


2011

Kujichagalia! Self-Determination in Young African American Women With Disabilities during the Transition Process

La Tonya L. Gillis

University of South Florida, positiveone1989@yahoo.com

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Kujichagalia! Self-Determination in Young African American Women with Disabilities
during the Transition Process

by

La Tonya L. Gillis

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Special Education
College of Education
University of South Florida

Major Professor: Ann Cranston-Gingras, Ph.D.
Brenda L. Walker, Ph.D.
Constance Hines, Ph.D.
Deirdre Cobb-Roberts, Ph.D.

Date of Approval:
June 27, 2011

Keywords: Autonomy, Parental Involvement, Psychological Empowerment, Self-
Realization, Self-Regulation

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Dedication

First and foremost I must give thanks to my Heavenly Father who made this journey a reality. With God all things are possible!

To my parents, Melba J. Walker and Richard L. Gillis, I give thanks for teaching me the value of education and putting my best foot forward. To my grandmothers, Mamie L. Walker and Virginia M. Gillis, I would like to praise you for providing me with food, shelter, clothing, and a sense of humanitarianism. To my brothers, Corinthians Walker, Sr. and Raymond Battles, thank you for always looking up to me. For my newly found brothers, Shawn and Jamil Jerman, I say to you welcome to our family. I know that Felix would be proud. A special dedication of love goes to my Jerman Family members.

To my children, son-in-law, and grandchildren, La Téce L. Gillis, Sha Neisha K. Williams, Kourtenay N. Hayter-Sirls, Rolando Sawyer, Jay' Ceon L. Taylor, and La' naiyah T. Warren, and the soon to be born Braylin, to all of you I leave a legacy to follow. I know there were some rough times over the past few years. Hopefully, you will appreciate my sacrifice. I love you dearly for supporting me when no one else would through your endless emails, phone calls, and text messages.

For my Aunt Rita and Larry, thank you for allowing me to share your world. For my aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, and nephews I say to you that no achievement is too small or too great. Many of you have witnessed my struggles and accomplishments. I love you and thank you for your continued support over the years. Sankofa!

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the members of my committee: Drs. Ann Cranston-Gingras, Brenda Walker, Constance Hines, and Deirdre Cobb-Roberts. I am greatly indebted for their guidance and support throughout my doctoral experience. Also, I would like to extend a heartfelt appreciation to the University of South Florida's Department of Special Education, Brenda Walker, Ann Cranston-Gingras, Patricia Alvarez-McHatton, and Jeannie Kleinhammer-Tramill for their financial support. I would like to extend a personal thank you to Drs. Gwendolyn Webb-Johnson and Samuel Wright for their support and prayers throughout my entire doctoral experience. I would like to thank the doctoral cohorts of the LASER and ECLIPSE project (Candida, Danielle, Tamara J., Erica, Tommy, Alice, Vixen, Arlene, Stacey, Dee, Karen, Tandria, Scott, Simon, and Michael) and other doctoral students (Tamara F., Michelle, Jennie, Roseanne, Ida, Sarah, Julie, Angie, Jaya, Maya, Sharon, and Anna) for their continued support. Also, I would like to thank all of my professors at the University of South Florida and the College of William and Mary for allowing me to pursue my dream.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the role that self-determination played in the transition process for young African American women with disabilities who exited high school with a special diploma and participated in a local transition program. Factors under study included the young women's autonomy, self-regulation, psychological empowerment, and self-realization (Wehmeyer, 1996).

This examination of the perceptions of the transition process of young African American women with disabilities involved in-depth interviews with five young women and their parent or guardian. Additionally, The Arc's Self-Determination Scale (ASDS) and the Parent Self-Determination Practice Survey (PSDPS) were administered to determine the level of self-determination of the young women as well as the level of parental promotion of self-determination. Results showed that the young women were able to use self-determination in a variety of settings. Three of the five participants demonstrated high levels of self-determination as measured by the ASDS when compared to the normative sample. Also, the parent or guardian of the young women provided multiple opportunities for the young women to practice self-determination in their homes and employment settings. Furthermore, the young women discussed several factors that they perceived to be strengths and challenges to using self-determination throughout and beyond the transition process. The findings have implications for school systems, social service agencies, and parents and guardians.

Chapter I

Introduction

Transition to adulthood for secondary students with disabilities is often met with uncertain challenges. It is a difficult period for most adolescents who ponder what lies ahead for them as they seek postsecondary options. With physical, emotional, and psychological changes that occur, many adolescents struggle to find their way into adulthood (Clark, 2002). How well prepared these adolescents are for the future that awaits them depends on parental involvement, academic preparation, employability skills, and adaptability to the real world (Benz, Lindstrom, Unruh, & Waintrup, 2004; Clark, Troi Belkin, Obradovich, Casey, Gagnon, Caproni, et al., 2002; Geenen, Powers, & Lopez-Vasquez, 2001).

For example, it has been noted that without effective educational programs such as transition services, students with disabilities will continue to lag behind their non-handicapped peers in experiencing educational success, participating in postsecondary education, obtaining employment, and living independently (Benz et al., 2004; Johnson et al., 2002; Schutz, 2002). According to the reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004, the transition process for a child with a disability emphasizes movement from school to post-school activities. The transition process formally begins when a student with a disability reaches the age of 16 years to identify and prepare for postsecondary opportunities (IDEA, 2004). Thus, the transition process for students with disabilities is viewed as beginning while a student is in high school and

continuing through young adulthood until the student turns 21 years of age. Transition is considered a results-oriented process which focuses on improving academic and functional achievement outcomes to include postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment, independent living, or community preparation. This process is based on the individual needs, preferences, and interests of the student with disabilities (IDEA, 2004).

Transition to postsecondary settings for students with disabilities is not always described as a smooth process. In fact, many students with disabilities and their families experience difficulty when accessing necessary transition services (Johnson, Stodden, Emanuel, Luecking, & Mack, 2002). Historically, post-high school outcomes (e.g., graduating or completing high school, establishing and maintaining relationships, attending two or four-year colleges/universities, and living independently) for students with disabilities have been dismal (Trainor, 2007; Wagner, Newman, & Cameto, 2004; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997). Wagner (1989) found that 36-55% of students with disabilities drop out of school as compared to 14-29% of their non-disabled peers. In addition, within this population of students with disabilities, African American girls have been found to be at risk of dropping out of high school, being unemployed and underpaid, and becoming teenage mothers (Freeman, 2004; Trainor, 2007).

Transition outcomes for students with disabilities have improved over the past 10 years. Recent studies have reported a decline in unemployment rates, an increase in college attendance, and lower dropout rates for students with disabilities (Wagner et al., 2006; Certo et al., 2003; Stodden & Dowrick, 2000). However, limited studies have reported the outcomes for groups within this population, specifically young African

American women with disabilities who have participated in the transition process. Data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 indicate:

- Females with disabilities are 6% more likely than males to attend a college or university after graduating from high school;
- Girls are more likely to engage in friendships than boys; and
- Girls with disabilities are less likely to be single, this includes having a significant other, being engaged, married, or living with a mate (Wagner et al., 2006).

Young women with disabilities who live independently earn less than \$5,000 per year when compared to their male counterparts. While these data are an improvement over the data reported in the first wave of the NLTS study during the years of 1985-1993, the outcomes for girls with disabilities have still lagged behind that of their male counterparts in the area of employment (Wagner, Cameto, & Newman, 2003).

Disaggregated data that reflect gender by race were not available for the NLTS-2. There is also concern as to whether or not girls with disabilities receive equitable and appropriate special education services including during the transition process (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 2001). Additionally, female students with disabilities are likely to be served in more restrictive educational environments and continue to have poor postschool outcomes such as lower employment rates, lower wages, and less job stability (Doren & Benz, 2001; Harvey, 2003).

To address the challenges regarding transition for students with disabilities, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1990) has mandated that public schools develop a “statement of needed transition services” for students with individualized education programs (IEPs) age 16 or older (IDEA Amendments of 1990, 20 U.S.C.

§1401). The IDEA was amended in 1997 to include an additional “statement of transition needs” that was designed to support a student’s high school course of study (e.g., career and technical education or advanced academics) (IDEA Amendments of 1997, 20 U.S.C. § 1414). In the context of IDEA, the term *transition services* means a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that includes the following essential elements that: (a) consider a student’s needs, (b) are designed within an outcome-oriented process, (c) include a coordinated set of activities, and (d) promote movement from school to post school life (20 U.S.C. § 1401 [30]). Transition plans should identify roles and responsibilities of the school and agencies that will be assisting with transition services.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004 focuses on a results-oriented process that is designed to improve the academic and functional achievement of students with disabilities. In the spirit of improving transition services for adolescent students with disabilities, parents should be considered as vital and equal members of the IEP team during the entire process (Flexer, Simmons, Luft, & Baer, 2005; Kolb & Hanley-Maxwell, 2003; Leyser & Kirk, 2004; Wells et al., 2003).

According to recent data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (2004), the basic requirement for transition planning is being met and at least 90% of secondary students with disabilities are receiving some form of transition services. It has been noted, however, that although the basic requirement for transition planning is being met most of the time, many secondary students with disabilities continue to lag farther behind their non-disabled peers in completing high school, obtaining and maintaining employment, and sustaining a better quality of life (Agran, Blanchard, & Wehmeyer,

2000; Benz et al., 2004). Consequently, there has been an increase in focus on addressing the transition needs of youth with disabilities across the nation.

Conceptual Basis of Study

In the accessing of transition services by students with disabilities, self-determination has been identified as one of the key factors that serves to improve the educational, social, and functional outcomes for these students with disabilities (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997). Self-determination is defined as “acting as the primary causal agent in one’s life and making choices and decisions regarding one’s quality of life free from undue external influence or interference” (Wehmeyer, 1996, p. 24). Flexer and colleagues (2005) define self-determination “as both a means and an outcome of the transition process” (p. 247). Wehmeyer (1999) states that individuals who display self-determined behaviors “act autonomously, self-regulate their behavior, and are psychologically empowered and self-realizing” (p. 56). Self-determination is also represented as one of the principles of Kwanzaa called kujichagalia (Obijiofor, 2003). Karenga (1997) described self-determination as a means for African Americans to assert control over their lives in decision and choice making options.

Self-determined individuals are considered better equipped to sustain a more satisfactory quality of life than individuals who are not self-determined (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997). One example of ensuring the postsecondary success of students with disabilities is provided from the research on self-determination. Research has shown that self-determined individuals with disabilities fare better in making and sustaining post-secondary options than their peers with disabilities who have not been exposed to self-determination skills and opportunities (Agran & Wehmeyer, 2000; Flexer et al., 2005;

Frankland, Turnbull, Wehmeyer, & Blackmountain, 2004; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997). Self-determined individuals with disabilities are able to better communicate their needs, sustain employment, make better daily living decisions, maintain positive relationships with family and friends, and sustain a quality of life when compared to their peers with disabilities (Agran et al., 2000; Hogansen, Powers, Geenen, Gil-Kashiwabara, & Powers, 2008).

As special educators move forward in preparing students with disabilities to be more accountable for their own educational and employment outcomes, implementing and assessing the self-determination skills of students with disabilities has become an essential component of each student's IEP. One of the implications of self-determination for secondary students with disabilities is the notable decrease in inappropriate behaviors and an increase in learning. In addition, teachers of self-determined students report an increase in productivity (Flexer et al., 2005).

Parents of children with disabilities are often faced with many decisions regarding the social and academic planning of their child's future. At first glance this may seem a simple task. However, the task can be burdensome for many parents of children with disabilities, especially for those parents who are engaged in the transition process and are looking forward to post-secondary options for their child (Zhang, Landmark, Grenwelge, & Montoya, 2010). In order to maneuver and manage their child's IEP process, including paperwork, educational jargon, and the overall transition process, parents of children with disabilities must possess a certain skill level in securing adequate and effective transition services for their child (Zhang, 2005).

Many parents use economic, political, and social resources to secure educational services and supports for their children. Gewirtz, Ball, and Bowe (1995), in illustrating how parents maneuver through the educational process, asserted that there are three parent involvement types: skilled or privileged choosers, semi-skilled choosers, and disconnected choosers. More research is needed in this area to determine which parent involvement type reflects that of parents or guardians of children with disabilities.

A study by Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997) suggests that individuals with intellectual disabilities who are exposed to opportunities to practice self-determination fare better in making and sustaining post-secondary options such as employment and maintaining a savings account than their handicapped peers who were not exposed to self-determination skills and opportunities. Study participants included 80 students with cognitive disabilities (e.g., mental retardation or learning disabilities) from four states in the United States of America. The researchers compared two groups of students who recently graduated or received a certificate of completion from high school. The groups were divided into a high self-determined group and a low self-determined group based on frequency distribution of their total self-determination scores. Based on the results of this study by Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997), students who are more self-determined are more likely to show characteristics of self-determined behavior (e.g., autonomy, psychological empowerment, self-realization, and self-regulation) when compared to students who are less self-determined after graduating from high school. In another study, Trainor (2005) found that self-determination was instrumental in assisting adolescent students with learning disabilities in identifying postsecondary goals and options, making and defining an action plan, and enlisting a support network. Turnbull and Turnbull

(2001) and Trainor (2005) also state that parent involvement is critical throughout the entire transition process, especially for helping students use self-determination behaviors such as advocacy, self-knowledge, and goal setting.

Statement of the Problem

The transition process for African American girls with disabilities is of concern because of the low high school completion rate, low employment rate, and high teen pregnancy rate in this student population as compared to their non-disabled peers (Jans & Stoddard, 1999; Trainor, 2007). The availability of consistent and effective transition services is critical in making the transition from high school to postsecondary options necessary for these young women. Past studies have shown numerous challenges during and after the transition process to include: lack of program funding, teacher shortage, lack of teacher support, lack of parental involvement, low student interest, limited to no acquisition to self-determination instruction and curriculum, and lack of administrative support (Agran et al., 2000; Test et al., 2004; Wehmeyer et al., 2000). While much research (Test et al., 2004; Wehmeyer, 1999; Zhang & Benz, 2006) has been conducted on the transition process, the perspectives of young African American women themselves and their parents during and after the transition process have not been investigated. In addition, the role that self-determination plays in these young women's lives particularly during the transition process has not been explored.

Although much research exists regarding the self-determination of students with disabilities as a way to gain independence, African American girls with disabilities continue to encounter financial, social, emotional, and academic constraints when seeking college admission, vocational training, employment, and housing options when

compared to their nondisabled peers. When the experiences of African Americans are reported in the research literature, the researchers primarily focus on the experiences and outcomes of African American males (Paul, 2003). According to Paul (2003), the experiences of young African American women are subsumed under the experiences of African American men. In fact, African Americans are often lumped in the category with other groups of color which, in turn, disguises the experiences of African Americans in the United States, especially African American females. Additionally, Irvine (1991) suggested that the “inconspicuousness of Black girls in the classroom begins in upper elementary grades” (p. 71). In general, African American girls may be passive in their elementary classes but tend to stand out more when entering upper elementary grades because of their overt communication style and the way they command attention (e.g., loud voices, facial expressions, and body language). It should be noted that none of these forms of communication are negative and should be considered leadership traits when teaching African American girls (Paul, 2003). However, there are specific situations when these behaviors are not permissible in the classroom setting. Loud voices on the playground or in a role-playing setting are allowed. Conversely, children are encouraged to use quiet and soft voices in the classroom setting (Freeman, 2004; Horn et al., 1999; Paul, 2003).

Overview of a Transition Program

The transition program that the young women who participated in this study attended is a university-based program that was developed to assist young adult students with disabilities between the ages of 18 and 22 in developing marketable job skills while interacting with same age peers. The program is located in the southeastern region of the

country. A collaborative partnership between a local school district and university was forged to provide young adults with disabilities who have exited high school with a special diploma an opportunity to develop postsecondary employment skills and to experience life on a college campus. The mission of the transition program is to provide training and support to young adults with disabilities in the various aspects of their lives including career options, self-advocacy skills, and independent living skills. Students are allowed to attend the program for a maximum of two years after completing high school. The transition program is a daily program designed to engage students in a multi-faceted curriculum to enhance their opportunity to become employed during or after completing the transition program. The selection process for attending the transition program is based on the student's interest, postsecondary goals, and the student's ability to be fully independent without the use of continuous supervision. The program offers small class sizes with a certified special education teacher and one paraprofessional to assist the students in class and on job sites. The program serves different ethnic groups of students, including young African American women with disabilities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the role that self-determination played in the transition process for young African American women with disabilities who exited high school with a special diploma and participated in a local transition program. Involvement in the transition process on the part of these young women's families was examined also to provide further insight on the perspectives of African American parents or guardians during the transition process.

In this study, the researcher sought to understand better the experiences (Rossman & Rallis, 2003) of young African American women with disabilities who have transitioned from high school to post-secondary settings. Throughout the examination of participant responses, the researcher sought to identify to what extent and how self-determination played a role in the transition process of young African American women with disabilities.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed within the context of this study:

1. What is the level of self-determination of a select sample of young African American women with disabilities as they progress through the transition process?
2. What are the experiences of a select sample of young African American women with disabilities as described by them during the transition process? How and to what extent is self-determination evident in the actions and decisions of these young women?
3. In what ways do parents/guardians promote self-determination in a select sample of young African American women with disabilities during the transition process?
4. From the perspective of parents/guardians, what aspects of self-determination are evident in their daughter's development during the transition process? What strengths or challenges do they report?

Significance of the Study

While most transition programs have not been effective in explaining or describing the experiences of young African American women with disabilities during the transition process (Simon, 2001; Zhang, 2006; Trainor, 2007), this researcher hoped to gain a better

understanding of the transition process as experienced by young African American women with disabilities by utilizing a concurrent mixed analyses research design (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003). Thus, the researcher hoped to maximize the findings by incorporating the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research approaches simultaneously (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003). This research study will add to the existing body of literature relating to the experiences of young African American women with disabilities.

Identification of the influence of self-determination and the level of parent involvement during the transition process could provide K-12 school districts, college personnel, and employers with viable information for improving the postsecondary outcomes for young African American women with disabilities. Upon completion of this research study, parents, students, faculty, and administrators at the local school district and university will be informed of these research findings. As a result of these findings, the researcher hopes that school district personnel will design, coordinate, and implement postsecondary employment, living arrangements, and educational options to further improve the outcomes for young African American women with disabilities.

Operational Definition of Terms

The focal point of this section is on key terms used throughout this research project. A definition for each term is given below.

Disability. According to the Americans with Disabilities Act and Rehabilitation Act of 2008, a disability is defined as a physical, mental, or emotional impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual.

Kujichagalia. This is one of the seven principles of Kwanzaa which stands for self-determination (Obijiofor, 2003).

Mainstream Culture. White Americans who live in America and share similar values, beliefs, and customs are considered members of the mainstream culture (Spindler & Spindler, 1990).

Parental Involvement. The active participation of parents in their child's educational process (Diamond & Gomez, 2004).

Postsecondary Options. Postsecondary options are options available to high school graduates such as employment, career and vocational training, and admission to a college or university (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001).

Self-Determination. Self-determination is defined as "acting as the primary causal agent in one's life and making choices and decisions regarding one's quality of life free from undue external influence or interference" (Wehmeyer, 1996, p. 24).

Transition Process. The transition process formally begins when a student with a disability reaches the age of 16 to identify and prepare for postsecondary opportunities. The transition process concludes during the year when the student turns 21 years (IDEA, 2004).

Delimitations

In this study, the operational definition of self-determination purposely excluded imposed limitations in defining self-determination for persons with disabilities. For the quantitative component of this study, participants were limited to young African American women with disabilities participating in a postsecondary transition program.

Limitations

In this study, possible threats to the validity for the qualitative and quantitative portions of this study existed. Thus, limitations relevant to this mixed model study are presented and described as internal and external threats to validity. Threats to the internal validity of the study included instrumentation, attrition, and socially desirable responses during the self-reporting.

Threats to external validity included ecological validity, external validity of operations (operational definitions), and selection of participants. The intent of this study was not to generalize findings to all young African American women with disabilities and their parents or guardians, but rather provide a description of their perceptions of the transition process during and after high school and gain an in-depth understanding of the process for these young women.

Threats to credibility included interpretation of data and researcher bias. Establishing credibility was obtained through peer review or peer debriefing throughout the entire data collection process via interviews and self-reporting measures; addressing personal biases and assumptions; and providing the reader with thick, rich descriptions of participants, settings, and collected data.

Organization of the Remaining Chapters

A review of the relevant literature on self-determination, transition assessments, parental perceptions, national outcome data and challenges, and inclusion of students with disabilities are presented in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 includes information about the qualitative and quantitative methods and procedures used in this study. Literature related to research methods is also presented. Specific information related to the population and

sample, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, and limitations are incorporated into the discussion of research methods. Chapter 4 provides a closer look at the participants' responses to the research questions. A summary of findings is included in Chapter 5. Additionally, a discussion regarding the study's implications and recommendations concludes Chapter 5.

Chapter II

Review of the Related Literature

Since the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975 [reauthorized as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) in 2004], several follow-up studies have been conducted to provide status reports on high school completers with disabilities (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005; Karpur, Clark, Caproni, & Sterner, 2005; Katsiyannis et al., 2005; Wehmeyer et al., 2003). While all of these studies have focused on post-school outcomes for students with disabilities, the studies have varied in multiple areas. These areas include success in adult life, the helpfulness of high school programs, assistance to students, and the improvement of service delivery options (Flexer, Simmons, Luft, & Baer, 2005).

This review of the literature presents several seminal studies in the areas of the transition process for students with disabilities, including young African American women with disabilities; the impact of self-determination during the transition process; the role of parent involvement throughout the transition process. Another key focus of the literature review describes a theoretical framework for combining crucial factors necessary for the successful postsecondary transition of young African American women with disabilities. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine self-determination as an educational construct for young African American women with disabilities who exited high school with a special diploma and participated in a local transition program. A second purpose of this study was to provide further insight on the perspectives of the

young women's parents during the transition process. Chapter 2 concludes with a summary of the research surrounding the impact of self-determination during the transition process and parent involvement during the transition process for young African American women with mild cognitive impairments.

Transition from High School

Graduating from high school is a difficult period for most adolescents who ponder what lies ahead for them as they seek postsecondary options. A variety of changes occur in the life of an adolescent as they contemplate the future that awaits them (Halpern et al., 1995; Wagner, Newman, & Cameto, 2004). Parents, educators, and key stakeholders are charged with the task of preparing these young people for life after high school (Nietupski, McQuillen, Duncan Berg, Weyant, Daugherty, Bildstein, et al., 2004; Trainor, 2007). After graduating from high school, many students with disabilities remain at home or participate in limited recreational activities within the community setting (Katsiyannis et al., 2005; Stodden et al., 2003).

Historically, students with disabilities have encountered numerous challenges and obstacles in receiving equitable services to become self-sufficient and responsible adults (Heubert, 2002; Wells, Sandefur, & Hogan, 2003). Laws were not established to protect the rights of children and their families prior to the 20th century. It was not until 1909 that the passage of the first compulsory school laws were enacted to protect the rights of children with disabilities (Brown, 2005; Winzer, 1993). Schools began to provide educational services for students with disabilities in restrictive settings and later began to provide services in multiple settings using varied instructional strategies (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2007). Earlier studies have found that students with disabilities benefited from

special education services, but many continued to experience unemployment (Clark & Stewart, 1992; Hasazai, Gordon, & Roe, 1985).

National Longitudinal Transition Study 2 (NLTS-2) Data Outcomes

As a follow-up to the first National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS-1), the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS-2) was commissioned to begin in 2000 to assess the postsecondary outcomes and related transition services of special education students. A random sample of 12,000 youth between the ages of 13 and 18 with disabilities throughout the country and from various socioeconomic levels, school settings, and disability categories were surveyed along with their parents and schools (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Levine, & Garza, 2006). The following preliminary NLTS-2 data provide a brief description of the outcomes for postsecondary students with disabilities:

- Primary post-high school goals indicate: 47% want to attend college, 40% selected postsecondary vocational training, 53% sought competitive employment, and 50% prefer to live independently.
- Nearly 80% participate in postsecondary education, paid employment, or training.
- 47% have a goal of attending a two- or four-year college.
- 51% of students aged 14 and older have graduated with a standard diploma.
- 37.6% of students in the study dropped out of school.
- 16% of these students *entering college* receive a degree, compared to 27% of their nondisabled peers.
- There is a 57% *employment rate* for students with disabilities after two years of graduation, compared to 73% for nondisabled students.
- Almost 30% of all persons with disabilities who work *earn below poverty level wages*.

These data were collected prior to the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and other recent federal mandates such as the reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004. Additionally, the aforementioned outcomes present a dismal depiction of secondary students with disabilities as compared to their non-handicapped peers in the same age range. Other outcomes of students with disabilities graduating from high school indicate poor adjustments in the areas of friendships, community access, ability to live independently, and accessing postsecondary environments (DeStafano & Wagner, 1991). Providing students with disabilities exposure to and opportunities to enhance their transition experiences is important to sustain a quality of life as an adult (Halpern et al., 1995).

In order to facilitate positive transition experiences for students with disabilities, primary experiences that support programs at the middle and secondary levels should concentrate on employment and independent living skills at the primary grade levels (Edgerton, 2001). According to Warger (2000), transition planning is a student-centered process that involves the direct support of interagency collaboration between local schools, community, state, and federal agencies, and other key stakeholders. Students with disabilities should be provided with multiple opportunities at the elementary level to explore and expand their career and vocational options. Research that focuses on transition services for students with disabilities has found that postsecondary outcomes for these students have been less than promising with increased high school dropout rates, low employment, low level jobs, lack of postsecondary education, and lack of community participation and independent living (Sinclair, Christenson, & Thurlow, 2005; Wagner et al., 1992). However, the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 reports more positive

outcomes for students with disabilities exiting high school with increased employment and high school completion rates, higher levels of participation in transition planning, and more parental involvement (Wagner, Cameto, & Newman, 2003).

Self-determination

Recently, attention has been given to the cultural influence on the development of students' self-determination skills. Self-determination for people with disabilities became a major focal point for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) in 1988 (Ward, 2005). OSERS initiated a task force to develop a self-determination initiative to (a) focus on system-wide activities, (b) promote service systems to include consumers in decision making, and (c) increase the pool of future leaders with disabilities (Ward & Kohler, 1996). The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) funded a series of 26 model demonstration projects that focused on identifying and teaching skills for self-determination (Ward, 2005). According to Frankland and colleagues (2004), the self-determination construct emerged in the late 17th century as a European influence to promote free-will. During the 20th century other constructs began to emerge pertaining to self-control and self-governance. For example, Native Americans struggled for sovereignty and self-governance, as did African Americans with the edification of self-determination as seen during the celebration of Kwanzaa (Frankland et al., 2004). Wehmeyer (1996) has defined self-determination as "acting as the primary causal agent in one's life and making choices and decisions regarding one's quality of life free from undue external influence or interference" (p. 22).

In the 1990s the U.S. Department of Education began to shift its focus to promote and enhance the self-determination of children and youth with disabilities (Ward &

Kohler, 1996). Consideration regarding how the construct is used by culturally and linguistically diverse students began to receive closer attention in the latter part of the 20th century (Frankland et al., 2004; Zhang & Benz, 2006; Zhang, 2005; Zhang et al., 2005). Applying self-determination across cultures is a complex process due to cultural values and beliefs. Anglo-European values of self-determination often clash with the beliefs of other ethnic groups such as the Diné people and African Americans (Frankland et al., 2004). The Eurocentric values include: (a) personal control over the environment, (b) importance of time, (c) individualism, (d) self-help, (e) competition, (f) future orientation, and (g) goal orientation (U. S. Department of Agriculture and U. S. Department of Health and Human Services as cited in Lynch & Hanson, 1998). For African Americans, values of self-determination encompass: (a) importance of education, (b) strong racial identity, (c) positive self-concept, and (d) strong self-esteem (Cokley, 2003). In a study conducted by Cokley (2003), self-determination was described in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation when a closer examination of the assumption that African American students were anti-intellectual was taken into account. Cokley (2003) surveyed 687 students attending three public colleges in the Midwest and Southern regions of the United States who attended either a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) or a Predominantly White College of University (PWCU). Findings from the study suggest that African American female students were more intrinsically and extrinsically motivated as it related to academic achievement than their male counterparts when self-determination theory is used as a framework.

According to Frankland and colleagues (2004), the self-determination movement is “growing in both theory and practice” (p. 193) as it influences how transition services are

delivered to students with disabilities. With that said, when studying the cultural values and beliefs of the Diné people, Frankland and colleagues (2004) discovered that the Diné people's values and beliefs differed from those of Anglo influences. For example, the Diné people value interdependence and group cohesion above independence and autonomy. More specifically, the Diné people's recognition of the family structure, living arrangements, disability status, self-regulation, psychological empowerment, self-realization, and autonomy showed that they do value self-determination. However, the ways in which their values are expressed differ from the Anglo perspective. According to Frankland and colleagues (2004), the degree of acculturation of the Diné people is based on "the process by which the four essential characteristics" (p. 203) of self-determination are expressed. For example, when looking at the self-determination construct of psychological empowerment the Diné people value the importance of spirituality and being in harmony with their mind, body, and spirit as a vital aspect to their commitment to themselves and their family's well-being. Healing ceremonies are performed when a Diné's spirituality is out of balance with his or her well-being. The researchers encourage educators to closely examine self-determination within the context of different cultures and cultural values.

For African Americans, self-determination is not a new concept. In fact, self-determination is similar, but not the same as resilience. Resilience is an attribute many African Americans have possessed throughout the centuries (Hale, 2001; Paul, 2003). McMillan and Reed (1994) describe resilient students as those who possess the following characteristics: (a) high-intrinsic motivation and internal locus of control, (b) high educational aspirations, (c) the desire to succeed, (d) self-starting, (e) personally

responsible for their own achievements, (f) strong sense of self-efficacy, (g) clear and realistic goals, and (h) optimistic about the future. These characteristics are quite similar, but not the same as those of self-determined individuals. McMillan and Reed have concluded that individuals who possess the characteristics of resiliency or self-determination are more likely to complete high school rather than become high school dropouts.

Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1998) assessed the self-determination, locus of control, and adult outcomes of 80 adult students with cognitive disabilities from various school districts across the country. The researchers found that self-determined individuals with mental retardation or learning disabilities were more likely to achieve positive adult outcomes, including higher earned wages and higher employment rates. Participants in the study either graduated from high school or received a certificate of attendance during the 1994-1995 school year. Students ranged in age from 17 to 22 years and represented different ethnicities to include White (69%), African American (21%), Hispanic (5%), and either Native American or Asian American (5%).

According to Zhang and Benz (2006), self-determination is a heavy cultural laden concept with origins from Anglo-European roots. The cultural beliefs and values of children and their families must be taken into consideration prior to and during the transition process (Frankland et al., 2004; Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001; Zhang, 2005). Many families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are not as familiar with the concepts of self-determination as defined by Wehmeyer (1996) when compared to European American families (Trainor, 2007; Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001; Zhang &

Benz, 2006). However, it should be noted that families from culturally and linguistically backgrounds promote elements of self-determination in their homes.

Trainor (2005) conducted a qualitative study to examine the self-determination perceptions and behaviors of diverse students with learning disabilities during the transition planning process. Study participants included 15 adolescent males from three cultural groups: African American, Hispanic American, and European American. Results indicated that students from these diverse populations identified themselves as key players in the transition process, rather than their parents or teachers.

Key Characteristics of Self-Determined Behavior

Wehmeyer (1999) has described self-determination as an educational construct. What this means is that educators will promote self-determination in schools to “identify the skills, abilities, attitudes and beliefs that lead to personal self-determination and to design instruction to promote that outcome” (p. 54). Furthermore, people who exhibit self-determined behaviors are autonomous, self-regulated, self-realized, and psychologically empowered (Wehmeyer & Kelchner, 1995). Each self-determined individual will display the four characteristics of self-determination to a certain degree based on their age, opportunity, capacity, and circumstances (Wehmeyer, 1999).

Autonomy is based on individuation and independence which involves people acting: (a) on their own preferences, interests, and/or abilities; and (b) free of external influences.

Self-regulated behavior is based on the notion of people examining their environments and making decisions to live and evaluate their actions (Whitman, 1990). Examples of self-regulated behaviors include self-monitoring, individual accountability, self-instruction, self-evaluation, and self-reinforcement (Agran, 1997). Psychological

empowerment involves aspects of personal self-efficacy and locus of control. Zimmerman (1990) defines psychological empowerment as a process of learning and using problem-solving skills to attain control over one's life. According to Wehmeyer (1999), self-realization is knowledge and self-understanding of oneself and the identification of one's strengths and limitations. To promote self-determination in students with disabilities, Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1999) believe that "student involvement has the potential to increase student interest in and motivation to learn transition-related skills and provides hands-on experiences in making choices and decisions" (p. 254).

Challenges to Promoting Self-Determination

Test and colleagues (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of 16 studies to investigate interventions designed to increase student involvement in their Individualized Education Programs (IEP) process. Findings suggested that students with varying exceptionalities can participate in their IEP process. However, there is disagreement among researchers who support self-determination with respect to how, when, and where to teach self-determination skills in schools. There are three problem areas that exist when teaching self-determination skills: (a) teacher training, (b) limited knowledge of curricula, and (c) low priority on self-determination skills (Test et al., 2004). Furthermore, research has shown little infusion of goals related to teaching self-determination in class settings (Mason et al., 2004; Wehmeyer et al., 2000). A contributing factor to this dilemma is the late exposure to self-determination training. For the most part, students with disabilities do not receive self-determination training until high school. Student participation in IEP meetings is less than expected (Martin et al., 2006; Wood et al., 2004). In a separate

study conducted by Trach and Shelden (2000), findings indicated that only 64% of students with disabilities aged 14-22 attended their IEP meetings.

Johnson et al. (2002) found that students with disabilities often experience difficulty throughout their high school experience with respect to accessing the general education curriculum; clarification of graduation requirements; accessing postsecondary education, employment, and independent living opportunities; supporting students and family participation; and improving collaboration between schools and agencies (Priestley, 2001). Additional challenges are present when school administrators are poorly prepared to combat these obstacles for students with disabilities and their families (McLaughlin & Nolet, 2004; Tisdall, 2001). These challenges can make for a long and enduring high school career and pose a threat to students and their families after graduation.

Summary

According to Test and colleagues (2004), students with disabilities are more inclined to participate in IEP meetings after they have developed self-determination skills, especially prior to entering high school. Ward (2005) emphasizes a critical need for students with disabilities to actively engage in opportunities to practice and improve their self-determination skills in multiple settings. One way for students with disabilities to experience success is for them to receive training in school through the use of a specific curriculum (Ward, 2005). Individuals with disabilities should be afforded the right to self-determination without stigmatizing labels (Ward, 2005). There are several challenges to supporting self-determination for persons with disabilities. These challenges include the selection of appropriate curriculum (Flexer et al., 2007), teacher awareness and readiness (Vaughn et al., 2007), and student training (Ward, 2005). Educators and

researchers are advised to take careful consideration when examining self-determination in students with disabilities:

Self-determination is an interplay between the individual and society. Individuals with disabilities must have the abilities and opportunities to be self-determined. Society must give individuals with disabilities, including those with severe and developmental disabilities, the skills, opportunities, and the support to do so (Ward, 2005, p.111).

According to Frankland and colleagues (2004), quality transition services are crucial to the success of persons with disabilities. Educators are encouraged to create transition services that reflect the beliefs, values, and expectations of each student's cultural heritage (Zhang, 2005). An additional practice with promise for supporting the transition process is family involvement and participation (Repetto & Correa, 1996). Research supports a strong family involvement to ensure the success of the transition process. Repetto and Correa (1996) assert that the involvement of families throughout their child's life further promotes the positive impact of a seamless transition model. Key aspects of this model include preparing families and students for self-determination and service coordination, locating service centers in the community, providing access to family and student support groups, and overseeing service delivery through community interagency cooperative councils.

Parent Involvement and Perceptions of the Transition Process

Parents are often regarded as a child's first teacher when sending their child off to school. Keeping this in mind, parents often know what is best for their children (Hale, 2001), especially when it pertains to securing adequate transition services for their child with a disability (Zhang et al., 2005). For other parents of adolescent students with

disabilities many barriers are presented when obtaining educational, social, and employment opportunities (Wells, Sandefur, & Hogan, 2003).

In a recent study conducted by Wells and colleagues (2003), data were compared between the National Longitudinal Transition Study of 1987-1991 and the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 to determine the differences between students with disabilities and without disabilities immediately graduating from high school. Five variables were considered as outcome measures as represented by categorical variables (namely, education, employment, marital status, parental status, and residential independence). Results indicated that females were more likely to be unemployed and more likely to start a family. Previous studies of transition outcomes for adolescent students with disabilities show that high family income status and being reared by both parents has a stronger impact on transition related to education and employment. However, inconsistent findings regarding the effects of race and ethnicity indicate positive and negative outcomes on other variables.

The study by Wells and colleagues (2003) noted the important differences between youth with and without disabilities in reflecting challenges and barriers faced by youth with disabilities. According to the researchers, disability status plays a dominant role in determining whether or not students with disabilities achieve any of the statuses associated with transition to adulthood (e.g., employment, education, marital status, parental status, and residential status). Contrary to prior studies, family socioeconomic resources actually have a smaller effect on the transition to adulthood for students with disabilities. Moreover, it is well documented that families of higher socioeconomic status

have greater access to academic and employment resources than do families of lower socioeconomic status (Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Hale, 2001; Losen & Orfield, 2002).

Outcome data for women graduating from high school show that Black women are 5.6 times more likely than White women to enroll as full-time students than to mix family with work. Further results of the study by Wells and colleagues (2003) specify that participants reared in two-parent homes and growing up with less than two siblings are more likely to be full-time students than to live at home, work, establish their own families, or mix family with work. Data from Wells and colleagues (2003) demonstrate the need for more family involvement during adolescence for female students. Unfortunately, parents are not always fully informed of educational, recreational, or social activities that may be available to their child, especially parents of children with disabilities.

Geenen, Powers, and Lopez (2001) conducted a study with 308 parents representing various cultural and linguistic backgrounds (e.g., African American, Hispanic American, Native American, and European American). The level of parent involvement during the transition process was assessed through the use of parent involvement survey. Findings indicate that culturally and linguistically diverse parents are engaged in the transition process.

Zhang, Wehmeyer, and Chen (2005) affirm a strong relationship between student level of self-determination and the attainment of more positive adult outcomes. When examining the cultural impact of self-determination, it is believed that “cultural variables influence both the acquisition of skills promoting self-determination and the way the construct is operationalized in different cultural contexts (Zhang et al., 2005, p. 56). In a

comparative study of 203 parents and teachers from the United States of America and 90 parents and teachers from the Republic of China, Zhang and colleagues (2005) found that U. S. parents of students at the secondary level reported higher levels of engagement in self-determination than parents in Taiwan. These results support the belief that “children undoubtedly become self-determined youth and young adults because of the influence of multiple contexts and of many people” (Zhang et al., 2005, p. 61). Parents tend to be more involved in self-determination related behaviors during the transition process at the secondary level (Zhang, 2005). The role of parents in promoting and fostering cultural influences of self-determination during the transition process remains an untapped area in educational research. However, the attribution of high levels of parent involvement during the transition process at the secondary level are believed to have a strong impact on their child’s acquisition to self-determination skills (Zhang, 2005; Zhang, Katsiyannis, & Zhang, 2002).

Summary

Many students with disabilities become adults with disabilities who seek employment and postsecondary options to provide for their families, a better quality of life, and to be immersed in similar activities and situations as persons without disabilities (Turnbull III, Turnbull, Wehmeyer, & Park, 2003). Traditionally, ways of fostering some type of normalcy or inclusion for students with disabilities has been through the efforts of parents, classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, school administrators, and the students themselves. Lack of community involvement and exposure to postsecondary opportunities such as employment, vocational training, or college attendance often lead to higher unemployment rates, increased high school dropout rates, and criminal activity for

secondary students with disabilities (Lipsky, 2005). To combat these negative outcomes for students with disabilities, school, universities, and other agencies are encouraged to support adequate transition programs that meet the individual needs of students (Clark, 2002).

Sitlington, Clark, and Kolstoe (2000) believe that persons with disabilities are valuable resources and have potential that must be discovered, nurtured, and developed. In order for these potentials to be manifested, educators and other school professionals must invest time, effort, patience, and support in working with persons with disabilities. This is especially true when planning and coordinating transition services. It has been argued that one of the reasons for the lack of postsecondary success for students with disabilities is that many high school programs fail to provide adequate services needed to ensure success for these students (Johnson et al., 2002; Flexer et al., 2005). Pierangelo and Giuliani (2004) agree that schools should provide a wide range of transition services for students with disabilities to include instruction, transportation, community experiences, employment, and postsecondary educational activities. In doing so, the solicited involvement of local, state, and federal agencies is imperative to the academic and vocational success of students with disabilities.

In a study conducted by Halpern, Yovanoff, Doren, and Benz (1993), predictors associated with students with disabilities participating in postsecondary education involved successfully completing instruction in relevant areas, participating in transition planning, parent satisfaction, student satisfaction, high scores on functional achievement inventories, and parent perception of student achievement in critical skill areas. Given these predictors associated with participation in postsecondary education, schools, local,

state, and federal agencies, and local colleges and universities are encouraged to assist with the postsecondary needs of students with disabilities.

Although much research surrounds the influence of self-determination during the transition process, little consensus has been reached regarding the impact of self-determination during the transition process for young African American women with disabilities or the perceptions of their parents during the transition process. Most of the existing literature is either quantitative or qualitative in methodology, rather than mixed model. Therefore, the researcher hopes that the present study will add to the existing body of knowledge by concentrating on self-determination and parent involvement during the transition process for African American adolescent females. The next chapter will provide a detailed description of how the study was conducted in terms of generating and collecting data.

Chapter III

Method

The purpose of this study was to examine the role that self-determination played in the transition process for a select sample of young African American women with disabilities who exited high school with a special diploma and participated in a local transition program. Involvement in the transition process on the part of these young women's families was also examined to provide further insight on the perspectives of African American parents or guardians during the transition process.

This study was exploratory in nature and employed a mixed method approach to developing a descriptive profile of a small sample of young African American adult females with disabilities who were participants in a post school transition program. Mixed method research is "formally defined here as the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques into a single study. . ." (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 17). The study was conducted in two phases. Phase I involved the gathering of quantitative data to provide a descriptive profile of the study participants and their level of self-determination as measured by The Arc's Self-Determination Scale. Phase II involved the gathering of qualitative data from multiple sources through use of face-to-face interviews to obtain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences of the transition process and how self-determination may have played a role in this process.

Participants

Five African American female students who completed or were near completion of a selected university-based transition program and a parent or guardian of each of these students participated in this study. The students ranged in age from 18 to 24 years. A purposeful sampling procedure (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was used to select this sample of young female students. Student participants had a mild cognitive disability as defined by federal and state criteria. Additionally, student participants were purposefully selected to participate in this study because of their ethnic background, gender representation, disability status, and participation in the transition program. All female students have exited high school with a special diploma, participated in a postschool transition program, and were able to articulate and sustain a conversation. Three parents and one guardian of these young women participated in this research study. Parents and the guardian ranged in age from 46-65 years. One of the parents was not willing to participate in the study. Thus, altogether, data for the study were gathered from a total of nine participants.

Protection of Participants

Students and parents/guardian voluntarily participated in the study. Students participated in completing a self-determination scale and in-depth interviews. Parents and a guardian of student participants completed a survey and were individually interviewed. The researcher conducted the interviews with participants at a time and location that was convenient for them.

Prior to participating in the study, written consent was obtained from the students as well as their parents/guardian. The informed consent form (See Appendices A-D) explained the purpose, method, and duration of the study, as well as that participation in

the study was voluntary. Each participant (student and parent/guardian) was informed that her involvement in the study was voluntary, and that her responses would be confidential. In addition, each parent/guardian was informed that her participation and that of her daughter was strictly voluntary and she was allowed to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Data collection for this study took approximately four months.

Access to the participants for this study was made possible through the assistance of the transition facilitator, the local school district, and a university liaison. To facilitate confidentiality of participant responses, participants selected a pseudonym to further protect their identities throughout the study. Also, tape-recorded interviews remain confidential and were used solely for the purpose of the research study. Cassette tapes used during interviews were held in a secured location for the duration of the study. The tapes and transcripts will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study.

Context of Study

Students who were selected for participation in this study were participants in a university-based program that was implemented to meet the postsecondary needs of students with disabilities. The university is located in the southeastern region of the United States of America. This transition program was designed in collaboration with a local school district with the purpose of serving young adults with disabilities who have exited high school with a special diploma. The mission of the one-to two-year transition program is to provide training and support to young adults with disabilities in the areas of college life, career options, self-advocacy skills, and independent living skills after exiting high school. Students in the transition program participate in class activities,

travel by public transportation to and from the university's campus, receive employment training, and may be gainfully employed during or after their completion of the transition program. The collaborative partnership between the local school district and university promotes a full commitment to providing young adults with disabilities opportunities to complete internships, job training, and partnerships with local businesses and public agencies. Although this program serves a diverse group of students, African American girls are well represented. A pervasive element of the university-based transition program is that it promotes self-determination.

Instrumentation

Three instruments were used for data collection purposes, one in Phase I of the study and two in Phase II. Below is a description of each instrument.

The Arc's Self-Determination Scale (ASDS)

This instrument (see Appendix E) is a self-report measure designed to obtain data on an individual's perception of his/her level of self-determination and was administered in Phase I of the study. The instrument is designed for use by adolescents with disabilities, particularly students with mild mental retardation and learning disabilities. In the definitional framework that guided the development of the ASDS, self-determination, considered as "an educational outcome", is defined as "*acting as the primary causal agent in one's life and making choices and decisions regarding one's quality of life free from undue external influence or interference*" (Wehmeyer, 1992).

The ASDS is comprised of 72-items and is divided into four sections (subscales). Each section is designed to measure one of four different essential characteristic of self-

determination: autonomy, self-regulation, psychological empowerment, and self-realization (Wehmeyer, 1992).

Section 1 (Autonomy) consists of 32 items designed to measure one's perceived autonomy relative to a) *independence in performing routine personal care and family-oriented functions* (e.g., "I make my own meals or snacks", "I do chores in my home") and *interaction with the environment* (e.g., "I use the post office", "I deal with sales people at stores and restaurants"); and b) *acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests and abilities* relative to recreational and leisure time (e.g., "I do free-time activities based on my interests"), community involvement and interaction (e.g., "I volunteer in things that I am interested in", "I go to restaurants that I like"), post school directions (e.g., "I make long-range career goals", "I work on school work that will improve my career choices"), personal expression (e.g., "I choose my own hairstyle"). For each of the items in this subscale, respondents are asked to select one of four response options that best describes how they act in the given situation. The response options are: a) *I do not even if I have a chance*, b) *I do sometimes when I have a chance*, c) *I do most of the time I have a chance*, and d) *I do every time I have the chance*. The score points for each item ranges from 0 to 3. Total possible score points for this subscale ranges from 0 (minimum) to 96 (maximum). Low scores on this subscale (domain) reflect low levels of autonomy, higher scores reflect higher levels of autonomy.

Section 2 (Self-Regulation) consists of 9 items designed to measure one's self-regulation in problem solving, goal setting, and performing tasks. Each of the items solicits a written response. The first 6 items are designed to measure interpersonal problem-solving, using a story format. Respondents are presented with the beginning and

ending of a short story and asked to fill in the BEST answer for the middle of the story. The beginning of the story poses a problem and the ending reports the outcome. The respondent is asked to tell what happened in the middle of the story to connect the beginning and end. Responses to each item on this portion of the self-regulation subscale are scored 0 to 2 points, with a maximum possible score of 12 points; higher scores represent more effective interpersonal cognitive problem-solving. The final three items in this domain are intended to measure goal setting and task performance and ask respondents about their plans for the future. For each question (Where do you want to live?, Where do you want to work?, and What type of transportation do you plan to use after you graduate?), the respondent is asked to indicate if s/he has a plan for the outcome indicated, to state what is the plan, and to list four things s/he should do to meet the goal (outcome). Responses to each of the three items are scored 0 to 3 points, with a possible maximum score of 9 points on this portion of the subscale; higher scores reflect more effective goal-setting and task attainment skills. Thus, the total possible score points for the 9 items on the self-regulation subscale (domain) range from 0 (minimum) to 21 (maximum), with higher scores reflecting a higher level of self-regulation.

Section 3 (Psychological Empowerment) is comprised of 16 items designed to measure one's psychological empowerment to make choices, self-advocate, and have control over one's life. For each item on the subscale, respondents are asked to select one of the two response options given that best describes them. Responses are scored 0 or 1. Responses that reflect psychological empowerment (e.g., belief in one's ability, perceptions of control and expectations of success) are scored 1 and those that do not reflect a psychologically empowered belief or attitude are scored 0. The total possible

score points for this subscale ranges from 0 (minimum) to 16 (maximum); higher scores on this subscale reflect more psychological empowerment.

Section 4 (Self-Realization) consists of 15 items designed to measure one's self-knowledge and self-awareness. Each statement describes a feeling, emotion, belief or knowledge about one's self; respondents are asked to choose from two options "Agree" or "Do not agree", the option that best fits them. Responses that reflect a positive self-awareness and self-knowledge are scored 1, and those that do not are scored 0. The total possible score points on this subscale ranges from 0 (minimum) to 15 (maximum); higher scores on the subscale reflect greater self-realization.

Overall Score on the ASDS. The total score on The Arc's Self-Determination Scale provides a measure of overall self-determination. To compute a total score on this scale, the sum of the four subscale (domain) scores (*autonomy, self-regulation, psychological empowerment and self-realization*) on the instrument is computed. The maximum possible score on the ASDS is 148 points; higher total scores reflect higher levels of overall self-determination.

Administration of the ASDS. According to the Wehmeyer and Kelchner (1995), the entire Scale should be administered in a setting with minimal distractions. Students should be given ample time (30 minutes to one hour) to complete all of the sections.

Psychometric Properties of The Arc's Self-Determination Scale. The ASDS was normed using 500 students with and without cognitive disabilities who were identified by their school districts as currently receiving special education services and had completed protocols from the ASDS. These students ranged in age from 14-22 years and attended various rural, urban, and suburban school districts in five states (Texas, Virginia,

Alabama, Connecticut, and Colorado). Both male and female students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (e.g., African American, Native American, Asian American, Caucasian, and Middle Eastern) participated in the norming study.

Examination of the internal structure of the scale using factor analytic procedures showed that factors of the Scale measured the intended constructs. Internal consistency reliability was measured using Cronbach's alpha for all domains of the Scale except for the *Self-Regulation* subscale (due to the open-ended answer format for this subscale). The coefficient alpha for the overall Scale was .90, for the Autonomy domain .90, for the Psychological Empowerment domain .73, and for the Self-Realization domain .62.

Concurrent criterion-related validity was determined between *The Arc's Self-Determination Scale* and related measures (e.g., quality of life indicators, goal setting, choice making, and problem solving) (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997). Total and domain (subscale) scores from the ASDS were correlated with students' scores from these measures. Most of the relationships ranged from moderate to strong (.25 to .50).

Parent Self-Determination Practice Survey (PSDPS)

This instrument (see Appendix F) was developed by Zhang in 2005 to measure parents' beliefs and practices in supporting self-determination in their child. It is a self-report survey with three sections and a total of 36 items.

Section I includes 10 items designed to gather the respondents' demographic information as well as that of their child including the parent or guardian's relationship to the child, his/her race, age, occupation, place of origin, primary language spoken at home, family income, number of children, child's age, and the student's disability status.

Section II consists of 23 items related to parenting styles such as choice-making opportunities, identifying post school goals, decision-making opportunities, and respect for authority. More specifically, the items in this section have been grouped into eight categories based on Wehmeyer and Kelchner's (1995) model of self-determination assessment and parent practices that promote self-determination by Sands and Doll (1996). The categories include the following: (a) child's personal independence, (b) child's participation in making household decisions, (c) parents'/guardians' listening to and talking about the child's interests for the future, (d) parents'/guardians' allowing the child opportunities to make daily decisions that have important life impacts, (e) parents'/guardians' teaching of goal setting and assisting the child in recognition of weaknesses, (f) parents'/guardians' intent to control the child's future career and living arrangement, (g) parents'/guardians' general beliefs about parent authority and family priority, and (h) parents'/guardians' dealing with unexpected or undesired behaviors of the child.

Responses to items in Section II are assigned a score to reflect the degree of self-determination behavior shown by the child, or fostered by the parent/guardian. Items, asked in the form of questions, have two to four response options and the respondent selects the best option that represents his or response to the question. The assigned scores for each item ranges from 0 to 4 points depending on the number of response options available. Higher score value represents choices that are more likely to foster self-determination skills.

Section III of the PSDPS was not included in this study. With permission from the author, the researcher did not use Section III of the instrument as it did not pertain to the

focus of this study. Consequently, the instrument as it appears is a modified version of the original instrument.

Validity and Reliability. No data were available from developers on the reliability and validity evidence for this instrument. The survey was administered to 136 parents of children with disabilities who ranged in age between 2 to 24 years. These parents participated in a study conducted by Zhang (2005) to investigate “the influences of culture, socioeconomic status, and children’s special education status on parents’ engagement in fostering self-determination behaviors” (p. 154). The parents’ ages ranged between 20 to 54 years and all lived in a Southeastern college town. Participants represented various ethnic backgrounds to include African American, Caucasian, Hispanic, and Asian. The instrument was not piloted because most of the items were adopted from previous instruments (Wehmeyer & Kelchner, 1995; Sands & Doll, 1996; Zhang, Katsiyannis, & Zhang, 2002). Zhang (2005) also reports “. . . validity of the instrument and interrater reliability were not calculated” (p. 154). This instrument was selected for use in the study to the nature and items measured that were specific to parent level of engagement of self-determination practice skills. The scoring guide for the Parent Self-Determination Practice Survey was developed by the researcher with permission from the author (see Appendix G).

Self-Determination Interview Protocol (Student Version)

An interview protocol for use with the student participants in the current study (see Appendix H) was developed by the researcher. The interview protocol consisted of 18 open-ended questions designed to obtain information about the experiences of young African American women with mild cognitive disabilities during the transition process.

Interview questions were designed to allow for a broad range of responses from participants (Creswell, 1998). Broad areas addressed in the interview protocol included social activities, career goals, job training, employment opportunities, personal strengths, personal challenges, communication skills, and decision making. Students were asked questions such as “How did you feel when you graduated from high school? How did you decide to attend the transition program? Why did you decide to attend the transition program? How has the transition program helped you with communication skills?”

Self-Determination Interview Protocol (Parent/Guardian Version)

This interview protocol for use with the parents/guardians of the student participants in the current study (see Appendix I) was developed by the researcher. The interview protocol consisted of nine open-ended questions. The protocol was designed to obtain information about parent perceptions of the transition process, duties in which their daughter engaged, and in which they promoted self-determination in their young African American daughter with a mild cognitive disability during the transition process. Interview questions were designed to allow for a broad range of responses from participants (Creswell, 1998). Broad areas included social activities, self-care skills, home and community involvement, level of independence, decision making, quality of life, communication skills, and goal setting. Parents and a guardian were asked questions such as “How have you prepared your daughter for post school life? What are some things that you have encouraged your daughter to think about as she prepares to leave the transition program?”

Data Collection/Generation Procedures

Phase I. In this phase of the study the researcher administered *The Arc's Self-Determination Scale* to the five young women who were student participants in the study to assess their level of self-determination. Students were administered the scale during their respective lunch periods. Throughout the administration of *The Arc's Self-Determination Scale*, each young woman was asked by the researcher if she understood the various questions and written requests contained in the instrument. If a participant did not understand what was being asked of her, the researcher would read the statement out loud and provide clarifying examples. Each participant was reminded that her responses were voluntary and that the instrument was used as a self-reporting tool to assist her with self-determination. Additionally, the *Parent Self-Determination Survey* was administered to the parents/ guardians of the student participants to gather data on how they promote self-determination skills outside of the school setting for their daughters. Three parents and one guardian of four of the five young women who participated in the study responded to survey. Two parents completed the survey in the presence of the researcher. One parent and one guardian requested to have the survey mailed to their respective residence. Both mailed surveys were returned to the researcher at the researcher's expense.

Phase II. Participants in the study were individually interviewed face-to-face, except the guardian of one of the student participants. The guardian was interviewed over the telephone. Each participant in the study was administered a semi-structured interview that lasted approximately one hour. All interviews were conducted by the researcher. A tape recording device was used to facilitate an accurate recording of reported responses. Each

interview consisted of a standard set of open-ended questions which allowed for probes, as needed, in an effort to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' perspectives regarding the transition process.

Using the *Self-Determination Interview Protocol (Student Version)*, the researcher was able to interview the young women to obtain verbatim reports about her participation in the postschool transition program (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The *Self-Determination Interview Protocol (Student Version)* is a non-standard form of questioning that is constructed throughout the interviewing process. For example, if a student participant were asked the following question: "How did you select the transition program?" and she responded by saying, "I selected it on my own." Then, the researcher did some probing and asked the participant to give examples by elaborating on her definition of "on my own."

The researcher was able to interview the parent or guardian of the young women using the *Self-Determination Interview Protocol (Parent/Guardian Version)*, to obtain verbatim reports about the type of self-determination skills her daughter used during the transition process (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The *Self-Determination Interview Protocol (Parent/Guardian Version)* is a non-standard form of questioning that is constructed throughout the interviewing process. For example, if a parent or guardian were asked the following question: "How does your daughter help out at home?" and the parent or guardian responded by saying, "She does what I ask her to do." Then, the researcher did some probing and asked the parent or guardian to give examples by providing examples of her meaning of "what I ask her to do."

The researcher gathered additional data in the form of analytic note taking during the actual interviews. The researcher maintained a reflexive journal throughout the entire study. Maintaining a reflexive journal allowed the researcher to record her thoughts, feelings, and decisions in conducting the study.

Student Records. The researcher gathered student data from four of the young women's educational records known as Transition Individualized Education Plans (TIEP) to determine which goals and objectives supported self-determination during the transition process for the young African American women with disabilities in this study. Information contained in the TIEP included consent to share information about the student, when the student reached the age of majority, which agency was responsible for providing and/ or implementing transition services, the specific transition domains addressed, the student's present level of academic achievement and functional performance, goal statements and objectives, evaluation plan, accommodations/modifications, and where and how often services will be provided. A copy of the TIEP was obtained from the transition facilitator. These educational records were reviewed and notes recorded from them to organize the data and get a better understanding of the students' academic, social, and personal goals and objectives as they related to self-determination. Examples of TIEP goals include: While participating in a transition training program, Miss Diva will seek a job of interest 8 out of 10 assignments over a semester. Another example would be: With support in various settings, Miss Diva will use strategies to write personal goals and demonstrate self-determination skills 8 out of 10 trials over one semester.

The researcher used multiple forms of data collection/generation: *The Arc's Self-Determination Scale*, *the Parent Self-Determination Practice Survey*, individual student interviews, individual parent/guardian interviews, student Transition Individualized Education Plans, analytic notes, and a reflexive journal. These multiple forms of data generation allowed the researcher to use data triangulation to verify the accuracy of responses and to increase credibility (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003).

Data Analysis Procedures

The following were the data analysis procedures used to answer each research question.

Research Question 1: What is the level of self-determination of a select sample of young African American women with disabilities as they progress through the transition process?

Data gathered from administration of The Arc's Self-Determination Scale (ASDS) were used to answer this research question. Each of the ASDS protocols completed by the five student participants was hand scored by the researcher and a graduate student, using the scoring guidelines provided in the ASDS Procedural Guidelines (Wehmeyer, 1995). For each protocol, a total raw score for the full scale and a subscale score for each of its four subscales (domains) were computed. These raw scores were then converted to percentiles using the percentile score distribution for the norming sample provided in the Conversion Tables of the ASDS Procedural Guidelines (Wehmeyer, 1995). The converted percentiles were used for interpretation of participants' full scale score and domain scores. Graphs of these converted percentile scores for the study participants were also constructed to aid in the interpretation of data and develop a descriptive profile

of the level of self-determination reported. Interrater agreement of the scoring was determined by selecting two samples that were rated independently by the researcher and the graduate student. The scores were compared in order to determine agreement between scorers. Agreement rates of 97% and 98% were found, indicating very high agreement between the scorers.

Also, information from the Transition Individualized Education Plan (TIEP) was used to answer research question one by describing employment and career goals for each young woman. Transition goals and objectives were reviewed to begin the process of hand coding the data by assigning codes. Next, the goals and objectives were labeled and definitions were provided for each code. The researcher and a graduate student met to review the codes and definitions. Using discrete ideas as the unit of analysis, each goal and objective was labeled and definitions provided for each code. The data were coded and sorted into initial specific categories (*open coding*). The researcher and graduate student grouped the codes into themes. The level of inter-coder agreement between the researcher and graduate student was 96%.

Research Question 2: What are the experiences of a select sample of young African American women with disabilities as described by them during the transition process? How and to what extent is self-determination evident in the actions and decisions of these young women?

Data gathered from the face-to-face interviews with the student participants using the Self-Determination Interview Protocol (Student Version) (Appendix H) and from their parents/guardian using the Self-Determination Interview Protocol (Parent/Guardian Version) (Appendix I) as well as from the ASDS were used to answer this research

question. First, the researcher transcribed each interview verbatim from the audio recordings. Second, the researcher summarized each transcript and submitted them to participants for member checking. Interview summaries were sent to all of the participants either through the United States Postal Service or via electronic mail. Participants were asked to review their respective interview summaries to verify the accuracy of the data. Each participant was encouraged to make any necessary changes and return the interview summary to the researcher either through the United States Postal Service or via electronic mail. All of the participants agreed to review the interview summaries for purposes of member checking. There was a 100% response rate from the participants. None of the participants made corrections to the interview summaries. Following are the procedures used for analyzing the transcripts from the student interviews. Upon completing the transcription, summarization, and receiving feedback from member checks, the researcher and a graduate student reviewed the data and began the process of hand coding each interview transcript by assigning codes. Using discrete ideas as the unit of analysis, each section of the data was labeled and definitions provided for each code. Additionally, the data were coded and sorted into initial specific categories (*open coding*). The researcher and the graduate student reviewed the codes again to determine if further grouping into larger categories (*axial coding*) were needed (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Similar codes were then grouped to yield themes. The graduate student coded four of the interview transcripts independently. The level of inter-coder agreement between the researcher and graduate student was 96%.

The transcripts from the Parent/Guardian Interview protocols were analyzed using the same procedures as described above.

Data from the ASDS were analyzed using participant interview responses based on the related self-determination domains: autonomy, self-regulation, psychological empowerment, and self-realization. Data were placed in a chart and table format using Microsoft Excel. The researcher identified specific elements of self-determination in both the ASDS and the student interviews to describe the levels of corroboration or discrepancies between both data sources.

Research Question 3: In what ways do parents/guardians promote self-determination in a select sample of young African American women with disabilities during the transition process?

Data gathered from the Parent Self-Determination Practice Survey (PSDPS) were used to answer this research question. Data were grouped into seven categories based on the different elements of self-determination (see Appendix J). Each protocol from the PSDPS was hand scored by the researcher using a scoring guideline developed by the researcher with permission from the author (D. Zhang, personal communication, February 17, 2011). For each protocol, a total raw score was computed. Data were grouped in to seven categories (daughter's personal independence, daughter's participation in household chores, parent listening to and talking about their daughter's interests for the future, parent allowing their daughter opportunities to make important life impact decisions, parent teaching goal setting, assisting their daughter in recognition of weaknesses, parent intent to control their daughter's future career and living arrangements, and parent dealing with unexpected or undesired behaviors) to reflect the parents/guardians opportunity to engage their daughter in activities of self-determination (e.g., household chores, decision making, and interacting with sales people at restaurants

and stores). Graphs of the raw scores were constructed to aid in the interpretation of data and develop a descriptive profile of self-determination reported for the daughter's of the parents/guardians. Only items 1, 2, 9, 13-14, 16-26, and 28-37 were used for data analysis to answer this research question. Descriptive data were used to analyze the results of the PSDPS to include the minimum and maximum scores and frequencies. The Statistical Analysis Software (SAS) system was used to analyze the data from the PSDPS.

Research Question 4: From the perspective of parents/guardians, what aspects of self-determination are evident in their daughter's development during the transition process? What strengths or challenges do they report?

Data gathered from the Self-Determination Interview Protocol (Parent/Guardian Version) were used to answer this research question. Each interview was audiotaped and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. After transcribing and summarizing the interviews, the researcher and a graduate student met to review the data and began the process of assigning codes. Using the discrete ideas as the unit of analysis, each section of the data was labeled and a definition was given to each code. After the data were coded and sorted into specific categories (*open coding*), the researcher and the graduate student reviewed the codes again and grouped some related codes together into larger categories (*axial coding*) (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The codes were modified as necessary throughout the study (see to Appendix K) for the final list of codes and code definitions). The researcher used a highlighter to color code each unit of data. Next, similar codes were collapsed or grouped and themes generated from the coded data.

Data Presentation

Table 1 provides a pictorial description of how the research questions are aligned with the respective statistical procedures and variables.

Table 1. Description of Research Questions and Statistical Procedures for Answering Each Question.

Research Question	Source/Statistical Procedure
1. What is the level of self-determination in a select sample of young African American women with disabilities as they progress through the transition process?	<p>The Arc's Self-Determination Scale and Transition Individualized Education Plan goals</p> <p>Total raw scores for the full scale and four domains were converted to percentile scores using appropriate distributions derived from the norm sample</p> <p>Graphs of participant percentile scores across domains were constructed to develop a descriptive profile of level of self-participation</p> <p>Qualitative analysis of goals</p>
2. What are the experiences of a select sample of young African American women with disabilities as described by them during the transition process? How and to what extent is self-determination evident in the actions and decisions of these young women?	<p>Semi-structured interviews with female students</p> <p>The Arc's Self-Determination Scale Qualitative analysis of participants' responses and alignment with The Arc's Self-Determination Scale</p>
3. In what ways do parents/guardians promote self-determination in a select sample of young African American women with disabilities during the transition process?	<p>Parent Self-Determination Practice Survey (Items 1-2, 9, 13-14, 16-26, and 28-37)</p> <p>Descriptive statistics (calculation of frequencies)</p>
4. From the perspective of parents/guardians, what aspects of self-determination are evident in their daughter's development during the transition process? What strengths or challenges do they report?	<p>Semi-structured interviews with parents/guardians</p> <p>Qualitative analysis of parents/guardian responses to the Parent/Guardian Interview Protocol?</p>

After completing the data analysis, the researcher presented the results of the research findings for each student participant by in a case-by-case format. Using this case-by-case format allowed the researcher to present the quantitative and qualitative research results for each student based on the students' and parents or guardians' responses to the research questions outlined in the study.

In summary, an exploratory approach was used to describe the experiences of former students and their parent or guardian during the transition process. Using this method allowed the researcher to collect data in various formats including response scales, surveys, interviews, and educational artifacts. Also, the researcher adhered to the characteristics of exploratory methods while employing a mixed method approach. The study was conducted in two phases: quantitative and qualitative. The sample used in this study was purposeful. The researcher met with participants either in their home, work setting, or a local restaurant. The meeting locations were at the request of the participants. Each participant was described in detail. The researcher used the case study reporting mode to report the data. There were no claims made about the transferability of this study's results to other studies.

Permission to conduct this study was obtained from the university, from the school district in the county where the students participated in the transition program, from adult students, and from parents and a guardian of the student participants. Data from audio-taped transcripts of interviews, participant surveys, participants' response to scale items, and educational artifacts were read and coded with respect to the questions proposed in this study. These questions addressed participants' experiences during the transition process and their level of self-determination.

In chapter four, the results of the study are presented in a case-by-case format. Both quantitative and qualitative data were used to describe the experiences of each participant as well as her level of involvement with either the transition program or her participation in self-determination.

Chapter IV

Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the role that self-determination played in the transition process for a select sample of young African American women with disabilities who exited high school with a special diploma and participated in a local transition program. This study incorporated both quantitative and qualitative methods to answer the research questions. The results of the study are presented in this chapter. First, a demographic profile of each of the study participants will be presented followed by a summary of the data analyses used to answer each research question. Participants are referred to by pseudonyms. The chapter will conclude with a researcher self-reflection.

Following are the research questions addressed in this study:

1. What is the level of self-determination of a select sample of young African American women with disabilities as they progress through a transition program?
2. What are the experiences of a select sample of young African American women with disabilities as described by them during the transition process? How and to what extent is self-determination evident in the actions and decisions of these young women?
3. In what ways do parents/guardians promote self-determination in a select sample of young African American women with disabilities during the transition process?
4. From the perspective of parents/guardians, what aspects of self-determination are evident in their daughter's development during the transition process? What strengths or challenges do they report?

Wehmeyer and Kelchner's (1995) conceptualization of the four domains of self-determination was used as an organizing framework around which to address the research questions. As was noted previously, the transition process began in high school and continued later into young adulthood. The four domains of self-determination as defined by Wehmeyer and Kelchner (1995) include autonomy, self-regulation, psychological empowerment, and self-realization. Autonomy is described as a person's behavior in terms of being able to participate in social activities and perform household chores, to interact with salespeople, attend work training sessions or hold employment based on the individual's interest level and independent of outside influences. Self-regulation is described in terms of self-regulating behaviors that are indicative of a person's ability to articulate and make informed decisions, problem solve, and plan for the future. Psychological empowerment is the state of being psychologically empowered to have control over one's decisions and outcomes. An element of being psychologically empowered is when a person is able to tell her friends when she has a good idea or is able to work well with others. Self-realization is the person's ability to acknowledge her strengths and limitations and be able to make informed decisions based on that knowledge.

Demographic Profile of Participant Sample

Five African American young women with a disability and their parent or guardian were participants in this study. Each of the young women was a participant in a transition program at a university in a southeastern state in the United States of America. A summary of selected demographic characteristics of each of these young women including their age, disability category, current status in transition program, family status,

socioeconomic status, perspective toward the transition program, and employment goals is described in this section (See Table 2). These data were provided in each participant’s Transition Individualized Education Plans (TIEP) on record at the university, and through responses to semi-structured interviews, the Parent Self-Determination Practice Survey (PSDPS), and The Arc’s Self-Determination Scale (ASDS).

Table 2
Summary of Demographic Characteristics of Student Participants

Participant	Age	Employment/ Education Goals	VRS	Independent Living Goals	Family Status	SES
Amber	20	Child care, entrepreneur	Yes	To live alone in apartment	Lives with mother	Middle
Dereon	23	Child care, entrepreneur	Yes	To live alone in apartment, have children	Lives with parents	Unknown
Miss Diva	23	Open employment	Yes	To live with mother, get married with children	Lives with mother	Lower Middle
Tina	23	Massage therapist	Yes	To live alone in apartment, get married with children	Lives alone	Lower Middle

Note. Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) is a government-funded agency designed to assist adults with disabilities with employment and career opportunities.

Amber

Amber is a 20-year old African American young woman with a cognitive disability. She entered the transition program shortly after completing high school and will complete the transition program in one year. She does not have any children and currently lives at home with her mother. Amber is the middle child of three children. Her parent’s

socioeconomic status is reported to be at the middle income level (\$50,000-\$80,000).

Amber is outgoing and likes to hang out with her friends while participating in various social outings. She enjoys being in the transition program and has assumed a leadership role in the program. Amber has aspirations of being an entrepreneur.

Dereon

Dereon is a 23-year old African American young woman with a cognitive disability. She was one of the first students to participate in the transition program shortly after completing high school. Dereon remained in the transition program for less than one year. She is a single parent who currently lives at home with her parents. Dereon's parents did not complete the PSDPS or participate in the Semi-Structured Interview (Parent/Guardian Version). Therefore, information regarding Dereon's siblings or socioeconomic status was not available. Dereon spends her time taking care of her son rather than hanging out with her peers. She felt that the transition program did not meet her expectations of being employed and acquiring additional academic skills. Dereon would like to own a daycare in the future.

Miss Diva

Miss Diva is a 23-year old African American young woman with a cognitive disability. She entered the transition program immediately after completing high school and remained in the program for the entire two years. Miss Diva does not have children. She is an only child who lives with her mother. Her mother's socioeconomic status is reported to be at the lower middle income level (\$25,000-\$50,000). Miss Diva enjoyed her time spent in the transition program and misses the friendships she developed. Miss Diva has aspirations of being employed.

Riesha

Riesha is a 23-year old African American young woman with a cognitive disability. She entered the transition program a few months after completing high school. Riesha remained in the program for less than two years. She does not have children and is the youngest of three children. Riesha lives with her mother. Although she currently resides with her mother, it was Riesha's grandmother who participated in the study. Her grandmother's socioeconomic status is reported to be at the lower income level (\$25,000-\$50,000). Riesha enjoys spending time with her friends. She felt that the transition program was a good experience for her and that it was instrumental in getting her a job at a local daycare. Riesha would like to own a daycare in the future.

Tina

Tina is a 23-year old African American young woman with a cognitive disability. She enrolled in the transition program immediately after completing high school and remained in the program for the entire two years. Tina does not have children. She has four brothers and sisters. She lives alone in an apartment not far from her mother. Her mother's socioeconomic status is reported to be at the lower income level (\$25,000-\$50,000). Tina is active in her community and church where she serves as a mentor to young children. Tina was very involved in the transition program from learning new skills to helping with various social activities. She would like to become a massage therapist or a child care provider.

Research Question 1

What is the level of self-determination of a select sample of young African American women with disabilities as they progress through a transition program?

In order to address the first research question, the responses of the five African American females to The Arc's Self-Determination Scale (ASDS) were analyzed. Participants' total raw score on the full scale as well as on the four subscales (domains) of the ASDS were computed and converted to percentiles based on the reported score distributions of the ASDS normative sample (Wehmeyer, 1995). First, participants' scores on the full scale were examined and compared with scores from the normative sample to aid in the interpretation of these scores as a measure of overall self-determination. These data are reported in Table 3 below.

As is shown in Table 3, four of the five young female participants in the study had total raw scores on the ASDS that were higher than the mean score of the normative sample. Based on their percentile scores, these four participants (Amber, Dereon, Miss Diva, and Riesha) reported higher overall levels of self-determination than that reported by a majority of the students in the normative sample for the ASDS. Tina's overall self-determination level was, however, relatively low (percentile = 39) when compared to that of the normative sample.

Table 3
Summary Statistics on Student Participants' Overall Self-Determination Score as Measured by The Arc's Self-Determination Scale

Participant	Total Raw	Percentile ¹
Amber	116	84
Dereon	124	94
Miss Diva	136	99
Riesha	143	99
Tina	94	39
Possible Score Range on Scale	0 – 148	
Norm Sample:		
Mean Score	97.52	
SD	1.943	

Note. ¹Based on Normative Sample Distribution

To gain insight into the relative strengths and weaknesses across the four domains of self-determination (Autonomy, Self-regulation, Psychological Empowerment, and Self-realization) as measured by the ASDS, participants' scores on each of the domains (subscales) were examined and compared to the respective domain scores of the normative sample. Data for each of the participants on the four domains are reported in Table 4 on the next page.

Table 4
Participants' Scores on The Arc's Self-Determination Scale by Domain

	Autonomy		Self-Regulation		Empowerment		Self-Realization	
	Raw Score	¹ Percentile	Raw Score	¹ Percentile	Raw Score	¹ Percentile	Raw Score	¹ Percentile
Amber	79	87	12	74	13	44	12	73
Dereon	81	90	14	85	15	79	14	96
Miss Diva	90	97	17	95	15	79	14	96
Riesha	96	100	18	96	15	79	14	96
Tina	54	28	12	74	16	100	12	73
Score Range:								
Min:	0		0		0		0	
Max:	96		21		16		15	
Normative Group								
Mean	63.35		9.78		13.28		11.11	
<i>SD</i>	9.78		4.95		2.64		2.25	

Note: ¹Based on percentile score distribution in normative sample

A graph of the participants' percentile scores on the domains derived from the normative sample score distribution for the ASDS is shown in Figure 1.

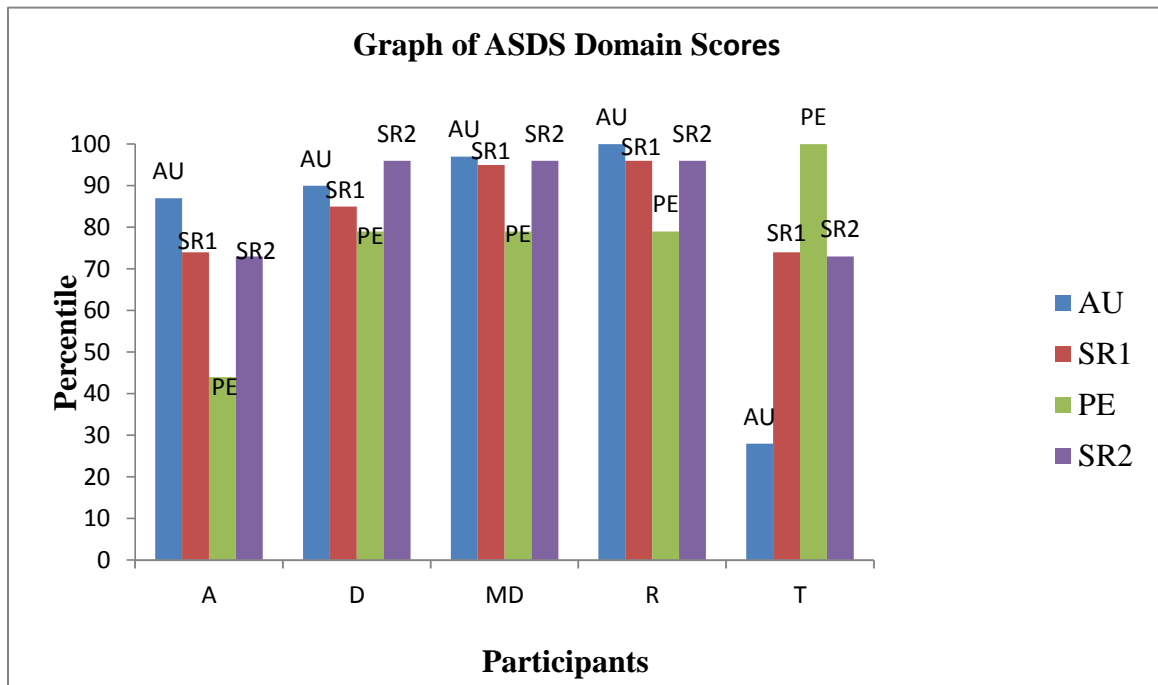


Figure 1: Participants' Percentile Scores on Domains of the Arc's Self-Determination Scale. Note. A = Amber; D = Dereon; MD = Miss Diva; R = Reisha; T = Tina; AU = Autonomy; SR1 = Self-Regulation; PE = Psychological Empowerment; SR2 = Self-Realization

A descriptive profile of each of the five young females' scores yielded as a result of their self-report on the subscales (domains) of the ASDS is presented below.

Amber

Autonomy. Amber received a score of 79 (maximum possible score = 96) on the Autonomy subscale. Her domain score exceeds the mean score for the normative sample on this subscale (Mean = 63.35) and is at the 87th percentile on the normative sample score distribution for that domain (see Table 4). These data indicate that Amber's autonomy score was equal to or higher than 87% of the scores in the normative sample on

this domain, and thus represent a relatively high level of autonomy when compared to that of the normative sample. These data suggest that Amber self-reported a relatively higher level of independence in carrying out routine personal care and family functions and acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests and abilities than a majority of the students in the normative sample.

Self-Regulation. Amber's domain score on the self-regulation subscale was 12 (maximum possible score = 21); it exceeded the mean score for the normative sample (Mean = 9.78). Her score was at the 74th percentile in the normative sample score distribution on this subscale (see Table 4), indicating that her score was equal to or higher than 74% of the scores in the normative sample on this domain. These data suggest that Amber reported a level of self-regulation (e.g., more effective interpersonal cognitive problem-solving, goal setting and task attainment) equal to or higher than a majority of the normative sample.

Psychological Empowerment. Amber received a score of 13 (maximum score possible = 16) on the Psychological Empowerment subscale, which was approximately equal to the mean of the subscale (Mean = 13.28). Her score on this domain was at the 44th percentile in the normative sample score distribution on this subscale, indicating that her score was equal to or higher than only 44% of the scores in the normative sample on this domain; thus 56% of the scores in the normative sample were higher than Amber's score on this domain. These data suggest that Amber self-reported a lower level of psychological empowerment (e.g., belief in her ability, perceptions of control or expectations for success) than a majority in the normative sample. Examination of Figure

1, suggests that relative to the performance of students in the normative sample, Amber self-reported her lowest performance level in the psychological empowerment domain.

Self-Realization. Amber received a score of 12 (maximum possible score = 15) on the Self-Realization subscale, a score just slightly above the mean score for the normative sample (Mean = 11.11) on this subscale. Her score on the domain was at the 73rd percentile in the normative sample distribution for this subscale, indicating that her score was equal to or greater than 73% of all the scores in the normative sample of the ASDS on this domain. These data suggest that Amber reported a level of individual self-knowledge and self-awareness that was equal to or relatively higher than that reported by a majority of the normative sample.

Summary. Amber showed a relatively high overall level of self-determination when compared to that of the normative sample for the ASDS. Based on her self-report, she appeared strongest in the autonomy domain (percentile = 87). This score suggests that Amber had a relatively higher level of independence in performing personal care and family oriented functions, interacting with the environment, participating in recreational and leisure time activities, selecting post-school directions, and demonstrating personal expression than a majority of students in the normative sample. Her lowest percentile score (44) across all four subscales was on the psychological empowerment domain. Thus, across all four subscales Amber self-reported a lower level of psychological empowerment in terms of telling others when she has new or different ideas or opinions, informing others when they have hurt her feelings, and in her ability to make friends in new situations.

Dereon

Autonomy. Dereon received a score of 81 (maximum possible score = 96) on the Autonomy subscale. Her domain score exceeds the mean score for the normative sample on the autonomy domain (Mean = 63.35) and is at the 90th percentile on the normative sample score distribution for that domain (see Table 4). These data indicate that Dereon's autonomy score was equal to or higher than 90% of the scores in the normative sample on this domain, and thus represents a high level of autonomy when compared to students in the normative sample. Thus, Dereon self-reported a high level of independence in carrying out routine personal care and family functions and acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests and abilities when compared to a majority of the normative sample.

Self-Regulation. Dereon's domain score on the self-regulation subscale was 14 (maximum possible score = 21); it exceeded the mean score for the normative sample (Mean = 9.78). Her score was at the 85th percentile in the normative sample score distribution on this subscale (see Table 3), indicating that her score was equal to or higher than 85% of the scores in the normative sample on this domain. These data suggest that Dereon reported a level of self-regulation (e.g., more effective interpersonal cognitive problem-solving, goal setting, and task attainment) equal to or higher than a majority of the normative sample.

Psychological Empowerment. Dereon received a score of 15 (maximum score possible = 16) on the Psychological Empowerment subscale, which exceeded the mean of the subscale (Mean = 13.28). Her score on this domain was at the 79th percentile in the normative sample score distribution on this subscale, indicating that her score was equal

to or higher than 79% of the scores in the normative sample on this domain. These data suggest that Dereon self-reported a relatively higher level of psychological empowerment (e.g., belief in her ability, perceptions of control or expectations for success) than a majority of students in the normative sample.

Self-Realization. Dereon received a score of 14 (maximum possible score = 15) on the Self-Realization subscale, a score that exceeded the mean score for the normative sample (Mean = 11.11) on this subscale. Her score on the domain was at the 96th percentile in the normative sample distribution for this subscale, indicating that her score was equal to or greater than 96% of all the scores in the normative sample of the ASDS on this domain. These data suggest that Dereon reported a very high level of individual self-knowledge and self-awareness when compared to that reported by the majority of students in the normative sample.

Summary. Dereon showed a high overall level of self-determination when compared to the normative sample for the ASDS. Examination of Figure 1, suggests a highly consistent level of performance across the four domains of self-determination relative to the normative sample. Dereon appeared strongest in the self-realization domain (percentile = 96); she reported a very high level of performance in identifying her emotions, showing her feelings, knowing what she does best, liking herself, and being confident in her abilities when compared to a majority of the normative sample. Her lowest percentile score (79) across all four subscales was on the psychological empowerment domain. Thus, although she had a score in this domain that was equal to or higher than a majority of students in the normative sample (her self-report showed her to be strong in making decisions for herself, sharing her ideas and opinions, informing

others when they have hurt her feelings, believing in herself, and working with others when compared to the normative sample), notably in this domain, Dereon had a relatively low score in her ability to make friends in new situations.

Miss Diva

Autonomy. Miss Diva received a score of 90 (maximum possible score = 96) on the Autonomy subscale. Her domain score is greater than the mean score for the normative sample on the autonomy domain (Mean = 63.35) and is at the 97th percentile on the normative sample score distribution for that domain (see Table 4). These data indicate that Miss Diva's autonomy score was equal to or higher than 97% of the scores in the normative sample on this domain, and thus represent a very high level of autonomy when compared to the normative sample. These data suggest that, Miss Diva self-reported a very high level of independence in carrying out routine personal care and family functions and acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests and abilities, relative to the ASDS normative sample.

Self-Regulation. Miss Diva's domain score on the self-regulation subscale was 17 (maximum possible score = 21); it exceeded the mean score for the normative sample (Mean = 9.78). Her score was at the 95th percentile in the normative sample score distribution on this subscale (see Table 4), indicating that her score was equal to or higher than 95% of the scores in the normative sample on this domain. These data suggest that Miss Diva reported a high level of self-regulation (e.g., more effective interpersonal cognitive problem-solving, goal setting and task attainment) relative to a majority of students in the normative sample.

Psychological Empowerment. Miss Diva received a score of 15 (maximum score possible = 16) on the Psychological Empowerment subscale, which was slightly higher than the mean of the subscale (Mean = 13.28). Her score on this domain was at the 79th percentile in the normative sample score distribution on this subscale, indicating that her score was equal to or higher than 79% of the scores in the normative sample on this domain. Examination of Figure 1, suggests that relative to her performance in the other domains of self-determination, Miss Diva self-reported her lowest level of performance in the psychological empowerment domain (e.g., her ability to tell others when she has new or different ideas or opinions).

Self-Realization. Miss Diva received a score of 14 (maximum possible score = 15) on the Self-Realization subscale, which exceeded the mean score for the normative sample (Mean = 11.11) on this subscale. Her score on the domain was at the 96th percentile in the normative sample distribution for this subscale, indicating that her score was equal to or greater than 96% of all the scores in the normative sample of the ASDS on this domain. These data suggest that relative to the normative sample, Miss Diva reported a very high level of individual self-knowledge and self-awareness. More specifically, she is not ashamed of her emotions or feelings and is able to identify what she does best, as well as accepting her limitations.

Summary. Miss Diva showed a high overall level of self-determination when compared to the normative sample for the ASDS. She reported high levels of performance on the autonomy, self-regulation, and self-realization domains relative to the normative sample. Miss Diva's highest score relative to the normative sample was in the autonomy domain. Her score suggests that she had a relatively higher level of

independence in making her meals, making friends, listening to music that she likes, volunteering in the community, making long-range career goals, and choosing how to spend her personal money than a majority of students in the normative sample. Across all four domains, Miss Diva's lowest percentile score (79) was in the psychological empowerment domain. Notably, she self-reported a lower level of performance in this domain in telling others when she has new or different ideas or opinions.

Riesha

Autonomy. Riesha received a score of 96 (maximum possible score = 96) on the Autonomy subscale. Her domain score exceeds the mean score for the normative sample on the autonomy domain (Mean = 63.35) and is at the 100th percentile on the normative sample score distribution for that domain (see Table 3). These data indicate that Riesha's autonomy score was equal to or higher than 100% of the scores in the normative sample on this domain, and thus represents an exceedingly high level of autonomy when compared to that reported by the normative sample. Thus, when compared to the ASDS normative sample, Riesha self-reported a very high level of independence in carrying out routine personal care and family functions and acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests and abilities.

Self-Regulation. Riesha's domain score on the self-regulation subscale was 18 (maximum possible score = 21); it exceeded the mean score for the normative sample (Mean = 9.78). Her score was at the 96th percentile in the normative sample score distribution on this subscale (see Table 4), indicating that her score was equal to or higher than 96% of the scores in the normative sample on this domain. These data suggest that Riesha reported a very high level of self-regulation (e.g., more effective interpersonal

cognitive problem-solving, goal setting and task attainment) when compared to that reported by a majority of students in the normative sample.

Psychological Empowerment. Riesha received a score of 15 (maximum score possible = 16) on the Psychological Empowerment subscale, which exceeded the mean of the subscale (Mean = 13.28). Her score on this domain was at the 79th percentile in the normative sample score distribution on this subscale, indicating that her score was equal to or higher than 79% of the scores in the normative sample on this domain. These data suggest that Riesha self-reported a higher level of psychological empowerment (e.g., belief in her ability, perceptions of control or expectations for success) than a majority in the normative sample.

Self-Realization. Riesha received a score of 14 (maximum possible score = 15) on the Self-Realization subscale, a score that exceeds the mean score for the normative sample (Mean = 11.11) on this subscale. Her score on the domain was at the 96th percentile in the normative sample distribution for this subscale, indicating that her score was equal to or greater than 96% of all the scores in the normative sample of the ASDS on this domain. These data suggest that Riesha reported a high level of individual self-knowledge and self-awareness when compared to a majority of the students in the normative sample.

Summary. Riesha reported a high overall level of self-determination as measured by the ASDS when compared to the normative sample for the ASDS. She self-reported very high performance levels in the domains of autonomy, self-regulation, and self-realization relative to the normative sample. Based on her self-report, Riesha appeared strongest in the autonomy domain, suggesting that she exercised a very high level of independence in

caring for her clothes, keeping appointments and meetings, planning weekend activities, going to restaurants that she likes, working to earn money, and choosing gifts to give to her family when compared to students in the normative sample. Across all four domains, Riesha's lowest percentile score (79) was on the psychological empowerment domain. Notably for this domain, based on her self-report, she does not believe that trying hard in school will benefit her in getting a good job.

Tina

Autonomy. Tina received a score of 54 (maximum possible score = 96) on the Autonomy subscale. Her domain score was lower than the mean score for the normative sample on the autonomy domain (Mean = 63.35) and is at the 28th percentile on the normative sample score distribution for that domain (see Table 4). These data indicate that Tina's self-reported autonomy score was equal to or higher than only 28% of the scores in the normative sample on this domain; thus 72% of the scores in the normative sample were higher than Tina's score in this domain. These data suggest that when compared to the normative sample, Tina self-reported a relatively low level of independence in carrying out routine personal care and family functions and acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests and abilities. Examination of Figure 1, suggests that relative to her performance in the other domains of self-determination, Tina's lowest level of performance was in this domain.

Self-Regulation. Tina's domain score on the self-regulation subscale was 12 (maximum possible score = 21); it exceeded the mean score for the normative sample (Mean = 9.78). Her score was at the 74th percentile in the normative sample score distribution on this subscale (see Table 4), indicating that her score was equal to or higher

than 74% of the scores in the normative sample on this domain. These data suggest that Tina reported a level of self-regulation (e.g., more effective interpersonal cognitive problem-solving, goal setting and task attainment) equal to or higher than that reported by a fair majority of the normative sample.

Psychological Empowerment. Tina received a score of 16, the highest score possible on the Psychological Empowerment subscale. Her score on this domain was at the 100th percentile in the normative sample score distribution on this subscale, indicating that her score was equal to or higher than all scores in the normative sample on this domain. Thus, relative to the normative sample, Tina self-reported an exceedingly high level of psychological empowerment (e.g., belief in her ability, perceptions of control or expectations for success).

Self-Realization. Tina received a score of 12 (maximum possible score = 15) on the Self-Realization subscale, a score just slightly higher than the mean score for the normative sample (Mean = 11.11) on this subscale. Her score on the domain was at the 73rd percentile in the normative sample distribution for this subscale, indicating that her score was equal to or greater than 73% of all the scores in the normative sample of the ASDS on this domain. These data suggest that Tina reported a level of individual self-knowledge and self-awareness that was equal to or higher than that reported by a fair majority of students in the normative sample.

Summary. Tina showed a relatively low overall level of self-determination when compared to the normative sample for the ASDS. However, her score in one domain, psychological empowerment, was very high (percentile = 100), suggesting that relative to the normative sample, she perceives herself as having a strong belief in her ability and

her perceptions of control or expectations for success. Her low score on the autonomy subscale (percentile = 28) suggests that relative to the normative sample, she exercised a low level of independence in carrying out routine personal care and family functions or in acting on the basis of her preferences, beliefs, interests and abilities. More specifically, when compared to the majority of students in the normative sample, Tina self-reported lower levels of autonomous behaviors in doing simple first aid or medical care for herself, using the post office, dealing with salespeople at stores and restaurants, and volunteering in things in which she is interested. However, Tina scored high in having autonomous behaviors that reflect her selection of participating in school and free time activities, creating long range career plans, searching for employment, participating in job training such as CARE, and working for pay.

Overall Findings

Overall, three of the five young African American female participants in this study (Dereon, Miss Diva and Reisha) showed high overall levels of self-determination as measured by The Arc's Self-Determination Scale when compared to the normative sample for the ASDS. Two of these participants (Miss Diva and Reisha) had overall self-determination scores (i.e., total scores on the full Arc's Self-Determination Scale) that were equal to or greater than 99% of the scores in the ASDS normative sample; Dereon had an overall self-determination score that was equal to or greater than 94% of the scores in the normative sample.

Examination of participants' scores on the four subscales (domains) measured by the ASDS, showed particular strengths and weaknesses when compared to the normative sample across the four domains. As is shown in Figure 2, on two domains, self-regulation

and self-realization, the five participant young women had relatively higher scores than a majority of the students in the normative ASDS sample. Self-regulation measures the participants' ability to examine their environment and their range of responses for coping with those environments to make decisions about how to act, evaluate the desirability of the outcomes of their action, and to revise their plans (e.g., self-monitoring, self-instruction, goal setting, problem-solving, and observational learning). Self-realization measures the participants' ability to use a comprehensive and reasonably accurate knowledge of themselves and use their strengths and limitations to act in such a manner as to benefit from this knowledge of themselves (e.g., not being ashamed of one's emotions, knowing what one does best, liking one's self, and being confident in one's abilities). The domain in which there appeared to be the greatest variability among the five study participants was that of psychological empowerment which measures multiple dimensions of perceived control, including cognitive (e.g., personal efficacy, or how well the participant believes that she can do something), personality (e.g., locus of control, or the participant's ability to have control over aspects of her life that are important to her), and motivational domains (e.g., the participant's ability to apply the necessary skills that will reach a desired outcome). The variability in the psychological empowerment domain was evident in participants' responses to four items: a) telling others when one has new or different ideas; b) telling people when they have hurt one's feelings; c) believing that trying hard at school will help one get a good job; and d) being able to make friends in new situations.

On the autonomy domain which measures the participants' ability to act according to their own preferences, interests, and/or abilities and independently free from undue

external influence or interference (e.g., the ability to select and participate in taking care of one's clothes, making age-appropriate friends, planning weekend activities, volunteering in community-based activities, searching for employment, and choosing a personal hairstyle), four of the participants (Amber, Dereon, Miss Diva and Riesha), had high scores when compared to the normative sample. However, Tina had a very low score on this domain relative to the normative sample, suggesting that she reported relatively low levels of independence in terms of personal care, family functions, recreational activities, and social and vocational activities, when compared to students in the ASDS normative sample. More specifically, although on the ASDS, Tina scored high on post-school directions in terms of participating in school and free time activities based on her career interests, making long-range career plans, working to earn money, participating in career or job training, and looking into job interests by visiting work sites or talking to people in that job, she self-reported lower scores in

- routine personal care and family oriented functions (e.g., caring for her own clothes, doing simple first aid or medical care for herself, keeping good personal care and grooming),
- interaction with the environment (e.g., using the post office, keeping appointments and meetings, and dealing with salespeople at stores and restaurants),
- recreational and leisure time (e.g., planning weekend activities that she likes to do, being involved in school-related activities, and choosing activities that she and her friends want to do),

- community involvement and interaction (e.g., volunteering in things in which she is interested, going to restaurants that she likes, and going to movies, concerts, and dances), and
- personal expression (e.g., decorating her room and choosing how to spend her personal money).

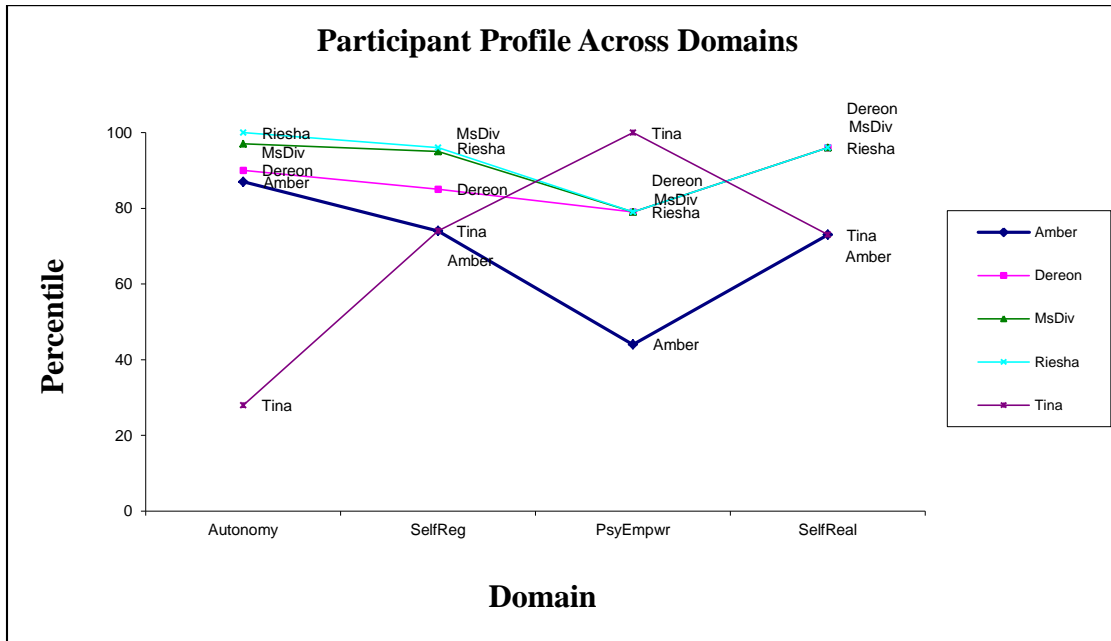


Figure 2: Participant Profile on Domains of The Arc’s Self-Determination Scale

Research Question 2

What are the experiences of a select sample of young African American women with disabilities as described by them during the transition process? How and to what extent is self-determination evident in the actions and decisions of these young women?

The second research question involved describing the experiences of young African American women with disabilities during the transition process. Data were gathered from face-to-face individual interviews that were conducted by the researcher with each of the five young women.

Experiences of Young African American Women with Disabilities during the Transition Process

Individual face-to-face interviews were conducted with the sample of young African American women with disabilities to obtain in-depth self-reports of their experiences during the transition process. As was noted previously, the transition process began in high school and continued later into young adulthood.

Data were analyzed as was described earlier in Chapter 3. The researcher and an independent coder, coded each transcript and collapsed similar codes to yield themes. Five major themes emerged from these interviews. These themes were labeled: goals, social activities, challenges, strengths, and job training/employment. Using the iterative process, both the researcher and independent coder found that three of the emergent themes could be separated into subthemes: goals had two subthemes-career goals and personal goals; challenges had two subthemes - personal challenges and employment challenges; and strengths had two subthemes -personal qualities and skills. The iterative process is a process for arriving at a decision by repeating rounds of analysis (Caracelli & Greene, 1997).

The results of the student interviews will be discussed in terms of the themes and subthemes.

Goals

Each interviewee spoke about her goals and how the transition program assisted in shaping those goals. Below is a description of what each interviewee reported as her goals and how she planned on achieving these goals. All of the young women except Tina, reported that they would like to work in a child care setting. Tina stated that she has aspirations of becoming a massage therapist.

Amber

Career Goals. Amber has set a career goal to become a child care provider. She would like to own a day care center someday. After trying cosmetology and working in a restaurant, Amber has decided that working with small children is better for her. She enjoys working with small children in various group settings such as a day care center or an elementary school. She described what it is like to work with two and three year olds in a day care setting:

They don't really talk too much and they know what they want. They tell you right off and they tell you how it is. They don't really give you a lot of lip. They're pretty easy going for the most part aside from their hyperness.

Currently, Amber is receiving on-the-job-training at a local elementary school. She has been there for about one month. She thinks this is a "good experience" because it allows her to experience various aspects of teaching children and running an office. "I definitely want to work with kids; possibly own my own daycare. That will be a big goal." To achieve her career goals Amber stated that she will work "really hard" with her Vocational Rehabilitation case manager and her mother. She plans to accomplish the goal by the time she turns the age of 25 years.

Personal Goals. Amber reported several personal goals. The first of the personal goals that she described is to have surgery to correct her voice. Amber has a speech impediment that sometimes makes it difficult for others to understand her. She described another personal goal to have surgery on her thumb to correct for a thumb-sucking habit. “I have one habit that I don’t really want to say but you can kind of tell. My other goal, sucking my thumb is my habit, so I can get my surgery [on my] thumb.” Driving is another personal goal for Amber. She would like to obtain her driver’s license in the future. In addition, Amber would like to own a home and learn how to pay her own bills and individual income taxes. She wants to “make sure the water bill comes on right that month.” Amber is also adamant about living independently when she completes the transition program. Her mother is supportive of this decision.

In an effort to live on her own, Amber would like to have an independent living coach to assist her with living arrangements, starting a family, personal hygiene, and managing her finances. According to Amber, she attended an orientation for students with disabilities to learn about the services provided by an independent living coach after high school.

Summary. In articulating her career goals, Amber demonstrated autonomous behavior. She participated in an on-the-job training program that she selected based on her own preferences and interests. Her on-the-job training experience involved working at a restaurant and an elementary school. Also, Amber expressed an interest in wanting to live on her own as an element of autonomous behavior. Amber demonstrated an element of self-regulation in stating her personal goals which was evident when she expressed a desire to live independently. She was also able to identify the areas in her life that she

would like to improve. For example, Amber would like to have corrective surgery to improve her speech and refrain from sucking her thumb. Amber did not specifically outline a plan of action to achieve her personal goals. Based on her interview responses there was some evidence of self-regulation; however the behavioral strategies used in setting those goals were not present, as she did not have a plan of action to achieve her personal goals. According to Wehmeyer (1995), the ability to use both cognitive and behavioral strategies in setting goals is a key component of self-regulation. Self-regulation was not consistent between her career goals and personal goals.

Dereon

Dereon has established a career goal for herself to become an entrepreneur by owning a daycare for young children. She has a fondness for working with children. When asked why she liked working with infants, Dereon responded by saying, “They cuddly. They’re sweet and they’re easy to take care of.” She prefers to work with infants and toddlers rather than school-aged children.

Career Goals. In order to achieve her career goal, Dereon realizes that she must obtain certain credentials to own a business. The transition program only helped Dereon slightly in deciphering the career path she must take to own her business. “. . .everything I learned might be from my mom or my job coach. . .” Dereon asserted that she was well-versed in using computer applications such as the internet and the various Microsoft Office programs prior to attending the transition program. While attending the transition program, Dereon did establish career goals for herself. “My goal was to own my own day care or do nursing.” She knows that it will require her to have money, established credit, attend a postsecondary school, and obtain a child care license.

Summary. Dereon has demonstrated self-regulated behaviors in identifying a career goal of becoming an entrepreneur in child care. She indicated that the transition program was partly responsible in assisting her with her career path and that she has acquired computer application skills. Dereon's ability to identify a career goal is partly consistent with the elements of self-regulation. However, in order to fully demonstrate self-regulating behaviors, Dereon would need to identify a plan for becoming an entrepreneur. She did not do this in her interview nor did she discuss her personal goals. The ability to use both cognitive and behavioral strategies in setting goals is a key element of self-regulation.

Miss Diva

Miss Diva has aspirations of finding employment, getting married, and starting her own family. With the help of her mother and other family members she is hopeful that she will find employment soon. The transition program was instrumental in providing her with on-the-job training experience. In response to needing a full time job as compared to a part time job, Miss Diva stated, "I need more money than just \$300."

Career Goals. Miss Diva reported that her primary career goal was to obtain full time employment. She had this to say,

But, right now at this point in time I really need a job because you know I really need a full time job 'cause (sic) part time jobs doesn't help for me. Work three days out the week is not enough money.

Although Miss Diva participates in the Vocational Rehabilitation program, she reports that she does not receive the level of assistance required to gain full time employment. Miss Diva is assigned a job coach who is responsible for taking her to

various job sites to complete job applications. However, she indicates that it is difficult to locate her job coach, “Sometimes I call them (sic) but they don’t give me no answer. Sometimes they are busy. So, I have to just wait to they get back to me.”

Personal Goals. Miss Diva spoke of several personal goals. One of her goals is to save money for specific purchases such as a laptop computer. Another goal of hers is to learn how to drive. When asked if she had her driver’s permit, Miss Diva responded, “Not yet but I’m willing to ‘cause I really want to know how to drive.” She realizes that there are basic steps prior to purchasing a car. According to Miss Diva, her first step in purchasing a vehicle is to “learn how to drive.” The second step is to “go take the test and study.” Her mother is willing to help with teaching her to drive.

Miss Diva would like to marry and live with family. Miss Diva indicated that when she decides to marry she realizes that there are additional responsibilities for taking care of children. “If they got football, basketball games, take them to their games and be his wife.”

In terms of being married, Miss Diva reported that she will clearly communicate to her husband that she is family-oriented and the importance of family to her. Therefore, she will remain at her mother’s house when she decides to get married. Miss Diva stated that her future husband will be accepting of her need to remain at her mother’s house. She explained what she meant by living at her mother’s house with her husband,

If I got married, I’m still ‘gon (sic) take care of momma. I’m not ‘gon (sic) move out this house. This house belongs to me. So, I’m staying here. If my husband don’t like it, he can leave. This ‘gon (sic) be my house and whoever I invite to my house, they ‘gon (sic) have to deal with the environment.

Summary. Miss Diva has demonstrated self-regulated behaviors in identifying a career goal of obtaining full time employment. She stated that she will visit job sites and complete job applications as a plan of action to reach her career goal. She is reliant upon a job coach to assist her with her goal which is consistent with the domain of self-regulation because Miss Diva has evaluated her current situation and has shown an interest in achieving her career goal. These types of behaviors provide evidence of self-regulated behaviors. Also, Miss Diva has identified personal goals of establishing a family and remaining at her mother's house. She is very clear in articulating her career and personal goals. For example, a career goal for Miss Diva is to obtain full time employment. A personal goal for her is to save money for a laptop computer.

Riesha

Prior to graduating from high school, Riesha made plans to pursue a career in child care. She loves working with children. Being in the transition program was instrumental in helping her gain exposure in working in an actual child care setting. "It benefited me real good because when I was in high school I really wanted to do child care."

Career goals. Riesha was able to trace her career goals back to the time when she was in middle school. According to Riesha, she has always had a career goal. It started with being an artist. Currently, her goal is to pursue a career in child care. Riesha described her path to reach her career goal in child care,

When I was in middle school at one point in time I was like, "I want to be an artist. I want to be an artist." But, once I got to high school I had wanted to take commercial arts and when I went to take it, the classes were too full. So, I went ahead and took culinary arts. And when I was in high school, I took that all three years. I mean all

four years. And once I graduated, I went to CARE. Then, I start working at my cousin's daycare.

Once she began to volunteer at her cousin's daycare, she realized that she was capable of being a child care provider. "I was like, I think I would like to do this with little kids." Volunteering her time at her cousin's daycare was not her only exposure to working with small children. "I have two nephews. So, I'm always with kids. That's what kinda made me want to work with kids."

While attending the transition program, Riesha was provided the opportunity to visit a local daycare center that partnered with the transition program. "Well, I wanted to do child care because I never actually physically worked in a daycare. I mean I worked at a daycare before but not like all day and every day." Drawing further on her background experience within a daycare setting, this is what Riesha had to say,

And when I did know it [working at a daycare], it was just like with my auntie or something like that. So, when I came here [current job at daycare], I was like I'm gonna love it! So, like me I really like kids. Kids are a wonderful thing to me. So, by me coming here it was well, I can do this. I can do that. I was like I can get my CDA (Child Development Associate). I can open my own daycare.

After leaving the transition program, Riesha was still convinced that pursuing a career in child care was a good decision. She planned to work at a daycare. "Either working at a daycare or trying to get my CDA so I can own one." As part of her preparation to obtain her Child Development Associate, Riesha studies on a regular basis. "I'm getting ready to work on the computer. It's really like common things like how do you change a child. Do you supposed to sanitize a table before you change a child? Stuff

like that.” Riesha studies for the CDA exam every other day. “Once you get really moving at your own pace because it’s on the computer. But, they give you a deadline of when it needs to be done. They give you a deadline.” The format for the exam consists of working through training modules.

Riesha tries her best to complete the lessons. Upon completion of the modules, she will receive a certificate of completion. In terms of employment, the CDA license will allow her to be a teacher at the daycare rather than a teaching assistant and increase her hourly pay. “If you are a lead teacher, you get a different pay. I think it’s like \$4.00 [per hour] more than what you make.” Riesha believes that the pay increase will be a positive incentive for her. “It’ll be good. I mean I would enjoy it, of course. Getting more money is the thing. I mean I’ll be happy if I got more pay.”

Summary. Riesha’s responses indicate a high level of autonomy and self-regulation by taking advantage of career and vocational training opportunities and setting a career goal. As a young adult, her response to pursuing a career in child care demonstrates a sense of being psychologically empowered to make that decision by possessing the requisite skills to achieve her goal. At this point, Riesha’s desire to pursue a career in child care, having a belief that she made a good decision to pursue a career in child care, obtaining the skills required for the position, and choosing to apply those skills is commensurate with characteristics of being psychologically empowered.

Tina

Tina has a career goal of becoming a massage therapist. According to Tina, people have tried to dissuade her from pursuing this career goal. Tina has personal goals that include relocating to another state and starting a family.

Career Goals. Tina was not readily forthcoming with her responses to career goals. Tina shared her childhood goal of being a massage therapist. She stated, “When I was little I always wanted to be a massage therapist.”

Personal Goals. When asked about other goals, Tina described the type of lifestyle that she would like to have in a few years. She has a brother, nieces, nephews, and a great niece who live in Maryland. She would like to relocate to Maryland. Tina has not investigated the cost of living for the area in which she would like to reside. Upon further probing from the researcher about the differences in the cost of living in Maryland and her current state, Tina indicated that she would investigate what it costs to live in Maryland, the price of food, and the price of fuel. Tina stated that she would like to be married and have one child of her own. Tina would like to pursue her interest in traveling to the Bahamas by “getting on a cruise.”

Summary. Tina has demonstrated some basic elements of self-regulating behavior in stating her career goal of becoming a massage therapist and her personal goals of relocating to Maryland, starting a family, and traveling to the Bahamas. However, in order to be fully self-regulated in articulating her career and personal goals, Tina would need to indicate the steps involved in becoming a massage therapist, relocating to Maryland, and starting a family. She did not provide details about how she would obtain her career goal in massage therapy, nor did she provide much detail about how she would accomplish her personal goals of relocating to Maryland, starting a family, and traveling to the Bahamas.

Social Activities

Each student participant was engaged in some type of social activity. A description of how each young woman experienced social activities either in high school, during the transition program, or after participating in the transition program is provided in this section.

Amber

During the interview, Amber had a smile on her face and was eager to share her experiences about being in the transition program. She admitted that there are times when she is shy and reluctant to participate in activities. However, being in the transition program is allowing her to explore who she is as an individual.

Amber enjoyed high school and had mostly positive experiences while attending high school. She participated in several social activities such as attending church, hanging out with her friends, and serving as the Best Buddies director. Best Buddies is a nonprofit organization that links nondisabled persons with persons who are intellectually and developmentally disabled. The organization is designed to provide social activities for persons who are intellectually and developmentally disabled. Amber's role as the Best Buddies director involves contacting parents about events and event locations. Amber described her experience with her friends,

I hang out with my friends on weekends. We do our own activities 'cause (sic) they have their own cars . . . I am a people person. I can make friends easily. I'm very passionate towards others. I'm the type of person who is pretty easy-going . . .

Amber has learned to make friends within her peer circle and among the college students on campus. The various social activities in which she engages help her to be more outgoing. Amber is learning new aspects of her life by hanging out with her friends.

Summary. Amber's responses indicate a level of self-realizing behavior in identifying her personal limitations. For example, she is aware when she is shy and reluctant to participate in activities as an area to improve. Amber's responses also reflected some level of autonomous behavior in her ability to participate in the Best Buddies program, spending time with her friends on the weekends, and engaging in social events with her friends. Thus in sum, Amber's interview responses reflect with the elements of both self-realization and autonomy.

Dereon

Dereon was happy to complete high school and celebrated with her family. Dereon's family indulged her in a celebratory dinner. She attended various social events such as her high school prom and home coming festivities. Dereon was active in a cultural club while she was still enrolled in high school. She enjoyed the different projects and group gatherings while being a member of the club. "We did like projects; different projects together. . . like each of us had our own group. . . we'll do one project together as a group and then we'll present it as a group."

Dereon spends her free time attending church and singing in the choir. She said that the church choir went on field trips like going to the movies. While participating in the transition program, Dereon was able to go to the mall and shop with her classmates.

Summary. Dereon has demonstrated autonomous behavior by indicating her active involvement at her high school prom, homecoming, and the cultural club while in high

school. She spends her free time attending church, singing in the church choir, going to the movies, and shopping at the mall. All of these behaviors correspond with the characteristics of autonomy indicating that Dereon is able to act according to her own preferences and interests and independently from external influences.

Miss Diva

Miss Diva felt excited to graduate from high school. “I was really glad to get out of there.” While attending school, Miss Diva participated in various social activities. She described herself as a sociable person who is friendly and outgoing. In fact, making friends is one of her strongest qualities. According to Miss Diva, she is not the type of person who sits at home and waits for adventure and excitement to come to her. She seizes opportunities and enjoys herself in the process.

While in high school Miss Diva had some positive experiences while “meeting new people; being around the environment of the school; participating in stuff.” She participated in social activities such as pep rallies, basketball games, and football games.

Summary. Miss Diva has demonstrated a relatively high degree of autonomous behavior by indicating that she has participated in a variety of social activities in high school (e.g., pep rallies and basketball games) and making friends. Miss Diva’s behaviors indicate that she is able to interact with her environment, participate in recreational and leisure activities, and involve herself in the community which is commensurate with being autonomous.

Riesha

Riesha enjoys spending time with family and friends on a regular basis. She engages in social activities like anyone else. “I go to the movies. I go to the mall. I don’t know. I

do what a young adult do.” Riesha is capable of selecting her social activities. However, there are times when she will plan activities with her friends. According to Riesha, she plans social events “all of the time.” There are times when she is not available.

Not every day ‘cause (sic) I be working. But, when I do have free time like on the weekends sometimes I’ll go to the movies and hang out with my friends and just have a good time.

Summary. Riesha’s responses indicate a level of autonomy by spending time with family and friends and participating in various social activities. However, Riesha did not specify the type of social activities in which she engages with her friends. She did demonstrate the ability to act according to her own preferences and interests by attending the movies, going to the mall, and planning activities. These behaviors are indicative of being autonomous. Also, her responses indicate some degree of psychological empowerment in her ability to decide when she wants to go to the movies or the mall with her friends.

Tina

Tina is a member of her youth church choir. She sings in the choir on a regular basis. Also, Tina attends various social functions with the church choir. While attending the transition program Tina participated and assisted with various social activities such as the annual homecoming parade, Open House, concerts, Best Buddies, and the transition program commencement ceremony. “We did the homecoming parade for the [team’s name omitted] football team. Then, they had the homecoming parade.” Tina’s involvement with the homecoming parade included her collaborating with other peers to design shirts. Tina and her peers marched in the homecoming parade. One of the things

Tina liked about the parade was making shirts. “We had to make shirts and stuff like that. It said, “Go [name of team omitted].” According to Tina, the parade lasted about an hour. During the transition program’s Open House, Tina was given the task of creating an invitation for key stakeholders such as parents and teachers. Tina took advantage of the concerts that were performed at the campus where the transition program is located.

Another social activity in which Tina engaged was the Best Buddies program. She described the program, “Like when people with disabilities, they take you different places if you have a lot of interests. We go out to eat or we go to the mall.” Tina liked “having fun” and going to the mall with her Best Buddy. She said that her Best Buddy was someone she could talk to. Tina and her Best Buddy talked about the Best Buddies club and going to a local restaurant for lunch. Another fun activity that Tina experienced with her Best Buddy was going to the mall to the Build-A-Bear store. The final social activity that Tina could recall was attending the commencement ceremony when she completed the transition program requirements. Tina recalled that the ceremony was held at a local restaurant where the prices were “expensive.”

Summary. Tina’s responses indicate some level of autonomous behavior in her ability to articulate the multiple types of social activities that she participated in such as the annual homecoming parade, Open House, and Best Buddies. Tina provided details of her level of involvement with homecoming, Open House, and the Best Buddies program. Because Tina demonstrated her ability to select and participate in these social activities based on her own preferences, she has demonstrated autonomous behavior in selecting social activities.

Challenges

Each student experienced challenges in some form during the transition process. This particular theme is divided into sub themes to include personal challenges and employment challenges.

Amber

Like many of her adult counterparts with disabilities, Amber has faced several challenges. Those challenges have shaped her perspective of the young woman she is today. According to Amber, personal challenges are not unusual. It is the challenges that come with employment related skills and tasks that are new to her.

Personal Challenges. Amber has encountered many personal challenges. In high school she reported that the class work in general education classes was “difficult” when compared to the assignments she did in her Exceptional Student Education (ESE) classes. Although Amber’s teachers in the general education classes tried to help her, she felt more comfortable in the ESE classes. This is what Amber had to say about the personal challenges she faced in high school,

Ninth thru eleventh grades I was in regular-going to regular classes. Twelfth grade year I was back in ESE. It was difficult, hard. Kids were not the same as ESE kids.

The work was a little more difficult. You don’t get like one-on-one help. You have to try to figure it out on your own. That was really difficult.

Amber wanted to succeed, but experienced much difficulty with mathematics. She said that “anything with numbers, times, and counting” was hard because she did not learn those concepts in middle school. “Academically math was hard. Everything else was easy.” Her math class consisted of fifth grade worksheets with money and time

tables. Also, Amber believes that there were other things she could have learned when she attended high school. “There were some things that I wish I could have learned more like how to get along [with others].” Another challenge that Amber is trying to overcome is being able to communicate effectively with the campus bus drivers. She described a recent event while riding the campus shuttle service:

“ . . . unless they’re [Amber is referring to college students] on the [name of shuttle service omitted] and don’t want to take the time to listen. . . It makes me feel like I’m in my middle school days, back to that. Very hard.”

Amber tries her best to communicate with the campus bus drivers. She recalled a time when she became frustrated,

Well, I have to go to jobs. I have to go to different students’ jobs and take photos of them for our project we have to do. I’m not really that familiar with the campus still. I asked him if the “D” bus goes to the [name of location omitted]. He basically act like he didn’t understand what I was saying. And I think “D” bus do go to [name of location omitted]. But, I wasn’t quite sure. Then I asked a second. That’s when I got mixed up and got kind of frustrated. I asked a second bus. I think “E” if it goes down to the [name of location omitted]. They couldn’t understand me either. So, I just got mad and got on the “C” bus and went back to class.

Back in middle school Amber recalled how she was bullied and made fun of from the sixth through to the ninth grade. When asked how she handled the challenges of being bullied, she replied, “Not very well. I think I could have handled it differently, but I was young and naïve. So, I handled it the best way I could. I started crying and telling my mom.” Amber would like to advise younger students to tell someone immediately if they

are the victims of bullying. “Don’t let it hang on and dwell on it. Just tell somebody even if you are scared of a person or what they might do. Tell an adult nearby, someone you can trust, someone.”

Another personal challenge for Amber is when relatives try to make decisions for her while she is an adult. “They treat me like a baby.” It makes Amber angry when she is treated like a child. She responds to her siblings and relatives, “I tell them that I am 20 years old. They treat me like I’m 12.” Amber believes that she is treated younger than she really is because she has a disability. “Because I have disabilities and they still try to talk to me like I’m little.” Even her younger brother treats her in that manner.

Employment Challenges. Amber was eager to attend the transition program and receive on-the-job-training. One of the challenges she faced was calculating math. Counting money and calculating math problems has always been a challenge for Amber. Computing income taxes and managing her bills has been a challenge for Amber as well. In the future she would like to own a home. “So if I want to do that I have to learn how to carry my own bills and taxes and make sure the water bill comes on right that month.” Another employment challenge for Amber is speaking Spanish. She volunteers her services at a local nursing home. Amber enjoys working with the elderly. Amber says, “I like to talk to people.” However, talking to people at the nursing home has been an obstacle for Amber whenever she interacts with Spanish speaking clients. “I’m not good at speaking Spanish. That’s the only complicated thing at the nursing home.”

Summary. Amber has shown self-regulating behaviors in her ability to self-evaluate her personal challenges of being bullied in high school, challenges in math and calculating personal income taxes, challenges in verbal communication and speaking

Spanish, and decision making. She has also demonstrated self-regulating behaviors in establishing a plan to cope in her environment by asking for assistance. Amber's response indicates that she possesses characteristics of psychological empowerment by demonstrating that she has some control over her circumstances. For example, Amber indicated that she would communicate to her relatives that she is able to make decisions for herself.

Dereon

Unlike many of her adult peers with disabilities, Dereon does not report having significant challenges. On the contrary, she reports that she is quite talented in taking care of herself, making good decisions, and following up on her goals. Dereon is determined to make a better life for herself in achieving her dreams.

Personal Challenges. Two personal challenges that Dereon reported were interior decorating and obtaining her driver's license. Dereon watches her mother as she decorates their home with curtains and home décor. "Like if I have an apartment I'll ask my mom or somebody to help me decorate." Putting up wallpaper is one of her interior decorating challenges. "The wallpaper will be on me. It won't be on the wall."

The second personal challenge that Dereon has experienced is receiving her driver's license. She already has a driver's permit. "I took driver's ed in high school. To make a long story short, I didn't complete the course. So, I have my permit so I can take the driver's test anytime I want."

Employment Challenges. Lately, Dereon has experienced some challenges in computing algebraic expressions and securing full-time employment and. Even with the assistance of her job coach through the Vocational Rehabilitation Services, she is unable

to locate full-time employment. “Well, let me tell you about her. It’s a long story. She’ll come and get me. Then, she’ll reschedule for a whole ‘nother (sic) month. And it would be just like a month to month basis. And after that I didn’t see her no more.”

Dereon was hopeful that her job coach would provide her assistance in locating full-time employment. However, to her dismay her job coach was unsuccessful. “Then, every time I call her she’ll be like I get to get your file back together and all that other crap.” Dereon said that it made her feel “angry” whenever her job coach did not pick her up and take her on job searchers. Dereon described how she felt,

It makes me angry. Why would you tell me one thing then do another thing if you’re not going to be able to do my cases? Well, just let me know and contact my case manager and have her recommend another job coach.

Dereon has been unemployed for a year. She worked as a home health aide for a short time. Dereon discontinued working as a home health aide because the job only required her to work on weekends. Dereon is interested in pursuing the health care field. “...I went to [location omitted] to take like the TAPE test for patient care. I took the TAPE test, but I never went back for my test results to see if I passed or fail. ”

With respect to completing math problems, Dereon indicated that she likes math a little bit. However, when it comes to doing more than basic math calculations Dereon had this to say, “I can do time table, plus and take-away. But, it’s like that math with the number and you have that line then you have the number on the side. Algebra.” Dereon realizes that she will use math skills in the future.

Summary. Dereon has demonstrated self-regulation in her response with her ability to self-evaluate and set a plan of action to overcome her personal challenges with interior

decorating and obtaining her driver's license, as well as her ability to self-evaluate her math skills. Dereon's response demonstrates autonomous behavior. In the area of psychological empowerment the evidence was somewhat mixed. Dereon showed some level of psychological empowerment in her desire to locate full-time employment. However, Dereon's response in articulating her employment challenges indicate a low level of psychological empowerment when she did not follow through with taking the performance part of her driver's test, or in verifying her score on the TAPE test, and when she did not have control over her situation in contacting her Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) case manager to recommend another job coach.

Miss Diva

According to Miss Diva her challenges include relationships, starting a family, money management, and online job searches. She describes her challenges with female peers in terms of high school girls' gossip. Her employment challenges primarily consist of working on a "big project."

Personal Challenges. For the most part, Miss Diva's high school experiences were good. "I had a lot of problems with females. All the "he said, "she said" drama (i.e., interpersonal conflict between Miss Diva and her female peers)." Miss Diva did not like the gossiping that her female peers participated in while in high school. Another personal challenge for her includes settling down and starting a family. She explained her challenges,

. . . it's hard for me to find the right person. 'Cause (sic) every time I meet somebody it's all about sex. I'm not really about that. I'm ready to settle down. You know find somebody that match my personality. They like stuff that I like and I like stuff that

they like. You know I'm ready to settle down [with someone] that I can spend my life with.

Another relationship challenge for Miss Diva was being careful around people she did not know very well. "I tell myself everyday do not go out into these streets. Watch out for people you don't know. Don't talk to strangers. Watch out for your surroundings." Miss Diva recalled the advice her mother gave her about being cautious when away from home. She knows not to give her number to strangers. "She always tells me to be careful and now, since I'm 21, I know how to be careful."

Miss Diva added that the relationship part of decision making is a challenge for her because she has to seek support and advice from her mother. For Miss Diva, relationships are a "serious thing." She explained what she meant,

And I have to tend to think, "Okay. You better be careful with the kind of relationship you get in because you don't know what the circumstance is going to be. So, I have to ask her for advice. I might not like it, but I have to listen to my mom. I have to listen to and go by what she says. Sometimes I make my own decisions with relationships, but I'd rather for her to make 'em (sic) for me.

Miss Diva continues to learn from her decisions. There was another time when she did not make a good decision. She described what happened while she was in the transition program,

Meeting somebody I should never have met and told them [transition program staff] about it. I almost got terminated, but I had to get suspended for like two days. But that was only for a minute though. I was upset for a little bit but I had to get over it

and just step up and say, “Okay. You know that was a mistake. Now get over it and move on.”

Miss Diva has found that she internalizes her feelings. She prefers to talk with someone whenever she is having problems. “Like my mother said sometimes with me sometimes I like to keep stuff to myself, but I’d rather tell somebody so they can help me with the situation.” Miss Diva believes that if she does not share her problems with her mother, then her mother is unable to provide assistance. Rather than keeping her problems a secret, Miss Diva had this to say,

I’d rather be open about it and get it out. Of course she knows we’re gonna (sic) agree to disagree. She’s not going to agree with everything I do. But, I’d rather be open about it, then get it out than you know than hide it from her.

Money management is another personal challenge for Miss Diva. She knows that she should save her money rather than spend it on non-essential items. Miss Diva described her money management experience:

I’m not good at that. ‘Cause (sic) I like to-as soon as I see something that I like-bam! I got to have it. Bam! Bam! I’m just a spender which I like to spend. By the time I finish spending, I might have about five dollars.

Miss Diva’s mother is assisting her with managing her money. Her mother encourages her to save her money to pay her bills. Miss Diva explained the process, She saves it. Like if I need to pay my cell phone bill she gives me like \$50 just go to pay my cell phone bill. I tell her to keep my money just in case we go somewhere I’ll have some money to spend or save. Really mostly spending.

Miss Diva admits that she likes to spend money. Although her mother encourages her to spend her money wisely, Miss Diva reports that she has a hard time resisting the urge to go shopping. “But, knowing me that’s not me.” Miss Diva realizes that spending all of her money does not allow her to purchase the items that she wants at a later time. “Now, I’m learning how to from her save up your money and when you wanna (sic) go someplace. I’m learning. I’m learning every day.”

Employment Challenges. There are very few things that Miss Diva finds challenging with respect to employment. She described her challenges,

I’m good at some of the stuff. But, you know especially when they make it like a big project I might need a little help on it. I might need a little help on the project thing.

That’s why I don’t do it because I don’t get that much help like I should.

Conducting an online job search is challenging for Miss Diva. She seeks assistance from her mother when searching for employment online. “Like if I want to look for a job on the internet.” Her mother also helps her pay her bills online.

Summary. Miss Diva’s responses indicate self-regulating behaviors in her ability to self-monitor, self-evaluate, and apply problem-solving strategies in her relationships with men. Miss Diva’s response also demonstrates a level of self-realization in her ability to acknowledge her strengths and limitations in her decision making skills with respect to her ability to use caution when interacting with men and spending money. However, she has also demonstrated a limited level of self-realization when she described her employment challenges. For example, Miss Diva indicated that she does not participate in “big projects” because she does not receive help. According to Wehmeyer (1995), a

person who is self-realizing is able to capitalize on their strengths and areas of improvement.

Riesha

Riesha describes herself as a very independent young woman who is capable of taking care of herself. However, there have been some instances in which she has needed assistance. At one point in her adult life, Riesha lived independently and struggled to pay the bills. Improving her reading skills has been challenging for her as well.

Personal Challenges. After taking several classes in culinary arts, Riesha registered for the child care courses. She had an interest in working with children. However, there were some personal challenges and conflicts with course offerings and interactions with her peers. Riesha described her experience with eventually selecting child care as a career option while in high school,

When I first got to high school they didn't have no more spots open for commercial arts. They only had culinary arts. So, I just went ahead and took culinary art other than commercial art. And then when commercial art had a position, I took culinary art. And then I was like I really want to do child care. And then I went to child care and end up not liking it.

Riesha cites a lack of attentiveness on her peers' part for not liking the child care program hosted at her high school. Although she did not find the program engaging, she was not discouraged from pursuing her career goal in child care. Riesha described her high school child care program,

I don't know. It was drama like when we were supposed to be paying attention the kids, they be talking 'bout, "Are you seeing such and such?" And I'm like you ain't

even doing what you supposed to do. You supposed to be communicating with the kids and working with them. And you over there talking about boys. Don't nobody want to hear that . . . They just be talking about each other and saying that such and such said that. I'm like I don't want to be around all this drama. There's too much drama over there. So, I just looked for something else.

Living on her own was a personal challenge for Riesha as well. She described what it was like to live on her own, "Me and my best friend had an apartment together, but I moved back home and she moved with her boyfriend." Even though she had a roommate, Riesha still considers this as an independent living arrangement. "Well, I was living on my own. No one was helping me pay bills. I was doing it on my own. I came back home because my grandmother and mother needed more help."

Another personal challenge for Riesha is reading. Originally, she thought the transition program would help her become a better reader. However, Riesha reported that she continues to struggle with reading. She mainly has difficulty with complex words and their meanings. She articulated her challenge with reading,

I mean like some things I don't understand and I need them to be explained to me a little more than some other people. Some words I can't spell. Some words I can. Like long words I know how to spell those. But, like say like if-I don't know. Like big long words.

According to Riesha, she has difficulty spelling words. "Like hereditary. Like long words I don't know. Like little stuff I don't know how to spell. But other than that, I'm good. But, if a person is talking to me I can understand what the person is saying." A

final personal challenge that Riesha reports is in cooking specific ethnic foods. She tries to follow her mother and grandmother's recipe.

I'm not good at cooking. I can cook, but I can't throw down like some people can. I be trying to sit back and learn and watch my momma cook some stuff. Some stuff I don't even want to try . . . like ox tails. I be watching sometimes. And sometimes I just be chilling.

Employment Challenges. When asked about any employment challenges she may have encountered Riesha stated that she did not struggle with anything. However, she was able to recall an event that occurred at the daycare,

It was three of us working in the room. And one of the teachers would leave and like, sometimes we would need another teacher to come in. And people up front wouldn't come into the room when we needed. But, it's like when we needed help, they didn't come. But, when we didn't need help, they came. That's the only downfall at the daycare that I didn't like.

The lack of assistance from Riesha's co-workers presented a challenge because she required immediate coverage. Riesha indicated that communication between her and her co-workers improved over time.

Summary. Riesha showed seemed to show a somewhat limited level of psychological empowerment in selecting a career choice that she liked early on. However, she was able to make the decision to avoid the external conflict that existed within her high school's child care program by switching to culinary arts. Riesha also demonstrated a level of psychological empowerment when she stated that she did not experience any employment-related challenges. Riesha's responses indicate autonomous behavior when

she selected to live independently with a roommate. Her behavior also demonstrates a level of self-regulation in her ability to self-evaluate and revise her living arrangement by moving back in with her grandmother and being able to observe her mother prepare meals. A final characteristic of self-determination that is evident in Riesha's responses is her ability to use self-realization in identifying her academic areas in need of improvement.

Tina

Tina has experienced many challenges while preparing to exit high school and as a young adult. She knows her limitations and is willing to turn her limitations into strengths. Tina has a support network of family and her church community. Her personal challenges include relationships, writing skills, math skills, preparing meals, and counting money. Tina is capable of finding and maintaining employment. There are fewer employment related challenges that she has encountered when compared to her personal challenges. Whenever an employer provides Tina with constructive criticism she takes it as a learning opportunity.

Personal Challenges. Tina does not seem to be a very sociable young lady. She is reserved in terms of selecting her social network of friends to hang out with on a regular basis. Tina attended her senior prom without a date. "Just the thing about before I graduated I went to prom by myself. 'Cause (sic) . . . everybody got prom dates or whatever. And I didn't have nobody. So, I went by myself." Tina did not have a boyfriend at the time of the prom. However, she was able to recall a time when she was dating a young man in high school, "...my first boyfriend was Puerto Rican. We went together in high school. It was like he called me and was like what's going on? [He] gotta

(sic) baby already and I was like forget it.” Tina was not fond of the idea of having a boyfriend who was already a father. She described how the experience made her feel:

Really it [having sex] just had made me upset...It’s like in high school. Let’s go in the back of the building [Her boyfriend made this suggestion]. I’m not like that and that’s not me. That’s not my lifestyle. So, he was like why? I got home. I don’t care what nobody say if I don’t want to do that in the school or whatever I was not raised up like that. [Her boyfriend asked her this question] So, that’s not what you want to do? I was like “no”. I got my life and you got your life. Life is too short. So, I just told him just forget it.

Another relationship challenge Tina encountered was “getting along with other people.” In terms of working collaboratively with people, Tina reported the hardest part for her was getting to know people. Whenever she does not know someone she will ask them their name. Although Tina was not comfortable with working in a collaborative setting with people she did not know, she participated in the group project until it was completed.

Cooking and counting money are some other personal challenges for Tina. “I’m not good at cooking.” Tina knows how to prepare sandwiches from working at a restaurant. Counting money and managing her money are challenges Tina experiences while living on her own. Tina also recognizes that she has difficulty with her handwriting and math calculation. In her past, Tina would give up on academic tasks. “I gave up. Just like, Man, I can’t do this.” Tina recalled an experience she had in first grade,

I don’t know how to write. I can’t do this. ‘Cause (sic) I’m left-handed. When I was first grade, I was like, “Man, I can’t write with my left-handed.” They’ll show you

how to write with your hand or whatever. I was like I'm giving up. I can't do my homework. I don't know how to do this. I'm not good with math or whatever. I don't know how to do math.

Presently, if Tina is having a hard time with something, she will try it again before giving up. There was a time Tina had to complete paperwork when she was in the transition program. "I be like, I don't know how to do this. I just give up. I gotta (sic) learn." When she was in high school she would ask for assistance. This is Tina's recollection of a time when she asked for help,

I did it in class or whatever and they'll help me. But, they'll be like you can't use no calculator. You have to do it by your hand. Why would I do it on my hand and now the money I get I don't know how much it is. I ask somebody how much this is. How much should I give them? And, another day I be like-how am I trying to put it [asking herself]-I don't like myself. They be like, "Why you want to say something like that?" I just don't have that confidence or whatever like other people. "Oh, you think you ain't 'gon (sic) do this. You ain't 'gon (sic) do that." I just be like I don't like myself. I just sit there and cry.

Employment Challenges. Tina has faced some challenges in the workplace when she was employed at a local grocery store. Tina recalled that situation,

Like one of the managers I went to school with. She was like, "She ain't doing her job. She not pushing the carts." I've been out there like pushing the carts and ain't nobody helping me. If I'm saying my back hurt, it's hurting. She was like, "Well she dumb. She ain't doing her job." I wouldn't want nobody-like one of the dudes I used to talk to. "Oh, you retarded." And all that. That hurts. I have feelings. You have

feelings just like me, too. If you don't want your daughter or whatever or your sister being called retarded, don't call me that. I might be slow but still. Come on now. I'm not like a normal 21 year old. I'm just have a disability or whatever. If I don't know stuff, I ask people. When I was born I had meningitis. I couldn't hide it. The doctor told my momma and my daddy, "Oh, she ain't going to be able to walk. She ain't going to be able to talk." God had did something. I'm talking. I'm walking. Yes, I have seizures. I haven't had a seizure since '97. That's the last time I had my seizure.

When Tina was asked if her feelings were hurt when her former manager called her "retarded", she responded by saying, "It didn't hurt. I just sat there and cried. This is not right. I'm not supposed to be called that." Tina recounted how she informed her mother of the incident at work,

I told my momma. She was like that's not right how people just sit up there and call you any kind of name. When I was in high school, "Oh, you big nose this and da-da-da-da (sic). You ain't (sic) 'gon (sic) make it in life." How am I not gonna (sic) make it in life? I got my goals and what I want to do in my future.

Summary. In articulating her challenges, Tina demonstrated psychological empowerment by showing that she had control over her personal relationship with her boyfriend and conveying to him that she was not ready to engage in a sexual relationship. She also demonstrated psychological empowerment by making friends and working with people whom she did not know. Tina's responses indicate that she is able to use elements of self-realization by identifying areas in her life that she feels she needs to improve. Tina also demonstrated self-regulating behaviors in her ability to evaluate an unpleasant encounter with her supervisor.

Strengths

In addition to experiencing challenges, the students were able to detail some of their strengths. Strengths are divided into two sub themes of personal qualities and skills.

Amber

Amber did not hold back when she discussed her strengths in relation to her personal qualities and skills. In fact, she believes that the transition program has allowed her to develop and refine some of her personal qualities and skills. Amber admitted that she is getting better at counting real money. “I’m getting a lot better with real money. She’ll give us money and have us count it out to the teller and do math problems with the money.”

Personal Qualities. Amber describes herself as a friendly and passionate individual. “I am a people person like I can make friends easily. I’m passionate toward others. I’m the type person who is easy-going.” She usually has a smile on her face.

As far as her high school experience, Amber indicated that she enjoyed going to high school. She recalled her high school experience,

Twelfth grade year was a lot easy going. It seemed more peaceful and calmer.

Everybody knows each other, but for me kind of complemented each other well.

Pretty much the work was a lot easier ‘cause we had like one-on-one help when you needed it. A lot more time on [name of state assessment omitted] and things like that.

Amber felt a sense of accomplishment when she graduated from high school. With regard to friendships, Amber often takes trips to the mall and travels out of town with her friends.

Skills. Amber gives credit to the transition program for helping her learn and use self-advocacy skills. She discusses how she has been able to do that:

Actually, we have someone come do a presentation for us about passive and aggressive and assertive. And we learn about those tools in the classroom. So, that helps out a lot. That makes the class seem a little bit more content when you're coming.

Amber is learning to control her temperament by not letting things get to her and speaking up for herself. She practices her self-advocacy skills by speaking with the transition facilitator about obtaining an independent living coach. "Some teachers have a lot to do and they haven't gotten around to it. So, I keep on like bugging her about it."

Additional skills that Amber has acquired since enrolling in the transition program involve using various functions on the computer such as Microsoft Word applications and composing and sending emails. Amber described her computer skills, "Well, I'm pretty good on computers. I kinda (sic) taught myself with the MySpace thing. Flamingo Queen kinda (sic) helped us a lot with yahoo. I never had a yahoo account before. She helped us a lot with that." Amber and her classmates learned how to keep a daily calendar using her computer skills. "We do our daily calendar on the yahoo, what we are going to do for the day. So she'll [Flamingo Queen] know where everyone is on a certain day or time." Another benefit of using email as a form of communication is to allow students to remain in contact with their respective Vocational Rehabilitation counselors.

Amber said that her favorite part of being in the transition program is the ability to make decisions for herself. "I like being the independent and doing my own thing. I want to be more independent and having my own place someday." Amber shared that she

makes decisions for herself a lot of the times. Also, she mentioned that students were not as independent as they are in the transition program. In fact, in high school students are watched “like a hawk”, according to Amber. Amber compared her experience as far as being independent in the transition program to that of being in high school,

High school they watch you very closely. You have APs [assistant principals] all around, principals. At CARE, you’re more on your own. You can only be in the program actually if you are really more independent. I learned a lot.

Amber has learned through personal experience how to make informed decisions. She was coerced into signing a legal document at her mother’s job. After her mother informed Amber of her responsibility once she has signed a legal document, Amber has been reluctant to sign any documents without her mother’s approval. She described a recent incident,

We were around here and waiting for the Best Buddies director to come get us and this lady was asking some of my students I mean my classmates if they wanted to sign something. I said, “Oh, no. We’re old enough, but we’re in a program. We’re not allowed to sign something that we don’t know.” So, I told her no thank you.

‘Cause they were about to sign it. I was like don’t sign it. We’re well over age but you don’t know.

At home Amber’s mother makes decisions for her as opposed to when Amber is on campus in the transition program. “On campus I do and my sister and I can consult her first before I do anything.” Some of those decisions at home include attending parties. Amber recalled a recent birthday party she attended,

Like we have to ask if we could go to that birthday party if we go before school hours. And she will come asking for us if we are not on campus just to make sure we're okay. Technically we have to.

Summary. Amber demonstrated autonomous behavior in her ability to make friends, engage in social activities, and participate in the transition program. However, Amber is required to ask her mother's permission to participate in some social activities. The ability to act according to one's own preferences, interests and/or abilities, and to do so independently and free from undue external influence is a key component of autonomy. Amber's responses indicate a level of psychological empowerment when she felt a sense of accomplishment in graduating from high school, making class presentations, and making good decisions away from home. At home, Amber continues to rely on her mother to make decisions for her. The ability to have control over one's circumstances, possess the skills to achieve desired outcomes, and apply those skills across multiple settings are key components of psychological empowerment. A final element of self-determination that Amber has demonstrated is her ability to self-regulate by controlling her temperament (self-management) and problem solve.

Dereon

Dereon had no trouble discussing the things that she is relatively good at doing. For instance, she is capable of styling her hair, selecting the clothes she wants to wear, and deciding where she would like to go to eat. Dereon possesses basic skills needed to care for children. She is eager to start working a full-time position in which she can apply her child care skills and talents.

Personal Qualities. Dereon expressed concern about the lack of commitment and follow through from the promises the transition program made in order for her to participate. She makes reference to the provisions in the contract. “Like on the contract. It’s saying one thing and you doing another thing. So, basically it was like a whole big lie to me. I don’t know what to say about nobody else.”

Skills. Dereon has acquired multiple skills from participating in the transition program, on-the-job-training, and learning from her mother. Her skills include taking care of small children, running errands, basic computer functions, communication skills, performing job searches, using the internet, and making decisions for herself. Dereon is hopeful that her skills will enable her to find a full-time position either in the health care or child care profession.

With respect to the skills she learned in the transition program, Dereon attributes her participation in the program to her mother. “Cause she thought it was gonna (sic) be like a good program for me to attend. And, I was excited to do it because I thought I was gonna (sic) learn more.” Dereon and her classmates used the computer and completed their daily errands. Their daily schedule included attending a college course, keeping track of a daily journal, participating in job-training, going to the computer lab, and riding the local metro bus to go home.

Dereon had this to say about her communication skills, “Like talking to others; getting along with others; like when you go to an interview you know how to sit straight and dress appropriate and all that good stuff.” Also, Dereon knows how to answer a business call or make business calls. She explained how to respond to business calls,

Like when somebody you have to talk to them like you want them to talk to you and tell them more about what you are selling. If you a bill collector you calling them and asking them about their bill or how they 'gon (sic) pay their bill. If you a telemarketer and you trying to sell something, you have to sell it like you really want to get that bonus.

In the age of technology, Dereon is able to stay connected with people through text messaging on her cell phone. Although she is not a very fast texter, Dereon is able to respond to her friends' comments. ". . . sometimes my friends and I be talking and I be texting them and they don't give me time to text them back. 'Cause (sic) they text me while I'm texting them back." In addition to texting her friends, Dereon is capable of using the internet as a form of communication. She explained how she uses the internet,

Well, like you can add them to your contact book. Then, you can scroll down to their name and click it. And, then type whatever you want to send to them and email it to them. And, then they check their email and they have your email. Or you can like, if somebody send you an email forward it to whoever in your contact book.

As part of her daily routine, Dereon learned how to use the computer and internet from her mother such as "how to work the computer and what to do with like your resume; how to make my own resume." Additionally, Dereon learned how to check her email and surf the internet. While in the transition program Dereon became familiar with other uses of the computer. "They [transition program] did teach us how to do that [referring to Microsoft applications such as Microsoft Word and Powerpoint]; how to make powerpoint presentations."

Another skill that Dereon possesses is the ability to make decisions. She indicated that she was mature enough to make her own decisions. “I didn’t feel that I needed them [transition facilitator and paraprofessional] to make decisions for me . . .”

Summary. Dereon demonstrated autonomous behaviors in deciding to attend the transition program. Dereon’s response indicates her ability to self-evaluate her needs in the transition program based on the contract that she signed and what she learned, to self-monitor her health by scheduling doctor’s appointments, and to make decisions based on her personal needs. Dereon demonstrated psychological empowerment in describing her ability to communicate using multiple options such as the internet and the telephone and her ability to develop and sustain friendships.

Miss Diva

Although Miss Diva did not participate in any of her high school’s clubs or organizations she did assist her teachers. “I helped my teachers out a lot.” Her help was needed to grade papers, make copies, and send faxes.

Personal Qualities. Miss Diva describes herself as a very confident young woman. “I have a high standard of confidence.” Miss Diva does not recall how she acquired her high standard of confidence. She continues to explain, “The personality tells you if the person has a lot of heart. So, you got to have a lot of heart and you got to have standards.” According to Miss Diva, a person with high standards will be able to believe in themselves.

You gotta (sic) have confidence in yourself and believe that you can do stuff on your own without people telling you to do it. They don’t have to babysit you and stuff like that. So, I do have a high standard.

Miss Diva would like to encourage young adults to “be confident.” She is very adamant about taking a stand for what she believes is right. “Don’t let people put you down. Stand up for your rights. And know who you are and where you came from.”

Not only is Miss Diva a young woman with a high level of confidence, she continued to describe herself as “a compassionate person” one who is “sweet” and “nice.” When interacting with others Miss Diva usually has a smile on her face. She makes sure that she is friendly and gives the other person eye contact. “I love when people make me laugh.” In order to be in her company, Miss Diva says that a person has to make her laugh. “‘Cause (sic) I’m very goofy. People got to make me laugh. They got to. They don’t have no choice.”

Miss Diva is well liked by others. For instance, at one of her job training sites when she was in the transition program one of the staff members adopted her as her goddaughter. She recalls her last day at her job training site.

The people was very, very nice to me. I mean they were. It’s hard to explain ‘cause (sic), you know I cried when I left there. I broke down and cried when I left there because I didn’t want to leave. That’s how much I really liked that job.

Skills. According to Miss Diva, there are few things that she is unable to master. She is capable of grooming herself, preparing meals, selecting her daily outfits communicating with others, and making some decisions for herself. Miss Diva believes that she is a nice dresser. She indicated that she dresses “like a diva is supposed to be.”

While in high school Miss Diva acquired basic clerical skills. “I helped my teachers out a lot.” She graded papers, made copies, and sent faxes. As Miss Diva began to attend the transition program, she learned how to keep a daily schedule through the use of a

planner. Also, her writing and spelling skills were remediated with a weekly spelling list. “We had to write certain things in the planner that we had to do like a to-do list. And we took computer lab and we put ‘em (sic) in the computer. And then we had to print out stuff that we had to do.” While on the college campus Miss Diva was able to utilize her office skills by making copies and running errands.

Maintaining a household is another skill that Miss Diva has attained through the modeling and training from her mother. She knows how to “cook, clean, and take care of kids.” When Miss Diva decides to marry she realizes that there are additional responsibilities for taking care of children. “If they got football, basketball games, take them to their games and be his wife.”

Miss Diva considers herself an excellent cook. She specializes in cooking “soul food.” “Ribs, chicken, collard greens, candied yams, macaroni and cheese, fish, pork chops, and neck bones” are all food items that she is able to prepare without any assistance. “I can cook big. If I cook breakfast, I cook pancakes, waffles, toast, grits, eggs, country style potatoes, sausage, bacon, ham. I cook big.” She does not always cook by herself. “Sometimes I cook by myself. Sometimes my auntie and sometimes my mom. But, they want me to cook all of the time.” When asked if her food tasted good this was Miss Diva’s response, “Ooh yeah! They love my food especially when I cook ‘cause (sic) I get down in the kitchen. I get down. Ya’ll (sic) be licking your fingers. Ya’ll (sic) be like this sho’ (sic) ‘nuff (sic) good. I’ll be like, I told you.” Miss Diva’s mother and grandmother showed her how to cook. “And I watch the foodworks channel.”

Another personal quality that Miss Diva has developed as a result of attending the transition program is how to make decisions for herself. “Sometimes she [her mother]

helps me out in my decisions.” Miss Diva describes a situation when she made a “bad decision.”

Like the bad decisions she [her mother] was like, “That was a mistake and you need to learn from your mistake.” It boosts my confidence up a little bit toward good decisions.

Miss Diva stated that everyone has decisions to make. She explained what she meant,

Everybody make their own decisions, but some decisions are bad and some of them was good. But I learned from it. I learned from the decisions that I make. I make good and bad decisions. But most of them are good.

According to Miss Diva, making good decisions is part of being an adult. Miss Diva has made some good decisions. “Be on time. Getting along with people. Just being myself and not being somebody that I’m not trying to be. Just being myself and show my personality.” Listening to the advice her mother gives her is another good decision that Miss Diva has learned to make. “I like listen to my mom and I like to get my own opinion.” Miss Diva reported that she especially attends to the advice her mother gives her about sex and her personal appearance. “She teach me how to dress. You got to dress. It’s a time and place for everything. When you go out you can’t be showing everything. You got to cover up.” On the day of the interview, Miss Diva took her mother’s advice and wore a jacket to cover the dress she was wearing that was cut out in the back. Miss Diva admitted that she is learning from her mother’s advice. She shared her learning experience,

So, when she talks about the sex part that part right there, I'm learning from that. I'm learning from the mistakes I made in the past. Everybody makes mistakes. I'm the type of person if I make a mistake you better bet I'm a learn from it. You better bet I'm a learn from it. Now, the sex part ,yeah she teaching me to wait and stuff. And I'm ready to wait 'cause (sic) every time I meet a person, a guy, it's all about sex, sex, sex, sex. And I'm not about that. She's teaching me to watch out about who you meet 'cause (sic) you don't know what they 'gon (sic) say or how they 'gon (sic) approach you. So, I'm learning from that, too.

For Miss Diva decision making is a part of her daily life. She makes decisions about what she wants to eat, the clothes she wants to wear, the leisure activities in which she would like to participate, how to style her hair, and what time she rises in the morning. "I know how to do hair. Like styling it up in a ponytail or braids. Sometimes I do it. Sometimes I get it done by my cousin." She does not style hair for other people. "I know how to. I just don't do other people's heads." When deciding where to go this is what Miss Diva said, "Like if I want to go somewhere all I have to do is get ready."

Another decision that Miss Diva has made is to obtain employment. She feels that working is a good decision. "Now is the time I need to go." Although she likes staying at home, Miss Diva realizes that she cannot continue to stay at home indefinitely. "You can't be home all the time. You gotta (sic) work. I'm willing and ready to work.

Summary. Miss Diva's responses indicate that she has the ability to use self-realization by having a high level of confidence in herself, being liked by others, and capitalizing on her personal strengths, as well as identifying her areas in need of improvement. Miss Diva demonstrated autonomous behavior by selecting to attend the

transition program, having the ability to self-manage her daily schedule, and assisting with daily household chores at home. Her responses indicate a level of self-regulation in identifying her role as a future wife and self-evaluating her personal relationships. A final element of self-determination that Miss Diva demonstrated in her responses is psychological empowerment when she articulated her ability to make decisions and learn from those decisions.

Riesha

Riesha is an independent young woman who has a car, works two jobs, and takes care of her adult family members. She is a sociable person who spends time with her friends whenever she can. Riesha knows how to self-advocate and make decisions for herself. She listens to the advice of her grandmother and brother. Riesha spends quality time with her nephews.

Personal Qualities. Like many of her peers, Riesha was glad to finish high school. “I felt good. No more school. Yes! I felt real good.” Riesha stated that she no longer had to get up early in the morning to attend classes after graduation. “No more work. Just relax. Well, I thought it would be just relax. But, it turned out not to be.” Riesha thought being out of high school would be relaxing. Soon she discovered that she had to continue working the job at the amusement park. She further explains what she meant in terms of not having to do “no more work.”

It means I don't have to work. I mean I was working and I had a job, but I mean no more work in school and actually doing book work and all that. I could just sit back and relax and go to work. Just being out of school. Not at school like all day or half a day or whatever.

Riesha describes herself as a “people’s person” in terms of her current work setting at the amusement park. “You gotta (sic) be a people’s person. I know that.” Riesha defines what it means to be a “people’s person”,

Like when the people come in the restaurant sometimes you have to talk to them and let them know what we have; how does it come; what comes with it; how much is it; what do they want on it; what they don’t want on it.

Skills. Riesha has acquired many skills in the areas of self-care, helping others, transportation, conflict resolution, decision making, and job related skills. These skills have aided Riesha to meet her daily living and employment needs.

According to Riesha, she is able to provide for all of her needs. “I do my own hair. I take a shower, of course. I cook when I want to. What is there to say? I know how to take care of myself.” For example, Riesha’s mother showed her how to style her hair. Both her grandmother and mother showed her how to cook.

My grandmomma and my mom showed me how to cook. They showed me how to do that. My mom showed me how to do my hair. Well, because my mom used to do hair. I really sat back and watched all that.

Riesha watched her grandmother and mother show her how to iron clothes. It was her grandmother who taught her how to drive a car. “I took driver’s ed. But, they were too mean. I told my grandmomma that I want to learn how to drive. And she was like, “You ‘gon (sic) learn how to drive.” So, my grandmomma showed me how to drive.” Riesha’s sister taught her how to use the public transit system. Learning how to use the public transit system was not a new skill for Riesha. “Like how to catch the bus. I already knew how to catch the bus.” Other skills Riesha acquired prior to attending the transition

program included basic clerical skills such as making photocopies. “I already knew how to go do that.” She learned these office skills in middle and high school.

Riesha takes care of family members by providing transportation and assisting her family members with basic home health care. Riesha also provided assistance to her peers in the transition program. “To me, some of the kids needed more than me because most of the things we did, kind a teaching us, I already knew.” Riesha further explains what she meant by “some of the kids needed more” than she did,

‘Cause (sic) the other kids like their parents do everything for them. My parents, I mean they do stuff. But, most of the stuff, they teach me how to be independent in case they are not always around. I already know how to do things since I have an older sister and an older brother.

Another skill Riesha has developed is being able to avoid conflict. As previously mentioned under the theme headed “Career Goals” Riesha is able to avoid conflict by removing herself from situations. She was able to determine that the gossip that took place in the child care program was not beneficial to her goal in becoming a child care provider. In that situation she immediately requested a transfer to enroll in another vocational program. Another interpersonal skill Riesha has acquired is the ability to self-advocate while working at the daycare. She describes the experience,

Well, I would I explain to them and bring it up that we needed you at such and such a time and you didn’t come. And they were like, “We’re really sorry. We try to make it as soon as we can. Sometimes it just gets so hectic up front.” And I’m like, “Oh, okay.” But, me and the other teacher we try our best to do whatever we have to do with or without the help.

Riesha has learned various job related skills at the amusement park. She has learned to be knowledgeable of the restaurant's menu, prices, and locations of the other dining areas. Riesha is confident in her ability to do her job. "I think I'm good at everything that I do."

Another skill Riesha has developed is the ability to make decisions for herself. Riesha does not require assistance in making decisions or how often her decisions are made. Recently, she made the decision to remain in current position at the amusement park. "They're trying to make me a supervisor, but I don't want to do that. 'Cause (sic) it's only a quarter more than what I make. To me that's nothing. And as much work as they do, I think they need more than that." When she was approached about the management position Riesha simply replied, "No, thank you." She decides where she wants to go, her daily clothing attire, and when to make personal appointments. She explains in detail,

Where I want to go. If I got to go to work. When I want to go to work. What I'm a wear. How does it look. I need my hair done. When do I need to get it done. Do I need to make an appointment? When I'm going to get my nails done. Do I need to make a doctor's appointment when I'm not feeling good?

Riesha travels with her friends to various out of town locations. "Either I make the decision of whoever I'm riding with, of course. Where we're going. Where I'm going." With respect to traveling, Riesha and her friends make decisions regarding how much money they will need to cover expenses. She describes how a conversation between her and her friends would sound when planning a road trip,

How much money do we need? Do we need to split the cost? If we want to get a hotel room or if we're gonna (sic) stay with somebody. Do we want to go shopping where we're going? How long do we think it's going to take? What day do we want to leave? When we want to come back.

Summary. In articulating her strengths, Riesha demonstrated autonomy by self-managing her work schedule and leisure activities, as well as engaging in routine personal care (e.g., styling her hair, bathing, and cooking), spending time with her family and friends, and scheduling doctor's appointments. Riesha's response indicates that she is psychologically empowered when performing her employment-related tasks in an effort to do well, possessing the requisite skills to assist her peers, and demonstrating the ability to self-advocate while working at the daycare and the amusement park. Another element of self-determination that Riesha demonstrated in her responses was self-realization. Riesha used self-realization to identify her strengths (e.g., having knowledge of the menu and prices) while working at the amusement park.

Tina

Tina is a semi-independent young lady who lives in her own apartment. She relies on her immediate and extended family members for support. Tina is able to make decisions for herself, practice grooming etiquette, prepare light meals, and participate in community activities.

Personal Qualities. Tina is an easy-going person who gets along with her peers. She enjoys making new friends either at church or in the community. Tina described herself, "I'm pretty. I'm smart, outgoing, gorgeous."

Skills. Tina is able to make decisions for herself. For example, Tina described a situation with a young man in which she was able to decide for herself that she did not want to engage in sexual intercourse with him. While attending the transition program Tina made decisions for herself. “I probably had to learn how to make my own decisions. If I don’t have to do this, then I’ll do this.” She said that her decisions include, “Making sure the dishes are clean. Making sure the house is clean.” Other decisions she makes for herself include when to go to bed. Whenever Tina wants to go shopping she asks her mother for permission and her mother will sometimes take her.

Tina has learned to overcome challenges that have been presented to her. Rather than giving up on a task, Tina has learned to ask for help or try the task again. Another example of a time when she overcame a challenge was when she first joined the transition program. Tina described her experience,

‘Cause (sic) when I first didn’t know anybody, I just sat there by myself. Well, new people like the old people and the new people had came I was new or whatever. Then, at that point we got close and me and [two classmates’ names have been omitted] we was close or whatever. We were good friends.

Tina has developed many skills and talents that she uses on a regular basis. Her skills and talents include singing in the church youth choir. The choir sings every third Sunday and Tina likes being around people that she is familiar with like her friends. Mentoring the younger members of her church is one of Tina’s talents, as well. “The girls is about 12 or 13. I tell them to stay in school. Don’t dropout.” Tina realizes that staying in school is important. The reason she encourages girls to stay in school is “because you get your education and you graduate what you study for.”

Tina made friends while she was in the transition program. She became friends with two young women after an icebreaker activity. Tina described the activity, “The first time you had to put your friend name, then your age or something like that. We did that.” Tina keeps in touch with her friends by using communication skills such as talking or texting on her cell phone and using electronic mail. “We talked. She text me once like send pictures. I’ll text her back.”

Tina learned how to schedule appointments electronically and manually using the computer and a daily journal. She learned how to schedule doctor’s appointments afterschool. “Every time we had our planner we had to put that on the computer.” Tina described the items that were scheduled in her planner, “Like what we supposed to do, the school work. Flamingo Queen put on the board what you supposed to do.” Some of the activities that Tina scheduled in her electronic calendar included “what time you go to lunch” and “what time you leave.” Additional job skills that Tina acquired while participating in the transition program were learning how to make photocopies, running errands, and using the computer. Tina described her experience with making photocopies,

I learned how to make copies ‘cause at first I didn’t know how to make copies. One of the students helped me, showed me how to make copies. If the person put the number, student name, put the number on their ID number, then, fax it.

If there was an error in sending the fax, Tina would re-send it. She would not give up until the fax was sent.

Tina used the computer to email people, friends, and teachers. Her communication skills were not confined to using the computer. Tina used her communication skills to “talk out loud.” She said that talking out loud was something she enjoyed doing. Another

way Tina exercised her communication skills was through the use of completing paperwork. “Some of the papers we have to fill out papers.”

Another skill that Tina has acquired is being able to accept constructive feedback from her employer at the restaurant. Tina described the experience, “Tom, he was like why you didn’t finish cleaning off the tables? This is what you were supposed to do. So, I went back and did it.”

Summary. In articulating her strengths, Tina demonstrated elements of psychological empowerment in her ability to describe herself with positive qualities, make decisions, establish friendships, possess the requisite skills and apply those skills to mentor young children, and use those requisite skills throughout her attendance in the transition program. Tina demonstrated autonomous behavior by selecting to participate in the transition program. However, she continues to ask her mother for permission to go shopping even though Tina is 23 and lives alone. Tina demonstrated self-regulatory behaviors when she made decisions for herself. She showed self-realization by using communication skills in various settings and in her ability to accept constructive feedback to improve her work performance.

Job Training/Employment

Each student participated in job training while attending the transition program. Job training is divided into two sub themes of employment and Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Their job training experiences are described using personal comments from each student.

Amber

Obtaining a job with pay has been a priority for Amber. It was Amber's mother who encouraged her to seek employment. "First, it was my mom in the IEP (Individualized Education Program) meeting trying to find something for me to do after high school because I knew I couldn't do cosmetology board tests." Amber received her first paying job while attending the transition program. She said she was "kinda (sic) reluctant, but scared" to have a job because she would have to handle money and time.

Amber's first job was at a restaurant on campus. Amber soon discovered that working in the food industry was not the career of her choice. She made this comment about working at the restaurant, "I wouldn't mind buffets." Amber worked at the restaurant for a couple of months. "It was nice experiencing getting my own minimum wage pay check." Another benefit of working at the restaurant was the opportunity for Amber to practice her communication skills. Amber explained,

Because in food prep you have to be very friendly to the clients. You have to speak up for yourself and ask them if they need anything. Food Court helped me with that as well as CARE with our presentations that we have to do. When I was in high school I was scared to do presentations, but CARE helped me even more with speaking up. I talk a lot anyway.

Other benefits of being in the transition program for Amber include making appointments, earning a pay check, and experiencing new things. Her first work experience was when she was growing up and assisting her aunt in a hair salon during the summers. She did not receive pay for helping her aunt. According to Amber's mother,

she enjoyed helping out at the salon and would shampoo the customers' hair and sweep the floors.

Another non-paid work experience for Amber was volunteering at a local nursing home. After completing high school, she decided to work at a nursing home. "Well, after graduation my mom said she didn't want me sitting at home doing nothing. So, I asked the activities director if it was okay if I could volunteer." Amber continues to work at the nursing home after she completes her day at the transition program. Amber explained her involvement as a volunteer at the nursing home,

I worked in the activity room. I used to help get their coffee, get their newspapers, just helping out with arts and crafts. I think tomorrow their having a carnival. I might help out with that after school. Different holidays, different events I help them with; bringing the residents to their room; help them out with different things.

Amber had the option to attend the transition program or do job training in a hospital setting after she graduated from high school. Amber selected the transition program because it was located on the campus of a university. "I thought about going to CARE and I liked how it ran, where it was located, and it was close to my mom's job..." It was at an Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting that Amber was informed about the transition program. Amber recalled the conversation with her Exceptional Student Education (ESE) specialist,

They just told me to go to both programs to see how I liked one or the other. I went to CARE and had like an interview there. I already knew that I wanted to go to that one. It was a done deal.

Amber compared both the job training program at the university and the job training program at the hospital. She indicated that the transition program at the university met her needs more than the one at the hospital. “Because it was on the campus and college students, people around my age.”

Amber’s job training experience in the transition program consisted of a daily routine of keeping a daily planner with lessons, open class discussions, going to work, and completing various tasks. She described her daily routine,

Actually when I first got to CARE it was a daily planner with lessons. We talked about we gotta (sic) do for the day. Then, I’ll go to work about 10:00. Ten to one I was at Food Court. Eat lunch around one. Computer labs on Tuesdays and Thursdays after work and then we would go home. That was my first nine weeks. Now, I get dropped off at [name of elementary school omitted]; walk to CARE; and do my daily planner, quick lessons, computer lab, and then go home.

The job training experience at a local elementary school has been a positive experience for Amber. Amber has worked at the elementary school for a month. She credits the elementary school for learning her clerical and organization skills. Amber described her experience,

I actually learned a lot at [name of elementary school omitted]. I learned how to make copies like front and back. I learned how to do a fax today, actually. I learned how to help the art teacher with the paint and get all the utensils they need. I worked in the library helped got books and put them in alphabetical order on the shelf. Kinda (sic) like monitor them where they need to go like easy reference, nonfiction, and

fiction. Put ‘em (sic) in their box. That’s pretty much what I do at [name of elementary school omitted].

Amber receives additional job training through presentations. “We do a lot of presentations. We do like fake interviews.” The “fake” or mock interviews are used to assist students with actual job interviews. The purpose is to help students speak comfortably in front of other people. Amber explained the process,

We do presentations to help us speak in front of people that we don’t know. Like the medical students we meet at work each month. We pick a different topic for a different student each month. We can pick the topic and I help sometimes a little bit. We go on campus and ask people questions that we need for our class.

Most students in the transition program complete training in how to ride the public transit service. Amber is a frequent rider of the university’s transportation system. The university’s transportation system transports students to various locations on campus and to the local mall. “It can take you from one place to another on campus.” As a result of using the public transit service either on campus or in town, Amber stated that students learn how to be “more independent mostly.” Amber said she enjoyed having her own transportation whenever she needed it. “I don’t drive.”

In addition to receiving job training assistance through the transition program, Amber has been assigned a Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselor. “She helps me find employment in my area. At first there were some difficulties because you have to have a license for cosmetology, but I don’t want to do that anymore anyways.” Currently, Amber is seeking employment in the child care field.

Summary. Amber's response demonstrates her ability to use self-realization in identifying her strengths (e.g., interacting with people and performing clerical duties) and areas of interest (e.g., speaking Spanish and working with children) in seeking employment and capitalizing on her strengths to improve her skills. However, Amber's response indicates a limited psychological empowerment in terms of handling money and discovering that working in the food industry was not suitable for her. Amber demonstrated autonomous behaviors in her ability to self-manage her daily activities by keeping a journal while in the transition program. Psychological empowerment was also demonstrated in Amber's ability to make the decision to attend the transition program because of the outcomes she would obtain in developing job skills that she could later apply in a child care setting. Her ability to self-regulate was demonstrated in using self-evaluation skills to evaluate her performance in the transition program and being able to use public transportation to get to and from her job site. Amber's behaviors are commensurate with the characteristics of self-regulation which include cognitive and behavioral strategies.

Dereon

Dereon was not pleased with the outcome of her experience while attending the transition program. Many of the skills that Dereon learned were from her mother or being placed on job sites by her Vocational Rehabilitation Services job coach. "I told my grandma that I didn't want to go back. 'Cause (sic) I said I wasn't learning nothing." Dereon accused the transition program of not teaching the students the necessary skills and talents required to secure employment. She explained what she meant,

It's like a waste of time going every day. You seeing other people moving out of there with jobs, paying jobs and me stuck here in this corner still going on job training and not getting paid for it. We didn't take no field trips. We really basically didn't do anything.

Dereon's job training experience while attending the transition program consisted of working at a day care center as a teaching assistant. "We had to wear scrubs and stuff like that. Then, later my job coach had got me a job at the day care center. And, I was getting paid for that and I was attending CARE at the same time. But, after I got that job I felt like I didn't want to go back to CARE anymore." Dereon expressed a feeling of happiness to receive compensation for her services at the day care. When she volunteered her time she said, "It felt bad." She further explained the difference between getting paid versus volunteering at a job site,

'Cause (sic) I was getting paid for what I did and my time that I was there. But, when I was at a job where I was volunteering, I wasn't liking that because I was like, "It's not for me." So, I didn't feel good about it.

On-the-job-training for Dereon required specific qualifications such as being able to administer first aid and CPR. ". . . my job coach took me to the first aid classes and I prepared like get my first aid." She has learned various skills while working at day care centers. "I was around kids." She assisted them "with their lunch, dinner, cleaning 'em (sic) up so they can get ready to go home, taking 'em (sic) outside, giving 'em (sic) snacks, doing activities, classwork." In addition to assisting with the daily living needs of the children at the day care, Dereon was able to converse with her lead teacher about the

daily instructional activities. “We talked about it. Like, “What sort of activities do you think they should do today?” Those activities included finger painting.

Summary. Dereon’s responses indicate that she has demonstrated autonomous behaviors in selecting to attend the transition program and participating in various on-the-job training experiences (e.g., child care). Dereon demonstrated elements of self-regulation when she evaluated the transition program’s commitment to meet her vocational and employment related needs, as well as her ability to problem solve with her supervisor.

Miss Diva

Miss Diva enjoyed her on-the-job-training experience at a local elementary school while attending the transition program. In fact, she was sad to leave. When selecting the transition program, Miss Diva and her mother were able to find information about the program. “We looked it up online . . .” No one else told her about the program. What attracted her to the transition program was the location “and the environment that it was in.” She described the campus as having “bookstores and restaurants.” It is a place where she can “hang out with friends and go to the mall.” Miss Diva attended the transition program for two years which is the exact amount of time students remain in the program in order to receive a certificate of completion.

Miss Diva’s job training experience consisted of performing light clerical duties such as making copies and running errands. “I did not fill out applications. They had to interview us and then see if we could go into the job and do the work they tell us to do.” Miss Diva worked in a restaurant setting for a short time as part of her job training. However, she preferred working with children. “The best one [job training experience]

was working with children. Even though I don't want children I want to work with them." Another option for working with children on campus was at a local daycare. Miss Diva did not visit the daycare. She gained experience working with children while in the transition program was limited to the elementary school that she volunteered at five days a week for four hours each day.

Miss Diva did not complete a resume "because it was on the job training. According to Miss Diva, it was a non-paid position. One day they say you got the job. Then, you come in there and work." Miss Diva was not accompanied by a job coach at the elementary school. "I went by myself. I felt confident." She knew that she had to be at her job site each day and on time. Some of the job duties Miss Diva performed included "putting papers on the wall." She also checked and graded papers. "You know make copies. Help them in the lunch room." Miss Diva primarily assisted children in kindergarten through third grade. "I worked with actually all of them. Kindergarten to third grade. But, fourth and fifth I did not work with because they were older."

With respect to securing employment, it was Miss Diva who came to the conclusion that full time employment would be in her best interest rather than working a part time job. She made this comparison:

Because sometimes you work three days out the week and that's like 300 twice a week. And that's not enough for me. Three hundred dollars . . . I could just buy clothes with that and I would be broke.

Summary. In articulating her job training and employment experiences, Miss Diva demonstrated autonomous behaviors in selecting to attend the transition program and participate in the on-the-job training activities. Miss Diva's response indicates self-

regulating behaviors in her ability to make the decision to work with children and act upon her decision when she volunteered at a local elementary school. Self-realization was demonstrated through her ability to complete her on-the-job training to capitalize on her strengths in working with children.

Riesha

Riesha has worked two jobs since she has been old enough to receive a paycheck. Currently, she is employed at both jobs: a local daycare and an amusement park. She described her dual work schedule,

Well, over the summer I was working at Tropical Oasis just over the weekend. But, now since the season has changed and it's cold now Tropical Oasis is closed. So, I'm on call. I work as catering for Tropical Oasis. They have a catering company. So, I work at catering. So, I'm on call. So, they call me when they need me. So, on weekends I really just been off unless they call me and they need me for the weekend. And then I'll go in.

Riesha works at the daycare five days each week Monday thru Friday. She works eight hours each day for a total of 40 hours per week.

The transition program helped Riesha find the job at the daycare. "I worked there for a year. That's about it. I worked mostly." Riesha gets along well with her co-workers. "I liked the people and the two ladies I worked with." She explains why she liked her co-workers,

They were so nice. They made me feel so comfortable in front of them. Like how we worked with the kids and how we all worked together. That's about it. They was just really sweet ladies. Somebody they can really work with.

Riesha's co-workers were thoughtful enough to remember her birthday. She explained what they did to demonstrate their thoughtfulness,

Like my birthday was coming up and I was throwing a big 'ole (sic) party and they both brought me two gifts. And they gave it to me and they threw me a party and they gave me a cake and everything. That was cute.

No one else had given her a party before. "We had a little party with the kids and all." The children even tried to sing happy birthday to Riesha. "They were just one year olds just looking and laughing."

As for the present time, Riesha explained that her future goals include finding a "good paying job." A "good paying job" to her is "one that makes like \$15 or more an hour" or something that she is "really interested in" that she "really" wants to do. Riesha continued to define "being happy" to mean having a "good paying job." Riesha said, "I'm already happy." I'm going to stay with them [the amusement park]. Riesha has held a steady job with the same employer since she turned 16. She does not envision terminating her employment with the amusement park any time soon. Riesha registered for the transition program after completing high school. She was eager to improve her skills in reading rather than job placement. "I thought it was a program that would help me more with my reading not help me get a job. I mean I already had a job but I wanted something that paid a little more." However, as a result of participating in the transition program Riesha was successfully employed full time at a partnering daycare center.

After graduating from high school, Riesha was able to work more hours at the amusement park. "I mean I had to get more hours at work." Riesha indicated that she has become versatile at her job in taking food orders, serving customers, and counting

money. “I was a cashier. I was a server. I did surveys-a little bit of everything.” In preparing for working at the amusement park, Riesha followed the application process which led to an interview. “Well, I started when I was 16. That was the first place I went to apply for a job and I got hired. So, every since then I’ve been working there.”

Altogether, Riesha has worked at the amusement park for five years.

Job training is an initial step in becoming an employee at the amusement park. Prior to initiating any job duties on her own, Riesha received job training to become proficient at her tasks. She described the job training experience,

They give you job training when you first start. It’s real easy. They tell you all about the different rides and the restaurant and all that. And they show you videos and clips of what to do and what not to do. How to check for the person when they get inside the rides and you check to make sure that you don’t touch the person in the wrong way so they don’t get upset or nothing. It was really interesting.

In preparation for working at the daycare, Riesha received job training while participating in the transition program. Usually, students are introduced to the transition program by someone familiar with the program. Riesha recalls her experience,

Actually, I was in high school and it was my last year and this lady came. I can’t remember her name at all. She was talking and she was telling me about CARE. And then this girl that had went there she had came in there and did a presentation about CARE. And I was like, “Oh that sounds like a really nice program. I wanna (sic) go there and see how it is.” And then, when the lady came and talked to me, it was my last year of high school. She was telling me about it and I end up signing up for it. And when I signed up for it, they didn’t have any openings there.

After receiving a phone call informing her that she had been selected to participate in the transition program, Riesha made preparations to visit the campus. Riesha and her mother attended a tour of the campus and signed documents to allow Riesha to participate in the two year program. However, Riesha did not complete her tenure with the transition program.

I think it was like a year and a couple of months 'cause (sic) I got the day care job. It was a full position, a full-time position. So, I took it. Well, I quit. 'Cause (sic) you really supposed to be there for two years. But, I only stayed for like a year and couple of months because I got this full time job. But, I was still working at Tropical Oasis.

While attending the transition program, Riesha received additional job training which was specific for her placement at the daycare. She completed two months of job training. She recalls her job training at the daycare,

Actually, I came here because we do job training at CARE and I came here for job training and a person was leaving. And Flamingo Queen, she called and said, "I hear that you guys are going to have a position opening and one of my student's is job training there now. And she's really likes and I would really like for her to work there." So, they did it like that. Plus, I've been doing my job training and so they know I know the kids and I know the co-workers and all that stuff.

Riesha believes that the job training was beneficial because she was able to learn information about caring for children. "Like when you come outside, you help the kids get on the little slide or the projects you can help them with that." Riesha has learned to

help the children with whatever they need. “You can sit down and read a book with the kids. You can talk with them.” She compliments the job training,

I think the job training is really good. But, it’s only good if they’re gonna (sic) hire you. If they are not going to hire you, I don’t think you should really do it. Flamingo Queen said that it was really good to get different experience, in case you don’t have to do and like it.

There were benefits from completing her job training at the daycare. “It benefited me real good because when I was in high school I really wanted to do child care.” The other benefit of carrying out her job training experience at the daycare was receiving a full time job offer at the daycare center. Full time employment at the daycare consists of 40 hours each week with benefits such as health insurance and a 401K plan. One of the current employees was resigning and a position became available that matched Riesha’s skill level. She described the process,

...one of the ladies that I was in the room with doing my training was leaving.

‘Cause (sic) she couldn’t do school and work. So, she left there and they noticed that I been there awhile and I know the kids. And I know how to do everything and so, I just got her position when she left.”

Riesha said that the former employee was “cool” about her taking her position because she knew Riesha. Riesha likes working at the daycare. “I liked the people and the two ladies I worked with.” She reminisced about how nice the women were to her,

They were so nice. They made me feel so comfortable in front of them. Like how we worked with the kids and how we all worked together. That’s about it. They was just really sweet ladies. Somebody they can really work with.

Prior to working full time at the daycare center, Riesha received job training provided by the transition program. This form of job training consisted of using technology to communicate with others, participating in college courses, and managing personal finances. Riesha explained how the transition program assisted her with communications skills,

Well, they helped me with the email thing. They kinda (sic) showed me how to use the email thing. But, we were really using email and computers a lot. So, I really liked that we got more hands on with the computers. I knew how to type papers, of course. But, I learned how you could make it smaller, bigger, use different sizes and all that. I like that we got more hands on with the computer. In case you got a job and you had to use the computer, I will always have a little experience on how to do a little things. But, that was one of things that I really liked about CARE.

In addition to using technology to aid with her communication skills, Riesha also learned how to live independently. She shared her experiences,

Like we used to go take classes with the college students. One of them was, we was learning about how would you live on your own. Like your expenses and all of that. We did one of those with the college students. That was really cool. I liked that. Like how much rent would be. How much do you think it would be? How much money would you be spending if you had a car? Water bill? All that.

Fortunately for Riesha, she was already living in her own apartment which required her to be responsible for managing her personal finances. “Actually, when we started taking classes I was already living in my apartment. It didn’t help me do anything but it was nice to know that some people don’t know things that you have to know and need to

know when you move out.” Riesha was referring to a person having realistic expectations as compared to limited information about living on your own. “Cause (sic) a lot of people be thinking that they can move out with \$800 but you really can’t.” In the present economy Riesha further explains that in order to move into an apartment a person is required to “put the first and last month rent” down as the first payment. She adds, “You have to have a steady job.” According to Riesha, additional requirements for renting an apartment include established credit and background checks. “You gotta (sic) have good credit. And sometimes they check your background . . . to see if you’ve been in jail or did some crazy stuff. Anything that would not be good for you to live in the apartment.”

Summary. Riesha’s response demonstrates elements of self-realization in her ability to recognize her strengths and capitalize on her knowledge of working at an amusement park and daycare. Riesha has demonstrated psychological empowerment in her ability to get along with others, being liked by others, having control over her circumstances, and possessing and applying the requisite skills required in both places of employment. Riesha’s response indicates her ability to use autonomous behaviors in electing to be employed and attend the transition program simultaneously. Riesha’s ability to revise her plan to shorten her length of stay in the transition program because of an employment opportunity demonstrates self-regulation. Another demonstration of self-regulation was Riesha’s ability to determine the requirements for living independently.

Tina

Tina fully participated in the transition program for the required two years. She received a certificate of completion at the end of the year celebration. Tina decided to attend the transition program after she was referred by her high school counselor. “Cause

my counselor had told me about it. Referred me to go. So, I went.” One of the things she liked about the transition program was writing in her planner and putting appointments on the computer. Tina met some of the students who were already attending the program. “They said it’s ‘gon (sic) be good. I know you ‘gon (sic) be like you don’t like Flamingo Queen. I’m a go ahead and do it. So, at least I had friends.” Tina explained why she decided to attend the transition program, “It would be better for me to learn more stuff. Open up. Talking to people.” Tina indicated that she enjoyed meeting new people when she attended the transition program.

The transition program provided opportunities for Tina to meet other students, teachers, and college professors. Tina recollected a time when she worked on a class project,

We had went on different classes and doing different projects. Like the disease that like Chlamydia. We had to come up with what we ‘gon (sic) talk about and look it up on the computer. Print it out and present it. Then, I did that and then I came up with like epilepsy and different seizures.

Another aspect of the transition program that Tina was fond of was the job training component. As part of her job training, Tina practiced her interviewing skills each week by watching video tapes. She learned to make eye contact and ask questions during the interview. When she went on her interview, Tina said she felt “nervous.” Tina recollected how she acquired the job at a local restaurant, “They interview you first, then I got hired. They asked me how many jobs I had so far. Then, would you like to work with our staff . . . (I) had to sit there and look at them face to face.” Writing her resume was another skill that Tina learned in the transition program. “We had to do it on the computer. Like

make the resume. We had plenty of hours so we could take it to the supervisor.” Tina was happy to be employed at the restaurant. “I didn’t have to sit there like I ain’t got no job. I want to go there and work.” Tina said she was the only one in her cohort to have a job. Unfortunately, her peers would go on interviews but would not be hired. “They get the other people like they go on the interview. They say, ‘No, you can’t get this job. We’re not hiring.’”

Tina learned how to make various food items and how to clean the eating areas. “I had to learn how to make pizza. You got the cheese, the pepperoni. The pizza crust, the pepperoni, and then the cheese. You gotta let it sit there for little while then take it out.” In addition to learning how to make pizza, Tina learned another job skill of how to prepare waffles, organize sodas, and replace the different flavors of ice cream. “If there’s no more in there, we have to go back in there and get some. If it’s like the same kind, then go get the next kind.” Tina liked working at the restaurant. She especially liked “getting along with people like the supervisor and everybody.” Before working at the restaurant Tina did not know anyone. “ ‘Cause (sic) I ain’t know them at first. It was like, ‘Well, this is the new worker just show her how to do it. We became good friends.’”

Prior to working at the restaurant, Tina had been employed with a local grocery store. She bagged groceries for three years while she was in high school. Tina describes her experience while working at the grocery store, “It was okay. It was like times I had to get off like the late times. I’ll walk home. She [her mother] was like don’t do that. I’ll come get you.” Tina felt that having a job was beneficial to her. This is what she said, “To pay my rent, my bills. I help my momma out when she need help.”

After successfully completing the transition program, Tina said that she was “excited” to leave. “Two years. I was like I wanna (sic) go. I wanna (sic) go. I don’t want to stay no more. Flamingo Queen was like you don’t have another year. And, I was like Thank God.” Tina said that completing the transition program was “different” than graduating from high school. “We had a diploma and it was like different. Tina plans to continue to use her job skills in future employment settings.

Summary. Tina’s responses indicate elements of psychological empowerment in her decision to attend the transition program, her ability to get along with others, and obtain employment while examining the personal benefits for herself. Tina demonstrated a level of autonomy in having an interest to attend the transition program. She was able to implement self-regulatory behaviors in her ability to use cognitive and behavioral strategies during the interviewing process to secure employment. For example, Tina practiced job interviewing skills prior to her actual interview which involved her learning how to make eye contact with the employer and ask questions during the interview. Tina used elements of self-realization to use her strengths and talents to secure employment. For example, she was able to articulate to the employer her previous employment history and provide a resume of her work history and job specific skills.

Overall Findings

Findings suggest that most of the young women’s interview responses were mostly consistent with the various elements of self-determination to include autonomy, self-regulation, psychological empowerment, and self-realization. The young women’s interview responses in relation to the elements of self-determination are discussed below.

Autonomy. Three of the young women's interview responses (Dereon, Miss Diva, and Riesha) corroborated with the key characteristics of autonomy which include the ability to act according to one's own preferences, interests and/or abilities, and independently free from undue external influence or interference (Wehmeyer, 1995). Amber's interview response under the theme "Strengths" indicates an inconsistency with her level of autonomy as self-reported on The Arc's Self-Determination Scale. Amber had a high level of autonomy on the ASDS with respect to being able to participate in social activities. However, in her interview response she indicated that she requires her mother's permission to attend some social events. It appears that Amber is hesitant to make these types of decisions on her own. Tina's interview response under the subtheme "Career Goals" suggests that there is some inconsistency between her ASDS percentile score on the autonomy domain and her interview response. Her percentile score on the autonomy domain was the lowest of all of her domain scores. However, Tina reported a high level of autonomous behaviors in her interview responses. She was able to articulate her career goal; attend concerts; participate in the Best Buddies program; participate in the on-the-job training program; and make friends. It is possible that Tina is reluctant to participate in social activities because she has to seek her mother's prior approval. A final inconsistency demonstrated in Tina's interview responses related to autonomous behaviors is indicated under the theme "Job Training/Employment." Tina was able to articulate her interest in attending the transition program. However, Tina's interview response under the subtheme "Skills" was commensurate with her low score on the autonomy domain of the ASDS when she demonstrated a lack of autonomous behavior in being able to go shopping which required her mother's consent.

Self-Regulation. All five of the young women's interview responses (Amber, Dereon, Miss Diva, Riesha, and Tina) showed evidence of elements of self-regulation which includes both cognitive and behavioral strategies that enable each of them to take a closer look at their environment and make decisions about how to act, evaluate and revise their plans as necessary (Wehmeyer, 1995). For example, Amber's interview responses indicate that she is able to think about her plans for the future and develop a strategy to accomplish her future plans and goals. Dereon and Riesha want to own a daycare with the skills and talents they have developed as a result of their on-the-job-training experiences and paid work experiences in child care.

Psychological Empowerment. Three of the five young women's interview responses (Amber, Miss Diva, and Tina) were consistent with the elements of self-determination as well as psychological empowerment based on their responses to the ASDS. Amber's interview responses under the theme "Job Training/Employment" is corroborated by her low percentile score on the psychological empowerment domain on the ASDS when she showed a relatively low level of psychological empowerment in her inability to maintain employment at a restaurant. Miss Diva's interview response under the subtheme "Employment Challenges" is highlighted by her somewhat lower percentile score on the psychological empowerment domain of the ASDS when she demonstrated a lack of psychological empowerment in conducting online searches for employment. It should be noted that a low score in one domain on the ASDS is not representative of all behaviors in that domain. Tina demonstrated a very high level of psychological empowerment on the ASDS which was consistent with her interview response. For example, Tina expressed her strong feelings about not wanting to engage in a sexual relationship with

her ex-boyfriend because of the manner in which she was reared by her mother and the way she felt about herself. Two of the participants' (Dereon and Riesha) responses indicated inconsistencies with the elements of psychological empowerment. For example, Dereon's interview response under the subtheme "Personal Challenges" highlights an inconsistency with her high percentile score on the psychological domain of the ASDS when she did not follow through with obtaining her driver's license. It should be noted that a single interview response does not indicate a lack of performance in psychological empowerment.

Self-Realization. Four of the five young women's interview responses (Amber, Dereon, Riesha, and Tina) corroborated the key elements of self-realization which includes having a comprehensive and accurate knowledge of themselves while using their strengths and limitations in such a way as to capitalize on this knowledge (Wehmeyer, 1995). For example, Amber was able to articulate her strengths and areas for improvement as they relate to her job skills as a way to capitalize on her knowledge of herself to gain employment. Another example of notable difference between a participant's interview response and her respective ASDS percentile score is present in Miss Diva's interview responses under the subtheme "Employment Challenges." She demonstrated a lower level of self-realizing behavior when compared to her high percentile score on the self-realization domain of the ASDS when she demonstrated a lack of self-realization in describing her challenges with "big projects."

Participants emphasized their involvement in various aspects of self-determining behaviors which include their ability to act autonomously, use self-regulating behaviors, demonstrate psychological empowerment, and become self-realizing by providing

examples of ways in which they have exhibited behaviors in each domain of self-determination. Participants' interview responses reflected numerous instances in which both their strengths and self-determination skills were fostered at home, in the community, at work sites, and in the transition program. Also, participants articulated their self-determining behaviors during the transition process to include the extent in which self-determination was evident in their actions and decisions.

Research Question 3

In what ways do parents/guardians promote self-determination in a select sample of young African American women with disabilities during the transition process?

In order to address the third research question, the responses of the parents to the Parent Self-Determination Practice Survey (PSDPS) were analyzed. Their responses to items 13-14, 16-26, and 28-29, and 33-37 on the survey were designed to assess the extent to which parents promoted self-determination in their child as identified by the developer of the PSDPS instrument (Zhang, 2005). These items were scored and grouped into seven categories as recommended by Zhang (see Appendix F). An overall score and category score were computed for each of the four respondents to the survey. The parent of one of the young women, Dereon, chose not to participate in the study. This section begins with a descriptive profile of the three parents and one guardian who responded to the PSDS. This is followed by a description of each parent or guardian's responses relative to the seven self-determination categories. This section concludes with an overall summary of the data that emerged from the parent/guardian's responses across the self-determination categories on the survey. (Hereinafter, this group of interviewees will be referred to as *parents*.)

Demographic Profile of Parent Sample

A parent of four of the five African American young women with disabilities participated in this study. All four are female (three mothers and a grandmother). Each parent was involved with her daughter or granddaughter throughout the transition process. A summary of selected demographic characteristics of the parents including their daughter's pseudonym, parenting status, highest educational level, and family income level is presented in Table 5. This information was provided by the parent on the Parent Self-Determination Practice Survey.

Table 5

Summary of Demographic Characteristics of Parent Participants

Parent/Daughter	Parent Status	Educational Level	Family Income Level
Bella/Miss Diva	Mother	College Graduate	Lower Middle
Emily/Amber	Mother	College	Middle
Macela/Riesha	Grandmother	Some College	Lower Middle
Sharon/Tina	Mother	Some College	Lower Middle

A descriptive profile of each of the parents' scores yielded as a result of their self-report on the PSDPS is presented below.

Bella

Bella is the mother of Miss Diva. She reports that Miss Diva is an only child and is adored by her family members. Bella is a college graduate with a family income level of \$25,000 to \$50,000. She describes Miss Diva as an independent young lady who makes her own choices. These days Bella spends time with Miss Diva preparing her for independent living and how to respond in various social situations such as what to expect

when on a date and hanging out with friends. Bella was pleased with the transition program and would like to see more young African American women with disabilities participate in the program.

Emily

Emily is the mother of Amber. She reports that Amber is the second oldest of three children. Emily graduated from college and reports a family income level of \$50,000 to \$80,000. She is quite pleased with Amber's involvement in the transition program and is confident that Amber will learn the skills necessary to prepare her for adulthood. She believes that Amber is learning how to be independent and to make choices for herself.

Macela

Macela is the grandmother of Riesha. She reports that Riesha is the youngest of three children. Macela has some college education and reports a family income level of \$25,000 to \$50,000. Macela encouraged Riesha to participate in the transition program because she felt that the program would provide Riesha with the skills she did not acquire in high school. She has been a supporter of Riesha and continues to encourage her to pursue her dreams. She is proud of the young woman Riesha has become.

Sharon

Sharon is the mother of Tina. She reports that Tina is the second oldest of five children. Sharon has some college education and reports a family income level of \$25,000 to \$50,000. Sharon is pleased with the outcome of the transition program; she feels that Tina was able to improve her communication skills as a result of her participation in the program. Sharon is protective of her daughter while allowing her to make some decisions for herself.

Parent Engagement in Fostering Self-Determination Behaviors in their Daughter during the Transition Process

The three mothers and a grandmother ($n = 4$) who participated in this study, responded to a series of items on the *Parent Self-Determination Practice Survey* designed to measure parents' level of engagement in fostering or encouraging self-determination behaviors in their child. For each item, respondents were asked to select a response option that they believe best represents their actions or behavior with respect to their child. The overall score that each respondent received on the series of items is reported in Table 6. The maximum score possible is 43 (score range = 0 to 43). The higher the score, the greater the extent to which a parent fosters, encourages or provides opportunities for her child to develop and demonstrate self-determination.

Table 6

Summary Statistics on Parent Participant's Overall Engagement in Fostering Self-Determination Behaviors as Measured by the Parent Self-Determination Practice Survey

Parent	Total Raw Score
Bella	39
Emily	37
Macela	42
Sharon	30
Mean Score	37.0

As is shown in Table 6, three of the four respondents had total raw scores on the PSDPS that were equal to or higher than the mean score for all four participants (Mean = 37.0). Macela had the highest score (42) and Sharon the lowest (30).

To gain insight into the parents' relative strengths and weaknesses across the seven areas (categories) of parent engagement in fostering self-determination in their child as delineated by Zhang (1995), their responses to the PSDS were examined. Several items on the PSDS were grouped under a given category (see Appendix H). These areas (categories) were: (a) daughter's personal independence, (b) daughter's participation in making household decisions, (c) parents listening to and talking about their daughter's interests for the future, (d) parents allowing their daughter opportunities to make daily decisions that have important life impacts, (e) parents' teaching of goal setting and assisting their daughter in recognition of weaknesses, (f) parents' intent to control their daughter's future career and living arrangement, and (g) parents dealing with unexpected or undesired behaviors.

For each of the seven categories described above, the total score points earned by each parent based on their responses to items in the category was computed (each response option for an item was assigned a score point, higher score points reflect more positive engagement in fostering self-determined behavior; an individual's total score points for the category was the sum of the points assigned the response option selected for each item); next, a percent (%) score for the category was computed (i.e., the number of score points earned expressed as a percentage of the maximum possible total score points for the category). The data for each of the parent respondents on the seven categories are reported in Table 7.

Table 7

Respondents' Scores on the Parent Self-Determination Practice Survey by Category

Category	Max. Score	Bella		Emily		Macela		Sharon	
		Score	%	Score	%	Score	%	Score	%
1. Daughter's personal independence (6)	6	6	100	5	83	6	100	5	83
2. Daughter's participation in household decisions (5)	5	4	80	4	80	4	80	3	60
3. Parent listening to & talking about their daughter's interests for the future (8)	8	8	100	6	75	8	100	4	50
4. Parent allowing their daughter opportunities to make important life impact decisions (8)	8	8	100	8	100	8	100	6	75
5. Parent teaching goal setting, assisting their daughter in recognition of weaknesses (4)	4	4	100	2	50	4	100	4	100
6. Parent intent to control their daughter's future career and living arrangements (2)	2	1	50	2	100	2	100	2	100
7. Parent dealing with unexpected or undesired behaviors (10)	10	8	80	10	100	10	100	6	60

A graph of the participants' scores on the categories derived from the PSDPS is shown in Figure 3.

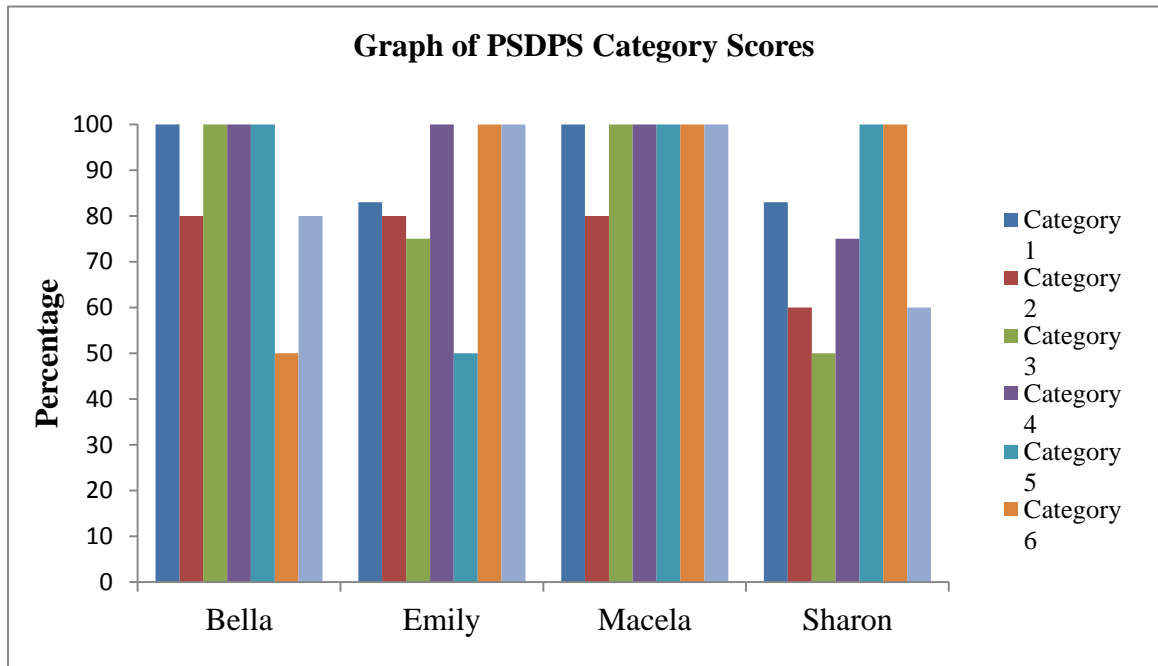


Figure 3. Graph of Participants' Scores on Categories of the Parent Self-Determination Practice Survey

A descriptive profile of each of the four parents' scores yielded as a result of their self-report on the categories of the PSDPS is presented below.

Bella

Category 1: Daughter's personal independence. Bella received a score of 6 (% score = 100) for this category. She reported that she frequently (weekly) provides her daughter opportunities to participate in household chores such as cooking, washing dishes, washing clothes, cleaning up rooms, or taking out trash. Also, Bella indicated that she frequently (weekly or more often) provides opportunities for her daughter to deal with

salespeople at stores and restaurants. Thus, Bella promotes multiple opportunities for her daughter to practice and engage in autonomous behaviors at home.

Category 2: Daughter's participation in making household decisions. Bella received a score of 4 (% score = 80) for this category. She indicated that she allows her daughter to frequently (weekly or more often) participate in making household decisions. When her daughter disagrees with her, Bella reported that she talks to her daughter about differences and they make a decision about the disagreement together. Bella has demonstrated a relatively moderate level of promoting self-regulating behaviors in her daughter by allowing her daughter to participate in making household decisions.

Category 3: Parents listening to and talking about their daughter's interests for the future. Bella received a score of 8 (% score =100) for this category. Bella reported that she likes to ask and listen to her daughter talk about her interests. She indicated that she talks to her daughter on a weekly basis about what she will do after high school and encourages her daughter to make her own decisions about what to do after high school. Thus, Bella reported a high level of promoting self-regulating behaviors in her daughter when she indicated that she likes to inquire and listen to her daughter's interests.

Category 4: Parents allowing their daughter opportunities to make daily decisions that have important life impacts. Bella received a score of 8 (% score =100) in this category. She concurs that she gives her daughter opportunities to make decisions that have an important impact on her academic goals, such as what program and what courses she wants to take. She also indicated that she gives her daughter opportunities to make decisions that have an important impact on her schedules at home, as well as gives her opportunities to make decisions that have an important impact on her personal life, such

as her diet and sleep habit. Bella indicated that she does talk to her daughter about her goal and daily decisions in relation to the goal. Category 4 represents the promotion of self-regulating behaviors. Bella promotes self-regulating behaviors in her daughter by providing her with opportunities to make decisions with respect to her daughter's academic goals, schedules at home, and personal life decisions.

Category 5: Parents' teaching of goal setting and assisting their daughter in recognition of weaknesses. Bella received a score of 4 (% score = 100) on this category. Bella reported that she teaches her daughter how to set a realistic goal, break that goal into smaller steps, and then work on the smaller steps. She also indicated that she assists her daughter in realistically recognizing and accepting her weaknesses. Category 5 represents both self-regulating and self-realizing behaviors. Bella reported a high level of teaching her daughter how to establish and sequence her goals into manageable steps which is a characteristic of self-regulation. Bella also assists her daughter in identifying her strengths and accepting her weaknesses which is a form of self-realization.

Category 6: Parents' intent to control their daughter's future career and living arrangement. Bella received a score of 1 (% score = 50) for this category. Bella reported that she wants her daughter to have a career of what she (her daughter) wants rather than what Bella plans for her. She indicated, however, that she wants her daughter to live with her for as long as possible rather than live independently as early as possible. Category 6 represents the ability to be psychologically empowered in selecting a career path and living independently as early as possible. Bella reported a lower level of promoting psychological empowerment in daughter when she indicated that she wants her daughter

to live with her as long as possible, rather than wanting her daughter to live independently as soon as possible.

Category 7: Parents dealing with unexpected or undesired behaviors. Bella received a score of 8 (% score = 80) in this category. Bella reported that if her daughter came home one hour late after school she would ask her what happened and talk to her about what she should do the next time she might be late coming home, rather than reprimand her or act normal as if she did not come home late. When asked how she would respond to her daughter wanting to get a job after school at a local department store, Bella indicated that she did not think that her daughter was ready to be working, Bella reported that her daughter is not in school. Bella indicated that she would discuss the pros and cons with her daughter and let her daughter make the best decisions and support her decision to attend a college that is far away from home and required out-of-state tuition, even though Bella wants her to attend a local college that she (Bella) has liked for a long time. When asked if her daughter had an argument or fight with a brother, sister, neighbor, or friend, Bella reported that she would ask them to stop and direct them to discuss their differences. If her daughter earned a low grade from school, Bella indicated that she would talk to her daughter about what went wrong and what to do next. Category 7 represents all four domains of self-determination: autonomy, psychological empowerment, self-regulation, and self-realization. Bella reported a moderate level of promoting self-determination in category 7. The promotion of autonomous behaviors was promoted in Bella's willingness to discuss with her daughter what she (her daughter) should do the next time she came home late. Psychological empowerment was not fully promoted because Bella indicated that her daughter was not ready for employment. Self-

regulation was promoted when Bella indicated that she would discuss the benefits and disadvantages with her daughter about attending a college away from home. Also, self-realization was promoted when Bella reported that she would discuss her daughter's academic performance with her.

Summary. Bella showed a relatively high overall level of promoting self-determination in her daughter based on her responses to the PSDS. The following four areas are the ones in which Bella promoted a high level of promoting self-determination in her daughter: personal independence, listening to and talking about her daughter's interests for the future, allowing her daughter opportunities to make important life impact decisions, and teaching her daughter goal setting and assisting her in recognition of her weaknesses. In the area of psychological empowerment, however, she seemed to inhibit her daughter, in that she would like her daughter to live with her for as long as possible, rather than to live independently.

Emily

Category 1: Daughter's personal independence. Emily received a score of 5 (% score = 83) for this category. She reported that she rarely provides her daughter opportunities to participate in household chores such as cooking, washing dishes, washing clothes, cleaning up rooms, or taking out trash. On the other hand, Emily indicated that she frequently (weekly or more often) provides opportunities for her daughter to deal with salespeople at stores and restaurants. Emily's response to category 1 indicates a moderate level of promoting opportunities for her daughter to engage in autonomous behaviors such as doing household chores.

Category 2: Daughter's participation in making household decisions. Emily received a score of 4 (% score = 80) for this category. She indicated that she does allow her daughter to participate in making household decisions, but only rarely. However, when her daughter disagrees with her, Emily reported that she listens to her daughter. Category 2 represents self-regulating behaviors. Emily's response to this category suggests a moderate level of promoting self-regulating behaviors in her daughter by allowing her daughter to rarely participate in making household decisions. Another example of promoting self-regulation is when Emily listens to her daughter after a disagreement.

Category 3: Parents listening to and talking about their daughter's interests for the future. Emily received a score of 6 (% score = 75) for this category. Emily reported that she likes to ask and listen to her daughter talk about her interests. She indicated that she talks to her daughter approximately on a monthly basis about what she will do after high school and encourages her daughter to make her own decisions about what to do after high school. Category 3 is representative of self-regulating behaviors. Emily's response to this category indicates a moderately low level of promoting self-regulating behaviors in her daughter. For example, Emily self-reported that she likes to ask and listen to her daughter's interests. However, Emily does not frequently discuss her daughter's post high school plans.

Category 4: Parents allowing their daughter opportunities to make daily decisions that have important life impacts. Emily received a score of 8 (% score = 100) in this category. She concurs that she gives her daughter opportunities to make decisions that have an important impact on her academic goals, such as what program and what courses

she wants to take. She also indicated that she gives her daughter opportunities to make decisions that have an important impact on her schedules at home, as well as gives her opportunities to make decisions that have an important impact on her personal life, such as her diet and sleep habit. She further indicated that she does talk to her daughter about her goal and daily decisions in relation to the goal. Emily has demonstrated a high level of promoting self-regulation in her daughter.

Category 5: Parents' teaching of goal setting and assisting their daughter in recognition of weaknesses. Emily received a score of 2 (% score = 50) on this category. Emily reported that she teaches her daughter how to set a realistic goal, break that goal into smaller steps, and then work on the smaller steps. She also indicated that there is no need to assist her daughter in realistically recognizing and accepting her weaknesses. Category 5 represents both self-regulating and self-realizing behaviors. Emily reported a lower level of promoting self-regulation and self-realization in her daughter. Emily indicated that she does teach her daughter goal setting strategies. She also indicated that there was no need to assist her daughter in realistically recognizing and accepting her weaknesses. The ability to recognize and accept weaknesses is a key characteristic that assists her daughter in identifying her strengths and accepting her weaknesses which is a form of self-realization.

Category 6: Parents' intent to control their daughter's future career and living arrangement. Emily received a score of 2 (% score = 100) for this category. Emily reported that she wants her daughter to have a career of what she (her daughter) wants rather than what Emily plans for her. She also indicated that she wants her daughter to live independently as early as possible rather than live with her for as long as possible.

Category 6 represents the promotion of psychological empowerment. Emily's responses indicate a high level of promoting psychological empowerment in supporting the career path in which her daughter selects. She also is supportive of her daughter's desire to move out early.

Category 7: Parents dealing with unexpected or undesired behaviors. Emily received a score of 10 (% score = 100) in this category. Emily reported that if her daughter came home one hour late after school she would ask her what happened and talk to her about what she should do the next time she might be late coming home, rather than reprimand her or act normal as if she did not come home late. She reported that if her daughter wanted to get a job after school at a local department store but she (Emily) did not think that her daughter was ready to be working and her daughter applied for the job and was hired, she would talk to her about the pros and cons and let her (daughter) decide, rather than tell her daughter not to go to work or just ignore it. When asked how she would respond to her daughter wanting to get a job after school at a local department store but she did not think that her daughter was ready to be working, Emily reported that her daughter is not in school. Emily indicated that she would discuss the pros and cons with her daughter and let her daughter make the best decisions. She also indicated that she would support her daughter's decision to attend a college that is far away from home and requires out-of-state tuition, even though Emily wants her to attend a local college that she (Emily) has liked for a long time. When asked what she would do if her daughter had an argument or fight with a brother, sister, neighbor, or friend, Emily reported that she would ask them to stop and direct them to discuss their differences. If her daughter earned a low grade from school, Emily indicated that she would talk to her daughter

about what went wrong and what to do next. Category 7 represents all four domains of self-determination: autonomy, psychological empowerment, self-regulation, and self-realization. Emily self-reported a relatively high level of promoting self-determination in category 7. The promotion of autonomous behaviors was promoted in Emily's willingness to discuss with her daughter what she (her daughter) should do the next time she came home late. Psychological empowerment was promoted when Emily indicated that she would discuss the pros and cons about working at a local department store. Self-regulation was promoted when Emily indicated that she would discuss the benefits and disadvantages with her daughter about attending a college away from home. Also, self-realization was promoted when Emily self-reported that she would discuss her daughter's academic performance.

Summary. Emily showed a relatively high level of promoting self-determination in her daughter based on her responses to the PSDS. She was strongest in promoting self-determination in her daughter in the following three areas: allowing her daughter opportunities to make important life impact decisions, her intent to refrain from controlling her daughter's future career and living arrangements, and dealing with unexpected or undesired behaviors. Her lowest score relative to her performance in promoting self-determination in her daughter was in category 5: teaching goal setting and assisting her daughter in recognition of weaknesses. While Emily indicated that she teaches her daughter goal setting strategies, she however, reported that there is no need for her to assist her daughter in recognizing her strengths and accepting her weaknesses.

Macela

Category 1: Daughter's personal independence. Macela received a score of 6 (% score = 100) for this category. She reported that she frequently (weekly) provides her granddaughter opportunities to participate in household chores such as cooking, washing dishes, washing clothes, cleaning up rooms, or taking out trash. Also, Macela indicated that she frequently (weekly or more often) provides opportunities for her granddaughter to deal with salespeople at stores and restaurants. Macela's responses indicate a high level of promoting autonomy in her granddaughter.

Category 2: Daughter's participation in making household decisions. Macela received a score of 4 (% score = 80) for this category. She indicated that she frequently (weekly or more often) allows her granddaughter to participate in making household decisions. When her granddaughter disagrees with her, Macela reported that she talks to her granddaughter about differences and they make a decision about the disagreement together.

Category 3: Parents listening to and talking about their daughter's interests for the future. Macela received a score of 8 (% score =100) for this category. Macela reported that she likes to ask and listen to her granddaughter talk about her interests. She indicated that she talks to her granddaughter on a weekly basis about what she will do after high school and encourages her granddaughter to make her own decisions about what to do after high school. Category 3 suggests that Macela reported a high level of promoting self-regulating behaviors in her granddaughter.

Category 4: Parents allowing their daughter opportunities to make daily decisions that have important life impacts. Macela received a score of 8 (% score =100) in this

category. She concurs that she gives her granddaughter opportunities to make decisions that have an important impact on her academic goals, such as what program and what courses she wants to take. She also indicated that she gives her granddaughter opportunities to make decisions that have an important impact on her schedules at home, as well as gives her opportunities to make decisions that have an important impact on her personal life, such as her diet and sleep habit. Macela indicated that she talks to her granddaughter about her goal and daily decisions in relation to the goal. Category 4 represents the promotion of self-regulating behaviors. Macela promotes self-regulating behaviors in her granddaughter by providing her with opportunities to make decisions with respect to her daughter's academic goals, schedules at home, and personal life decisions.

Category 5: Parents' teaching of goal setting and assisting their daughter in recognition of weaknesses. Macela received a score of 4 (% score = 100) on this category. Macela reported that she teaches her granddaughter how to set a realistic goal, break that goal into smaller steps, and then work on the smaller steps. She also indicated that she assists her granddaughter in realistically recognizing and accepting her weaknesses. Category 5 represents both self-regulating and self-realizing behaviors. Macela reported a high level of teaching her granddaughter how to establish and sequence her goals into manageable steps which is a characteristic of self-regulation. Macela also assists her granddaughter in identifying her strengths and accepting her weaknesses.

Category 6: Parents' intent to control their daughter's future career and living arrangement. Macela received a score of 2 (% score = 100) for this category. Macela

reported that she wants her granddaughter to have a career of what she (her granddaughter) wants rather than what Macela plans for her. She indicated that she wants her granddaughter to live independently as early as possible rather than live with her for as long as possible. Category 6 represents the promotion of psychological empowerment. Macela's responses indicate a high level of promoting psychological empowerment in supporting the career path in which her granddaughter selects. She also is supportive of her grandddaughter's desire to move out early.

Category 7: Parents dealing with unexpected or undesired behaviors. Macela received a score of 10 (% score = 100) in this category. Macela reported that if her granddaughter came home one hour late after school she would ask her what happened and talk to her about what she should do the next time she might be late coming home, rather than reprimand her or act normal as if she did not come home late. When asked how she would respond to her granddaughter wanting to get a job after school at a local department store but Macela did not think that her daughter was ready to be working, Macela reported that she would talk with her granddaughter about the pros and cons and let her granddaughter decide. Additionally, Macela indicated that she would discuss the pros and cons with her granddaughter and let her granddaughter make the best decisions and support her decision to attend a college that is far away from home and requires out-of-state tuition, even though Macela wants her to attend a local college that she (Macela) has liked for a long time. When asked if her granddaughter had an argument or fight with a brother, sister, neighbor, or friend, Macela reported that she would ask them to stop and direct them to discuss their differences. If her granddaughter earned a low grade from school, Macela indicated that she would talk to her granddaughter about what went

wrong and what to do next. Category 7 represents all four domains of self-determination: autonomy, psychological empowerment, self-regulation, and self-realization. Macela self-reported a high level of promoting self-determination in category 7. The promotion of autonomous behaviors was promoted in Macela's willingness to discuss with her granddaughter what she (her granddaughter) should do the next time she came home late. Macela's responses indicate that she promotes psychological empowerment in discussing the pros and cons of employment with her granddaughter. Self-regulation was promoted when Macela indicated that she would discuss the benefits and disadvantages with her granddaughter about attending a college away from home. Also, self-realization was promoted when Macela self-reported that she would talk to her granddaughter's about her academic performance.

Summary. Macela showed the highest overall level of promoting self-determination when among the participant sample for the PSDPS. She received full score points in terms of positively promoting self-determination in her granddaughter in six of the seven categories assessed by the PSDS: promoting her granddaughter's personal independence, listening to and talking about her interests for the future, allowing her granddaughter opportunities to make important life impact decisions, teaching goal setting and assisting her granddaughter in recognition of weaknesses, intent to control her granddaughter's future career and living arrangements and dealing with unexpected or undesired behaviors. Her lowest score relative to her performance across all of the categories was in category 2: daughter's participation in household decisions. Macela self-reported that she talks about differences and makes decisions with her granddaughter whenever her granddaughter disagrees with her. Category 2 reflects self-regulating behaviors in which

a person is able to make decisions for herself. In this case, a higher score would reflect Macela indicating that she listens to her granddaughter.

Sharon

Category 1: Daughter's personal independence. Sharon received a score of 5 (% score = 83) for this category. She reported that she frequently (weekly) provides her granddaughter opportunities to participate in household chores such as cooking, washing dishes, washing clothes, cleaning up rooms, or taking out trash. However, Sharon indicated that she rarely provides opportunities for her daughter to deal with salespeople at stores and restaurants.-Sharon's response to category 1 indicates a moderate level of promoting opportunities for her daughter to engage in autonomous behaviors.

Category 2: Daughter's participation in making household decisions. Sharon received a score of 3 (% score = 60) for this category. She indicated that she does allow her daughter to participate in making household decisions, but only rarely. However, when her daughter disagrees with her, Sharon reported that she talks to her daughter about differences and they make a decision about the disagreement together. In category 2, Sharon reported a relatively lower level of promoting self-regulating behaviors in her daughter by not frequently allowing her daughter to participate in making household decisions.

Category 3: Parents listening to and talking about their daughter's interests for the future. Sharon received a score of 4 (% score =50) for this category. Sharon reported that she likes to ask and listen to her daughter talk about her interests. When asked how often does she talk to her daughter about what she will do after high school, Sharon replied "not applicable." However, Sharon does encourage her daughter to make her own

decisions about what to do after high school. Category 3 suggests that Sharon reported a relatively lower level of promoting self-regulating behaviors in her daughter when she indicated that she likes to inquire and listen to her granddaughter's interests.

Category 4: Parents allowing their daughter opportunities to make daily decisions that have important life impacts. Sharon received a score of 6 (% score =75) in this category. She concurs that she gives her daughter opportunities to make decisions that have an important impact on her academic goals, such as what program and what courses she wants to take. She also indicated that she gives her daughter opportunities to make decisions that have an important impact on her schedules at home, as well as to make decisions that have an important impact on her personal life, such as her diet and sleep habit. When asked if she talks to her daughter about her goal and daily decisions in relation to the goal, Sharon replied "not applicable." Sharon has demonstrated a lower level of promoting self-regulation in her daughter in category 4. For example, Sharon reported that she provides opportunities for her daughter to make important decisions related to her academic goals, as well as promoting opportunities for her daughter to make decisions that impact her personal life. However, Sharon did not select a response option on the PSPDS that indicated her level of engagement in discussing her daughter's goal setting behaviors.

Category 5: Parents' teaching of goal setting and assisting their daughter in recognition of weaknesses. Sharon received a score of 4 (% score = 100) on this category. Sharon reported that she teaches her daughter how to set a realistic goal, break that goal into smaller steps, and then work on the smaller steps. She also indicated that she assists her daughter in realistically recognizing and accepting her weaknesses. Category 5

represents both self-regulating and self-realizing behaviors. Sharon reported a high level of teaching her daughter how to establish and sequence her goals into manageable steps which is a characteristic of self-regulation. Sharon also assists her daughter in identifying her strengths and accepting her weaknesses which is a form of self-realization.

Category 6: Parents' intent to control their daughter's future career and living arrangement. Sharon received a score of 2 (% score = 100) for this category. Sharon reported that she wants her daughter to have a career of what she (her daughter) wants rather than what Sharon plans for her. She indicated that she wants her daughter to live independently as early as possible rather than live with her for as long as possible. Category 6 represents the promotion of psychological empowerment. Sharon's responses indicate a high level of promoting psychological empowerment in supporting the career path in which her daughter selects. She also is supportive of her daughter's desire to move out early.

Category 7: Parents dealing with unexpected or undesired behaviors. Sharon received a score of 6 (% score = 60) in this category. Sharon reported that if her daughter came home one hour late after school she would ask her what happened and talk to her about what she should do the next time she might be late coming home, rather than reprimand her or act normal as if she did not come home late. When asked how she would respond to her daughter wanting to get a job after school at a local department store but Sharon did not think that her daughter was ready to be working, Sharon reported that her daughter is not in school. Sharon indicated that she would discuss the pros and cons with her daughter and let her daughter make the best decisions and support her decision to attend a college that is far away from home and requires out-of-state tuition,

even though Sharon wants her to attend a local college that she (Sharon) has liked for a long time. When asked if her daughter had an argument or fight with a brother, sister, neighbor, or friend, Sharon reported that she would ask them to stop and direct them to discuss their differences. When asked if her daughter earned a low grade from school, Sharon indicated “not applicable.” Category 7 represents all four domains of self-determination: autonomy, psychological empowerment, self-regulation, and self-realization. Sharon self-reported a relatively low level of promoting self-determination in category 7. The promotion of autonomous behavior was promoted in Sharon’s willingness to discuss with her daughter what she (her daughter) should do the next time she came home late. Psychological empowerment was not indicated with respect to maintaining employment after school when Sharon disclosed that her daughter was not in school. Self-regulation was promoted when Sharon indicated that she would discuss the benefits and disadvantages with her daughter about attending a college away from home. Also, self-realization was promoted when Sharon self-reported that she would talk to her daughter about her academic performance.

Summary. In general, Sharon showed the lowest overall level of promoting self-determination when compared to the other parents who responded to the PSDPS. Her lowest scores relative to her performance across all of the categories were in the following categories: parents listening to and talking about the daughter’s interests for the future and parents dealing with unexpected or undesired behaviors. Sharon demonstrated a higher level of promoting self-determination in her daughter in teaching her daughter goal setting and assisting her daughter in recognition of her weaknesses, as well as refraining from controlling her daughter’s future career and living arrangements. Sharon

did not select a response option on the PSDPS when asked how often she discusses her daughter's post high school plans.

Overall Findings

In summary, across the seven categories, the parents responded to questions about how they foster practices of self-determination in their African American daughters with disabilities throughout the transition process. Three of the four parents participating in this study (Bella, Emily, and Macela) reported relatively high overall levels of engagement in fostering or encouraging self-determination behaviors in their daughter. In reviewing Figure 3, Macela was the most consistent in promoting self-determination; Bella was next followed by Emily and then Sharon.

Examination of participant scores on the seven categories measured by the PSDPS showed particular strengths and weaknesses. As is shown in Figure 4, the category in which there appeared to be the greatest variability among the four study parents was that of category 3: parents listening to and talking about their daughter's interests for the future. This category measures Question 19 (How often do you talk to your daughter about what she will do after high school?) which accounted for the greatest variability in category 3 with one half of the participants (Macela and Bella) scoring higher than the remaining participants; however, Sharon had a lower score relative to the participant sample suggesting that she does not engage in conversation with her daughter about her daughter's post-high school plans. On two of the categories, category 1: daughter's personal independence and category 2: daughter's participation in making household decisions, there was less variability among participants. Category 1 measures the parent's level of engagement in providing opportunities for their daughter to participate in

household chores (e.g., cooking, washing dishes, washing clothes, cleaning rooms, or taking out the trash) and the parent's ability to listen and discuss their daughter's interests (e.g., employment, career choices, family planning, and postsecondary options) for the future. Category 2 measures the parent's level of engagement and frequency in allowing their daughter to participate in making household decisions (e.g., frequently, rarely, daughter does not want to, or never; listening to daughter, ordering daughter to listen to her, or discussing differences and making decisions together). One half of the participants scored higher than the other half of the participants on category 1. On category 2, three of the participants (Bella, Emily, and Macela) showed relatively higher scores on the category when compared to the participant sample.

On category 4: parents allowing their daughter opportunities to make daily decisions that have important life impacts, the majority of the participants (Bella, Emily, and Macela) showed relatively high scores on the category when compared to the participant sample; however, Sharon had a lower score relative to the participant sample, suggesting that she reported relatively low levels of fostering and engaging her daughter in opportunities to make daily decisions that have major life impacts. Category 4 measures the parent's level of engagement in fostering or encouraging their daughter to make decisions that have an important impact on her daily life (e.g., academic goals, schedules at home, personal life, and goals).

On category 5: parents' teaching of goal setting and assisting the daughter in recognition of weaknesses, the majority of the participants (Bella, Macela, and Sharon) showed relatively high scores on the category when compared to the participant sample; however, Emily had a lower score relative to the participant sample, suggesting that she

reported a relatively lower levels of fostering and engaging her daughter in opportunities to set realistic goals and recognize her weaknesses. Category 5 measures the parent's level of teaching her daughter how to set a realistic goal, break that goal into smaller steps, and work on the smaller steps (e.g., academic, career, and personal goals) as well as assisting her daughter in realistically recognizing and accepting her weaknesses (e.g., areas in her academic, career, and personal life to improve).

On category 6: Parents' intent to control the daughter's future career and living arrangement, the majority of the participants (Emily, Macela, and Sharon) showed relatively high scores on the category when compared to the participant sample; however Bella had a lower score relative to the participant sample, suggesting that she reported a relatively lower level of demonstrating less of an intent to control her daughter's future career and living arrangement. Category 6 measures the parent's intent to control their daughter's future career (e.g., career choices selected by her daughter rather than her parent) and living arrangement (e.g., independent or semi-independent living arrangement).

On category 7: parents dealing with unexpected or undesired behaviors, two of the participants (Emily and Macela) showed relatively high scores on the category when compared to the participant sample; however Sharon had a score relatively lower than the participant sample, suggesting that she reported a relatively lower level of dealing with unexpected or undesired behaviors in her daughter. Category 7 measures the parents' ability to deal with unexpected or undesired behaviors (e.g., daughter coming home late after school, daughter wanting a job after school, daughter wanting to attend an out-of-

state college, arguments between the daughter and relatives or friends, and daughter receiving low grades).

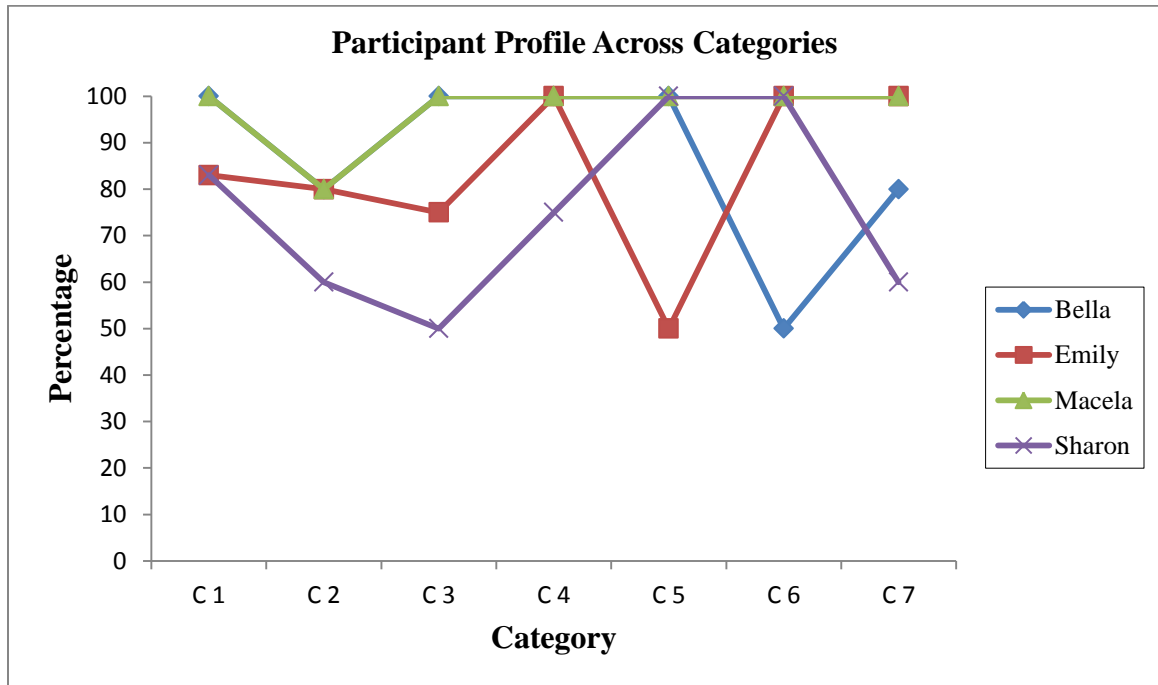


Figure 4. Graph of Participant Profile on Categories of the Parent Self-Determination Practice Survey

Research Question 4

From the perspective of parents/guardians, what aspects of self-determination are evident in their daughter's development during the transition process? What strengths or challenges do they report?

The fourth research question involved describing the parents' or guardian's perceptions about the transition process for young African American women with disabilities. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three parents and one guardian. (Hereinafter, this group of interviewees will be referred to as *parents*.)

Semi-Structured Interviews of Parents

Individual face-to-face interviews were conducted with the sample of parents of young African American women with disabilities to obtain in-depth reports of their perceptions about the transition process for their daughters. One of the parents requested to participate in the interview by telephone.

Autonomy

Engagement in Social Activities

Parents of the young African American women with disabilities who participated in this study identified several sources of social activities in which their daughter or granddaughter participated during the transition process. All of the young women were able to select their own social activities whether it was shopping at the mall, going on a road trip, hanging out with friends, or dating a significant other. Parents reported that they encouraged the young women to communicate their whereabouts and agree upon a time when they would return from their social activities.

Bella. From Bella's report it was evident that Miss Diva showed a great amount of autonomy in her behavior. Bella reported that she encouraged Miss Diva to participate in social activities. One of the postsecondary activities in which Miss Diva actively participated was the *Best Buddies* program. Bella described her daughter's involvement with Best Buddies:

The Best Buddies program which was a wonderful, wonderful program. She had an opportunity to link with another person on campus who was her buddy, but that person would also come to the house. They would go out into the community going

to the movies, dinner, and just be a young person. So, she had a lot of those activities after graduating from high school.

Bella also reported that while attending the transition program, Miss Diva was able to assist with the annual homecoming parade as a Best Buddies member. She helped with the creation of a mobile float and the design of the logo. Bella recalled Miss Diva's participation with the homecoming parade,

So, they had an opportunity to do that and actually walk in the parade with the other students and throw beads and candy and go through the whole thing. It was really fun because I had an opportunity to be there and sit through all the homecoming activities, the concert. I mean it was just really a big deal.

According to Bella, Best Buddies is a national program created on most college campuses to link non-disabled students with students who either have a disability or come from low-income families. Usually, the students who are partnered with a Best Buddy have not had the opportunity or money to participate and attend community events, go to a movie theater, or have fun at a theme park. Best Buddies is a program for students who would otherwise not have the exposure to cultural events and social activities to participate in events with a Best Buddy mentor. Bella had this to say about her daughter's Best Buddy,

That was a good opportunity. And her buddy was great. They were the best of friends and a lot of times I would come home and they'll be in Miss Diva's room laying in the bed watching TV, eating, or sleeping. You know they really became friends.

Another social activity for Miss Diva revolved around her meeting an African American female teacher at the elementary school where she completed her job training. Bella said that although Miss Diva is no longer working at the school, she is still friends with the teacher. She reported that on some weekends Miss Diva spends the weekend with the teacher and her kids. According to Bella, Miss Diva “really took to her and she was able to develop a relationship from it.”

Bella also reported that Miss Diva participates in the community by volunteering her time at a local outreach center. “We’ve done the homeless food shelter thing.” When Miss Diva is not working, Bella plans volunteer activities for her to do. “As a matter of fact, since she’s not working I was going to discuss with her doing some volunteer work just to get her out of the house and into the community.” According to Bella, Miss Diva sings in the church choir, attends Sunday school, and serves food to church members. She describes these activities as follows; “She do the feeding ministry. We feed members in the church. She’s pretty active in the church.” Miss Diva has not had that many community involvement experiences, however.

Although Miss Diva has had somewhat limited community involvement, she does engage in other social outings with her friends. Whenever she is out with friends, Bella reports that Miss Diva communicates where she is going, with whom, and what time she will return home. Bella recalled a time when Miss Diva went out with friends,

We pretty much do stay within the curfew. I mean if she’s out, she’s had a couple of dates. She’s usually home by one. You know or 1:30 or whatever. But she has weekends where she stays over to her girlfriend’s. First time she ever went to a nightclub she stayed with her girlfriend and she came back and I said what did you

guys do? She said we went to the club last night. Then, there came another set of instructions for the club.

Bella considered the transition program a positive learning opportunity for Miss Diva. She noted that Miss Diva immediately transitioned from high school to enter the transition program which was a “wonderful experience for her because she had the opportunity to participate in some higher learning activities that she probably would never had that experience.” Those experiences involved Miss Diva participating in the homecoming parade. “Actually, being in the parade and had an opportunity to be part of those activities; all kind of campus activities that were going on; the CARE program was involved in.”

Emily. Emily believed that Amber’s social life has increased during the transition process. Amber spends time with her friends and participates in various social outings. Emily had this to say:

They watch movies at each others’ houses. They go shopping. They’ve been to football games and basketball games. She went on a trip with one of her friends. Four days with her Spanish speaking friend and most of the folks spoke Spanish, but Amber went any way. They offered for me but I didn’t go . . . She’s been talking about driving, but we haven’t gotten to that part yet.

Another social activity in which Amber was reported to participate on a regular basis is the Best Buddies program. Emily reports that during her first year in the transition program, Amber became the assistant to the president of Best Buddies. She attended the activities that were held at a recent beach outing. “Amber is the first one to be involved in social parts of the program.” Emily recalled two social events,

It was actually at a lake. It was so cold. But, we all went. If anything happens, Amber goes. There's a bowl-a-thon and we're going to go to that. And she made sure I signed up for the fund raiser for the bowl-a-thon.

Amber participated in the homecoming parade during her first year in the transition program. According to Emily, she was one of the few students who actually participated in the event. The Best Buddies Open House was another social event that Amber and her family attended. Emily stated "She invited my sister, her dad, and myself."

In addition to participating in social events with her family, Amber attends social events with her friends. Amber notifies Emily where and when she is going with her friends. Emily will ask Amber what her plans are for the weekend. Amber will tell her where and when she is going. "I just let her go whenever. I don't really set a time. But, she gets home at a reasonable time."

Macela. Macela recalled that Riesha participated in the Best Buddies program when she attended the transition program. "She went on activities like they had parties and they had little group things like going out to things like picnics and parks and movies. You know all kind of activities." Other social outings for Riesha included spending time with her friends. According to Macela, Riesha hangs out with her friends. "You know they have team leagues and they go bowling and sometimes the whole group get tickets and they go to Disney World and Sea World and movies." Riesha and her friends will go to local recreational facilities. Riesha has a best friend with whom she has been friends for several years.

Another social activity for Riesha is traveling with her friends and family. "The last time we traveled we went to Dallas-Ft. Worth in '07. She do travel. She drives to

Orlando.” In addition to hanging out with her friends, Macela reports that Riesha attends church as well: “She goes to church with her mother. She goes to church. But, not all of the time, but she does go to church.”

Sharon. Sharon stated that Tina is an active member of their church choir. Although the church choir does not travel, members sing and rehearse twice each month.

According to Sharon, the church is the center of Tina’s social activities. “We just got through having our Christmas dinner at the church. She helped out with that. Every Thanksgiving dinner she helped out with that.”

Strengths

Bella. A strength that Miss Diva has acquired during the transition process is completing her household chores and walking the family dog. Bella said this about Miss Diva’s domestic skills,

She has her chores. Miss Diva cooks. Miss Diva washes. I mean she doesn’t have limits on what she can do in terms of her activities of daily living or her instruments of activities of daily living. So, there’s no limits there.

Miss Diva is capable of styling her hair, doing her nails, and coordinating her daily outfits. “It’s no different than no other young adult. She does all of it on her own.” When it comes to styling her hair, Miss Diva has good and bad hair days. According to Bella, whenever Miss Diva cannot style her hair the way she wants to, she goes to the hair salon.

Being able to communicate with others is a strength that Miss Diva has gained as a young adult. Bella believed that another positive outcome of Miss Diva being in the transition program was her exposure to technology. “. . . the technology that it introduced

her, the program introduced her. And most of the students in the program took that and really ran with it. Whatever's out there, she's using it." Bella stated that Miss Diva uses the computer for various reasons. "She's on the computer all the time. She's on the cell phone. All the time! But, what young person isn't? I mean all the new technology she uses it." Miss Diva learned how to use various forms of technology to communicate when she was in the transition program. She has learned to use social networking websites like *MySpace*.

Bella also reported that Miss Diva acquired a strength in entrepreneurial skills while attending the transition program. She and her peers started a business on campus in which they would deliver lunch meals to various departments. However, the biggest success she gained from being in the transition program according to Bella was learning how to use public transportation. Bella recounted how Miss Diva benefited from the public transportation training,

What Miss Diva the biggest success that she got out of that program, one of the biggest success was when she had the transportation training and when they taught her how to catch the bus from home to out at XYX. That was just awesome and I think this girl could catch the bus anywhere. And she's really good at it.

Emily. Emily stated that Amber volunteers her time at a nursing home. She assists the residents with recreational activities. "In the community we don't do a whole lot. We go to work and go to church." In the past Amber would go out of town to volunteer in her aunt's hair salon. Emily described Amber's involvement,

A lot of times she didn't pay you [Emily turns and speaks to Amber] much but you would just help out. But, she would do the floors and help with my mom. My mom

was getting real senile. Amber would try to support her grandmother while my sister was doing hair and stuff like that. But, she would shampoo people's hair at the beauty shop and stuff like that. I tried to get her to go every summer. She didn't go every summer, but my oldest girl did. But, Amber went some.

Emily continued to describe Amber's strengths in the area of self-care. She indicated that Amber is "very independent" and "conscientious" about her hair. Emily stated that Amber is "very, very, very good about being on time for things." Amber wears makeup and is responsible for removing it each night. "She's very good in the morning about having her stuff laid out for the next day." Amber takes care of her hair and washes her own clothes. Emily stated that Amber is getting better at doing her own laundry. "I think it's because she takes short cuts. Like she'll put the yellow with the black or the yellow will come out with odd colors." Emily believes that Amber knows that she is taking short cuts with her laundry. "But as far as personal care, she's very good about hygiene. Her personal care she does a very good job."

According to Emily, Amber has learned how to use the public transportation system to travel places which is another strength she has developed as a result of the transition program. Additionally, Amber receives job training assistance from both the transition program and the local Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program. Emily agreed that Amber's quality of life had improved since she started attending the transition program. In fact, Emily believed that the quality of life for both her and Amber has improved because Amber has more autonomy. She's more confident." Emily stated that Amber was taught how to ride the city bus from her home to the campus where the transition program is located. "She was doing that by herself but I kinda (sic) started bringing her because I

work five minutes from here.” The bus ride for Amber was two hours each direction. This made for a four hour roundtrip each day.

Macela. According to Macela, Riesha has developed strength in managing her own money and taking care of her needs. “And whatever she needs to do for herself, she does it.” Another part of Riesha’s strengths in being independent stems from her being able to prepare basic meals for herself and learning how to drive. Another strength of Riesha’s is having more than one job. She works at a local amusement park. Currently, she has received a promotion as a supervisor. “She’s a supervisor there and she also do catering with Tropical Oasis.” She has worked for the amusement park for six years. Macela believed that Riesha has been working the same job since she was in the 10th or 11th grade. Riesha interviewed for the position when a recruiter came to the high school.

Riesha has strengths in other areas such as personal grooming, housekeeping, running errands, and making good decisions. Macela reported that Riesha takes care of herself by styling her own hair and going to the hair salon when needed. Macela described Riesha as “a mother hen” and “a grown lady.” Macela indicated that Riesha knows how to take care of her medical and personal needs. Macela had this to say about Riesha,

She goes to the doctor on her own, the dentist, whatever. She makes her own appointments. She cleans up well. She wash clothes. She do all the normal things that a parent would do. She help out with her two nephews.

Riesha used to live alone but has returned to live with her mother and brother.

Macela thought that the transition program helped to improve Riesha’s quality of life. “Well, it helped her to be more independent. She was in her own apartment . . . when

she was in CARE.” Riesha lived independently for a year. She was able to plan her own budget and set goals for herself. “I think CARE is a good program, but the thang (sic) is they got different children with different situations.”

Sharon. Some of Tina’s strengths include helping around her mother’s home by washing dishes, cleaning, and folding laundry. Tina assists her younger siblings with their homework. “She’ll go to the grocery store with me.” Tina lives in her own apartment a few blocks away from her mother’s house. Tina is in close proximity to her mother and cousins who all live in the same area. Although Tina has her own apartment, she visits with her family on a daily basis. She will eat meals with her family. However, Tina will eat microwave dinners at home when she is not eating meals with her family. “So, when she goes home if she wants a snack, she can put stuff in the microwave. She’s able to do all of her self-care, except her hair.” Sharon reviews Tina’s monthly expenses with her. According to Sharon, Tina “only has a light bill, rent, and cell phone.”

Self-Regulation

Strengths

Bella. According to Bella, another strength that Miss Diva has is a mother who is her “biggest advocate.” Bella is aware of the many pitfalls that exist in the area of social services. “I’ve always been her biggest advocate and always will. Because the system has shown me that once a person gets to a certain age, there’s really nothing there.” Bella indicated that there are no services for people with disabilities who are the same age as Miss Diva. According to Bella, fortunately for Miss Diva, she is there to advocate for her. Bella stated her advantage over most parents,

The advantage that Miss Diva has probably over a whole lot of kids is she has a mom that knows the system that works within the system and how it works. So, I know how to travel within the system and find those programs. But a lot of parents give up and they don't have that.

Another strength that Miss Diva has acquired during the transition process is her level of maturation. Bella feels that Miss Diva has matured during the transition process, especially after hearing Miss Diva indicate that she will confide in her mother about some of the decisions she has made . . . Bella described the decisions Miss Diva is able to make,

She buys her own clothes. She goes shopping. She does all of those things for herself. She's able to make those types of decisions. "Oh, I'm going to get my hair done. I'm going to the library." Our biggest thing is that when she's making decisions and I'm just a single mom and she's the only one. Just let me know where you are and what you're doing. You know I don't want to close the door to what she does. I tell her all the time it's not what you do but how you do it. Just keep me from going crazy. Just call me and say, "Momma, I'm going so and so."

In addition to being able to make decisions for herself, Miss Diva has demonstrated to her mother that she is capable of staying away from home for an extended period of time. Miss Diva and another friend attended a culinary arts program out of town for two weeks. According to Bella, Miss Diva was afraid the first night she stayed away but soon became comfortable being away from home. Bella reported that Miss Diva called her each day. She recounted Miss Diva's time spent at the culinary arts training program,

They cried and they cried and they cried. I just really encouraged them. Okay let's take it one day at a time. Let's see what's gonna (sic) happen. I was so proud of her.

She was there for two weeks. They had to be up at five o'clock in the morning. She'd call me every morning at five. She said mamma I'm up. I'm in the shower.

After Miss Diva completed a full day's work, she would call her mother to tell her how the day progressed. Bella felt that Miss Diva did well away from home. "She managed herself really, really well. So, that told me that she can do it. I mean I don't doubt that. She's shown me that." Whenever Miss Diva and her roommate would leave the hotel room both young women would call their parents to inform them of their intended whereabouts. "I said just call and let us know that you're out. Either call me or call the girl's mom who doesn't live too far from here." Bella encouraged her daughter to call her in the event that something would happen to either young woman. Upon completion of the culinary arts training program, Miss Diva received a certification in food handling, food preparation, and food safety. The certification allows Miss Diva to work in any commercial kitchen. Bella was proud of Miss Diva's accomplishment. "She did that. She did really, really well. I was just really pleased with her."

One of the more successful job training experiences for Miss Diva was when she served as an assistant teacher's aide at an elementary school.

The one at the school was a really a good [experience] but, what it did provide with her is an orientation into the work environment. So, she had that orientation. That was an activity that I found to be very good for her.

Another positive aspect of the transition program was the structure that was provided for Miss Diva. According to Bella, there were times when Miss Diva was exposed to "life

experiences” in which she learned make better choices. Bella described what she meant by the structure of the transition program,

The good thing about the CARE is that she had those experiences within the confines of that program. And even when I was not right there, there was somebody-and that’s what I can really praise about Flamingo Queen-there was somebody there that could say, “Okay. We got a problem. I need to call mom and let her know what’s going on.” So, that was the good thing about it. She just had some life experiences. But, she did have the constrictions and the confinement of that program that she was having these life experiences but while she participated and we were able to catch some things. If I didn’t catch it, Flamingo Queen caught it and we were able to deal with it like that.

The structure of the transition program kept Miss Diva from getting into more severe trouble than what Bella has described. “Because she made some decisions that really could have brought some serious harm to herself. Because she and the structure of the program, we were able to catch it. And right away.”

In response to the question “How has the transition program improved the quality of life for her daughter?”, Bella stated “Now that she’s out of the program I wish she was back in it.” There were many aspects of the transition program that Bella found to be beneficial for her daughter. She felt that Miss Diva had matured as a result of participating in the program. The structure of the program was another aspect that Bella found useful for Miss Diva. She explained,

. . . what she had in this CARE program was the structure. What she had was daily

activity. She was able to exert her independence. She was in a place where she could get out and meet new people all the time. Then as a people person she never meets a stranger. She acquired a lot of relationships and friendships. She is Miss Congeniality. I miss that for her.

Macela. One of the strengths that Macela described for Riesha is learning how to drive. Macela described how she taught Riesha to drive a car:

Well, first we rode around my neighborhood. But, I just decided to get her in front of the wheel and just went around and around the block 'til (sic) she caught on. And when she caught on, it took about three or four days for her to catch on real good. And I just let her go in the main traffic and within about four or five weeks she was driving on her own.

According to Macela, Riesha drives her own car and ensures that her car repairs are made. "She did save her money and pay for it cash."

Another strength that Macela shared about Riesha is Riesha's ability to maintain employment and save money during the transition process. "Right now she's trying to get her a job to work at a center where they have handicapped people." Riesha used to work at a local daycare center. "Last year she left the daycare. She liked it okay." Macela indicated that Riesha has a 401K plan at her current job. Macela recalled a conversation she had with Riesha about saving money,

I told her that was a very good thang (sic) to do and that was just like having saving money. And you know you won't miss it because they're taking it out of your paycheck every two weeks. She decided that would be a good idea and she started saving about two years ago.

Additionally, Riesha and her family members save money for personal reasons. Macela shared that each family member will set a personal financial goal usually at the beginning of each year. Macela described the family's financial goal setting process, "We pay our bills off. We write 'em (sic) down. We discuss our finances. If we got bills and stuff like that, we write all that stuff out. If we pay 'em (sic) off, we take it off. If we wanna (sic) do our room over, if we wanna (sic) paint our room or we decorate our room, we'll put costs down and what we want or what we want to do for the house. Something like that. Bedspread or paint the bedroom. Or get some new rugs."

Macela indicated that the youngest to the oldest members of the family participate in the family's financial goal setting process. "We all do it. Riesha do it. I do it. I think I got my grandson. He does it, too." Another aspect of setting financial goals for the family is to find ways to save money.

Sharon. Tina was introduced to the transition program by her high school counselor before she graduated. The counselor showed Tina the campus and thought the program would be a good experience for her. Tina remained in the transition program for two years and received a certificate of completion.

Similar to her peers with disabilities, Tina was assigned to a job coach through the local Vocational Rehabilitation program while attending the transition program. "A job coach took her around to look for a job. Maybe once or twice a month." In addition to seeking employment with her job coach, Tina worked at a restaurant as part of her job training experience in the transition program. "She did serving." The restaurant was a buffet style setting. Sharon said that Tina actually liked working at the restaurant. Sharon

thought the transition program was a good experience for Tina. “Anybody that child have a disability coming out of high school, I recommend CARE. I really do.”

Psychological Empowerment

Strengths

Bella. Making friends is another strength that Miss Diva has acquired during the transition process. According to Bella, “she is driven to be around people.” Bella has noticed that Miss Diva’s male friends are homosexual. She described their relationship with Miss Diva,

I found out that a lot of her friends, especially her guy friends are gay guys. They really like her and take care of her and they really love her and she doesn’t judge them. She don’t judge folks because she just wants to have a friend. She wants people around her because she grew up by herself.

Miss Diva grew up as an only child with very few friends and no other children to keep her company. Now that she has entered adulthood she is able to establish friendships.

Emily. A strength that Amber has developed during the transition process is the ability to make decisions for herself and others. With respect to her social life, Amber informs Emily when she is going places. Emily believed that Amber’s assertiveness in making decisions is newly found since she began attending the transition program. Emily described what she meant,

And I think this is new since she’s come to the CARE program since high school.

Before high school, I was kind of dictating more. I think. Telling her you can’t do it and that kind of thing. And, I think too because I have a son at home, too. A little bit

different for me as far as my sense of stability or something because we were getting bored in doing everything wrong. So we both were going through some trauma.

According to Emily, Amber makes good decisions in a lot of areas even when it comes to her younger brother. As far as making decisions for other people, Amber helps a younger relative with making decisions. Additionally, Amber reminds her mother about upcoming events. “I procrastinate a lot and she’ll remind me until I get things done. The bowl-a-thon she asks me, Did you sign up? I get cranky, but she won’t let me say no.” Amber also assists her younger brother in making decisions. Emily recalled a time when this happened,

But, he’ll come by and he’ll ask Amber opinion on things. I hear you guys talking and he’ll ask Amber some questions. He’ll say to her, “I’m smarter than you, Amber.” And Amber is more mature than him. She has a memory deficit, but she uses more common sense than Brett has and she’s also more mature than him. He can’t see it, but he’ll come to her for advice . . . I hear you talking.

Amber makes decisions for her dog as well. She is responsible for taking care of the dog. “It was my oldest girl’s dog but she kinda (sic) dropped him off ‘cause (sic) she didn’t want to deal with him.” It is Amber’s responsibility to make sure the dog’s needs are met. “It’s like Amber’s having a baby almost. It’s Amber’s little baby. So, that’s what she means by decisions. She babies him. He looks up to her and follows her around like a puppy.”

Amber also possesses good social skills. “She listens to people talking to her. I mean her social skills are very good.” Emily stated that people are impressed with Amber when

they meet her. “She knows how-she’s sociable. She’s a likable person. Her communication skills, I think, are very good.”

Prior to attending the transition program, Amber was intimidated to go in stores on her own. “But now, she goes in the stores and buy what she wants in the store.” Whenever a store clerk does not understand Amber, she repeats herself and speaks louder. Emily explained,

Like the lady said Sprite [referring to the server at the restaurant]. In the past, I would say it for her. I would speak right up for her. Now, I don’t say a word. Amber will figure it out...somebody on the [name of transit service omitted] bothered her the other day. But, usually she just handles it.

The ability to volunteer as the assistant to the Best Buddies president is another strength that Amber possesses. According to Emily, Amber was eager to apply for the position. “Once she got there I was really surprised and impressed that she applied for the position right away.” Although Amber was not selected for the position immediately, she later fulfilled the role. Emily stated, “That’s really motivating. She seems motivated to do that.” Emily also reported that although Amber’s Best Buddy has not been involved with her, Amber continues to remain active in the program and to participate in the different social events sponsored by Best Buddies.

Macela. Macela described Riesha as being “very independent.” Riesha is a responsible young woman who knows how to use the computer and can read well. “She reads pretty good and she writes and she works on her computer like texting people.” A further example of Riesha’s independence is her willingness to decline Social Security

Disability benefits. “She no longer gets that because she declined. She didn’t want it. She went and applied to tell them not to give that to her anymore.”

Decision making is a strength that Riesha has acquired during the transition process. Macela reported that Riesha does not make bad decisions. “She makes pretty good decisions for herself. When it comes down to work ethics, she goes to work every day.” She usually confides in Macela, her mother, or her aunts before she makes a decision that she will “jump into.” Riesha makes decisions for her nephews. According to Macela, Riesha is “very strict” on the two boys. Macela described how Riesha makes decisions for her nephews,

She make sure like when it’s time for them to take their bath in the evening; do their homework. When she’s around she take ‘em (sic) to like the movies when new movies come out for kids and stuff like that. She spend quality time with those two little boys.

According to Macela, Riesha liked the transition program. “She loved it because she met a lot of interesting people that was different from her and that had different problems than she had.” Macela believed that Riesha’s disability was not as severe as those of her peers attending the transition program.

Sharon. According to Sharon, Tina has developed a strength in making decisions for herself, especially when it is related to dating. Sharon reported that she did not have a problem with the friends that Tina selects. “She chooses her own man.” In addition to selecting who she dates, Tina also makes decisions for other people. There is a young girl who lives in Tina’s neighborhood who comes to her for advice. Sharon recalled their relationship,

There's a girl that's 13. She comes to Tina for –I guess she looks up to Tina. She's always around Tina. Tina talks to her and stuff. I would say she talks to Tina. She looks up to Tina. I just see them talking. So, I don't know. And she been coming around here. 'Cause (sic) right now her lights are off. So, the little girl been coming around here and they talk.

Sharon indicated that Tina possesses strength in her ability to advocate for herself. Sharon reported that there was a time when Tina would not speak up for herself. "She let people push her over. But, I've seen a big change in her like over the last two years." Sharon mentioned that there was a time when Tina would ignore her advice. "I don't see that anymore." Now, Tina listens to her mother because she believes that what her mother has to tell her is in her best interest. "I don't see a lot of rebellious in her. So, she's made a big change." This "big change" has taken place since Tina participated in the transition program.

Sharon believed that the transition program helped to improve Tina's life. "It helped her well. At one point she wouldn't open up to people on the outside. It opened her up." Tina's communication skills improved as a result of attending the transition program. Working on campus was another opportunity for Tina to improve her communication skills. "Her working on campus, it helped. Like I say she would only talk to certain people where she had to answer questions and be more talkative and be more outgoing." According to Sharon, Tina was exposed to different people with different attitudes. "She worked in an atmosphere where she had to be outgoing." Sharon reported how Tina felt about being in the transition program. "She was very excited." Tina's communication

skills have improved over the years. “She communicates well. She communicates a lot more with people than she did I would say two or three years ago.”

Self-Realization

Strengths

Bella. Bella believes that there are no limits to what Miss Diva can do if she tries. “She does have some limits in terms of her strengths because in some ways she tells me she does.”

Emily. Emily wants Amber to have a successful transition into the workforce. Emily explained what she meant,

‘Cause (sic) after the program, I want her to do what she enjoys. Like, I enjoy being an OT. I want her to enjoy what she wants to do. If that’s going to be your career, you’re going to be forced to go into something that you don’t want to do.

A final strength that Emily shared about Amber was Amber’s communication skills, She had this to say,

I just think she can do anything she wants on that computer. That’s one thing I gotta say but it’s kinda (sic) negative in a way when Amber says, “I can’t.” Amber can do so much. On the computer she’s a wiz. She can pick music. She can email people. She can surf the web. She can do all of that. She’s a champ. It makes me look like an imbecile as far as computer skills.

Challenges

Many of the challenges that the young women have faced while transitioning into adulthood have involved locating and maintaining employment, developing and maintaining healthy relationships, making informed and good decisions, and sustaining

an independent lifestyle. All of the parents stated that their daughters/granddaughter were able to identify challenges to either employment and/or educational opportunities while attending the transition program.

Bella. Employment is one of Miss Diva's biggest challenges after exiting from the transition program. She has not been able to locate full time employment. However, during her tenure in the transition program Miss Diva was able to experience the work setting either in a job training situation or as a volunteer. According to Bella, Miss Diva did not have a good experience at a local restaurant. "I know Subway was one of the ones that just really wasn't as good. And when she worked at the [name of establishment omitted] on the campus that really just didn't work."

Additionally, Miss Diva is assigned a Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) job coach. The experience has been challenging for both Miss Diva and Bella. Bella shared her concerns, ..right now she is in the Vocational Rehab program and they have linked her with an employment coach , a program that she's had two coaches now in two different agencies. And they have been very unsuccessful. Neither coach have worked on her behalf. I've been more of the coach than anybody. We're constantly looking on the internet for jobs. We're constantly putting in applications.

The job coach assigned to Miss Diva did not follow through with the expectations of the VR program. Bella described a time when the job coach failed to assist Miss Diva with locating a job and developing a plan of action,

A week or so her job coach came and picked her up. Their time together was supposed to be for a period of three to four hours. She called Miss Diva and she said I'll meet you at 11. She got there at 11:30. She said 12:30 I have to leave. I have a

lunch date. She took Miss Diva to three or four places to put in applications. They walked in and said are you hiring. They said no we're not hiring. There was no plan for action. There was no care plan. There was nothing to get her to a success rate. The first job coach I had them fire her myself. She may not have gotten fired from her job, but I did not want her to be the coach for Miss Diva. I had gotten Miss Diva a job. The coach was supposed to go in coach with her. Get the staff on the job to kinda (sic) understand this is where we are. Let's get her trained. I'll train with her. I'll get her where she needs to be so I can transition out. She can keep the job. That didn't happen so the job fell through. This job coach is not doing anything.

Bella feels that if she does not look out for her daughter's best interest, her opportunities for employment will be limited or nonexistent. "Vocational Rehab or the vendors that they use just have not been successful in that sense. It's just no success rate." Bella understands that the job market is not doing well. However, she does not understand how Miss Diva has not had any success with the VR program. "At least you would think an interview. If she's gotten an interview, I've gotten them for her."

Bella described an example of another challenging situation for Miss Diva during the job training experience in the transition program,

Some of them were very good and some of them weren't. A lot of times it had to do with Miss Diva's maturity level at that time. For a student who has never had the opportunity to work or knew what the ethics of having a job was, some of them were successful for her and some of them were not because they may have been too demanding. She just did not get it.

According to Bella, the job training experiences that were not as successful were accompanied by employees who were not as “nice” to Miss Diva. “But, I think it’s because the job was so demanding and they expected her to *pop, pop, pop*. And she just wasn’t there yet.”

A second challenge for Miss Diva after she completed the transition program was the decline in her quality of life. Bella explained what she meant,

So, her quality of life has almost declined because in that transition, now she went from something to not having anything. So, where she had transitioned across the board from high school to this program and had some bad opportunities but they were life experiences that she matured. Now from the decline because although she’s matured, there’s no life experiences now to go with the maturation.

Bella connected her explanation of her daughter’s quality of life with working and keeping a job. “The job, yeah you work and you get money, but you also develop relationships. You meet new people. You have activity in your life.” Having a job and developing relationships is a benefit that Bella would like for Miss Diva to acquire. She considers having a job and activity in Miss Diva’s life as the “plus side of also having a job.” Furthermore, Bella added that working and having relationships with others “gives you opportunity to interact and socialize with other people.” At the present time Miss Diva does not have the opportunity to interact and socialize with others. “I want for Miss Diva’s quality of life to be much more than mine ever was. I think every parent really wants that for their children.”

Learning to ride the local transit was a challenge for Miss Diva at first. Bella recalled Miss Diva’s riding experiences,

She had some scary moments on that bus and we've had some whoppers. But, they were learning incidents for both she and I. And, I think now being 21 almost 22 she's matured enough. So, some of the things that happened in the past, won't happen again.

The bus riding experiences were not the only challenges Miss Diva faced while attending the transition program. Miss Diva faces everyday challenges with her cognitive ability or as Bella described her "learning disability." Bella continued to explain those experiences Miss Diva encountered as a result of having a "learning disability",

Like most young girls she was having life experiences. She was 18. She learned how to get out. She was meeting boys. Some of 'em (sic) good, some of 'em (sic) not so good, more of 'em (sic) not good than good. She was meeting different people. Miss Diva is an only child and first grandchild. So, she comes from a very sheltered environment where everybody loved her, would never hurt her and she made some really bad decisions and she linked herself with some people that she probably shouldn't have linked her to out of immaturity, out of being just really green. And for the first time in her life she was out of her bubble. She was out of the box. Like anybody's that's been released that's sheltered for a long time it just kinda (sic) goes haywire. She just had that experience.

Although Miss Diva had some challenging situations, Bella did not attribute them to being in the program. "It wasn't the program itself. It was the life experiences that she was having."

Bella believed that Miss Diva has learned a lot about making informed decisions as a result of her life experiences. Those life experiences expand to Miss Diva's ability to live independently. Bella had this to say about Miss Diva living on her own,

The only thing that I'll say that Miss Diva is probably not ready for in terms of taking care of herself is living independently because she of course needs to get a job. Once she gets a job and I kinda (sic) take that in steps with her. Let's get the job and then we'll learn about let's managing our money.

Other areas of independence in which Miss Diva requires more guidance include money management and housekeeping. Bella recognizes that Miss Diva is not ready to live on her own. She explained why,

She doesn't manage her money really well. And I'm kinda (sic) playing the "devil's advocate" with that because I just kinda (sic) let her have her freedom with her money. Although, now since she's getting older I'm saying you know you have to watch your spending and those things. In terms of being able to be home alone, yes. In terms of taking care of the house and the things she needs to do in the house, just like anybody else, I mean there's no restrictions with that.

Bella does not view her parenting style as one that Miss Diva has to come to her all of the time to make her decisions. In fact, she believes the opposite should occur. Bella described what she meant,

I want her to grow to a point where she *can* make decisions for herself even relationship decisions. What I am trying to teach into her spirit is look at both sides of the coin and one of Miss Diva's biggest limits in making decisions is that she don't weigh the odds and she don't ask a enough questions. A lot of it has not to do

with her disability. It has to do with her being an only child and being by herself *a lot*.

Because Miss Diva has a drive to be around people as indicated by Bella, she tends to surround herself with people. According to Bella, Miss Diva received a lot of attention from her grandparents. “She got a lot of attention and a lot of love, but there wasn’t peer relationship.” Miss Diva is learning to become friends with other young adults. Bella described what that has been like for Miss Diva,

So, now here she is a young adult who’s kinda (sic) making some decisions for herself. Even in relationships that she build she doesn’t ask enough questions so that she is sure that the people she’s involving herself with are people who won’t be out to hurt her or get something from her in that sense. Decisions about life I think that and this is probably more my fault than anything. She still wants to rely on me heavily for a lot of things. I am now to a point where I really encourage her to make decisions for herself. But, I want her to think about. Don’t make a rash decision. Think about it. Weigh it out. You know I tell her. Her being the only child, Miss Diva grew up with an imaginary friend and talking to herself. Talk to your friend. Ask your friend, “Okay. Should I do it this way or should I do this way? If I do it this way, this may happen. But, if I do it that way, that may happen.”

Bella often talks to Miss Diva about her decision making skills. She feels that Miss Diva still has some “growing” to do. Recently, Bella had a conversation with Miss Diva about family planning after considering that her daughter will turn 22 years old soon. Bella recalled the conversation,

We come from a household where we're saved (i.e., Christians) and we really love the Lord. We were talking about sex and I said, "Listen. Of course I want you to wait, you know, until you're married until you find a young man that really likes you and cares enough about you. But let's get real. This is 2009 and times are different than when I was a girl." I want her to feel comfortable enough to say to me, "Okay, mom. We really need to go get some birth control pills."

Bella is straightforward in the advice that she gives Miss Diva. She wants her daughter to take care of herself and be "very selective" in the men she dates. Bella had this to say,

Like on the other side of the coin like I tell her you have to be very selective on who you get involved with. Don't make it easy. So, we go through all those mom things that mom teaches a girl about waiting. Don't make it easy. Don't give yourself to everybody. Everybody doesn't deserve you. We have those conversations. What I've learned to be with her is to be very upfront and very real. I don't color. I don't make it sweet.

Miss Diva's communication skills are another challenge for her. Bella believes that Miss Diva's communication skills could be better. Bella tries to pass on her experience with a speech impediment as a child to Miss Diva. She described Miss Diva as having a "heavy tongue." Bella believes that the way Miss Diva communicates with others is how people view her as a person. "I always speak with her on how she communicates, how she's sitting, how people see her because your communication is what's gonna (sic) sell you." According to Bella, "people see you first, we're visual. They hear you second. And that's how you present." Bella attempts to correct Miss Diva's use of slang terminology. She recounted the conversation with Miss Diva,

One time our conversation was we had this very “girlfriend dialect” which just appalled me. I kinda (sic) was able to get her to let go of the girlfriend thing and “Whatever!” We kinda (sic) got rid of that. In her process of learning and maturing it’s important for me for her because she does have a learning disability.

Bella believes that presentation is important when people meet you for the first time. According to Bella, even though a person may have a disability, he or she may be employable because of their communication skills. Bella further explained what she meant by this,

We’re very visual and physical people. So, I want her to get to a point where she understands people, see you in your visual and how you present yourself in the physical, but they also hear what comes out of your mouth. And that’s gonna (sic) play a big role in how successful you are regardless of where you are and what you’re doing. If you ‘gon (sic) flip a burger you make sure you the best burger flipper that’s out there. Right now I think that we can stand to still do some work.

A final challenge that Bella mentioned was encouraging Miss Diva to think about her future. According to Bella, Miss Diva enjoyed staying home without having anything to occupy her time for the first 30 to 40 days after completing the transition program. Bella was successful in finding a job for Miss Diva. She recounted how she found the job,

I was able to get a friend of mine to hire her in his facility. That didn’t work out. That’s when the job coach and everything broke down. What I’ve been trying to get her to think about as we still look, is employment; how employment will bring her such independence.

Along with having her independence, Bella encourages Miss Diva to surround herself with people who drive automobiles and can provide her with transportation when she wants to attend social outings. “Your friends should be people that drive and come get you. You wanna (sic) go out. You wanna (sic) go places.” Bella stated that she is trying to convey to Miss Diva that she has transitioned from high school to the transition program and will need employment. “Her independence not only with working friendships, with relationships, with other people, with her peers, just getting her to a point where she is independent of me. She didn’t have a life outside of mom.”

Emily. Amber has experienced a few challenges related to her disability and becoming a young adult. Emily indicated that Amber is not good at helping out around the house. “She’s not the working type. Really not the working type.” After separating from Amber’s father, Emily would not allow her daughter’s to do work outside the house. Emily further explained what she meant,

I always did the yard work. But, inside they were supposed to do a lot work and my oldest girl she would kinda (sic) jump in and wash and do a lot of things. Because Amber had three open heart surgeries and the last one was in ’99 or something like that, but before that she couldn’t do a lot anyway. I think we kind of protected her from doing a lot.

As a young adult, Emily believed that Amber’s sense of cleanliness is similar to that of other young adults. Emily described the similarities,

It’s nothing major but like it might just be an age thing. Because I know my nephew leaves his clothes on the floor; toothpaste in the sink. And those are the kinds of

things that I have to constantly remind her of. Sometimes dirty clothes. Just that. Other than that she's good.

Amber often will experience challenges when communicating with the campus bus drivers. The drivers have a hard time understanding her pronunciation of words. Whenever that occurs, Amber will get frustrated. Emily recalled a recent occurrence, "Usually, she doesn't come home complaining about anything. But, once she complains I know there's something not right. 'Cause (sic) she really don't come home-when she comes and says something like that then I know it was frustrating her." Emily teaches Amber how to manage her frustration through role playing. She talks with Amber about what happened and how she felt about the situation. Emily offers Amber words of encouragement and advice for future reference. Emily recalled a recent conversation between Amber and the transition facilitator,

Sometimes it's not that you're not taking care of stuff, they're not listening. She [Flamingo Queen] says there are two parts of any conversation. You gotta (sic) be an active listener. Even she says if you try really hard you can get it. Even people with accents, if you really want to hear you're going to put yourself out there and you're going to listen for it.

Amber faces other social challenges. "I think sometimes she does get to chatting a lot . . . That's the only real problem. She'll miss some things 'cause (sic) she's talking, a little bit of chatting." Emily is concerned about Amber's future with specific regard to getting married and having a family. Emily wants Amber to have her own place to live. "We've been saying that for years. Even when she was in grade school, I was trying to think of a job for her-either child care or photography-even when she was younger."

Emily would like for Amber to learn how to drive a car. There are times when no one is able to provide transportation for Amber. Being able to drive herself to various locations would allow Amber to become more independent and less reliant on her family members.

Emily shared her expectations,

I'm hoping she'll be able to drive at least around a 10 mile perimeter in [name of town omitted]) or something so she can get to a job and go to the shop and get groceries or whatever. So, I would like to see her be independent in that respect. We talked about that how to be able to get groceries.

According to Emily, Amber is "good" with money whenever she goes shopping. "Not excellent...I don't know if you know how much change to get back. But, you're learning [Emily is speaking directly to Amber]." Emily believes that Amber has made a lot of progress in her money management skills since she has attended the transition program.

Furthermore, Emily is concerned about people taking advantage of Amber. "Relationships and people trying to take advantage of her; that's one thing that I worry about." Emily shared an example of a time when Amber was taken advantage of by someone and coerced into signing a document,

A guy came in with some legal paperwork. And he came to my department- and they came and asked me and I said no. So, they went and asked some of the therapists . . .

I said, "Don't sign it . . . So, I told the person that they can't sign and I can't sign it.

Even after Emily informed the person that no one in the building was allowed to sign the document, he ignored her and pursued Amber. Amber was not aware that she should not sign the document. Emily was upset when Amber told her that the person had her

sign the document. “They went to my daughter and made her sign and I told them nobody in the building could sign.” Emily educated Amber about the legal ramifications of signing documents. “So, I told Amber don’t sign anything from anybody. She was doing it outside of CARE. I guess she thought it was okay. They thought it was okay, but it was really not.”

Emily and Amber attended a seminar on future planning for adult students with disabilities prior to Amber graduating from high school. She shared the information she learned from the seminar,

They told us a lot of stuff and they were saying once your kids become an adult legally which Amber she’ll be 21 this year that even if she had a relationship, say with a guy or something, and even if you didn’t like the guy, if I didn’t like the guy or if I didn’t like what was going on, legally I don’t have any say so because she’s an adult. I was hoping that people don’t come and try to take advantage of her because she’s special needs or because they think she can’t her own decisions. So, those are the kind of things I worry about. But, Amber like I say she’s smart and intelligent but you know how people try to do you.

Additional future planning for Amber will involve signing a power of attorney and creating a will. “All those kind of things that we need to get into place. A will so Amber can get whatever I have for her. I need term life insurance again so she’ll be taken care of.”

Amber discovered an unhealthy habit as a young adult. Emily referred to it as “one little slip up.” Amber began to smoke cigarettes. “Only thing is...there’s more chance of problems with your internal organs, meaning your heart [Emily is speaking to Amber].”

Emily felt that Amber was trying to be “grown up” when she started smoking cigarettes. When Emily found out that Amber had been smoking she recognized that Amber was old enough to smoke without her consent. “She’s trying to smoke. This is the worst thing she could do health wise.” Emily indicated that Amber has had three open heart surgeries. “I work in a nursing home and see people with all kind of problems because of smoking. So, I just told her this is really not something you want to be doing health wise.” For Emily, Amber’s smoking habit was a health concern more than anything else.

Amber has been involved with the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program. However, she has encountered some challenges in selecting her career choice. Emily reported that Amber selected cosmetology as a career option and later changed her mind. Unfortunately, the change did not transcend to the VR staff. Emily described what happened,

The only thing that I was frustrated with is Voc. Rehab. Amber was in cosmetology program the Voc. Rehab. started with that. Well, Amber had a change of heart, but my mom’s a beautician and my sister and I considered it. But, it wasn’t for me. In the Voc. Rehab. Program, they had Amber have to do that. She had a change of heart. She doesn’t want to do it. Even until recently they were still trying to force her into going into cosmetology and she doesn’t want to do it. And they didn’t want to change the program, although, that was her original goal.

Emily felt as if the assessment for cosmetology was complicated for Amber. “Amber didn’t even put forth her best effort, although I was trying [to encourage Amber].” Emily said that there were times when both she and Amber would almost become agitated because Amber did not want to pursue cosmetology. Emily tried to help Amber study for

the assessments. According to Emily, persons with disabilities should be allowed to choose the jobs they want. “The other part is that people don’t allow them to choose the jobs they want. And that’s what I’m trying not to do with Amber.” Emily stated that she will continue to advocate for Amber.

Emily recently read an article in one of her Occupational Therapy journals about successful transition after high school for students with disabilities. The article described transportation being of concern for one particular young adult who had a one hour and a half commute to work. The young man received a grant to pay someone to transport him to work and back home. Emily noted another challenge for people with disabilities is their limited ability to choose jobs that they are interested in doing.

Macela. According to Macela, one of the challenges that Riesha faced was making the decision to leave the daycare center. “She said it was entirely too confining with the babies there. She was working with the little kids.” Riesha assisted with taking care of one and two year old toddlers. She left the daycare for a management position at the amusement park.

Macela said this about Riesha’s challenges, “She might have a handicap but it isn’t really as severe as it’s supposed to be. You can’t tell it.” Macela agreed that Riesha is not the best reader and believes as time passes that Riesha will become more progressive in her reading abilities. Macela referred to Riesha’s progressiveness as maturing later in life. She described what she meant,

Yes, as the years go by she will come into her fullness [i.e., full maturation as a woman]. Maybe five or six years if she keeps reading and stuff. But, I try to

encourage her to read. Just get you a book. Read every day. Read something. Do something.

Macela helped Riesha with her homework or assignments when she was in school. She provided transportation for Riesha and taught her “basic things about everyday life.”

According to Macela, Riesha experiences challenges with following through with her goals. Macela has tried to encourage her to obtain her certification in child care. “She didn’t finish. She took some classes until she could get her certificate. But, she didn’t finish it.” However, Macela felt as if the transition program was part responsible for Riesha not completing the certification process. She explained why,

I told her that CARE should have had them stay the whole process in the program where it would lead to different things. They need to really help them get prepared for whatever their goal is. CARE don’t do that. They help you, but then they don’t help you to me.

Macela indicated that the transition program should have helped Riesha to pass the certification test. Riesha needed assistance in studying for the certification test and paying for the cost of the test. “They should have prepared her while she was in CARE. They should have had her on that computer taking those classes. CARE gotta (sic) get more on the ball when it comes down to getting them ready for the real world.”

Although Riesha has experienced challenges in getting her child care certification, Macela continues to encourage her to become a certified nursing assistant. “I talk to her constantly about trying to get some kind of certificate.” Riesha wants to take classes with her sister to obtain a certificate in the health care field. Macela would tell Riesha before graduating from high school that she needed to take classes on a weekly basis.

“Remediate yourself and pick up from where you left off in your reading and writing. If you don’t read, you can’t progress.” In addition to promoting reading, Macela speaks with Riesha about having a “future . . . Tropical Oasis is okay, but she needs something where she can sit down and relax. She don’t need no job that you gotta (sic) stand up all day long. She got 30, 40 years to work.”

Sharon. According to Sharon, Tina continues to face challenges in some of the decisions she makes and requires guidance. In the area of food choices, Tina is unable to cook meals for herself. “She doesn’t make the right choices at times. So, she can’t cook.” Transportation is another area in which Tina experiences challenges. “She catch the bus on her own. She can’t drive a car. She don’t know how to drive. She don’t have a license.” Although Tina lives in her own apartment, Sharon is responsible for paying her bills.

Sharon has concerns about the male friends that Tina has dated. “The only problem that I ever had with Tina was with some of the guys that she dated.” More specifically, Sharon pointed out that she had problems with the chat line that Tina uses to meet men. “It’s on the cell phone. ‘Till (sic) this day I still don’t like it. That’s the only problem I ever had was the chat line.” Sharon continues to give Tina advice, although at times Tina is reluctant to seek her out for advice. Tina explained what she meant,

She doesn’t per se come to me for advice. But, if I say something or something is wrong and I say something. Sometimes I may have to pull it out of her, but she’ll talk to me about it.

Sharon encouraged Tina to think about her future prior to exiting the transition program. Both of them spoke about Tina’s future in terms of how Tina plans to provide

for herself and setting goals. Sharon believed that it was a good experience for Tina to attend the transition program. However, she advises her daughter to think about her future. “You know, put yourself first because again when it comes to men and friends you ‘gon (sic) always have. People ‘gon (sic) stay your friends, but in the end they gonna (sic) come, they gonna (sic) go just like men.” Sharon continues to stress the importance of putting herself first. She has communicated to Tina that her family will always be there for her. Sharon shared this advice,

You know, you gonna (sic) have your sister and your family and your brothers. They always gonna (sic) be there. So, think about yourself. You’re on your own. Try to build that up. So, you can have some where to stay. You can always come back home. But, you got some where to stay, make that and make the best of it. That’s what I try to tell her. You know, make the best of what you have and don’t let nobody say that you can’t do anything in this world that you wanna (sic) do. And like I said there’s somebody out there worse than you are that’s doing better than what you are doing. And you can do better than what they’re doing if you put your mind to it.

Whenever Tina feels like giving up, Sharon tells her not to accept defeat. “. . . don’t accept that word, I can’t do it. You can’t do it if you don’t try to do it.” Sharon believes that Tina can accomplish whatever she sets out to do. “If you don’t try to do it, then you’ll never know if you can’t do it.” There are other times when Tina gives up on trying to complete tasks. Sharon explained that Tina will put forth the effort to complete a task but not “all that she has into it.” Tina will give up and say that she is unable to complete the task. Sharon shared an example,

And she'll just say I can't do it. I think a lot of times she will say, "Well, I can't do that." And I'm like, "You didn't try to cook it. You just say you can't do it. Like when it comes to frying chicken, "I can't do it. That grease is 'gon (sic) burn me." But, you didn't try. You just know the grease is gonna (sic) burn you.

Sharon reflected on Tina's challenges with self-care and shopping skills, "She needs help doing her hair. She can pick out her own clothes. But, she doesn't look at prices. She doesn't compare prices. If she sees it, she gets it. She doesn't bargain shop."

Overall Findings

Findings from the interview with parents reveal that the five young women who were participants in this study demonstrated various aspects of self-determination development during the transition process. These included autonomy, self-regulation, psychological empowerment, and self-realization. The parents' interview responses in relation to the four domains of self-determination are discussed below.

Autonomy. All four of the parents interviewed shared instances in which their daughter/granddaughter was able to exercise key characteristics of autonomy which include the ability to act according to one's preferences, interests and/or abilities, and independently free from undue external influence or interference (Wehmeyer, 1995). Bella's interview response under the theme "Social Activities" shows that her daughter demonstrated some of the key characteristics of being autonomous in that she self-selected to participate in the Best Buddies program and the homecoming parade and volunteered to work in the community at a local outreach facility. However, three of the parents (Bella, Emily, and Sharon) reported instances in which their daughter required assistance in being autonomous throughout the transition process. Bella reported that

Miss Diva continues to require assistance in locating employment opportunities and selecting friends. Emily indicated that Amber demonstrates a low level of autonomy in completing household chores and completing yard work. Under the theme “Strengths”, Sharon reported Tina’s inability to cook meals on the stove. In the Parent Self-Determination Practice Survey (PSDPS), Sharon also reported that Tina rarely interacts with salespeople at stores and restaurants.

Self-Regulation. All four of the parents’ (Bella, Emily, Macela, and Sharon) reported evidence of elements of self-regulation in their daughter’s behavior. This includes both cognitive and behavioral strategies that enable each of the parents to take a closer look at their daughter’s environment and offer opportunities for their daughters to make decisions about how to act, evaluate and revise their plans as necessary (Wehmeyer, 1995). For example, Macela indicated that she encourages Riesha to set a financial goal and to save her money for retirement. On the other hand, under the theme “Challenges” Emily reported her daughter’s need to improve her social skills when she talks a lot. This is a concern for Emily because she feels that Amber misses information whenever she talks excessively.

Psychological Empowerment. All four of the parents (Bella, Emily, Macela, and Sharon) reported on the elements of psychological empowerment in their daughter/granddaughter’s behavior. For example, Sharon indicated that Tina has improved her communication skills and has become more outgoing when meeting new people. In her response to the PSDPS, Sharon reported that she is supportive of her daughter’s career decision and her daughter’s desire to live independently as soon as possible. Macela reported that Riesha experiences some difficulty with following through

with her goal to complete her certification in child care. According to Macela's response to the items on the PSDPS that reflect psychological empowerment, she self-reported that she supports her granddaughter's career choice.

Self-Realization. Three of the four parents' (Bella, Emily, and Macela) reported on key elements of self-realization in their daughter's behavior which includes having a comprehensive and accurate knowledge of themselves while using their strengths and limitations in such a way as to capitalize on this knowledge (Wehmeyer, 1995). For example, Macela described how her granddaughter was able to articulate her disinterest in having children. Macela's response to the PSDPS corroborates her interview response in terms of assisting Riesha in setting realistic goals and making plans to achieve those goals. Sharon's interview responses did not indicate any aspects of self-realization throughout the transition process for her daughter. However, she reported on the PSDPS that she assists her daughter in realistically recognizing and accepting her weaknesses.

Participants emphasized their involvement in promoting and fostering various aspects of self-determining behaviors in their daughters throughout the transition process. Those aspects include their daughter's ability to act autonomously, use self-regulating behaviors, demonstrate psychological empowerment, and become self-realizing by providing examples of ways in which they (parent) have promoted and fostered behaviors in each domain of self-determination. Participants' interview responses reflected numerous instances in which self-determination skills were fostered at home, in the community, at work sites, and in the transition program.

Summary

This chapter reports data generated from five young African American women with disabilities and their parent to describe how self-determination was evidenced during and after the transition program. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered to include scores from The Arc's Self-Determination Scale, The Parent Self-Determination Practice survey, interviews, and Transition Individualized Education Plans. Five major themes emerged from the student participant data: career and personal goals, social activities, personal and employment challenges, strengths, and job training/employment. Student participants demonstrated self-determination by participating in social activities, writing career goals, developing strengths, and participating in job training. Each young woman has set career goals for herself. Although Dereon's experience of the transition program was described as being negative, she was able to set a career path for herself. Additionally, there were three major themes that emerged from the parent participant data. Parents described the transition program as one in which their daughter was able to have the following: (a) a good experience, (b) a change in their quality of life, (c) a way to handle challenges, (d) a way to develop strengths, and (e) receive on-the-job training.

Researcher's Self-Reflection

I was eager to engage myself in this research endeavor as a way to give back the knowledge I acquired as a doctoral student. Prior to embarking on this research journey, I knew that my personal experiences and gender representation would impact my perspective as a researcher. As an African American female I immediately felt a connection with my participants and their families. Our backgrounds were quite similar in terms of being single parents rearing our daughters and wanting the best educational

experience for them. As a special educator, I have first-hand knowledge of the intricacies of how parents/guardians maneuver through the educational system in hopes of securing the best possible outcomes for their children. However, I realized that I would have to separate my beliefs, assumptions, and values from those of my participants in order to accurately listen to their voices as they told their stories to me. The purpose of this self-reflection is to provide a rationale for engaging myself into the lives of a few participants to determine to what extent they experienced or demonstrated self-determination throughout the transition process.

As a child growing up, I watched my aunt advocate for her son who had a specific learning disability. In addition to his learning disability, Larry encountered many health-related difficulties as a result of being born prematurely. My aunt attended all of Larry's Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, doctors' appointments, and ensured that all of his teachers understood his disability and medical condition. Currently, Larry is in his mid-thirties with two children of his own. He resides with his mother and is very involved in his daily living activities. As an eyewitness to how my aunt cared for her son with a significant learning disability and medical needs, I felt a calling to commit myself to the needs of families with children who have disabilities.

My career in special education has spanned over a fifteen year period in varying capacities. I have served as an elementary and secondary special education either in a self-contained, resource, or consultative role. Also, I have had the privilege to spread my talents in the higher education arena by teaching or assisting with the preparation of future special educators. Within my capacity of teaching at the K-12 and collegiate levels, I recognized that the outcomes for students with disabilities were not as favorable

as their peers without a disability. In particular, I began to research the differences in outcomes for students with disabilities based on their respective disability categories. One group stood out more so than the others. Young African American women with intellectual disabilities appeared to be at risk for dropping out of high school, becoming single parents, continuously unemployed, and remaining at home. I asked myself what could I have done as a classroom teacher to counteract the negative outcomes for this group of young women.

Self-determination is a principle that is emphasized in many African American homes. Although, the word self-determination may not be articulated as such parents/guardians recognize the need for their daughter to make decisions for herself, provide for her daily needs, obtain employment, plan for the future, and seek assistance when needed. Families recognize the importance of self-determination in preparing their daughters for life after high school. However, a closer look at the daily curriculum and activities of the young women while in high school warrants further exploration. The outcomes for young African American women with disabilities after exiting from high school continue to be dismal. The lack of coordinated services and adequate preparation for employment for the young women in this study was echoed by the young women and their parent or guardian. This impact on the lives of the young women and the larger society has implications for school systems, federal agencies such as Vocational Rehabilitation, and other social agencies. A detailed discussion including additional implications and recommendations is presented in Chapter 5.

Chapter V

Discussion

This study examined the extent to which self-determination was evident during the transition process in young African American women with disabilities who attended a university-based transition program after exiting the high school setting with a special diploma. More specifically, the researcher investigated (a) the young women's level of self-determination, (b) the young women's perceptions of the transition process, (c) how parents/guardians promote self-determination, and (d) the perceptions of parents/guardians of the transition process. The participants in the study were five African American young women with disabilities who participated in a transition program and four parents/guardians of the young women. A mixed method design was used to answer the research questions. The data were collected using multiple methods including the administration of surveys, face-to-face interviews, and document analysis of participants' transition plans. This chapter includes a summary of findings and implications for school systems, social service agencies, and parents or guardians. Additionally, limitations of the study and recommendations for future research are included.

Summary of Findings

The transition process for African American girls with disabilities is of concern because of the historically poor outcomes that have characterized this group of individuals as compared to their non-disabled peers (Jans & Stoddard, 1999; Trainor,

2007). Self-determination is regarded as a critical component in successful transitions for students with disabilities (Wehmeyer, 1996) with high levels of parent involvement during the transition process believed to strongly impact students' acquisition of self-determination skills (Zhang, 2005; Zhang, Katsiyannis, & Zhang, 2002). Overall, the findings from this study indicate that the young women participants perceived themselves as self-determining in spite of their disability, employment situation, and socioeconomic status. Parents of the young women reported numerous opportunities for their daughters to practice self-determining skills in an effort to enhance their ability to be more independent during the transition process.

Levels of self-determination were measured for each student participant using The Arc's Self-Determination Scale (ASDS). Three of the five student participants demonstrated high levels of self-determination as measured by the ASDS when compared to the normative sample. Parents were administered the Parent Self-Determination Practice Survey (PSDPS) to measure how they fostered practices of self-determination in their homes and community. The young woman who demonstrated the highest level of self-determination when compared to the normative sample also is the granddaughter of the parent who scored the highest level of promoting self-determination practices on the Parent Self-Determination Practice Survey (PSDPS). These findings are consistent with the literature in self-determination in that young women who score higher on the ASDS tend to come from families who promote and foster varying aspects of self-determination (Rousso & Wehmeyer, 2001). Another notable finding with the same young woman and guardian is that the guardian reported a lower socioeconomic status as compared to the other parents in the study. These findings are inconsistent with the literature in that

parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds tend to have daughters who demonstrate lower levels of self-determination (Zhang, 2005).

In the autonomy domain, four of the young women demonstrated high levels of autonomy when compared to the normative sample. According to the parents of the young women, the autonomous behaviors of the young women included preparing meals, interacting with salespeople at stores and restaurants, planning weekend activities, shopping at malls, pursuing a career interest, and choosing how to spend money. These findings are in line with the current literature showing that young adults with high levels of autonomy are able to select their own activities independently of any external influence (Agran & Wehmeyer, 2003).

All of the young women demonstrated high levels of self-regulation when compared to the normative sample on the ASDS. Some of their self-regulating behaviors included making decisions in the workplace, problem solving in interpersonal relationships, and describing and planning their independent living arrangements. Parents of the young women indicated that their daughters showed a relatively strong ability to problem solve, make daily decisions, and learn to drive a car or use public transportation. These findings are consistent with the literature on self-regulation in that persons who are self-regulated are able to self-monitor, self-instruct, and self-evaluate their individual environments (Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 2003).

In the psychological empowerment domain, four of the young women demonstrated high levels of being psychologically empowered as measured by the ASDS when compared to the normative sample. The young women who scored the highest indicated their ability to make friends, express their opinions, get along with others, and make

important choices. The young woman who scored the lowest on this domain struggled with her ability to tell people when they have hurt her feelings and her ability to feel confident in her skills. Parents reported that their daughters were able to make and sustain friendships, make decisions for themselves and others, make purchases, self-advocate, and develop communication skills. These findings are consistent with the literature indicating that young adults who are psychologically empowered have control over situations that are important to them and possess the skills to achieve their desired outcomes (Zimmerman, 2002).

All of the young women demonstrated relatively higher levels of self-realization on the ASDS when compared to the normative sample. Some of their self-realizing behaviors included taking risks in learning new employment skills, knowing their strengths and limitations, feeling good about themselves, and feeling confident in their abilities. Parents indicated that the young women were able to select a career choice of their own and develop good communications skills as part of being self-realizing. These findings are consistent with literature on self-realization in that the young women were able to use a reasonable and comprehensive knowledge of themselves in an effort to capitalize on this knowledge (Wehmeyer, Palmer, Agran, Mithaug, & Martin, 2000).

Although, three of the five young women demonstrated high levels of self-determination as measured by the ASDS only one of the young women worked a full-time job and maintained her employment after leaving the transition program. In addition, only one of the young women lived independently. The participants who were unemployed received Social Security benefits as a primary source of income. These findings are inconsistent with the literature that indicates that young adults with higher

levels of self-determination are more inclined to live independently, obtain long-term employment, make decisions for themselves, set goals, and exhibit an increase in self-image (Chambers, Wehmeyer, Saito, Lida, Lee, & Singh, 2007; Lindstrom et al., 2008; Trainor, 2007). However, considering the current economic status in the United States of America in which many young adults are remaining at home longer with their parents or returning home due to the economic recession (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010), the findings are not surprising. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010), the national unemployment rate is near 9%. However, the current unemployment rate for the state of Florida is approximately 12% which is noticeably higher than the national average. In fact, many persons who are unemployed hold at least a college-level degree. Therefore, at the current time, it is not surprising that persons with disabilities find it even more challenging to secure employment while competing with college graduates.

In addition to demonstrating self-determining behaviors which include the ability to be autonomous, self-regulating, psychologically empowered, and self-realizing the young women in the present study encountered challenges throughout the transition process. According to parents of the young women, locating employment opportunities, developing healthy relationships with men, following through with goals, living independently, and sustaining a quality of life have all been challenges for the young women. These findings are inconsistent with the literature on self-determination in that young adults with disabilities often experience positive changes in their quality of life to assist them in becoming more independent. For example, Halpern (1993) suggested that quality of life indicators should expand beyond employment (e.g., social activities, living arrangements, and general well-being) and are based upon the student's interests. More

specifically, if the student enters a transition program with the desire to become employed, then her experience should be catered around providing her with sustainable employment opportunities.

As a component of the initial entry phase into the transition program, parents and guardians were required to attend an informational session with their young adult daughters with disabilities. Parents and guardians either discovered the transition program through a school representative or online. Utilizing cultural resources such as the internet to gain information about the transition program is a form of cultural capital that is consistent with the literature. Additionally, parents and guardians relied on the resources available to them in terms of connecting with other family members of adult students with disabilities or attending various postsecondary presentations. This is a form of social capital necessary in order to access the transition program. Cultural capital is defined as a resource that families and individuals use to connect with other people in their culture. It can be acquired through the connections people make through various sources such as books, computers, universities, and libraries. On the other hand, social capital involves social resources and networks that enable people to achieve or attain personal growth through books, study aids, or academic tutoring (Hemmings, 2007; Perna & Titus, 2005).

Parents of children with disabilities are often faced with many decisions regarding the social and academic planning of their child's future. At first glance this may seem like a simple task of planning for a child's future. However, it can be burdensome for many parents of children with disabilities, especially those parents who are engaged in the transition process and looking forward to post-secondary options. In order to maneuver

and manage their child's IEP process, including paper work, educational jargon, and the overall transition process, parents of children with disabilities must possess a certain skill level in securing adequate and effective transition services for their child. Two theories help to explain the different parent involvement types: Sharon Gewirtz and colleagues' (1995) theory on parent involvement and Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) theory on cultural and social capital.

Many parents use economic, political, and social resources to secure educational services and supports for their children. Gewirtz, Ball, and Bowe (1995) asserted that there are three parent involvement types to illustrate how parents maneuver through the educational process. These parent involvement types include skilled or privileged choosers, semi-skilled choosers, and disconnected choosers. More research is required in this area to determine what the parent involvement type that reflects that of parents or guardians of children with disabilities.

Cultural capital is another tool that "skilled" or "semi-skilled" parents possess as a result of being connected with certain ethnic groups or organizations. According to Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital is defined as acquired leverage in a particular ethnic or organizational culture. Furthermore, cultural capital may be transferred into economic capital such as educational attainment and employment qualifications. Bourdieu's theory of social capital shares characteristics of cultural capital. In fact, the two are so similar that one may be mistaken for the other. More specifically, social capital is defined as access to various social groups (e.g., country clubs, parenting groups, and religious organizations) or social status (e.g., socioeconomic status and educational attainment) (Bourdieu, 1984). Recent studies on cultural and social capital (Dumais, 2002;

Hemmings, 2007; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Ream & Palardy, 2008; Trainor, 2010) highlight the importance of using cultural capital as parents become more involved in the academic preparedness and the daily activities of their children. For African American children, the cultural and social capital their parents use is usually viewed with less importance than that of White parents (Harry, Klinger, & Hart, 2005; Trainor, 2010).

Trainor (2008) suggests that cultural and social capital may differ for young adults with disabilities and their parents from low socioeconomic backgrounds and educational attainment level in accessing services from social agencies such as the VR program. However, a finding in the current study inconsistent with the literature was when one of the parents did not identify any barriers or challenges with her daughter securing employment through the VR program.

Limitations of Study

Threats to Internal Validity

The threats to internal validity in this study were instrumentation, attrition, and socially desirable responses during the self-reporting. The use of The Arc's Self-Determination Scale as a self-report instrument presented a threat because one of the young women was administered the scale prior to participating in the study. In order to minimize this threat, the researcher administered the scale to each student participant. Attrition presented another threat to internal validity because one of the parents declined to participate in the study after initially consenting (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 1999). There were two situations where both the parent and her daughter were present for each other's interview. Because of prior instances in which two of the young women were taken advantage of, both of their parents were present during their respective interviews. The

presence of both parents was to ensure their daughters' safety. Socially desirable responses during the self-reporting of the study may have posed as a threat because of the cognitive disabilities of the student participants. According to Beirne-Smith, Patton, and Kim (2006), individuals with mild cognitive disabilities often distrust their own responses due to a history of previous failure and are more likely to look to others for cues on how to respond or behave. Students and parents/guardians in the current study may have provided responses that they believed were acceptable by the researcher.

Delimitations

The intent of the study was not to generalize findings to all young African American women with disabilities and their parents or guardians but rather to provide an exploration of their perceptions of the transition process during and after high school. In two instances, both the parent and her daughter were present for each other's interview. At the parent's request, the interviews were conducted with her and her daughter. Threats to external validity included operations (operational definitions) and selection of participants.

Threats to Credibility

Threats to credibility included interpretation of data and researcher bias. To ensure credibility was obtained through peer review or peer debriefing throughout the entire data collection process via interviews and self-reporting measures; addressing personal biases and assumptions; and collaboration with another graduate student (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

Implications

The results of this study are not intended to be generalizable to the larger population of African American young women with disabilities; however, the results are intended to describe a sample of young African American women with disabilities and their parent or guardian's perceptions of promoting self-determination throughout the transition process. Implications for this study are presented to encourage a healthy dialogue and action among key stakeholders in the larger educational community, social service agencies, and parents and guardians.

Transition Programs

The classroom and school environment may not be the only place where students with disabilities are exposed to opportunities to practice behaviors associated with self-determination. However, transition programs provide a venue for students with disabilities to apply self-determination practices in their everyday interactions. As previously mentioned, student participants were provided multiple chances to practice self-determination skills in a variety of settings. Specific recommendations to transition programs include:

- *Offer career options in postsecondary transition programs.* One of the ways young adults with disabilities can be successful after high school is attending a postsecondary transition program that promotes self-determination. Shaw (2009) reported that there is an increase in the number of students with disabilities who have shown an interest in participating in postsecondary education. Unfortunately, school systems are unable to fund postsecondary transition programs using current budget restraints. However, creative partnerships with local colleges and universities can be made to find

ways to provide postsecondary opportunities. Funding for and support for postsecondary transition programs is crucial to enhance the quality of life for young adults with disabilities. The transition program provided an equal opportunity for students from all ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Services available to students while attending the transition program were at no cost to the student. All students received training in how to travel throughout the metropolitan area using the local transit service.

- *Develop an active role during transition planning.* A parent or guardian's active involvement during the transition planning meeting is crucial to the positive development and selection of postsecondary choices for their young adult student with a disability (Cameto, 2005). Like the case of Miss Diva, it is common for parents to take an active role with transition planning. It should be noted that the parent or guardian's presence can have an instrumental impact on the decisions their child makes in terms of future community involvement, housing options, employment, and postsecondary careers.

- *Invite parents and guardians to the table.* It is recommended that self-determination be taught as early as possible for students with disabilities (Thoma & Evans Getzel, 2005). Different learning formats should be used to encourage and teach self-determination. The parents' role in self-determination is important and should be increased as their child with a disability prepares to exit from high school. When parents view the appropriateness and effectiveness of self-determination their child with a disability was successful in practicing self-determination (Grigal, Neubert, Moon, & Graham, 2003). According to Ward (2005), self-determination has a positive impact on postsecondary education and quality of life outcomes. All of the parents in the current study fostered multiple opportunities for their daughters to engage in self-determined

behaviors throughout the transition process. However, there were reported instances in which parents were reluctant to allow their daughters to experience higher levels of autonomy. For example, Sharon stated that she is responsible for paying all of Tina's bills because Tina is not financially responsible to manage her own finances.

- *Coordinate involvement with community agencies.* For many of the participants in the current study, the problematic nature of transitioning from a postsecondary setting is compounded by the inherent complications involving the coordinated services with different social service agencies such as Vocational Rehabilitation (Mellard & Lancaster, 2003). Early planning and involvement from community agencies is beneficial considering the long waiting list to receive assistance after students with disabilities exit high school. In addition to early planning, follow-up planning is needed to assess the effectiveness of job placement for individuals with disabilities. Most of the participants in the current study shared negative feedback regarding the lack of follow-thru planning provided by their respective VR job coaches or counselors.

The 21st century has welcomed a number of educational reforms to foster conducive learning environments and stronger outcomes for young adults with disabilities. Recently, there has been a movement for students with disabilities to become more actively involved during and after the transition process through the use of self-determination skills. School systems are vital venues for delivering instructional settings and multiple opportunities for students with disabilities to practice self-determination. It will take a collaborative and concerted effort between and among all key stakeholders to ensure success for young African American women with disabilities.

Parents and Guardians

Often times the parent and guardian's role in promoting self-determination is minimized to serve as an advisor rather than an active decision maker for their young adult child with a disability (Shaw, 2009). The promotion of self-determination may begin at home for many young adults with disabilities. Parents are thought to be a child's first teacher even more so when it comes to teaching their child about self-determination (Grigal, Neubert, Moon, & Graham, 2003). Students with disabilities become acclimated to learning about self-determination while in elementary and secondary school through informal and formal situations. For example, a student may make a decision to write with a pen rather than a pencil to complete an assignment as an informal method of learning about self-determination. On the other hand, a formal method may include the student participating in a curriculum specifically designed to enhance self-determination. Parents and guardians must actively work in collaboration with school systems and outside agencies to improve the quality and quantity of postsecondary programs for young adults with disabilities, in particular young African American women with disabilities by focusing on the following:

- *Promote self-determination practices at home and in the community.* In the current study, parents and a guardian promoted self-determination to varying degrees. All of the young women had opportunities to practice self-determination by assisting with household chores and deciding what clothing items to wear. However, few of the young women were able to make decisions related to family planning, leisure activities, and employment without receiving approval from their parents. Young adults with disabilities are more comfortable with using self-determination strategies when they are presented

with multiple opportunities to practice the strategies at home and in the community (Wehmeyer, 1996; Zhang, 2006).

- *Slowly withdraw level of involvement.* Parents and guardians tend to make most of their child's educational decisions when the child is in elementary school. As their child matriculates through secondary school, parents and guardians continue to make decisions for their child with a disability (Abernathy & Taylor, 2009). In an effort to promote and support self-determination, parents and guardians are encouraged to slowly wean their authority and allow their young adult with disabilities to self-advocate.

- *Demand better outcomes.* Although the outcomes for young women with disabilities are more positive than compared to 10 years ago, the reality for many young women with disabilities remains dismal when compared to their male counterparts (Trainor, 2007). Parents and guardians can help shape the trend for ensuring better outcomes for their young adult daughters with a disability. This can be done by developing a collaborative partnership with local community and social service agencies, starting a parent advocacy group, and demanding that accountability procedures be in place to measure the outcomes for their daughter.

Informed parents and guardians are better equipped to assist their young adult daughter with a disability make informed decisions. The voices of parents and guardians should resonate at all levels throughout the educational process for their African American daughter with a disability.

Recommendations for Future Research

As previously mentioned, self-determination has been identified as an educational construct instrumental in the postsecondary success of students with disabilities

(Wehmeyer & Palmer, 2003). More specifically, a more direct impact on self-determination could be made by closely examining its relevance on how young African American women with disabilities and their parents or guardians use cultural and social capital throughout the transition process. The findings from this study revealed that there is additional research to be conducted. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods should be employed using multiple data sources. The following recommendations are a direct result of the present study:

- *Examine coordinated activities and involvement between local schools and social service agencies.* Young African American women with disabilities should be exposed to more opportunities to expand their skills and explore a range of career options. These young women should be provided with structured opportunities to enhance their self-awareness and disability awareness. This could be achieved by administering various types of interest and career inventories over an extended period of time. These inventories will provide local schools and social agencies with a more descriptive profile of the young women in terms of their strengths and limitations. Structured opportunities may include a variety of job training settings in which the young women are able to practice and evaluate their job skills with feedback from potential employers that is conducive to future employment. In the current study, the young women complained about the lack of assistance and training to secure full time employment that was provided by the local VR job coach or counselor.

- *Examine the quality of life for African American females with disabilities.* In the present study parents and a guardian had different perspectives about the quality of life for their daughters with disabilities. One parent indicated that her daughter's quality of

life had actually declined as a result of exiting from the transition program. Other parents reported positive outcomes regarding the quality of life for their daughters after attending the transition program. Therefore, a closer look should be taken at quality of life indicators.

- *Expand and replicate this study longitudinally.* This study included data from multiple sources. Increasing the sample size and conducting a longitudinal study would provide a more comprehensive description of the transition process for young African American women with disabilities. Also, conducting observations of the young women while attending the transition program would provide more representative information on the development and effectiveness of how young adults utilize self-determination throughout the transition process.

Continued research based on the recommendations above will push forward the agenda for promoting more positive outcomes for young African American women with disabilities. If parents, educators, social service agencies, and other key stakeholders are serious about influencing the quality of life for these young women, then the time is now to make a change. The voices of young African American women with disabilities have been silenced for too long. It is time to eradicate the dismal outcomes for these young women.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Parent or Guardian Consent Form A



Dear Parent or Guardian:

This letter provides information about a research study that will be conducted at your daughter's school by

La Tonya L. Gillis, a doctoral student at the University of South Florida. My goal in conducting the study is to examine self-determination in young African American women with disabilities.

➤ ***Who I am: I am La Tonya Gillis, M.S.E., a doctoral student at the University of South Florida. I am planning the study in cooperation with the Hillsborough County Public Schools.***

➤ ***Why I am Requesting Your Participation: This study is being conducted as part of a project entitled, "Kujichagalia! An Exploratory Study of Self-Determination in Young African American Women with Disabilities." You are being asked to participate because you are a parent or guardian of a young African American female with a disability who is participating in a transition program or has participated in a transition program.***

➤ ***Why You Should Participate: I am asking you to take part in this research study because I want to understand how your daughter uses self-determination throughout the transition process. Data from various participants including you, other parents or guardians, your daughter, other female students, transition facilitator, and teaching assistant will be compiled in order to try to understand their perceptions of how young African American women with disabilities use self-determination in the transition program and throughout the transition process.***

➤ ***What Participation Requires: You, along with other parents or guardians of young African American female students who are participating or have participated in a transition program, will be asked to participate in an individual interview. The interview will be done at a time convenient for you. The interview will last approximately one hour. The interview will be audiotaped. The information on the audiotape will be transcribed, so that I have a clear understanding of what was said. However, no names will be used during the transcription to identify you or your daughter in any way. You may select a pseudonym to further protect your identity.***

Appendix A (continued)

Once the transcription has occurred, the tapes will be stored in a locked and secured location for the duration of the study. The tapes, transcripts, scales, and surveys will be destroyed three years after the study ends. You will most likely not benefit directly as a result of participating in this research study; however, your input will assist me in understanding the how your daughter uses self-determination.

➤ How Long Will the Study Last: The study will last approximately one year.

➤ Please Note: Your decision to participate in this research study is completely voluntary. You are free to participate in this research study or withdraw at any time. If you choose not to participate, or if you withdraw yourself at any point during the study, this will in no way affect your relationship with your daughter's school, USF, or any other party. Your decision to participate, not participate, or withdraw at any time will in no way affect your daughter's grades.

➤ Confidentiality of Your Responses: There is minimal risk to you for participating in this research. Interview participants will not be asked to identify themselves. Prior to beginning the interviews, participants will be asked to maintain confidentiality of what takes place during the interviews. The audiotapes will be maintained for a period of three years after the study is closed at which time the tapes will be destroyed. Your privacy and research records will be kept confidential to the extent of the law. Authorized research personnel, employees of the Department of Health and Human Services, and the USF Institutional Review Board and its staff, and any other individuals acting on behalf of USF, may inspect the records from this research project.

➤ Questions? If you have any questions about this research study, please contact La Tonya L. Gillis at (813) 843-2708. If you have questions about your rights as a person who is taking part in a research study, you may contact a member of the Division of Research Compliance of the University of South Florida at (813) 974-9343.

➤ Want to Participate? To agree to participate in the study, please complete the attached consent form below and have your daughter return it to her transition teacher.

Sincerely,

La Tonya L. Gillis, M.S.E.
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Special Education

Appendix A (continued)

**“Kujichagalia! An Exploratory Study of Self-Determination in Young African
American Women with Disabilities”
University of South Florida
Research Study**

Consent to Take Part in this Research Study

It is up to you to decide whether you want to take part in this study. If you want to take part, please sign the form, if the following statements are true.

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

Signature of Person Taking Part in Study

Date

Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect.

I hereby certify that when this person signs this form, to the best of my knowledge, he or she understands:

- What the study is about.
- What procedures/interventions/investigational drugs or devices will be used.
- What the potential benefits might be.
- What the known risks might be.

I also certify that he or she does not have any problems that could make it hard to understand what it means to take part in this research. This person speaks the language that was used to explain this research.

This person reads well enough to understand this form or, if not, this person is able to hear and understand when the form is read to him or her.

This person does not have a medical/psychological problem that would compromise comprehension and therefore makes it hard to understand what is being explained and can, therefore, give informed consent.

This person is not taking drugs that may cloud their judgment or make it hard to understand what is being explained and can, therefore, give informed consent.

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Appendix B

Parent or Guardian Consent Form B



Dear Parent or Guardian:

This letter provides information about a research study that will be conducted at your daughter's school by

La Tonya L. Gillis, a doctoral student at the University of South Florida. My goal in conducting the study is to examine self-determination in young African American women with disabilities.

➤ Who I am: I am La Tonya Gillis, M.S.E., a doctoral student at the University of South Florida. I am planning the study in cooperation with the Hillsborough County Public Schools.

➤ Why I am Requesting Your Daughter's Participation: This study is being conducted as part of a project entitled, "Kujichagalia! An Exploratory Study of Self-Determination in Young African American Women with Disabilities." Your daughter is being asked to participate because she is a young African American female with a disability who is participating in a transition program or has participated in a transition program.

➤ Why Your daughter Should Participate: I am asking your daughter to take part in this research study because I want to understand how she uses self-determination throughout the transition process. Data from various participants including your daughter, other female students, parents or guardians, transition facilitator, and teaching assistant will be compiled in order to try to understand their perceptions of how young African American women with disabilities use self-determination in the transition program and throughout the transition process.

➤ What Participation Requires: Your daughter, along with other young African American female students who are participating or have participated in a transition program whose parents have also consented to their participation, will be asked to complete a self-determination scale and asked to participate in an individual interview. Each scale will take about 45 minutes to complete and consists of questions about how your daughter uses self-determination in school and out of school. In addition to the scale, I will review your daughter's Transition Individualized Education Plan. Your daughter will also be asked to participate in an interview to discuss her experiences. The

Appendix B (continued)

interview will be done during a time that will not interfere with instruction. The interview will last approximately one hour. The interview will be audiotaped. The information on the audiotape will be transcribed, so that I have a clear understanding of what was said. However, no names will be used during the transcription to identify your daughter in any way. Your daughter may select a pseudonym to further protect her identity.

Once the transcription has occurred, the tapes will be stored in a locked and secured location for the duration of the study. The tapes, transcripts, scales, and surveys will be destroyed three years after the study ends. Your daughter will most likely not benefit directly as a result of participating in this research study; however, her input will assist me in understanding the perceptions of the self-determination in young African American women with disabilities.

➤ How Long Will the Study Last: The study will last approximately one year.

➤ Please Note: Your decision to allow your daughter to participate in this research study is completely voluntary. Your daughter is free to participate in this research study or withdraw at any time. If you choose for your daughter not to participate or if you withdraw her at any point during the study, this will in no way affect your daughter's relationship with her school, USF, or any other party. Your decision to allow your daughter to participate, not participate, or withdraw at any time will in no way affect your daughter's grades.

➤ Confidentiality of Your Responses: There is minimal risk to your daughter for participating in this research. Your daughter's name will not be listed on the survey. Interview participants will not be asked to identify themselves. Prior to beginning the interviews, participants will be asked to maintain confidentiality of what takes place during the interviews. The audiotapes will be maintained for a period of three years after the study is closed at which time the tapes will be destroyed. Your daughter's privacy and research records will be kept confidential to the extent of the law. Authorized research personnel, employees of the Department of Health and Human Services, and the USF Institutional Review Board and its staff, and any other individuals acting on behalf of USF, may inspect the records from this research project.

➤ Questions? If you have any questions about this research study, please contact La Tonya L. Gillis at (813) 843-2708. If you have questions about your rights as a person who is taking part in a research study, you may contact a member of the Division of Research Compliance of the University of South Florida at (813) 974-9343.

➤ Want to Participate? To agree to allow your daughter to participate in the study, please complete the attached consent form below and have your daughter return it to her transition teacher.

Appendix B (continued)

Sincerely,

La Tonya L. Gillis, M.S.E.
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Special Education

**“Kujichagalia! An Exploratory Study of Self-Determination in Young African American Women with Disabilities”
University of South Florida
Research Study**

Consent to Take Part in this Research Study

It is up to you to decide whether you want your daughter to take part in this study. If you want your daughter to take part, please sign the form, if the following statements are true.

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing for my daughter to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

Signature of Person Taking Part in Study

Date

Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect.

I hereby certify that when this person signs this form, to the best of my knowledge, he or she understands:

- What the study is about.
- What procedures/interventions/investigational drugs or devices will be used.
- What the potential benefits might be.
- What the known risks might be.

I also certify that he or she does not have any problems that could make it hard to understand what it means to take part in this research. This person speaks the language that was used to explain this research.

This person reads well enough to understand this form or, if not, this person is able to hear and understand when the form is read to him or her.

Appendix B (continued)

This person does not have a medical/psychological problem that would compromise comprehension and therefore makes it hard to understand what is being explained and can, therefore, give informed consent.

This person is not taking drugs that may cloud their judgment or make it hard to understand what is being explained and can, therefore, give informed consent.

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Appendix C

Student Consent Form



Dear Student:

This letter provides information about a research study that will be conducted at your former school by

La Tonya L. Gillis, a doctoral student at the University of South Florida. My goal in conducting the study is to examine self-determination in young African American women with disabilities.

Who I am: I am La Tonya Gillis, M.S.E., a doctoral student at the University of South Florida. I am planning the study in cooperation with the Hillsborough County Public Schools.

Why I am Requesting Your Participation: This study is being conducted as part of a project entitled, "Kujichagalia! An Exploratory Study of Self-Determination in Young African American Women with Disabilities." You are being asked to participate because you are a young African American female with a disability who has participated in a transition program.

➤ Why You Should Participate: I am asking you to take part in this research study because I want to understand how you use self-determination throughout the transition process. Data from various participants including you, parents or guardians, other female students, transition facilitator, and teaching assistant will be compiled in order to try to understand their perceptions of how young African American women with disabilities use self-determination in the transition program and throughout the transition process.

➤ What Participation Requires: You, along with other young African American female students who are participating or have participated in a transition program, will be asked to participate in an individual interview. The interview will be done at a time convenient for you. The interview will last approximately one hour. The interview will be audiotaped. The information on the audiotape will be transcribed, so that I have a clear understanding of what was said. However, no names will be used during the transcription to identify you or your daughter in any way. You may select a pseudonym to further protect your identity.

➤ Once the transcription has occurred, the tapes will be stored in a locked and secured location for the duration of the study. The tapes, transcripts, scales, and surveys will be destroyed three years after the study ends. You will most likely not benefit

Appendix C (continued)

directly as a result of participating in this research study; however, your input will assist me in understanding the how you use self-determination.

- How Long Will the Study Last: The study will last approximately one year.
- Please Note: Your decision to participate in this research study is completely voluntary. You are free to participate in this research study or withdraw at any time. If you choose not to participate, or if you withdraw yourself at any point during the study, this will in no way affect your relationship with your school, USF, or any other party.
- Confidentiality of Your Responses: There is minimal risk to you for participating in this research. Interview participants will not be asked to identify themselves. Prior to beginning the interviews, participants will be asked to maintain confidentiality of what takes place during the interviews. The audiotapes will be maintained for a period of three years after the study is closed at which time the tapes will be destroyed. Your privacy and research records will be kept confidential to the extent of the law. Authorized research personnel, employees of the Department of Health and Human Services, and the USF Institutional Review Board and its staff, and any other individuals acting on behalf of USF, may inspect the records from this research project.
- Questions? If you have any questions about this research study, please contact La Tonya L. Gillis at (813) 843-2708. If you have questions about your rights as a person who is taking part in a research study, you may contact a member of the Division of Research Compliance of the University of South Florida at (813) 974-9343.
- Want to Participate? To agree to participate in the study, please complete the attached consent form below and return it to your transition teacher or La Tonya L. Gillis.

La Tonya L. Gillis, M.S.E.
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Special Education

**“Kujichagalia! An Exploratory Study of Self-Determination in Young African
American Women with Disabilities”
University of South Florida
Research Study**

Consent to Take Part in this Research Study

It is up to you to decide whether you want to take part in this study. If you want to take part, please sign the form, if the following statements are true.

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

Signature of Person Taking Part in Study

Date

Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect.

I hereby certify that when this person signs this form, to the best of my knowledge, he or she understands:

- What the study is about.
- What procedures/interventions/investigational drugs or devices will be used.
- What the potential benefits might be.
- What the known risks might be.

I also certify that he or she does not have any problems that could make it hard to understand what it means to take part in this research. This person speaks the language that was used to explain this research.

This person reads well enough to understand this form or, if not, this person is able to hear and understand when the form is read to him or her.

Appendix C (continued)

This person does not have a medical/psychological problem that would compromise comprehension and therefore makes it hard to understand what is being explained and can, therefore, give informed consent.

This person is not taking drugs that may cloud their judgment or make it hard to understand what is being explained and can, therefore, give informed consent.

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Appendix D

Student Assent Form



Assent to Participate in Research

➤ WHY AM I BEING ASKED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

You are being asked to take part in a research study because you are a young African American woman with a disability who is participating or has previously participated in a transition program. This research is looking at how you use self-determination during and after the transition program. You are being asked to participate in the study because you are participating or have participated in a transition program.

➤ WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

The person in charge of this study is La Tonya L. Gillis (PI) of the University of South Florida.

➤ WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

By doing this study, I hope to learn more about your thoughts and the ways you use self-determination during and/or after the transition program.

➤ WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

The study will take place at your school or home. The research study will last one year.

**“Kujichagalia! An Exploratory Study of Self-Determination in Young African
American Women with Disabilities”
University of South Florida
Research Study**

➤ **WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?**

You will be asked to complete a self-determination scale that will take about 45 minutes to complete. You will be asked to participate in an interview that will last about one hour. The interview will be audiotaped and you will not be asked to identify yourself. To protect your identity and what is discussed during the interview, I ask that you keep what is discussed confidential by not sharing it with others. If you feel uncomfortable answering any question you will not be forced to do so.

➤ **WHAT THINGS MIGHT HAPPEN THAT ARE NOT PLEASANT?**

To the best of my knowledge, the things you will be doing will not harm you or cause you any additional unpleasant experience.

➤ **WILL SOMETHING GOOD HAPPEN IF I TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**

I cannot promise you that anything good will happen if you decide to take part in this study. However, most students enjoy sharing their personal thoughts and feelings.

➤ **DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?**

You should talk with your parents or anyone else that you trust about taking part in this study. You will not be forced to take part in the study. You should take part in this study because you really want to volunteer.

➤ **IF I DON'T WANT TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY, WHAT WILL HAPPEN?**

If you do not want to be in the study, nothing else will happen.

Appendix D (continued)

➤ **WILL I RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY?**

There are no rewards for taking part in the study.

➤ **WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION I GIVE?**

Your information will be added to the information from other people taking part in the study so no one will know who you are.

➤ **CAN I CHANGE MY MIND AND QUIT?**

If you decide to take part in the study you still have the right to change your mind later. No one will think badly of you if you decide to quit.

➤ **WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?**

You can ask questions about this study at any time. You can talk with your parents or other adults that you trust about this study. You can talk with the person who is asking you to volunteer. If you think of other questions later, you can ask them.

Assent to Participate

I understand what the person running this study is asking me to do. I have thought about this and agree to take part in this study.

Name of person agreeing to take part in the study

Date

Name of person providing information to subject

Date

Appendix E

The 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., Principal Investigator
Kathy Kelchner, M.Ed., Project Director
Self-Determination Assessment Project

Student's name _____

Date _____

School _____

Teacher's name _____

The
Arc

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Section One

Autonomy

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.)

1A. Independence: Routine personal care and family oriented functions

1A. Subtotal _____

- | | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| 1. I make my own meals or snacks. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |
| 2. I care for my own clothes. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |
| 3. I do chores in my home. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |
| 4. I keep my own personal items together. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |
| 5. I do simple first aid or medical care for myself. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |
| 6. I keep good personal care and grooming. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |

1B. Independence: Interaction with the environment

1B. Subtotal _____

- | | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| 7. I make friends with other kids my age. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |
| 8. I use the post office. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |
| 9. I keep my appointments and meetings. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |
| 10. I deal with salespeople at stores and restaurants. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |

1C. Acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests and abilities: Recreational and leisure time

1C. Subtotal _____

- | | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| 11. I do free time activities based on my interests. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |
| 12. I plan weekend activities that I like to do. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |
| 13. I am involved in school-related activities. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |
| 14. My friends and I choose activities that we want to do. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |
| 15. I write letters, notes or talk on the phone to friends and family. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |
| 16. I listen to music that I like. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not even if I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do sometimes when I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do most of the time I have the chance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do every time I have the chance |

1D. Acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests and abilities:

1D. Subtotal _____

Community involvement and interaction

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 preferences, beliefs, interests and abilities: Post-school directions

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 preferences, beliefs, interests and abilities: Personal expression

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 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
32. I choose how to spend my personal 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

Please check Section One, A thru F, to make sure there is only one answer for each question.

Section Two

Self-Regulation

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-solving

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: _____

Ending: The story ends with you taking a vocational class where you will learn to be a cashier.

Story Score _____

35. **Beginning:** Your friends are acting like they are mad at you. You are upset about this.

Middle: _____

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: _____

Ending: The story ends with you working at the bookstore.

Story Score _____

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 using your English book for homework.

Story Score _____

37. **Beginning:** You are in a club at school. The club advisor announces that the club members will need to elect new officers at the next meeting. You want to be the president of the club.

Middle: _____

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 anyone. You want to have friends.

Middle: _____

Ending: The story ends with you having many friends at the new school.
Story Score _____

2A Subtotal _____

2B: Goal setting and task performance

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 _____

List four things you should do to meet this goal:

- 1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
4) _____

40. Where do you want to work after you graduate?

- I have not planned for that yet.
 I want to work _____

List four things you should do to meet this goal:

- 1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
4) _____

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:

- 1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
4) _____

2B Subtotal _____

Section Three

Psychological Empowerment

Directions:

Check the answer that BEST describes you.

Choose only one answer for each question.

There are no right or wrong answers.

42. I usually do what my friends want... or

I tell my friends if they are doing something I don't want to do.

43. I tell others when I have new or different ideas or opinions... or

I usually agree with other peoples' opinions or ideas.

44. I usually agree with people when they tell me I can't do something... or

I tell people when I think I can do something that they tell me I can't.

45. I tell people when they have hurt my feelings... or

I am afraid to tell people when they have hurt my feelings.

46. I can make my own decisions... or

Other people make decisions for me.

47. Trying hard at school doesn't do me much good... or

Trying hard at school will help me get a good job.

48. I can get what I want by working hard... or

I need good luck to get what I want.

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

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.

52. I am able to work with others... or

I cannot work well with others.

53. I do not make good choices... or

I can make good choices.

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.

55. I will have a hard time making new friends... or

I will be able to make friends in new situations.

56. 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.

57. My choices will not be honored... or

I will be able to make choices that are important to me.

Section 3 Subtotal _____

Section Four

Self-Realization

Directions:

Tell whether you think each of these statements describes how you feel about yourself or not. There are no right or wrong answers. Choose only the answer that BEST fits you.

58. I do not feel ashamed of any of my emotions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't agree	66. I don't accept my own limitations.	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't agree
59. I feel free to be angry at people I care for.	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't agree	67. I feel I cannot do many things.	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't agree
60. I can show my feelings even when people might see me.	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't agree	68. I like myself.	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't agree
61. I can like people even if I don't agree with them.	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't agree	69. I am not an important person.	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't agree
62. I am afraid of doing things wrong.	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't agree	70. I know how to make up for my limitations.	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't agree
63. It is better to be yourself than to be popular.	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't agree	71. Other people like me.	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't agree
64. I am loved because I give love.	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't agree	72. I am confident in my abilities.	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't agree
65. I know what I do best.	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't agree	Section 4 Subtotal _____		

Scoring Step 1:

Record the raw scores from each section:

Autonomy

1A =

1B =

1C =

1D =

1E =

1F =

Domain Total:

Self-Regulation

2A =

2B =

Domain Total:

Psychological Empowerment

3 =

Domain Total:

Self-Realization

4 =

Domain Total:

Scoring Step 2:

Sum each Domain Total for a Total Score:

Self-Determination Total =

Scoring Step 3:

Using the conversion tables in Appendix A, convert raw scores into percentile scores for comparison with the sample norms (Norm Sample) and the percentage of positive responses (Positive Scores):

Norm Sample	Positive Scores
-------------	-----------------

Autonomy

1A =

1B =

1C =

1D =

1E =

1F =

Domain Total:

Self-Regulation

2A =

2B =

Domain Total:

Psychological Empowerment

3 =

Domain Total:

Self-Realization

4 =

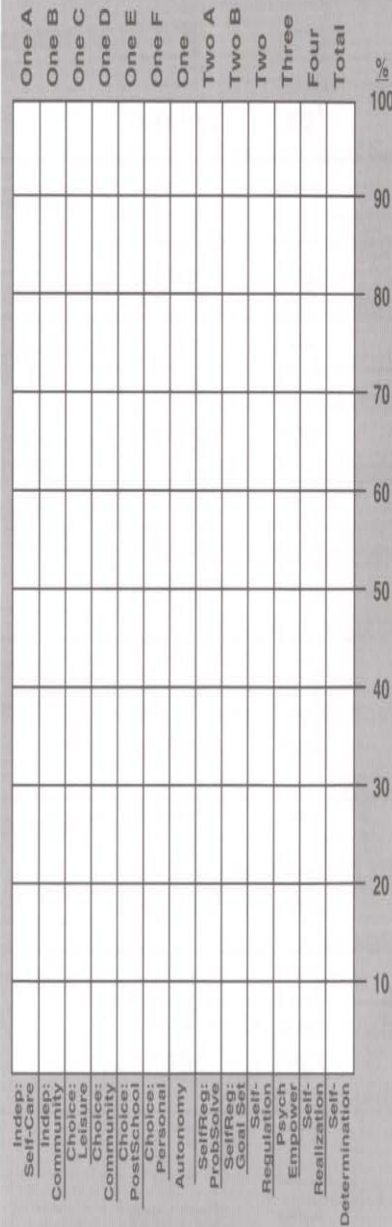
Domain Total:

Self-Determination

Total Score =

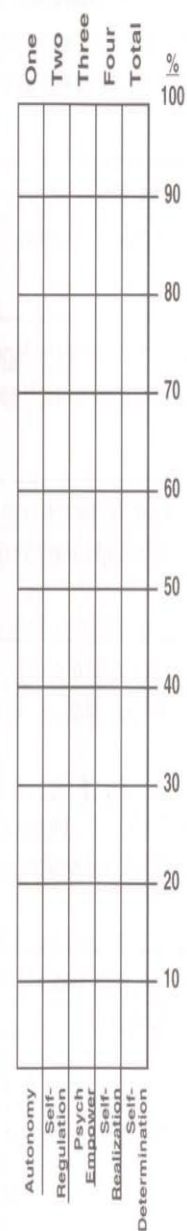
Scoring Step 4:

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):



Scoring Step 5:

Fill in the graph for the percentile scores indicating the percent positive responses.



Appendix F (continued)

9. Do you consider your family's income level as which of the following?

(Check One)

- Low (under \$25,000) Lower middle (\$25,000-\$50,000)
- Middle (\$50,000-\$80,000) Upper Middle (\$80,000-\$150,000)
- Rich (Over \$150,000)

10. How many children do you have? _____

Think of your daughter as the focus to answer the following questions:

11. What is your daughter's age? _____

12. What is her disability? (Check ONE)

- Emotional and behavioral disorder Learning disability
- Mental disability Sensory impairment
- Communication disorder Physical impairment or special health care needs
- Other (specify) _____

II. Self-Determination Practice

13. Does your daughter do any household chores (e.g., cooking, washing dishes, washing clothes, cleaning up rooms, or taking out of trash)?

- Yes, but rarely Yes, frequently (weekly)
- No, she does not want to do it No, I never give her opportunities

14. Does your daughter deal with salespeople at stores and restaurants?

- Yes, but rarely Yes, frequently (weekly or more often)
- No, she does not want to do it No, I never give her opportunities

15. Who is the primary decision-maker for your household?

- The father The mother
- The children Other (specify: _____)

16. Do you allow your daughter to participate in making any household decisions?

- Yes, but rarely Yes, frequently (weekly or more often)
- No, she does not want to do it No, I never give her opportunities

Appendix F (continued)

17. When your daughter disagrees with you or the other parent, do you listen to her or you just tell her to listen to you?
- I listen to her
 - I order her to listen to me
 - We talk about the differences and make a decision together
18. Do you ask and listen to your daughter about her interests?
- Yes, I like to do that
 - No, because she does not know
 - No, because I do things for her and there is no need to ask her interest?
19. How often do you talk to your daughter about what they will do after high school?
- Weekly
 - Bi-weekly
 - Monthly
 - A couple of times a year
 - Never
20. Do you encourage your daughter to make her own decisions about what to do after high school?
- Yes
 - No, because she can't do it
 - No, because I always make decision for her
21. Do you give your daughter opportunities to make decisions that have an important impact on her academic goals, such as what program and what courses the student wants to take?
- Yes
 - No, because she can't do it
 - No, because I always make decision for her
22. Do you give your daughter opportunities to make decisions that have an important impact on her schedules at home?
- Yes
 - No, because she can't do it
 - No, because I always make decision for her
23. Do you give your daughter opportunities to make decisions that have an important impact on her personal life, such as diet and sleep habit?
- Yes
 - No, because she can't do it
 - No, because I always make decision for her
23. Do you talk to your daughter about her goal and daily decisions in relation to the goal (for example her goal is to make a B in math and daily decision to do math homework)?
- Yes
 - No, because she can't do it
 - No, because I always make decision for her

Appendix F (continued)

24. Do you teach your daughter how to set a realistic goal and break that goal into smaller steps and work on the smaller steps?
- Yes
 - No, because she can't do it
 - No, because I always do things for her
25. Do you assist your daughter in realistically recognizing and accepting weaknesses?
- Yes
 - No, because she can't do it
 - No, because there is no need to do that
26. Do you assist your daughter in requesting academic and social supports from teachers?
- Yes
 - No, because I don't know how to
 - No, because she does not need it
27. Do you want your daughter to have a career of what she wants or you want her to do what you planned for her?
- Her own
 - What I planned for her
31. Do you want your daughter to
- live with you for as long as possible or
 - live independently as early as possible?
32. Generally, do you think
- Parents should have absolute authority and children should follow parents' directions? Or
 - Everybody is an equal member of the family?
33. If there is a conflict between what is best for your daughter and what is best for the family, which choice do you wish your daughter to pick?
- What is best for the family
 - What is best for my daughter
34. In your family culture, do you emphasize children's respect for the authority of the elders?
- Yes, absolutely
 - Yes, only when the children want to do it
 - No
35. If your daughter comes home one hour late after school, what would you do when you see her?
- Reprimand her, then ask what happened
 - Ask what happened and talk about what to do next time

Appendix F (continued)

- Act normal as if she did not come home late
36. If your daughter wanted to get a job after school at the local department store but you don't think that she is ready to be working, and she went ahead and applied for the job and got hired, what would you do?
- Tell her not to go to work
 - Just ignore it
 - Talk with her about the pros and cons and let her decide
 - My daughter is not in school
37. If your daughter wants to attend a college that is far away from home and requires out-of-state tuition and you want her to attend a local college that you like for a long time, what would you do?
- Tell her to attend the local college or you won't pay her tuition
 - Discuss the pros and cons and let her make the best decisions and support that
 - You support her decision without any discussions
38. When your daughter has an argument or fight with a brother, sister, neighbor, or friend, what would you do?
- Reprimand and order them to stop
 - Ask them to stop and direct them to discuss their differences
 - Ignore them
39. If your daughter earned a low grade from school, what do you do?
- You are mad and tell her that she did not study enough or played too many games
 - Talk to her about what went wrong and what to do next
 - Encourage her by saying she did well comparing to the last time to someone else

Note: This survey has been modified from its original version with permission granted from the author. Source: Zhang, D. (2005). Parent practices in facilitation self-determination skills: The influences of culture, socioeconomic status, and children's special education status. *Research & Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 30(3), 154-162.

Appendix G

Scoring Guide for Parent Self-Determination Practice Survey

13. Does your daughter do any household chores (e.g., cooking, washing dishes, washing clothes, cleaning up rooms, or taking out of trash)?
- Yes, but rarely (2)
 - Yes, frequently (weekly) (3)
 - No, she does not want to do it (1)
 - No, I never give her opportunities (0)
14. Does your daughter deal with salespeople at stores and restaurants?
- Yes, but rarely (2)
 - Yes, frequently (weekly or more often) (3)
 - No, she does not want to do it (1)
 - No, I never give her opportunities (0)

Category 1: The daughter's personal independence

16. Do you allow your daughter to participate in making any household decisions?
- Yes, but rarely (2)
 - Yes, frequently (weekly or more often) (3)
 - No, she does not want to do it (1)
 - No, I never give her opportunities (0)
17. When your daughter disagrees with you or the other parent, do you listen to her or you just tell her to listen to you?
- I listen to her (2)
 - I order her to listen to me (0)
 - We talk about the differences and make a decision together (1)

Category 2: The daughter's participation in household decisions

18. Do you ask and listen to your daughter about her interests?
- Yes, I like to do that (2)
 - No, because she does not know (1)
 - No, because I do things for her and there is no need to ask her interest? (0)
19. How often do you talk to your daughter about what she will do after high school?
- Weekly (4)
 - Bi-weekly (3)
 - Monthly (2)
 - A couple of times a year (1)
 - Never (0)

Appendix G (continued)

20. Do you encourage your daughter to make her own decisions about what to do after high school?
- Yes (2) No, because she can't do it (1)
 No, because I always make decision for her (0)

Category 3: Parents listening to and talking about the daughter's interests for the future

21. Do you give your daughter opportunities to make decisions that have an important impact on her academic goals, such as what program and what courses she wants to take?
- Yes (2) No, because she can't do it (1)
 No, because I always make decision for her (0)
22. Do you give your daughter opportunities to make decisions that have an important impact on her schedules at home?
- Yes (2) No, because she can't do it (1)
 No, because I always make decision for her (0)
23. Do you give your daughter opportunities to make decisions that have an important impact on her personal life, such as diet and sleep habit?
- Yes (2) No, because she can't do it (1)
 No, because I always make decision for her (0)
24. Do you talk to your daughter about her goal and daily decisions in relation to the goal (for example her goal is to make a B in math and daily decision to do math homework)?
- Yes (2) No, because she can't do it (1)
 No, because I always make decision for her (0)

Category 4: Parents allowing the daughter opportunities to make daily decisions that have important life impacts?

25. Do you teach your daughter how to set a realistic goal and break that goal into smaller steps and work on the smaller steps?
- Yes (2) No, because she can't do it (1)
 No, because I always do things for her (0)
26. Do you assist your daughter in realistically recognizing and accepting weaknesses?
- Yes (2) No, because she can't do it (1)

Appendix G (continued)

- No, because there is no need to do that (0)

Category 5: Parents' teaching of goal setting and assisting the daughter in recognition of weaknesses

28. Do you want your daughter to have a career of what she wants or you want her to do what you planned for her?
 Her own (1) What I planned for her (0)
29. Do you want your daughter to
 live with you for as long as possible or (0)
 live independently as early as possible? (1)

Category 6: Parents' intent to control the daughter's future career and living arrangement

33. If your daughter comes home one hour late after school, what would you do when you see her?
 Reprimand her, then ask what happened (1)
 Ask what happened and talk about what to do next time (2)
 Act normal as if she did not come home late (0)
34. If your daughter wanted to get a job after school at the local department store but you don't think that she is ready to be working, and she went ahead and applied for the job and got hired, what would you do?
 Tell her not to go to work (0)
 Just ignore it (1)
 Talk with her about the pros and cons and let her decide (2)
 My daughter is not in school (0)
35. If your daughter wants to attend a college that is far away from home and requires out-of-state tuition and you want her to attend a local college that you like for a long time, what would you do?
 Tell her to attend the local college or you won't pay her tuition (1)
 Discuss the pros and cons and let her make the best decisions and support that (3)
 You support her decision without any discussions (2)
36. When your daughter has an argument or fight with a brother, sister, neighbor, or friend, what would you do?

Appendix G (continued)

- Reprimand and order them to stop (1)
 - Ask them to stop and direct them to discuss their differences (2)
 - Ignore them (0)
37. If your daughter earned a low grade from school, what do you do?
- You are mad and tell her that she did not study enough or played too many games (1)
 - Talk to her about what went wrong and what to do next (3)
 - Encourage her by saying she did well comparing to the last time to someone else (2)

Category 8: Parents dealing with unexpected or undesired behaviors

Note: Higher score value represents choices that are more likely to foster self-determination skills.

Appendix H

Self-Determination Interview Protocol (Student Version)

1. Which high school did you go to?
2. How did you feel when you graduated from high school?
3. What activities have you participated in after graduating from high school?
4. How did you decide to attend the transition program? Why did you decide to attend the transition program?
5. What do you do when you attend the transition program?
6. Describe your job training experience.
7. What employment opportunities have you had?
8. Who encouraged you to look for employment?
9. What did you like about your job?
10. What were some challenges you faced?
11. How did you handle those challenges?
12. How has the transition program helped you with communication skills?
13. What did you think about having to make your own decisions while in the transition program?
14. How did you benefit from being in the transition program?
15. Who makes decisions for you? How often are those decisions made?
16. How often do you make decisions for yourself?
17. What are your future goals after leaving the transition program?
18. What are some things that you are really good at? Not so good at

Appendix I

Self-Determination Interview Protocol (Parent/Guardian Version)

1. What are some activities that your daughter has done after graduating from high school?
2. What are some activities that your daughter has done while participating in the transition program?
3. How does your daughter help out at home? In the community?
4. What type of self-care skills does your daughter demonstrate?
5. How independent is your daughter?
6. What types of decisions does your daughter make for herself? For others?
7. How has the transition program improved the quality of life for your student?
8. What is your perception of your daughter's communication skills? The decisions she makes for herself?
9. What are some things that you have encouraged your daughter to think about as she prepares to leave the transition program?

Appendix J

Categories and Corresponding Items Relating to Parent Self-Determination Practice

Category	Corresponding Items
Daughter's personal independence	<p>Question 13: Does your daughter do any household chores (e.g., cooking, washing dishes, washing clothes, cleaning up rooms, or taking out of trash)?</p> <p>Question 14: Does your daughter deal with salespeople at stores and restaurants?</p>
Daughter's participation in household decisions	<p>Question 16: Do you allow your daughter to participate in making any household decisions?</p> <p>Question 17: When your daughter disagrees with you or the other parent, do you listen to her or you just tell her to listen to you?</p>
Parents listening to and talking about their daughter's interests for the future	<p>Question 18: Do you ask and listen to your daughter about her interests?</p> <p>Question 19: How often do you talk to your daughter about what she will do after high school?</p>
Parents allowing their daughter opportunities to make daily decisions that have important life impacts	<p>Question 20: Do you encourage your daughter to make her own decisions about what to do after high school?</p> <p>Question 21: Do you give your daughter opportunities to make decisions that have an important impact on her academic goals, such as what program and what courses she wants to take?</p> <p>Question 22: Do you give your daughter opportunities to make decisions that have an important impact on her schedules at home?</p>

Parents' teaching of goal setting and assisting their daughter in recognition of weaknesses

Parents' intent to control their daughter's future career and living arrangement

Parents dealing with unexpected or undesired behaviors

Question 23: Do you give your daughter opportunities to make decisions that have an impact on her personal life, such as diet and sleep habit?

Question 24: Do you talk to your daughter about her goal and daily decisions in relation to the goal (for example her goal and daily decisions in relation to the goal (for example her goal is to make a B in math and daily decision to do math homework)?

Question 25: Do you teach your daughter how to set a realistic goal and break that goal into smaller steps and work on the smaller steps?

Question 26: Do you assist your daughter in realistically recognizing and accepting weaknesses?

Question 28: Do you want your daughter to have a career of what she wants or you want her to do what you planned for her?

Question 29: Do you want your daughter to live with you as long as possible or live independently as early as possible?

Question 33: If your daughter comes home one hour late after school, what would you do when you see her?

Question 34: If your daughter wanted to get a job after school at the local department store but you don't think that she is ready to be working, and she went ahead and applied for the job and got hired, what would you do?

Question 35: If your daughter wants to attend a college that is far away from home and requires out-of-state tuition and you want her to attend a local college that you like for a long time, what would you do?

Question 36: When your daughter has an argument or fight with a brother, sister, neighbor, or friend, what would you do?

Question 37: If your daughter earned a low grade from school, what would you do?

Appendix K

Codes and Code Definitions

Codes	Code Definitions
K-12 experience	Emotion felt after participating in high school graduation ceremony; high school activities participated in
Employment	Paid work experience; how long you worked for money; what you enjoyed about the job; what you did not enjoy about the job; reactions about being unemployed
Job training	Paid or voluntary on-the-job training
Transition program	Program with activities to prepare youth for postsecondary opportunities; reason for attending transition program; activities or elements of transition program; who or what informed you about transition program; how long you stayed in transition program; recommendations
Strengths	Things that are done well
Skills	Ability to make decisions with or without assistance; specific skills needed to get and keep job
Community involvement	Participating in community events and activities
Housing	Independent or semi-independent living arrangements
Daily living needs	Ability to take care of grooming, feeding, or dressing needs; skills used in verbal and nonverbal communication; taking care of the needs of others
Vocational or career preparation programs	High school programs that focus on vocational training or career programs
Relationships	Interacting with others; how you manage conflict with others on job; family planning that includes courses and/or other resources
Career choices	Selection of careers
Lessons learned	Real-life or academic lessons learned in and out of school setting; advice from other people
Enabling	When someone or something helps you too much
Independence	When you do something without help
Goals	Goals you want to achieve in the future
Challenges	Obstacles that you face; skills or talents that need refining; concerns
Post-secondary activities	Educational, vocational, or career related activities after high school

About the Author

La Tonya L. Gillis graduated cum laude when she received a Bachelor of Science in Education degree in Special Education in 1996. She received a Master of Science in Education degree in Secondary Education with an emphasis in Secondary School Administration in 2002. Both degrees were awarded from the University of Central Missouri. She was employed as a K-12 special educator until she entered the Doctor of Philosophy program at the University of South Florida in 2003. She returned to teach in the public school setting in 2008 until the present time.

While in the Doctor of Philosophy program at the University of South Florida, La Tonya made several presentations at various meetings of national organizations. In addition, she authored one publication in *Journal of School Counseling* and co-authored a publication in *The Counseling Interviewer*.