Self-Determination Related Goals and Objectives in Individualized Education Programs

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

(Special Education)

at the

UNIVERISITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

2015

Date of final oral examination: December 15, 2014

Month and year degree to be awarded: May 2015

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Acknowledgements

I can never thank Professor Audrey Trainor enough for what she has done for me. She oriented me in an interesting research direction while encouraging me to explore it from my own cultural perspectives. Her wonderful guidance, support and patience over these years studying at the University of Wisconsin-Madison helped me through numerous obstacles.

I would like to express my gratitude to Professors Erik William Carter at Vanderbilt University for sharing Project Summer databases with me and for his input on this work in his role as external examiners. His help has also made this study possible.

I also like to express my sincerest gratitude to Professors Cheryl Hanley-Maxwell, Catherine Compton-Lilly and Aydin Bal for serving as internal committees and providing feedback for various aspects of this project.

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my family. I would never have accomplished this without my grandmother, mother, aunt and brother. Thank you for never ceasing your caring and love wherever I am. Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank my beloved husband, Ichung Chang, for your understanding and endless support, and my son, Allen, for being a caring boy and accompanying me to Madison.

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Abstract

Self-determination is one of the most essential skills in post-secondary education achievement for students with and without disabilities. Despite the importance of self-determination, research that investigates what self-determination component skills are included in the Individualized Education Programs (IEP) for secondary school students with high-incidence and low-incidence disabilities is lacking. Using document analysis, I examined IEP documents for evidence of goals that incorporate self-determination and transition-related language. Moreover, I investigated how self-determination goals differ for students with high-incidence disabilities as compared to low-incidence disabilities, and how closely IEP goals and objectives adhere to the dominant model of self-determination. In order to better understand the bidirectional influences of self-determination and environmental context in an individual's development, I adopted Bronfenbrenner's Theory of the Bioecological Model of Human Development Framework as the guiding theoretical framework for my study. In this context, I argued that results of this study would contribute to the literature on effective transition planning with respect to IEPs and self-determination. Results indicate that goals and objectives related to self-determination were lacking from the IEPs.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Self-Determination and My Own Cultural Perspective

I still can remember vividly my first day of elementary school. While my mother was helping me put on my school uniform, she said, "You're a big girl now, and I hope I no longer need to give you discipline. From now on, you will make our family members proud." Since that day, I have made my own decisions about how to spend my allowance or what school to attend. I chose my undergraduate major, and I eventually decided to study in the United States.

Going to college or studying abroad is never an easy decision to make for someone who comes from a family background like mine. Before taking a college entrance exam, my relatives told me not to go to college because I needed to look after my younger brother. I agreed to honor their request because my younger brother was expected to live with my parents. In Taiwan, sons are mostly entrusted with the responsibility of caring for their parents. My decision to study in the U.S. also troubled many of my relatives. In a patriarchal society, families expect sons to go away to colleges, not daughters. But when my mother heard what my relatives said, she told me not to let their words become an excuse for me to perform poorly on my exams or miss the opportunity to study abroad.

My participation in a research internship project that focused on self-determination measurement tools in the summer of 2009 in the U.S. made me think more about my own life. I began to realize the importance of the support of my mother and the opinions of other relatives. As a member of the largest ethnic group in Taiwan, I am used to enjoying the convenience and privileges that are available to people like me. During my internship, I attempted to absorb the Western definition of self-determination. As I wrestled with this concept, my advisor, Professor

Trainor, challenged me to think about what self-determination really is, and how I perceive it from a Taiwanese cultural perspective, as well as from the perspective of an immigrant or a graduate student. Little did I know how important this thinking would become to my graduate studies.

The role of being a mother also strongly influences my perspective on teaching and the acquisition of self-determination. My son, Allen, has been nurtured in Canada and the U. S., as well as a Taiwanese environment within these cultures, for the past 14 years. He continues to study Taiwanese values, language, and traditions on a daily basis, while also being immersed in Western culture. Allen is a typical teenager who has learned and developed very strong self-determination skills (e.g., setting goals, maintaining goals, decision making, and self-advocacy) at school and at home. His learning of self-determination has required negotiation, compromise, and communication with people at school and his family, as he tries to balance family and societal expectations with his own wishes.

Over the years, I have continued to feel that holding my child's hand is like holding a kite. I want to see my kite fly high, but I always have to pull back on the string. Because Allen lives in North America and has as a consequence absorbed many Western values, I have tried to help Allen recognize his Taiwanese roots and understand more about Taiwanese culture. But even though I hope for Allen to be a strong, self-determined person, I always have the fear that he might become too self-determined, which is inconsistent with my understanding of Taiwanese culture.

Confucianism, which emphasizes obedience, filial piety, group identification, and respect for elders, is very important in Taiwanese culture, and it has profoundly influenced every aspect of my life. The teachings of Confucius emphasize the importance of education and family

obligations. However, after 10 years of studying in the United States, Western values and cultural assumptions have also influenced my understanding and perception of self-determination. I have come to realize that cultural values and social class have played a significant role in Allen's development of self-determination. Even though teaching self-determination in the Taiwanese way is preferable for our family, my immediate family in the U.S. and Canada tends to alternate between the insiders' and outsiders' perspectives. As Allen's experiences are far removed from the Taiwanese cultural values and norms, his culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) background has challenged my thinking about the best way to help him develop self-determination based on his age, transitional stages as well as our selected Taiwanese cultural values.

My preliminary analysis on the two most commonly implemented self-determination curricula (i.e., Steps to Self-determination and Whose Future Is It Anyway?) has taught me that self-determination curricula are not generally presented in a way that make them accessible or meaningful to all students. The implementation of these curricula does not always harmonize with CLD students' cultural norms and values. After conducting preliminary research, I was drawn to the excavation of objectives of self-determination and how learning goals related to self-determination are incorporated into IEPs.

This dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter one provides an overview of theoretical frameworks (i.e., Bioecological Theory of Human Development and self-determination), rationale, and purpose of this research project. I also discuss how self-determination concept and Bioecological Theory of Human Development inform my research design and analysis. Chapter two covers in-depth literature review that provides historical and ecological contexts in which self-determination concept and IEPs have been practiced in the U.S.

In the chapter, I also discuss Bioecological Theory of Human Development because it offers a holistic view on the influence of environmental contexts on the development of an individual's self-determination which should be evidenced in the IEP goals and objectives for students with disabilities. In Chapter three, I depict the research method, design and procedures as well as theoretical approach regarding self-determination. In Chapter four, I report the results of this study starting with demographic data gathered from IEPs to a more detailed description of IEP goals and objectives addressing self-determination. I begin Chapter five with synthesis of findings and interpretations, and I focus on analyzing and integrating findings of this study with previous studies from the angles of exo, macro and chrono system of Bioecological Theory of Human Development. Suggestions for future research and practice as well as limitations of this study are presented in this dissertation.

This introduction is organized as follows: first, a brief historical description of the theory (i.e., Bioecological Theory of Human Development) is provided for the discussion over the importance of the theory in relation to the development of an individual's self-determination. Second, an overview of the components of self-determination serves as operational definition for this study. Third, the importance of incorporating self-determination goals and objectives in the IEPs is addressed. Finally, the problem statement, research questions and potential contributions of the study is presented.

Self-Determination and the Bioecological Model

According to Deci and Ryan (1985), an individual's self-determination is acquired through supportive social contexts. In other words, environmental contexts in an individual's life may provide contexts that facilitate self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Environmental contexts can incorporate a broad range of factors (e.g., people, processes,

interactions, chronologies) that influence the development of an individual's self-determination. In recognizing the complexity of environmental contexts involved in the development of an individual's self-determination, I argue that there is a need for using the Bioecological Theory of Human Development as a framework to guide the research design and analysis of the present study. From a functional perspective, the Bioecological Theory of Human Development can be understood through investigating four essential components: process, person, context, and time.

Process

Bronfenbrenner viewed proximal processes as the primary property of the bioecological model for effective development (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci 1994). He defined proximal process as follows:

> Proposition 1: Human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex, reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate environment. To be effective, the interaction must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time. Such enduring forms of interaction in the immediate environment are referred to hence forth as proximal processes. Examples of enduring patterns of theses process are found in parent-child and child-child activities, group or solitary play, reading, learning new skills, problem solving, performing complex tasks and acquiring new knowledge and know-how. (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994 pp. 572)

> Proposition 2: The form, power, content, and direction of the proximal processes effecting development vary systematically as a joint function of the characteristics of the developing person, of the environment- both immediate and more remote- in which the

> processes are taking place, and of the nature of the developmental outcomes under consideration. (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994, pp. 572)

Both cited quotes indicate that the proximal processes involve interactions between an individual and their immediate surroundings, and that these interactions are related to or responsible for the individual's development and competencies. Although proximal processes is not a focus of current study, from a research perspective that is interested in self-determination, examples of proximal processes can be in interrogated with questions like "does the individual receive lesson about self-determination from home?" and "does the individual get parental or familiar involvement in understanding self-determined behavior?" In addition to the systematic interactions between an individual and his/her immediate surroundings, remote environments also impact an individual's development. Unlike the immediate surroundings (e.g., home and family), the remote environments (e.g., community and society) may have only indirect or limited influence on the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Such an influence may vary with an individual's characteristics.

Person

Bronfenbrenner (1977; 1979; 1986; 1989) acknowledges that the extent of influence that family, parents, teachers or peers have on an individual is largely determined by the individual's characteristics (e.g., age, gender, and physical appearance). Moreover, he suggests that an individual's characteristics can change their environments. Due to the fact that there is an infinite amount of variation that can occur within individual characteristics, the number of opportunities for learning or practicing self-determination related skills will also be varied. Similarly, differences in students' primary disabilities and ages may contribute to self-determination related goals and objectives included in students' IEPs. Therefore, individual's variables (e.g., age and

disability) can be linked directly or indirectly to IEP goals and objectives, and further impact the development of an individual's self-determination skills.

Context

Bronfenbrenner's (1977) original model, ecological systems theory, included four concentric environmental systems (micro, meso, exo, and macro). The fifth system, chrono, which incorporates the dimension of time as it relates to an individual's development, was later added to refine the theory. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) states that a child's development is shaped by various environmental contexts, I tried to use his theory to understand the influence of environmental contexts on a child's development while conceptualizing and designing the current study. The relationship between the development of an individual's self-determination and environment is bidirectional, meaning that not only do contexts influence an individual's self-determination development, but the individual also influences how frequently interactions regarding self-determination practices or opportunities are provided in these contexts. The salient elements of each system are further explored in Chapter Two.

Time

The bioecological model of the time component involves various aspects (e.g., chronological age, duration and nature of events). Bronfenbrenner (1986) indicates that the chronosystem models "take into account changes over time not only within the person but also in the environment and - what is even more critical – that permit analyzing the dynamic relation between these two processes" (p.724). What is happening during the specific time of proximal processes (interaction) between an individual and environmental context, or the extent to which an event occurs in the individual's environment over a period of time (e.g., days, weeks or years) can have varying degrees of impact on the individual's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Thus, both the internal processes of a student and his/her external changes (e.g., exo, and macro environments) can influence a student's level of self-determination. For example, a student's age can impact their learning or development of certain skills related to self-determination. Moreover, the exigencies of macro environments (e.g., cultural expectations and special education policies) can have a profound but indirect impact on the development of a student's capacity for self-determination as they influence IEP goals and objectives.

In summary, the impacts of various bioecological contexts and interactions should be considered when assisting an individual in the development of self-determination. In recognizing the complexity of the multi-dimensional nature of an individual's development, it becomes apparent that there is a need to incorporate bioecological theory as a general framework for this research because it offers a holistic approach to analyzing the impact of environmental contexts to IEP goals and objectives – those same goals and objectives that eventually influence an individual's development of self-determination. Based on the previous discussion, I used the bioecological theory to understand the impact of environmental contexts (i.e., exosystem and macrosystem) on an individual's self-determination, and to further examine the IEP goals and objectives from chronosystemic perspective.

Self-Determination Component Skills

In general, self-determination is a gradual process by which individuals learn to make their own decisions about doing certain tasks or thinking in certain ways. Self-determination is considered one of the most critical skills for preparing students with disabilities for the life after secondary schools because stronger self-determination leads to better adult outcomes (e.g., independent living, post-secondary education and employment) and quality of life (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997, 1998). The concept of self-determination was refined and elaborated in special

education that has become a rapidly growth area of study for individual with disabilities since 1990s (Field & Hoffman, 1994; Hoffman & Field, 1995; Wehmeyer, 1997; Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 1998). The early conceptual literature on self-determination has laid important ground work that explains and defines the concept of self-determination. The conceptual literature indicated that an individual should have certain requisite knowledge and skills in order to become self-determined, it supports that self-determination includes various teachable component skills. For example, literature regarding component skills of self-determination are available on choice making (Brown, Belz, Corsi & Wenig, 1993), decision making (Jenkinson, 1993; Doll & Sands, 1998), goal setting and attainment (Martino, 1993; Wehmeyer et al, 1998), self-advocacy (Brinckerhoff, 1994), self-efficacy (Wehmeyer, et al., 1998), and self-regulation (Browder & Shapiro, 1985; Hughes & Presley, 1998), problem solving (Agran & Hughes, 1997; Agran & Wehmeyer, 1999), and self-awareness (Horowitz, 1986; Tomlan, 1985). These teachable self-determination component skills are often addressed in curricula that promote self-determination (e.g., Steps to Self-Determination and Whose Future Is It Anyway?).

A history of the literature on self-determination component skills can be seen in the work of Wehmeyer and his colleagues (Wehmeyer et al., 1998) who, synthesis the previous literature and propose 12 component skills that are necessary to supporting students in becoming self-determined. These component skills include: (a) choice-making, (b) decision-making, (c) problem solving, (d) goal setting and attainment, (e) independent living (risk taking and safety skills), (f) self-advocacy and leadership, (g) self-observation, evaluation, and reinforcement, (h) internal locus of control, (i) positive self-efficacy and outcome expectancy, (j) self-awareness, (k) self-understanding, and (l) self-instruction.

The importance of self-determination is emphasized within the discussion of transition for both students with high-incidence and low-incidence disabilities. Studies indicate that students' disabilities and capabilities influence their opportunities for and skills in acquiring self-determination (Carter, Owens, Trainor, Sun, & Sweden, 2009; Carter, Trainor, Owens, Sweden, & Sun, 2010). For example, students with lower functional, social, and communication skills, particularly students who have been identified as having low-incidence disabilities (e.g., autism, multiple disabilities severe intellectual disabilities), experienced difficulties in acquiring self-determination related skills and had fewer opportunities for practicing self-determination (Carter et al., 2009). For the purpose of this study, I used the self-determination component skills suggested by Wehmeyer et al. (1998). The synthesizing of self-determination component skills suggested by Wehmeyer and his colleagues (Wehmeyer, et al., 1998) can be adopted as a guideline for examining goals and objectives related to self-determination in the IEPs for students with high-incidence and low-incidence disabilities.

Importance of IEP Documents

The United States congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) [EHA, PL. 94-142] in 1975. As a result, all children qualifying for special education services were guaranteed an IEP. EHA sought to provide a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) and related special education services for all students with disabilities, and the IEP was designed to function as a vital guide for providing FAPE to children with disabilities ages three to 21. In the subsequent decades, PL. 94-142 has undergone many changes (e.g., renaming and reauthorizations) and was codified as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990. The reauthorization of IDEA in 1997 expanded previous transition requirements by requiring that transition-related services and goals be documented in the IEP in order to prepare

students with disabilities for life after high school. Beginning at age 14, the IEP team is responsible for transition planning, which takes into consideration the needs and preferences of the students with disabilities (Kohler & Field, 2003).

The IEP, as a process or a written plan, is an essential aspect of IDEA. It defines the educational and transition programming designed to meet the needs of students who qualify for special education services. The IEP document functions as a set of guidelines for educational services because the IEP goals and objectives are directly linked to teaching, intervention, and the evaluation of self-determination. One aspect that measures the quality of an IEP is compliance with IDEA mandates (Grigal, Test, Beattie & Wood, 1997). IDEA requires that IEP documents include: (1) a description of a student's present level of educational performance; (2) measurable annual goals; (3) a description of special education services; (4) participation in the regular education program; (5) length and duration of services; and, (6) transition goals and services (Yell, Shriner, & Katsiyannis, 2006).

In the most recent reauthorization, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 [IDEA] entitles all students with disabilities, regardless of their culture, race/ethnicity, or language, to receive transition services. IDEA (2004) requires that all students with disabilities receive meaningful transition services, and that post-school activities (e.g., community participation, independent living) are accessible for students with disabilities. This federal regulation reveals the importance of IEPs in guiding instruction, as well as transition planning for families of children with disabilities.

Under IDEA (2004) regulations, transition services are coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, and transition planning should be based on the child's strengths, preferences, and interests. The IEP team should conduct a transition

assessment that is related to transition services or activity areas including postsecondary education, vocational education, employment, and independent living or community living (Shaw, 2006). The IEP documents for students with disabilities in secondary schools should include measurable and appropriate goals and objectives related to these transition areas. In addition to the requirements mentioned previously, the IEP document should also include transition services, placement determination, and the student's background or demographic information, such as gender, age, race/ethnicity. It also must include IEP team members' signatures, including parents or guardians, students with disabilities if appropriate or required, special education teachers, general education teachers, professionals providing transition services (e.g., agency representatives or case managers), and school system representatives (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Thus, the IEP document can be regarded as an educational contract among all of the educators, the individuals with disabilities, and their families. The IEP document not only states the essential components of secondary transition requirements, but is also a customized product of transition planning that ideally involves the active participation of the student and their parents. Individuals with disabilities and their families are the most important figures in the transition process, so the record of their contribution and presence in the IEP document is an essential component of effective transition planning.

Wehmeyer, Palmer, Lee, Williams-Diehm and Shogren (2011) indicate that promoting self-determination is the best practice for transitioning youth with disabilities from the world of secondary school to the world of adulthood. Research shows that students with disabilities should take ownership of their academic and personal goal development in the transition and IEP process because student involvement is an essential part of achieving any degree of self-determination (Martin, Marshall, & Maxson, 1993; Test et al., 2004). While there is a lot

scholarship on self-determination, our field has not yet made vigorous efforts to integrate self-determination into transition planning as part of the development of an effective IEP.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

Teaching students with disabilities to become self-determined has gained considerable attention in recent decades. As studies have shown, a meaningful life requires self-determination (Algozzien, Browder, Karvonen, Test, & Wood, 2001; Cross, Cooke, Wood, & Test, 1999; Wehmeyer, Field, Doren, Jones, & Mason, 2004). Indeed, more than anything else, parents and educators hope to prepare children with disabilities to direct their own lives in a way that is meaningful to them. Many studies have demonstrated the value of enhancing self-determination through student involvement in IEP meetings (Martin et al., 2006; Mason, Field & Sawilowsky, 2004; Test et al., 2004). Ideally, if students with disabilities participate in the self-directed IEP process and IEP meetings, then IEP documents should be a reliable reflection of student needs, interests, and preferences. However, despite the potential for enhancing self-determination skills through instruction and IEP meetings, the quality and adequacy of IEP objectives regarding self-determination has received less attention than it deserves (Griffin, 2011).

In considering the development of self-determination, researchers (Shogren & Turnbull, 2006; Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001b) suggest taking into account issues related to the values and beliefs of the families of students with disabilities. Shogren et al. (2007) suggest that environmental factors influence students' opportunities for self-determination. Trainor (2002, 2005b) suggests the importance of considering the impact of cultural differences on self-determination as it may cause students to approach self-determination and transition planning differently. The development of self-determination takes place within a variety of social and cultural contexts including the home and the community.

The IEP document is rooted in the dominant culture's approach to dealing with self-determination, and IEP documents are often used as a tool to evaluate quality of transition planning. My review of the literature, however, has uncovered that researchers have rarely used qualitative methods to investigate self-determination related goals in IEPs. The study of transition planning, including IEP documents for data analysis, has mostly used quantitative analysis in order to measure compliance with content requirement, as well as practices used during transition planning (Landmark & Zhang, 2013).

By looking at qualitative data in the text of IEP documents, researchers can explore how self-determination related goals and objectives are incorporated. By using qualitative methods like document review and analysis, I reviewed what self-determination goals and objectives were documented in students' IEPs. I followed the guidelines provided by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) for developing transition related goals and objectives in IEPs, as well as my review of best practices from the special education literature, in order to address the following research questions:

1. How do the IEP goals address self-determination?
2. How closely do IEP goals and objectives adhere to dominant model of self-determination as operationalized and illustrated in two widely used curricula, *Whose future is it anyway?* and *Steps to Self-Determination?*
3. How do self-determination goals differ for students with high-incidence disabilities as compared to those with low-incidence disabilities?

Potential Contributions of the Study

My intention is to make an empirical contribution to the descriptive research literature on IEPs and transition planning. In recent decades, the research on transition has shown that IEP

team members have become more proficient at writing goals and objectives for students with disabilities, as evidenced by the inclusion of all mandated domains (e.g., postsecondary education, community engagement, and employment) (IDEA, 2004; Grigal et al., 1997; Everson, Zhang & Guillory, 2001). Researchers have become increasingly cognizant of the importance of transition planning and have made great efforts to evaluate transition components in the IEPs (Defur, Getzel & Kregel, 1994; Everson et al., 2001; Grigal et al.,1997; Hasazi, Furney & Destefano, 1999; Shearin, Roessler & Schriner, 1999). And yet, self-determination and documentation in the IEPs have not gained enough attention. This study seeks to bridge the existing gap between what self-determination goals and objectives are effectively incorporated into transition and IEP planning.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

In this chapter, I first provide information on the histories of transition and IEP planning-related topics (e.g., laws and transition services, transition related IEP practices, and self-determination); in doing so, I provide a framework made up of research trends and best practices for transition and IEP planning. Next, I discuss the influence of cultural values on IEP practices. Finally, the scope of this section is expanded to include Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory of Human Development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) as a mode for discussing the individual development of self-determination.

Special Education Laws and Transition Services

In the 1960s, the deinstitutionalization and normalization movements moved experts in many fields to ponder several issues related to disabilities, including social integration, community-based living, and the concept of least restrictive environments (LREs). One of the important contributions of deinstitutionalization and normalization was to make community-based living alternatives possible for many individuals with disabilities (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1998). The deinstitutionalization and normalization movements also promoted the idea that individuals with disabilities could be included in mainstream society and that individuals with disabilities have the right to make decisions regarding their lives (Cross et al., 1999). The recognition of disability rights has influenced multiple disability-related regulations and amendments. Major pieces of U.S. legislation and their amendments include: the Education of the Handicapped Act of 1970 (EHA); Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (P. L. 94-142); the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA); multiple iterations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education

Act (IDEA); and most recently, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004.

Section 504 and the ADA are both federal civil rights laws that protect people from unfair treatment or discrimination based on their disability. Section 504 protects individuals with disabilities against discrimination from organizations receiving federal financial assistance (e.g., departments in state and local government) (U.S Department of Education, 2010). The scope of ADA previsions was therefore augmented by requiring agencies and businesses who do not receive federal funding to adhere to the non-discrimination and accessibility policies (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2010).

The ADA of 1990 was comprised of three major titles that guaranteed equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in accessing public services and institutions (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2005). Title I regulates employment policy. Under Title I, employers cannot discriminate against a qualified applicant with disabilities and are required to provide reasonable accommodation for employees with disabilities. Title II covers policies regarding public services. Any program or activity (e.g., transportation, education, or healthcare) provided by the government may not discriminate on the basis of disability. Title III requires private and public entities such as businesses, restaurants, hotels, retail stores, libraries and parks to provide accommodations for individuals with disabilities. Section 504 and the ADA of 1990 also provide protection and benefits to students with disabilities at colleges and universities (Bowman, 2011).

The ADA of 1990 was amended in the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008, which became effective in 2009. The ADA Amendments Act of 2008 retains the ADA's definition of disabilities, but it relaxes the criteria for determining who qualifies for benefits or

accommodations under the ADA. Bowman (2011) argues that the "ADA Amendments Act of 2008 does not make significant changes to an employer's or an educational institution's obligations of nondiscrimination or reasonable accommodation; it simply dramatically expands the pool of individuals who are now considered to be disabled" (p.89). By expanding the pool of disabilities, the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 actually qualifies many more individuals with disabilities for special services. For example, individuals with impairment conditions that are episodic or in remission become eligible for the services and benefits guaranteed by the ADA Amendments Act of 2008. Thus, Section 504 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 protect the rights of individuals' with disabilities who are transitioning into college, employment, or adult life.

Unlike Section 504, the ADA of 1990 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 that was reauthorized and renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), ensures that students with disabilities receive special education and services designed to meet their unique needs. The IDEA covers services and benefits for children with disabilities, ages 3 to 21, to prepare them for further education, employment, and community living by providing a smooth transition (IDEA, 2004).

The concept of transition has thrived since the early 1980s, and models of transition have evolved through different stages. The 1983 Amendments to the EHA (PL 98-199) supported transition-focused research and initiated transition model demonstration grants for transition services from high school to work (Kohler & Field, 2003). The 1990 Amendments to EHA (PL 101-476), which later became the IDEA, introduced the official definition of transition services. With the passage of the IDEA in 1990, schools were required to outline a transition service plan

within the IEP to help students with disabilities age 16 or older transition from school to independent life. The IDEA (1990) defined transition services as follows:

> A coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities shall be based upon the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

After the official definition of "transition services" was made public, the Council for Exceptional Children's (CEC) Division of Career Development and Transition (DCDT) provided an operational definition for future study and work in transition. The CEC is an internationally-renowned professional organization and plays a key role in special education policies in the U.S. The CEC is dedicated to improving the educational outcomes of individuals with exceptionalities, including those who are gifted. This professional organization originally defined transition as follows:

> Transition refers to a change in status from behaving primarily as a student to assuming emergent adult roles in the community. These roles include employment, participating in post-secondary education, maintaining a home, becoming appropriately involved in the community, and experiencing satisfactory personal and social relationships. The process of enhancing transition involves the

> participation and coordination of school programs, adult agency services, and natural supports within the community. The foundations for transition should be laid during the elementary and middle school years, guided by broad concept of career development. Transition planning should begin no later than age 14, and students should be encouraged, to the full extent of their capabilities, to assume a maximum amount of responsibility for such planning. (Halpern, 1994, pp.117)

This definition influenced the transition language in the later amendments of the IDEA in 1997 and 2004 (Cobb & Alwell, 2009). The IDEA of 1997 described transition services in the same manner as the transition language used in the IDEA of 1990. The most notable difference between the IDEA of 1990 and the IDEA of 1997 is the age at which the transition planning should be started for the individual with disabilities. The reauthorization of the IDEA in 1997 mandated that transition services planning must be provided to students with disabilities by age 14.

The most recent reauthorization of the IDEA in 2004 eliminates the requirement that transition services be provided to individuals with disabilities at age 16. In addition to the change on the age for transition planning, other changes are found in the IDEA of 2004. For example, the word "child" was used in the IDEA of 2004 instead of the word "student" that was used in the IDEA of 1990. Also, the transition service is called an "outcome-oriented" process in the earlier iterations, while the IDEA of 2004 uses "results-oriented" to describe the process. In addition, the IDEA of 2004 explicitly states that the focus of transition services should be to improve the academic and functional achievement of the child. The IDEA of 2004 defined "transition services" as a coordinated set of activities for a child that:

> designed within a results-oriented process that is focused on improving the

> academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living and community participation. The coordinated set of activities shall take into account the child's preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. (IDEA, 2004)

Both the definitions in the IDEA and DCDT/CEC statements require student interests and preferences be taken into consideration in transition planning. They both also require the participation of students with disabilities in the students' IEP and transition planning meetings. These federal amendments focus on more participatory approaches for transition-related services and planning (Kohler & Field, 2003). The reasoning behind these definitions indicates that students with disabilities ought to take more initiative, or be more directly involved with their own transition. The IDEA and CEC encourage the teaching of self-determination skills to students with disabilities in the process of transition planning.

Prior to the 1997 reauthorization of the IDEA, regulations regarding transition services were focused on academic and vocational education, and on functional vocational evaluation (Patton, 1981; Wehman, Kregel, & Barcus, 1985). The definition of transition services, however, has changed over the years from an interventional model and process, which emphasizes adult roles, to an outcome-oriented model (Cobb & Alwell, 2009; Grigal, Hart, & Migliore, 2011; Kohler & Field, 2003).

Optimal transition outcomes rely on sound and appropriate transition planning. Along with the definition of transition services, quite a few researchers (Kohler, DeStefano, Wermuth, Grayson & McGinty, 1994; Kohler, 1996) have identified essential components and strategies for transition models to assist adolescents with disabilities in accomplishing successful transitions. Rusch and DeStefano provided one of the earliest transition models. Their model suggests 10 strategies for transition planning, including the following: (1) early planning; (2) interagency collaboration; (3) individualized transition planning; (4) focus on integration; (5) community-relevant curriculum; (6) community-based training; (7) business linkages; (8) job placement; (9) ongoing staff development; and (10) transition related program evaluation (Rush & DeStefano, 1989 as cited in Grigal, West, Beattie & Wood, 1997). Rusch and DeStefano's model provided direction for earlier theoretical studies on best practices of transition planning, and continues to influence the latest recommended best practices for transition planning in the field (Grigal et al., 1997).

Taxonomy for Transition Programming

In an effort to develop and generate useful information for transition program development, Kohler (1993) and Kohler et al. (1994) analyzed fifteen studies conducted at the local, regional, and national levels that had identified models or programs as effective or exemplary in the delivery of transition services. This seminal work focused on the exemplary programs; decisions regarding the selection of exemplary programs were initially made based on clear definitions and specific criteria (Kohler et al., 1994). Through the analysis, 107 elements were found to be associated with exemplary programs across the 15 evaluation studies. These elements were then grouped into 14 categories of consideration in successful transition planning

for analysis.[1] The DCDT's definition suggests that transition components (i.e., employment, post-secondary education, maintaining a home, community involvement, personal and social relationships, participation and coordination of school programs and adult services, support from community, early transition in elementary and middle school) are congruent with Kohler's et al. (1994) categories.

The work of analysis on exemplary transition programs provided an important link for the framework of the Taxonomy for Transition Programming (TTP; Kohler, 1996). In addition to investigating evaluation studies, the TTP, which was developed through delimiting transition elements from earlier studies, emerged from state and national studies of students with disabilities, including literature reviews and transition-focused education and services (Kohler & Field, 2003). The TTP presents a comprehensive and conceptual framework for the best transition practices. According to Kohler (1996), the TTP, a conceptual model for school-related transition services, posits five substantive categories. These categories include student-focused planning, family involvement, interagency collaboration, student development, and program structure. Many researchers have adopted the practices suggested in the TTP. For example, Test et al. (2009) used this taxonomy as a framework for investigating the effects of intervention on post-school outcomes for students with disabilities (Test Mazzotti, et al., 2009). In their study, quality indicators were predetermined to select articles; 22 articles met the requirements of the quality indicators (i.e., predictor variables and outcome variables related to secondary transition program and post-school education) and were further included for the final review (Test, Mazzotti, et al., 2009). The results of this review indicate that 16 evidence-based predictors are

[1] These categories were career/vocational training, systematic interdisciplinary transition planning, community-based life and work skills curricula, appropriate integration, interagency/interdisciplinary collaboration, support services, staff development/allocation, public and employer relation, academic instruction, social or independent living skills training, program evaluation or dissemination, instructional issues and strategies, funding, and early intervention (Kohler et al., 1994).

closely connected with post-school outcomes in the areas of education, employment, and independent living for students with disabilities (Test, Mazzotti, et al., 2009). Many of these predictors (i.e., career awareness, community experiences, interagency collaboration, parental involvement, and self-advocacy/self-determination) are aligned with the practices suggested in the TTP (Kohler, 1996).

Kohler's (1996) five categories of TTP represent the culture of the U.S. special education system. This system could be compared to the circles of the Olympic Games logo, in which domains are linked and intertwined with one another. A summary of each domain of TTP (Kohler, 1996) is presented below.

Student-focused transition planning. Over the years, the practices in the category of student-focused planning have been expanded and studied across a variety of disability genres and standpoints (i.e., Martin, Greene, & Borland, 2004; Martin, Marshall, & Sale, 2004; Martin, Van Dycke, Christensen, Greene, Gardner & Lovett, 2006; Myers & Eisenman, 2005). According to the priorities outlined by the IDEA, the practice of student-focused planning suggests that transition planning ought to begin at the age of 14. Kohler and her colleagues (Kohler, 1993; Kohler, et al., 1994) suggest IEP development, student participation, and planning strategies as three main areas in TTP for student- focused planning. The fundamental practices of student-focused planning are based on personal visions and interests, and the research direction of student-focused planning practices has shown steady conformity to the concept of self-determination (Hoffman & Field, 1995; Wehmeyer, 1992). Students with disabilities are encouraged and expected to actively participate in their educational planning and any IEP development that determines educational, vocational, and community-related objectives or life goals (Kohler & Field, 2003; Martin, Van Dycke, D'ottavio, & Nickerson, 2007). One strategy

that is constantly applied to transition planning practice is to integrate self-determination into transition processes by involving students in their own IEP meetings (Test, Mason, Hughes, Konrad, Neale & Wood, 2004; Cobb & Alwell, 2009). By involving students in the planning process, transition teams help students practice self-determination related skills (Kohler, 1996; Kohler & Field, 2003; Martin et al., 1993).

Many researchers have designed interventions intended to increase student involvement in IEP meetings. Test et al. conducted a literature review that identified and analyzed 16 interventions specifically designed to enhance student involvement in the IEP meetings (Test, et al., 2004). Their review produced two important findings. First, students' involvement in the IEP process increased because students with varying disabilities were able to respond to the strategies provided through the intervention studies (Allen, Smith, Test, Flowers, & Wood, 2001; Cross et al., 1999; Powers, Turner, Matuszewski, Wilson, & Phillips, 2001; Van Reusen & Bos, 1994; Wehmeyer & Lawrence, 1995). Second, both student-focused planning strategies and self-determination curricula demonstrated effectiveness in increasing students' participation in their IEP meetings (Flannery et al., 2000; Mason, McGahee-Kovac, Johnson, & Stillerman, 2002; Miner & Bates, 1997; Snyder, 2002; Timmons & Whitney-Timmons, 1998). Much effort has been made to ensure that students demonstrate self-determination skills during the IEP process (particularly in meetings), yet more consideration for how to incorporate self-determination related objectives and goals into IEPs is needed.

Student development. A second critical feature of the TTP is an emphasis on instruction-based employment skills (i.e., job seeking skills, work-related behaviors, and skills training), vocational skills (i.e., career education curriculum, cooperative education curriculum) and life skills (i.e., leisure skills, social skills, self-determination skills training). Vocational

education and training provides students with proxy practice and effective strategies to cope with the demands of the workplace. A number of studies have been designed to investigate educational and vocational training pathways for adolescents with disabilities in secondary schools (Lee & Carter, 2012; Ofoegbu & Azarmsa, 2010; Sitlington & Clark, 2001). In general, the results of these studies confirm that students with disabilities who are more successful in school-based vocational education and training programs have more positive employment outcomes and trajectories. Kohler (1996) recommends that instructional activities should include assessment (vocational, academic, and cognitive and adaptive behavior assessment) and accommodations. Embedded in this category of practices are commonly accepted outcome domains that have appeared in the amendments of the IDEA of 1990 and its re-authorizations to prepare students with disabilities for a successful transition and meaningful postsecondary life.

After the re-authorization of the IDEA in 1990, the transition studies for student development associated with field practices have led to improving postsecondary school outcomes (e.g., education, employment and independent living) for students with disabilities (Benz, Yovanoff, & Doren, 1997; Doren & Benz, 1998; Halpern, Yovanoff, Doren, & Benz, 1995; Roessler, Brolin, & Johnson, 1990; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997; White & Weiner, 2004). Many practices found under this domain focus on life-skills development such as shopping, baking, and socializing. Test and his colleagues (2009) conducted a systematic review to identify published experimental, quasi-experimental, and single-subject studies that are related to student development at the secondary school level for students with disabilities (Test, Fowler, et al., 2009). They identified 25 skills (e.g., self-determination, life skills, employment, and functional academic skills) as evidence-based practices that are aligned with student development (Test, Fowler, et al., 2009).

Recent research practices regarding student development have also underscored the importance of curriculum and instruction that promotes self-determination related skills (Hoffman & Field, 1995; Wehmeyer & Lawrence, 1995; Browder, Wood, Test, Karvonen, & Algozzine, 2001). Literature on this topic suggests that instruction and strategies used to teach self-determination should be provided through school-based or work-based activities to enable students to achieve their short- and long-term objectives (Carter & Lunsford, 2005; Lee & Carter, 2012; Lee, Wehmeyer, Palmer, Soukup, & Little, 2008).

Family involvement. The practices represented in this category involve three levels of family involvement: participation, empowerment, and training (Kohler, 1996; Kohler, 1998; Cobb & Alwell, 2009). Parental input and family participation are categorized as crucial practices associated with successful transition planning in the category of family involvement. Many studies note family involvement in the transition process as a major index of successful transition planning (Kim & Morningstar, 2005; Kraemer & Blacher, 2001; Kyzar, Turnbull, & Summers, 2012; Martin et al., 2007; Morningstar, Turnbull, & Turnbull, 1995). Kohler (1996) mentions that family participation in program policy development, service delivery, and the evaluation of students' ability is essential in the transition process because parents play important roles as trainers and mentors for their children.

Despite national interest in advocating for family involvement in transition and IEP-related processes, limited studies have addressed the factors associated with family participation in IEP and transition planning processes (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Javitz, & Valdes, 2012). Wagner et al. (2012) analyzed parent and youth participation in IEPs and transition planning using two nationally representative samples of students with disabilities from the Special Education Elementary Longitudinal Study and the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2.

They found that only 68.6% of parents of students ages 15 through 19 years old attended IEP meetings. Of those parents, only 29.3% expressed their desire to be more involved in IEP planning decisions (Wagner et al., 2012).

Kim and Morningstar (2005) conducted a literature review focusing on CLD family involvement in the IEP meetings. They examined five studies that fit their criteria of selection (Boone, 1992; deFur, Todd-Allen, & Getzel, 2001; Geenen, Powers, & Lopez-Vasquez, 2001; Geenen, Powers, Lopez-Vasquez, & Bersani, 2003; Lynch & Stein, 1987). These studies investigated family involvement of various cultural groups (e.g., Asian American, African American, European American, Latino, and Native American). One consistent finding is that CLD parents report significantly more negative experiences during transition and IEP planning than European American parents (Kim & Morningstar, 2005). Four concerns addressed in this review include professional attitudes, diversity concerns, contextual barriers, and bureaucratic barriers (Kim & Morningstar, 2005).

Limited family involvement stimulates discussion regarding how to enhance levels of attendance for parents in IEP and transition planning meetings. Kohler (1996) suggests that families should be empowered by receiving plenty of choices and effective support networks. In addition, parents should be given as much information as possible about agencies, services, and legal issues; all information should be provided in the native language of parents (Kohler, 1996).

Interagency collaboration. Many people are involved in facilitating a student's transition, including students, parents, educators, and representatives of various cooperating agencies. Acquiring all of the needed services for students with disabilities could be a costly and time-consuming matter. Service agencies function differently and specialize in different areas. Without question, integrating school resources and community-based services, as well as

developing programs to make transition team members work more collaboratively, has been an essential topic in the field of special education (Repetto, Webb, Garvan, & Washington, 2002).

Interagency collaboration emphasizes collaborative service delivery and frameworks. Kohler (1996) suggests that transition services should be delivered through a collaborative framework and planning process. She states that in order to ensure the success of collaborative practices, student information and assessment data should be shared among agencies, and interagency agreement and methods of effective communication should be established among service providers (Kohler, 1996). Other researchers have urged for the adoption of partnerships between families and businesses (Summers et al., 2005; Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001b). A couple of experimental studies have proven the effectiveness of interagency collaboration for secondary school students with disabilities (Bullis, Davis, Bull, & Johnson, 1995; Repetto et al., 2002). These investigations indicate that when transition services are integrated, students with disabilities have better post-school employment and educational outcomes.

Program structure. Program structure provides a framework for implementing transition-focused education and related services. Kohler and Field (2003) recommends several crucial program features that relate to transition-focused education and services including philosophy, evaluation, planning, policy, resources development, and allocation. By utilizing these features as guidelines for transition practices, Kohler (1996) suggests that students should be provided with community-based learning opportunities and outcome-based curricula in the least restrictive environment. In addition, Kohler recommends that a program's mission, values, and principles be established using an integrated, multi-level approach. Transition practices focus on planning strategies, evaluating interdisciplinary policy, assessing staff qualifications,

and ensuring cultural and ethnic sensitivity in programs. Planning should be integrated at the local, regional, and state levels.

Although the empirical literature (e.g., Benz, Lindstrom & Yovanoff, 2000; Lindstrom & Benz 2002; Luecking & Fabian, 2000; Paganos & DuBois, 1999) has continued to support the practices included in this TTP, many recent studies regarding transition-focused education and related services have focused on issues related to transition assessment systems and employment-related skills; a representative but by no means exhaustive sampling of such work would include Cobb & Alwell (2009), Carter,et al. (2010), and Carter & Lunsford (2005). Among these practices, employment is the most crucial and desirable of outcomes for secondary school students with disabilities, and researchers suggest that early work experiences should be provided through community-based employment programs (Carter, Austin, & Trainor, 2011). Researchers have studied different aspects of school-to-work programs related to employment. Shandra and Hogan (2008) examined the effectiveness of school-based and work-based programs. They indicate that both school-based and work-based transition programs are associated with better postsecondary school employment outcomes for students with disabilities. They also point out that students who participated in school-based programs (i.e., cooperative education, school-sponsored enterprise, technical preparation, and career) are more likely to maintain a stable and full-time job. Students who participated in the work-based programs (i.e., mentoring, job shadowing, and interning) are more likely to be engaged in post-school employment that provides employee benefits (Shandra & Hogan, 2008). In addition to transition assessment and employment, instruction and curriculum for self-determination related skills comprise the centerpiece of the array of student development activities (Carter, Lane, Pierson, & Glaeser, 2006; Shogren et al., 2008).

Transition Components in Individualized Education Program

Early practices required IEP teams to document transition services in an Individual Transition Plan (ITP). However, the 1990 amendments to the IDEA specified that a student's transition plan needs to be addressed within the IEP. The following related studies have been conducted to evaluate both ITPs and the effective transition planning practices reflected in IEPs. In an early review of both ITPs and IEPs, DeFur et al. (1994) conducted a descriptive analysis of transition plans for 100 students across 14 schools in Virginia; these students were between the ages of 16 and 19 and had been identified as having learning disabilities. They found minimal involvement of students and community organizations in transition planning.

Lawson and Everson (1993) used the Statement of the Transition Services Review Protocol (STSRP) to evaluate the transition plans of 52 students who are deaf and/or blind across 22 states. The STSRP has been modified in many later studies (Lawson & Everson, 1993; as cited in Everson et al., 2001; Grigal et al., 1997; Powers et al., 2005). Several representative studies that focus on evaluating transition plans adapted the STSRP to help explain transition areas included in IEPs. These studies are described in detail below.

Grigal et al. (1997) modified the original STSRP for the use of students with disabilities under all categories in order to evaluate the transition component of the IEP. The original STSRP (Lawson & Everson, 1993; as cited in Everson et al., 2001) was designed for students who are deaf and/or blind. Grigal and her colleagues (1997) used the revised instrument to evaluate the transition components in the IEPs used with 94 high school students with various disabilities (e.g., learning disabilities, cognitive disabilities, and behavioral emotional disabilities) between the ages of 18 and 21. The revised STSRP consisted of 25 questions that were grouped into four sections, including demographics (i.e., gender, category of disability, number of years the

transition component had been in place, and graduation document to be earned), transition component format (i.e., family input, expansion of goals, timelines, and follow-up), compliance with the IDEA mandates (i.e., postsecondary education, independent living, transition team members), and reflection of best practices (i.e., integration opportunities with people without disabilities and evaluation procedures).

According to Grigal et al. (1997), 15 outcome areas reflected in transition components were evaluated for compliance with the IDEA's mandates. These outcome areas include postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment, continuing adult education, adult services, independent living, community participation, living arrangements, homemaking needs, transportation, medical, relationships, financial, leisure/recreation, and advocacy/legal. The results of this study show that vocational training, adult services, and independent living were the top three most common written goals in the transition plans that were studied. In contrast, transportation, developing social relationships, advocacy, and financial and medical concerns were less frequently included in transition plans. The authors (Grigal et al., 1997) also indicate that special education teachers (90.4%) were the most consistent team members involved in developing the transition component. Local Educational Agencies (LEAs), families, and students with disabilities were involved in 62.5% of the plans, while the exclusive involvement of LEAs appeared in 31.9% of the plans.

Everson et al. (2001) used a two-step sampling process to select a target sample size from the state of Louisiana. The sample included 329 student documents containing both transition components and IEPs. These documents represented students who were age 14 and older and who were qualified for special education services under the full range of IDEA mandated disability categories. The instrument, "IEP Statement of Transition Services Review Protocol"

(Zhang, Everson, & Guillory, 1999; as cited in Everson et al., 2001), used for this study was developed based on the original STSRP (Lawson & Everson, 1993; as cited in Everson et al., 2001) and a modified version of the STSRP (Grigal et al., 1997). The IEP/STSRP contains four sections: (a) demographics; (b) format of the transition services page (i.e., student or family's future vision statement); (c) the IDEA's definition and the state of Louisiana's suggested 11 target domains (i.e., postsecondary education, employment, living arrangements, homemaking needs, financial and income needs, community resources, recreation and leisure, transportation, health and medical services, relationships, and advocacy and legal needs) for transition services and planning; and, (d) valued practices based on the literature, for example, age-appropriate and integrated activities in a student's home, workplace, recreational settings, and school (Everson et al., 2001). The results of the study indicate that the IDEA's required transition goal areas -- such as post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment, continuing/adult education and services, independent living, and community participation -- were commonly addressed in the reviewed IEPs. However, health and medical issues, advocacy and legal issues, and transportation needs were less likely to be addressed in the IEPs.

Except the aforementioned studies, Powers et al. (2005) used a three-level nested sampling design along with random selection to select the IEPs of students from two urban school districts in two western states of the United States. The IEPs were developed for students ages 16 to 22. A total of 399 IEPs were analyzed for transition components using a modified version of the STSRP as an instrument. Powers et al. (2005) evaluated 12 transition goal domains. In addition to the domains identified by Everson et al. (2001), Powers et al. (2005) accentuated, vocational training, adult education, adult services, effective practices (i.e., person-centered career planning, self-determination education, extracurricular activities, and mentoring

opportunities). Powers et al. (2005) indicated that the majority of IEPs (63.1%) did not provide sufficient details on transition plan goals, except in goals related to community participation, transportation, and community recreation and leisure. The results indicated that school administrators, family members, and special educators were consistent members of IEP teams; signatures on IEP documents revealed the following participation rates for IEP team members: school administrators (87.1%), family members (81.8%), special educators (78.2%), and students with disabilities (75.8%). However, general teachers were only involved in 39.1% of IEP meetings. In terms of effective practices, few IEPs reflected evidence of the students' participation in school-based extracurricular activities (11.3%), training in self-determination (6.5%), or involvement in person-centered career planning (4.5%); few referenced cultural values or the student's background (9.8%).

Shearin et al. (1999) used the STSRP to create an outcome/skill checklist for evaluating the transition content of 68 IEPs for high school students with learning and cognitive disabilities from an Arkansas district in which 65% of students served were African American. The checklist consisted of three sections (i.e., students' background information, IEP participants, and transition components) with a total of 82 items. The first section included demographical information such as gender, primary disability, race/ethnicity, age, grade, and year the IEP was developed. The second section consisted of information about team members, including LEAs involved in the development of the IEP. The third section contained three parts: postsecondary outcomes (i.e., postsecondary education, postsecondary employment, residential options, and daily living skills), domains of daily living skills (i.e., domestic, community functioning, transportation, and recreation skills), and persons/agencies in charge of service delivery and support. The researchers found that the involvement varies among IEP team members. Among

the team members, special educators represented the highest level of participation in transition planning at IEP meetings (104%, with some participating in more than one plan). The percentages of participation for other members included: students with disabilities (65%), school counselors (62%), and mothers (52%). The results also indicated that very few IEPs address family planning and self-advocacy skills (Shearin et al., 1999).

The IEP review studies conducted prior to the 1997 amendments to the IDEA were aimed at determining the quality of transition planning and the most effective transition practices. Powers, et al. (2005) suggests that effective transition practices consist of the major topics related to student-centered career planning. In looking at student-center planning studies, they found the most effective transition practices include: support for postsecondary education and life, independent living, self-determined related skills instruction, family and student involvement in transition planning, student participation in general education, interagency collaboration, mentorship experiences, and multicultural issues in transition.

In the following section, I discuss how the dominant cultural values and practices found in the United States are embedded in many special education practices, particularly in the areas of self-determination and IEP document development.

Cultural Practices of IEP

Kalyanpur and Harry (1999) claimed that the "IDEA is a product of 20th century American culture" (p. 20). This statement conveys the assertion that the IDEA was established under culturally constructed values. The three major American dominant cultural values of equity, choice, and individualism are embedded in U.S. special education and the IDEA's principles. Examples of these values as they are found in the IDEA include: zero rejection, nondiscrimination assessment, individualized and appropriate education, least restrictive

environment (LRE), due process, and parent participation (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1999). Choice is embedded in the principles of LRE and parent participation, and the value of equity is found in the principles of zero rejection, nondiscrimination assessment, and parent participation. Besides the value of choice and equity, dominant American culture's emphasis on individualism influences the formation of the principles of due process, and individualized and appropriate education (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1999). These cultural values impact IEP practices, which in turn reflect the core values of the IDEA's long-established emphasis on individualism. In other words, the concept of individualism is embedded in IEP practices. For instance, the principle of transition and IEP planning is that setting transition goals and making life choices should be centered around the student's personal preferences and interests. Hence, both the actual transition process and the IEP's planning for it are focused on the student rather than family members.

IEP documents are essential artifacts of transition planning. These documents are inherently connected with the value of individualism, which is reflected in the practice of encouraging students with disabilities to participate in and/or lead their own IEP meetings. Legislative mandates play a key role in how transition practices are implemented for students with disabilities. In applying the concept of individualism to IEP documents, we expect to see individualized goal statements that are specifically tailored to the ability, preferences, and interests of students with disabilities. Trainor's (2005a) review of actual IEP documents, however, did not find such evidence.

The cultural value of individualism has placed the student with disabilities at the center of education service planning. Consequently, a student-centered planning approach (Getzel & deFur, 1997; Morningstar & Kleinhammer-Tramill, 1999) has been applied in order to provide

meaningful and appropriate transition and educational planning to individuals with disabilities in reaching their full potential as it relates to post-school goals and expected outcomes. With individualism and a student-centered approach in mind, students with disabilities are encouraged to participate in their own IEP planning; IEP meetings are broadly considered to be opportunities for students to learn and demonstrate self-determination skills (Mason et al., 2004). Although researchers have advocated promoting self-determination through student participation in IEP processes, the reality is that students are often unfamiliar with their IEP and do not fully participate in IEP meetings (Lovitt & Cushing, 1994; Thoma, Rogan, & Baker, 2001). A recent study regarding the effects of intervention regarding IEP participation indicates that very few positive results were documented for students with disabilities and their families who are from CLD backgrounds or cultural and/or language minorities (Griffin, 2011). Effective IEP planning in transition should begin with not only what students know -- i.e., their previous education and experiences -- but also family expectations. The public school system conceives of disability as it related to the values of dominant American culture, but these do not necessarily align with the conception of disability as it is founded in other ethnic groups. This dissonance can cause problems for students and their families (Shogren, 2012; Trainor, 2002, 2005b).

The concept of self-determination. The construct of self-determination that includes 12 component skills (i.e., choice-making, decision-making, problem solving, goal setting and attainment, independent living, self-advocacy and leadership, self-observation, evaluation, and reinforcement, internal locus of control, positive self-efficacy and outcome expectancy, self-awareness, self-understanding, and self-instruction) mentioned in the previous chapter as it is represented in the U.S. public school system, is derived from an Anglo-European socio-cultural milieu (Lynch & Hanson, 1999; Frankland, Turnbull & Wehmeyer, 2004). In the 17th century,

the term "self-determination" was deployed as part of a philosophical debate in England and Europe regarding whether or not human behavior is caused by free will or predetermined by God (Frankland et al., 2004). Self-determination was also used as a political slogan to refer to the rights of peoples to self-government (Frankland et al., 2004). The right of the First Nations of Indigenous Americans to self-determination first appeared in Woodrow Wilson's famous Fourteen Points speech Fourteen Points in 1918. The Fourteen Points speech supports the rights of all European countries or national groups involved in World War I, including colonies, to freely choose their sovereignty, or independence (Wehmeyer, 1998).

Self-Determination theory. The contemporary concept of self-determination was initially developed into a formal theory by Deci and Ryan (1985) in the field of psychology. From the perspective of these two psychologists, self-determination theory (SDT) embraces three basic psychological needs: competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Competence involves the knowledge and experiences that enable a person to control external and internal outcomes through actions. Relatedness refers to the ability to build meaningful connections with others. Autonomy refers to self-initiating and self-regulating behaviors (Deci, Vallerand, Pellerand, & Ryan, 1991). Deci and Ryan (1985) argue that these basic needs, which are postulated by SDT, are universal to all human beings, regardless of culture.

Although a variety of domains (e.g., universal psychological needs, human motivation, relations of cultural orientations, and the impact of social environment on motivation) have been used to expound SDT, motivation is viewed as the central domain of SDT (Gagne & Deci, 2005). Human motivation includes amotivation, defined as the absence of intentional regulation or lack of self-determination, as well as extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, which is assumed to be equivalent to self-determination (Gagne & Deci, 2005; Ryan & Connell, 1989). Intrinsic

motivation goes hand-in-hand with competence and autonomy because people are more likely to uphold their intrinsic motivation when they are competent and self-determining (Gagne & Deci, 2005).

External reinforcement, or material rewards, is not necessary for intrinsically motivated behaviors to occur (Deci et al., 1991). For instance, when adolescents are intrinsically motivated, they are engaged in events or activities that respond to their interests and that give them enjoyment and satisfaction. Adolescents' intrinsically motivated behaviors represent a form of self-determination because they are engaged in the events and activities with volition and choice. Deci and Ryan (1985) identify four types of extrinsic motivation: external, interjected, identified, and integrated regulation. Each type of extrinsic motivation varies in its degree of self-determination. The four types of extrinsic motivation that describe the control-to-autonomy continuum of self-determination were built around a concept of internalization that views it as a motivated process (Deci & Ryan, 1987; Deci et al., 1991; Gagne & Deci, 2005).

The definitions and conceptual framework of SDT also take into account social context and personality. Deci et al. (1991) note that "motivation, performance, and development will be maximized within social contexts that provide people the opportunity to satisfy their basic psychological needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy" (pp. 327-328). Ryan and Deci (2006) argue that social contexts (e.g., work, home, social environments) affect SDT because social contexts support intrinsic motivation and facilitate the internalization of the extrinsic motivation of people residing in them (Gagne & Deci, 2005). Grolnick and Ryan (1987) applied self-determination theory to assess the effects of motivationally relevant conditions and individual differences in learning performance and school-related activities of 91 fifth-grade children. They confirm that the impact of environmental conditions and children's motivational

orientations affect children's learning outcomes. They argue that parental support for competence, relatedness, and autonomy is a predictor for greater conceptual learning, which includes maintaining intrinsic motivation for school work and internalizing the importance of school-related activities, which in turn influences a child's school performance and adjustment.

Self-determination in special education. Researchers in special education (Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, & Eddy, 2005; Ward, 2005; Wehmeyer, 1998) agree that the first use of the term self-determination as it applies to individuals with disabilities can be found in Nirje (1972), who states that:

> One major facet of the normalization principle is to create conditions through which a [handicapped] person experiences the normal respect to which any human being is entitled. Thus the choices wishes, desires and aspirations of a [handicapped] person have to be taken into consideration as much as possible in actions affecting him. ….....Thus, the road to self-determination is indeed both difficult and all important for a person who is impaired (p.177).

Nirje's (1972) statement regarding self-determination for individuals with disabilities did not garner much attention until the U.S. Department of Education, specifically the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), created an initiative that instigated a focus on self-determination (Ward & Kohler, 1996; Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, & Wehmeyer, 1998a; Ward, 2005). OSERS provided a grant competition in 1989 for model demonstration projects on various topics (e.g., identifying, planning, and teaching skills necessary for self-determination) related to self-determination. There were a total of 26 model demonstration projects in self-determination that were funded through this initiative (Ward & Kohler, 1996; Field, et al., 1998a; Ward, 2005). Although the results of these model projects provide important

impetus, other factors such as laws, policies, and public awareness have contributed to the focus on self-determination.

Promoting the self-determination of students with disabilities might be partially attributable to the enforcement of the IDEA and research studies on transition. The IDEA amendments have supported and encouraged student involvement in transition planning processes, while researchers (e.g., Mason et al., 2004) have shown that meaningful involvement in the transition planning process maximizes student opportunities for participating in self-determination activities. When students become involved in IEP meetings, they have the opportunity to utilize self-determination related skills such as self-advocacy, self-awareness, autonomy, and goal setting (Test et al., 2004; Test, Neale, 2004). Correspondingly, self-determination is often incorporated into IEP meetings for effective transition planning (Wehmeyer & Lawrence, 1995; Snyder & Shapiro, 1997) because researchers have supported the view that self-determination can be promoted through involving students with disabilities in transition planning (Carter, Lane, Pierson & Stang, 2008; Martin et al., 1993; Wehmeyer, Palmer, Soukup, Gardner & Lawrence, 2007).

In recent decades, people have become increasingly aware of the right of people with disabilities to make their own decisions. While people with disabilities were finally allowed to have opportunities and rights to access services, proponents and advocates of disability rights recognized that individuals with disabilities were not actively exercising those rights (Cross et al., 1999). Many individuals with disabilities frequently did not get involved with decisions about their own lives as a result of their limitations (e.g., physical, mental, or behavioral). Family members or teachers of individuals with disabilities act as the primary decision makers for the individuals with disabilities due to over-protective caregivers and pervasive stereotypes which

imply that individuals with disabilities lack the ability to practice self-determination (Ward, 1988). Over-protectiveness and concern from parents and teachers often hinder people with disabilities from exercising their rights (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1998). However, with the increased visibility and acceptance of people with disabilities in our society, the concept and definition of self-determination has drawn the attention of researchers and special education communities (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997; Wehmeyer, Palmer, Agran, Mithaug & Martin, 2000; Eisenman & Chamberlin, 2001).

Operationalizing self-determination special education contexts. During the 1990s, the operational definition of self-determination elicited numerous discussions about both the content of the definition and the implications for pedagogical strategies it seemed to suggest (Field & Hoffman, 1994; Field, Martin, Miller, Ward & Wehmeyer, 1998b; Martin & Marshall, 1995; Wehmeyer, 1992; Wehmeyer, 1996). Field and Hoffman (1994) defined self-determination as:

> The ability to define and achieve goals based on a foundation of knowing and valuing oneself. It is promoted, or discouraged, by factors within the individual's control (e.g., values, knowledge and skills) and variables that are environmental in nature (e.g., opportunities for choice-making, attitudes of others). (p.164)

Martin & Marshall (1995) defined the concept as:

> Self-determined individuals know how to choose-they know what they want and how to get it. From an awareness of personal needs, self-determined individuals choose goals, then doggedly pursue them. This involves asserting and individual's presence, making his or her needs known, evaluating progress toward meeting goals, adjusting performance.

Field et al. (1998a) synthesize the definition by stating,

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> Self-determination is a combination of skills, knowledge, and beliefs that enable a person to engage in goal-directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior. An understanding of one's strengths and limitations together with a belief in oneself as capable and effective are essential to self-determination. When acting on the basis of these skills and attitudes, individuals have greater ability to take control of their lives and assume the role of successful adults in our society (p.2).

While special education researchers have provided their own definitions for the concept of self-determination, as shown above, it is a vastly more complicated concept both theoretically and historically than these definitions can convey. Wehmeyer's (1995, 1996) definition discusses self-determination from many conceivable angles. I found his definition of self-determination is convincing because his definition is perhaps the most influential one of all because it has been widely accepted and commonly used for understanding self-determination in students with disabilities. Wehmeyer's concept of self-determination consists of a broad scope of behavioral characteristics. From Wehmeyer's perspective, self-determination is defined as having four essential components that address the behavioral characteristics of a self-determined person. These include autonomy, self-realization, self-regulation, and psychological empowerment (Wehmeyer, 1995 & 1996). According to Wehmeyer (1995), autonomy allows an individual to act independently. An autonomous person possesses the freedom to make decisions according to his or her preferences and interests. Self-regulation allows an individual to make appropriate decisions and examine and evaluate a plan of action and respond to the situation. Self-realization refers to an individual's ability to have accurate self- knowledge including personal strengths and limitations. Psychological empowerment refers to an individual's belief in the degree to which they can affect and influence outcomes in his or her environment (Wehmeyer & Schwartz,

1998). Despite differences among definitions, researchers often relate self-determination to attitudes, beliefs, and skills (Wehmeyer, 1992). Experts in the field of special education agree that multiple skills should be incorporated into any definition of self-determination, especially including skills related to making choices and decisions, problem solving, goal setting and attainment, self-advocacy, self-efficacy, and self-realization (Field, et al., 1998a; Test, Karvonen, Wood, Browder, & Algozzine, 2000).

This operational definition of self-determination resulted in the proliferation of curricula and strategies that were used as interventions to promote self-determination, especially for transition-age youth. Many researchers believe that self-determination curricula can have a significant impact on individuals with disabilities in various facets of their lives (Hoffman & Field, 1995; Martin et al., 2003; Wehmeyer & Kelchner,1995). For instance, the ChoiceMaker curriculum (Martin & Marshall, 1995) provides strategies for students with disabilities to learn and practice self-determination skills such as self-awareness and decision-making, both of which are crucial to their future. Curricula that promote self-determination were originally created for use by teachers as an independent subject (e.g., self-advocacy, goal setting, self-awareness) that could, in conjunction with transition planning (e.g., IEP) or general academic content standards (e.g., lesson of unit goals), align with a school's current educational objectives or transition goals.

Researchers have urged educators to teach self-determination to students with disabilities in a systematic manner because self-determination skills are important in preparing students with disabilities for the transition to adulthood (Field, Sarver, & Shaw, 2003). Various teaching approaches, such as the McGill Action Planning System (MAPS), and structured curricula, such as "Steps to Self-Determination," "ChoiceMaker," and "Whose Future Is It Anyway?," have

gradually made their way into public school curricula. The following provides a description of two of the most commonly used self-determination curricula (Test et al., 2000).

Steps to Self-Determination. Steps to Self-Determination was originally published in 1996. This curriculum was designed in an attempt to help adolescents gain knowledge and skills that might help them achieve their goals (Field & Hoffman, 1996). This curriculum explores five major skills sets (self-awareness, self-worth, decision making, action taking, and self-realization in success) in relation to self-determination. Lessons are organized into two units, the introduction and the orientation, and 16 sessions. The authors also suggest the length of approximate teaching time for each lesson. This curriculum was updated in 2005 for both middle school and high school students. The authors claim that the curriculum can be incorporated into a variety of school settings; however, it is most suitable for classes that emphasize self-determine skills (Field & Hoffman, 2005). The second edition of the curriculum retains the introduction and orientation units and the 16 sessions, with minor changes to two of the original topics of the sessions (i.e., steps to reach short-term goals vs. planning the steps to reach a short-term goal and planning activities vs. planning actions for the steps).

The new edition of this curriculum adds more skill areas, such as identifying strengths, weaknesses, making good decisions, knowing rights and responsibilities, and communicating effectively. In order to improve the curriculum, Field and Hoffman (2005) incorporated tips, adaptations, and activities that were suggested by previous users of Steps to Self-Determination. In addition to the curriculum, some supplementary materials were added to the packages, including an instructor's guide, an activity book, and a CD-ROM with reproducible materials.

Whose Future Is It Anyway? Wehmeyer and Kelchner developed the curriculum Whose Future Is It Anyway? to help students with cognitive and developmental disabilities participate in

the transition planning process (Wehmeyer & Kelchner,1995). The Arc, a national organization for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, made this curriculum available in a complete book format in 1995. The curriculum consists of two parts: a student manual and a coach's guide. Both the student manual and the coach's guide are organized around the curriculum's 36 sessions. Those sessions are grouped into 6 sections including self-awareness, decision making, utilizing community resources, goal setting, communication skills, and meeting planning.

This curriculum emphasizes a student-centered approach with the focus on student needs and abilities. Each session includes an action plan goal, introductory material, summaries, exercises, and examples of problems from the lives of people with disabilities. Students who use this curriculum are expected to read and answer the questions for the exercise sections. Since this curriculum was designed for individual use, it can function as a student workbook. In contrast, the coach's guide was designed for educators. The second edition of Whose Future Is It Anyway? was published in 2004. The curriculum package includes a 36-session student manual and a coach's guide with 51 pages of information. The themes and content are kept intact from the first edition, however, the revised version includes clip art (e.g., an apartment, tickets, an individual playing guitar). Additionally, information regarding transition requirements in the IDEA was updated (e.g., the starting age for transition).

In addition to the aforementioned curricula, Field and her colleagues (Field, et al., 1998b) identified 35 structured curricula that were published to promote self-determination related skills, attitudes, and beliefs that teachers should teach in the early stages of school. Only one of the curricula was focused on elementary students (grades three through six). Of those 35 curricula,

approximately one third of them were focused on promoting adolescent involvement in transition planning, and only six of these curricula were field-tested (Field, et al., 1998b).

Wood, Test, Browder, Algozzine, and Karvonen (1999) conducted a systematic review of self-determination curricula. The authors state that they located approximately 60 published curricula aimed at promoting self-determination skills. These identified curricula include self-determination teaching approaches and curriculum lesson packages. The criteria used to identify both types of curricula were based on the eight most commonly used self-determination components -- choice making and decision making, goal setting and attainment, problem-solving, self-advocacy, self-evaluation, IEP, self-awareness, and relationships with others -- found in the literature (Test et al., 2000). The SDSP used both quantitative and qualitative methods to identify effective practices by conducting a literature review and meta-analysis. The results of the SDSP review indicate that 18 of these 60 curricula have been field tested, but test results were either not reported, or they were reported in a journal article or book chapter instead of the manual.

A few years later, Algozzine and his colleagues (2001) undertook an extensive review of the self-determination literature, specifically focusing on interventions that promote self-determination of individuals with disabilities. They identified 51 articles that were published from 1978 to 2000, and they then conducted a meta-analysis based on the results of identified articles. This study answered three major questions: (a) what interventions have been studied to promote self-determination?; (b) what groups of individuals with disabilities have been taught strategies to promote self-determination?; and, (c) what are the outcomes of interventions designed to promote self-determination? Results indicate that all elements (e.g., choice/decision making, goal setting and attainment, and IEP planning) of self-determination occur in the review

(Algozzine, Browder, Karvonen, Test, & Wood, 2001). However, according to Algozzine et al. (2001), some domains of self-determination were associated with particular types of disabilities. For example, interventions on teaching choice-making were often implemented for individuals with moderate and severe cognitive disabilities, and interventions on teaching self-advocacy were often designed for individuals with learning disabilities or mild cognitive disabilities.

Many of these curricula were developed to promote self-determination for students with cognitive disabilities (Wehmeyer, 1995; see the Self-Determination Synthesis Project, [SDSP], report for examples). Previously, curricula were developed that related self-determination skills to development stages, taking into account what kinds of personal and social skills were most appropriately taught at each stage of development. Curricula that have promoted self-determination in the U.S. have mostly followed Euro-American ways of thinking, thus impacting transition goal setting and IEP planning. Additionally, self-determination curricula reveal an assumption that self-determination should be promoted through the goals set for all students during certain stages of transition -- regardless of cultural traditions and the circumstances of students' communities. Therefore, researchers have rarely considered the validity or appropriateness of curricula and strategies with respect to the cultural values and familial expectations of students.

The extant transition literature reveals that self-determination is essential to transition education. Understanding transition education and self-determination related roots, concepts, instructional strategies, and implementation regulations might assist researchers and practitioners in developing the transition and IEP plans. Additionally, it is important to realize the influences of bioecological systems on children's learning, and in particular their development of self-determination skills, because cultural values and expectations held for children might be

different from one bioecological system to another. In the following section, I discuss the potential effect of each ecological setting on the development of self-determination in children using Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Bioecological Theory of Human Development

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory of Development (1979) argues that environmental context profoundly affects children's development, as do the adults who nurture them. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory holds that human development is rooted in four levels of the ecological environment, which, according to Bronfenbrenner, are arranged in a "nested structure," one level being set inside the next, like a set of "Russian dolls" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 3). This nested structure includes the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. All four ecological systems have direct or indirect impact on an individual's development. As Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1986) argues, human behavior and development are evolved from the interaction between the human organism and its environment.

The ecological theory, a precursor to the more developed bioecological theory, is focused on cultural aspects of human development and has recently evolved into the bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner, 2005). In bioecological theory, development is defined as "the phenomenon of continuity and change in biopsychological characteristics of human beings, both as individuals and as groups. The phenomenon extends over the life course, across successive generations, and through historical time, both past and future" (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006, p. 793). The bioecological model highlights the importance of understanding bidirectional influences between individuals' development and their surrounding environment, as well as the importance of time (known as the chronosystem in the model) because forms of

interaction between individuals and environment and developmental processes take place over time (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). In applying Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model to self-determination, we should acknowledge that students with disabilities do not develop their self-determination skills in isolation but in relation to their family, home, culture, school, community, and society through a lifelong process of development.

Microsystem. Bronfenbrenner (1979) addresses the importance of the quality of interaction within a child's microsystems in relation to the child's development. The microsystem, the innermost level of ecological context, presents the daily interactions of an individual involving direct interaction with people in immediate settings such as the home, classroom, or school (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986). A microsystem starts with family or home, as does child behavior and development. From a bioecological perspective, the development of beliefs, attitudes, and skills related to self-determination is a long and lasting learning behavior and should take place within a child's microsystem in early life (Palmer, et al., 2013). Parents and other family members (e.g., grandparents, siblings, or other relatives) are primary influences in cultivating a sense of self-determination in children. This premise echoes research findings that identify the home as playing an essential role in fostering and sustaining the early development of self-determination (Erwin & Brown, 2003; Shogren & Turnbull, 2006).

Family, one of the micro settings, contributes to various aspects of a child's development (e.g., thinking, remembering, reasoning, and problem solving). Some relevant research has been done through investigating the background of students and their "funds of knowledge." Researchers (Moll, Amanti, & Gonzalez, 1992) have investigated these "funds of knowledge" in order to develop strategic connections between homes and classrooms. Gonzalez, Andrade,

Civil, and Moll (2001) defined "funds of knowledge" as the historically accumulated bodies of knowledge and skills that are essential to family functioning and well-being. Similarly, students gain cultural knowledge from their family and community because they are both major sources of information about the cultural values and beliefs instilled in children.

Special educators and researchers generally agree that home is the most important environment where young children acquire self-determination skills (Brotherson, Cook, Erwin & Weigel, 2008). Families influence and mold the self-determination of children because the home environment is where opportunities and obstacles are provided to promote self-determination. Erwin and Brown (2003) show that the values and perceptions that influence self-determination may be held differently by families as self-determination is personally and culturally influenced (p. 79). Shogren and Turnbull (2006) also support that families and home environment play a critical role in promoting self-determination of children with disabilities.

All stakeholder groups have recognized the important role of parental support and family involvement in the development of self-determination in students with disabilities (Field & Hoffman, 1999). Trainor (2005b) investigated self-determination perceptions and behaviors of students with learning disabilities (LD) during postsecondary transition planning. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who met four predetermined criteria (i.e., 16 years or older, male, receiving special education under the LD category, and eligible for free and reduced-price lunch program). Trainor's study included 17 adolescents with diverse cultural and racial/ethnic backgrounds (e.g., African American, European American, and Latino American) from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Trainor, 2005b). Her in-depth analysis was based on qualitative data collected through interviews, observations, and document reviews. Trainor's study highlights the need to explore the interaction between environment and the development of

self-determination in students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Trainor, 2005b).

Shogren (2012) also conducted a qualitative study based on a phenomenological design used to explore the perceptions of Latina mothers with respect to self-determination. She found that most mothers who were interviewed said that the way self-determination is presented in the school context is not in line with their personal and cultural values. The findings of the study indicated that many Latina mothers described significant conflicts in the conceptualization of self-determination (e.g., identifying future goals) between school and family. Moreover, the way self-determination skills are taught and used in Latino homes differs from how they are taught and used in schools, where the teaching force is dominated by educators and professionals who hold dominant American cultural values (Shogren, 2012).

Family support and participation is important to the success of incorporating self-determination into the transition or IEP processes. However, transition planning and IEP processes that focus on Eurocentric cultural norms may overlook cultural differences between people from other ethnic or cultural backgrounds. If CLD families' needs and values are not considered when setting goals of self-determination, it is unlikely that these families would promote self-determination at home in the same way as planned in IEP documents. Thus, having a fundamental understanding of ecological systems, and especially of the microsystems of CLD students with disabilities, may help researchers and educators discover how microsystems affects the development of self-determination.

Mesosystem. The mesosystem, an outer layer of the microsystem, is defined as a set of interrelations between the settings within which a person develops. Bronfenbrenner (1979) argues that

> Mesosystem is a system of microsystems. It is formed or extended whenever the developing person moves into a new setting. Besides this primary link, interconnections may take a number of additional forms: other persons who participate actively in both settings, intermediate links in a social network, formal and informal communications among settings. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, pp.25)

According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework, the mesosystem is described as the interaction between the various microsystems of a child. The mesosystem also refers to situations or events that bridge two micro settings in a child's life; an example of the mesosystem is the transition planning and IEP meetings in which two microsystems (e.g., home and school) of a child come together. Mesosystems (or interactions between microsystems) can provide children with support, but can also cause stress for them. For instance, during transition planning and IEP meetings, a child's family, teachers, and transitional specialist meet to develop a transition plan. This plan has the potential to offer the student needed support, but may also cause frustration if the interests and values of the IEP team members are in conflict with one another. A research project that engaged African American students in discussions about the "burden of acting white" provides another good example on how mesosystems cause stress for racial and ethnically diverse students with special needs (Goff, Martin, & Thomas, 2007). In this study, six African American students indicated that "acting black" was having "bad" grades (Goff et al., 2007, p.143). Goff et al. (2007) argue that the burden of acting white may not be the problem causing a black student's academic underachievement, but rather a lack of self-determination to make educational decisions. This study, thus, suggests that the school should provide African American students with self-determination instruction as a tool to cope with the burden of "acting white" (Goff et al., 2007).

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Children grow up in homes with particular cultural values and expectations, so educators should not be solely responsible for teaching self-determination related skills to adolescents with disabilities. Educators who are often etic to students' culture, however, may be able to build a bridge between a student's home and school by learning about a student's funds of knowledge. One way to understand what students know about their family and cultural traits, and the expectations that their family and culture has for them in terms of the development of self-determination, is to have direct input from their families. Thus, the goals that are written on IEPs should incorporate topics or texts that help students to foster respect and understanding of their cultural knowledge. Additionally, transition or IEP objectives that appear on IEP documents should include information and goals that encourage parents, family, and community members to share their beliefs and values regarding self-determination.

The IDEA of 1990 and its reauthorizations in 1997 and 2004 mandated that parents with disabilities have the right to participate in the educational decision-making process. The parents or other family members of children with disabilities are expected to have an equal partnership with educators in special education and in the decision-making process (Kalyanpur, Hary, & Skrtic, 2000). However, teachers often make decisions on how to foster self-determination during the transition process or IEP meetings. Teachers and school officials usually have dominance, and parents, especially those from diverse cultural backgrounds, are viewed as supporters of their child's self-determination (Trainor, 2005b; Martin et al., 2006). Therefore, including the family in the transition process and in IEP meetings does not necessarily facilitate effective teacher-parent collaboration.

Parents can provide teachers with valuable information that can be used to better understand the perception and expectation of families regarding transition planning and the

development of self-determination. Supportive mesosystemic links (e.g., between school and home) are at the heart of a collaborative model of practice in transition planning and self-determination.

Exosystem. "An exosystem refers to one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.25).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) defines the exosystem as multi-settings that do not directly involve the individual as an active participant. Although individuals with disabilities may not be present in these interactions, they are still influenced by the multi-settings. The implementation of educational policies, the distribution of educational resources, and the sociocultural beliefs and values implicit in a special educator's training are examples of an exosystem. Special education policies in the U.S. reflect the core values at the macro-level of American culture. For instance, the IDEA reveals the core value of equality because it ensures that all children have the right to Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Through the IDEA entitlement, individuals and families with disabilities are under the law's protection and are ensured the right to challenge any aspect of education. Parents of adolescents with disabilities have the right to be informed about their child's education; however, due process for challenging the school authorities can vary, depending on the capability of parents. The framework of the IDEA employs a version of egalitarianism, yet parents of children with disabilities who are from marginalized groups may not have the resources or power needed to affect change, a situation which is conditioned in part by cultural, historical, and political forces. For example, a lack of knowledge or financial support prevents parents with disabilities from accessing public resources.

Educational policies and allocation of resources. Students with disabilities have been directly affected by several federal policies such as the IDEA and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2000). NCLB is one of many revisions to the elementary and secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, and was signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2002. NCLB includes six major essentials: accountability, highly qualified teachers, evidence-based practices, local flexibility, safe schools, and parents' empowerment (Turnbull, 2005). NCLB reinforces curricula and assessment requirements for students with disabilities, and focuses on promoting comprehensive strategies to improve public school programs for all students, including students with disabilities who are from CLD backgrounds. NCLB ensures that schools are held accountable for the academic achievement of students with disabilities. In addition, NCLB ensures the need of improving teaching and collaborative partnerships between schools, employers, postsecondary institutions, parents, and others. The reauthorization of the IDEA of 2004 attempts to incorporate its provisions more fully into Bush's NCLB principles by ensuring that students with disabilities have greater access to the general education curriculum and assessment systems (Agran, Alper, & Wehmeyer, 2002).

Although educational policies do not directly involve students with disabilities in their immediate context, these policies link the social networks in mesosystems to the student. For example, the policy brings teachers, service providers, organizations, and parents together to improve students' transition and IEP planning. Educational policies, however, might increase conflict among the school, organizations, educational facilities, and parents. The conflict between educational policies and exosystems might shift the focus of transition and IEP planning related to self-determination due to different cultural practices. Consequently, educational

policies sometimes create unintended effects in several aspects of the lives of students with disabilities.

Special educator preparation. The IDEA requires that IEPs be based on student preferences and interests and that special educators learn strategies for supporting student self-determination throughout the transition process and educational programs. Thoma, Baker, and Saddler (2002) argue that "skills that are necessary to support students in being self-determined and to teach self-determination skills to students with disabilities are different from skills that are necessary to support a more traditional model of transition planning" (p. 83). Thoma et al. (2002) studied university faculty perceptions and skills in preparing special educators to support or teach self-determination related skills. Results indicate that only around half (54%) of faculty members who participated in the study included instruction regarding self-determination in their teacher preparation courses. Instruction on self-determination was not taught in a single class but was rather folded into courses as part of instruction on trends and issues, transition strategies, disability-specific strategies, and secondary special education methods (Thoma et al., 2002). The participating faculty members indicated that they taught the core components (i.e., choice making, decision making, and self-advocacy) of self-determination by incorporating them into lecture, required reading, group discussion, and writing transition IEP plans (Thoma et al., 2002). However, most universities and colleges that offer special education certification programs do not require pre-service teachers to learn how to facilitate self-determination. Thoma, Nathanson, Baker, and Tamura (2002) surveyed special educators about the teaching of self-determination in college and university programs. They indicate that one third (approximately 32%) of respondents said their graduate-level courses taught them the meaning of self-determination.

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Pre-service teacher training programs offer insufficient self-determination related courses, and universities or colleges that provide special educators with preparation programs have not sufficiently considered exo-level factors that affect our future special educators' understanding of self-determination. Thus, it is crucial for universities or colleges to reorganize their courses and enhance the skills and knowledge of pre-service teachers regarding self-determination.

Macrosystem. "The macrosystem refers to consistencies, in the form and content of lower-order systems (micro, meso, and exo) that exist, or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, pp.26).

Bronfenbrenner (1977) uses the macrosystem to describe the large cultural context where multiple lives are played out in tandem with one another, where communities come together and interact. He refers to the macrosystem, the outermost layer of the four systems models of human development, as a "cultural blueprint." The blueprint that affects social structure and activities is closely interrelated to all three systems (micro, meso and exo) with its emphasis on regulations, customs, and cultural values (Bronfenbrenner,1979). For instance, cultural values in society, policies, and financial resources provided by the macrosystem or society constitute the context that affects educational practices and subsequently adolescent development. As culture is the most important element at the macro level, I provide a brief background on the many debates surrounding the definition of culture in the following section.

Concept and definitions of culture. Culture is a ubiquitous and a complex concept because culture influences the way we speak, the way we perceive the world, and how we live our lives (Schein, 1990). Culture has been defined in various ways in different disciplines. No

single definition has completely achieved scholarly consensus, and no definition can describe every dimension of culture. From a traditional anthropological perspective, culture encompasses shared history, religion, ideas, values, attitudes, traditions, language, and social organizations (Hiller, 1933; Hofstede, 1984; Radcliffe-Brown, 1949; White, 1949). Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) argue that the word "culture" originally appeared in the German language and that it is interchangeable with civilization, while in other languages (e.g., French and English) it is not.

Edward Burnett Tylor, an English anthropologist, borrowed the word from German and is considered by many researchers to be the foremost scholar responsible for defining it (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). Tylor's nineteenth-century study of anthropology and his contribution to defining the generic implications of culture gradually established the word "culture" as a technical term (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952) in the scientific world. Tylor published his work of *Primitive Culture* in 1871 (Tylor, 1958) and used the term culture interchangeably with civilization. Tylor's definition of culture is broad and appears to explain it as the creation of humanity at a given stage in the evolutionary processes. He offered a definition of culture in the very beginning of his work: "Culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a man as a member of society" (Tylor, 1958, p.1).

Kluckhohn and Kroeber (1952) examined and compiled 165 definitions of culture from a thorough review of studies regarding its various incarnations in the literature. In "A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions," Kluckhohn and Kroeber categorize these definitions into groups: descriptive, historical, normative, psychological, structural and genetic definition. As the authors note, Tylor's definition of culture was descriptive, emphasizing the enumeration of

content, which accounts for its impact on subsequent researchers who worked in the descriptive vein.

Definitions of culture have continuously evolved over time in various fields of studies. Schein (1990) defined culture as "what a group learns over a period of time as that group solves its problems of survival in an external environment and its problems of internal integration" (p. 111). Schein's definition of culture, which was derived from the psychology and sociology of organizational culture, includes three fundamental levels: (a) observable artifacts; (b) values; and, (c) basic underlying assumptions. The first level, observable artifact, represents the visible, tangible, and symbolic level of culture. The second level values represent the norms, ideologies, philosophies, and accepted realities that are shared by a group's members. The third can be seen as a static inheritance or dynamic innovation. Both as inheritance and as innovation, culture influences the ways we act and feel on a daily basis, providing our lives with morality, religion, customs, traditions, and language. In general, culture is treated as either a static noun or a dynamic verb. The static state of culture connotes historical heritage, whereas the dynamic state suggests the movement, interaction, and progress between human beings and their environment. The static and dynamic state of culture comprise multiple meanings that contribute to the difficulty we have defining the concept.

In a recent article, Cohen (2009) claims that culture exists in many different forms and is inflected by such things as socioeconomic status, region, social class, and religion. Each form of culture holds an important standing for investigations into the meaning of culture. Culture is one of the most essential elements in the development and represents a cornerstone of any understanding of human beings. Despite the different iterations of culture as a concept, and the difficulty in reaching a single definition, each understanding of culture encompasses some major

characteristics. Triandis (2007) argues that culture emerges in adaptive interactions between human beings and their environments, that culture consists of shared elements, and that culture is transmitted across time periods and generations. And, people interpret culture differently.

Gay (2000) argues that culture consists of standards, values, and beliefs, such as social values, cognitive codes, and behavioral standards. It is the centerpiece of education, and all of these elements define the characteristics of a culture. Eisenhart (2001), in applying the concept of culture to education, recommends that we embrace culture as an explanatory construct for educational practices:

> The patterns and meanings that people take up and manipulate in particular places and with particular other people are consequential for them. They affect the way people interpret (or "filter") their experiences, the concerns people feel, the preferences they have, the choices they make, and the identities they seek….Individuals are not free to choose for themselves any view of the world, any way of acting in class, any definition of success, or any identity. In practice, such choices are constrained by intersubjective understandings of what is possible, appropriate, legitimate, properly radical and so forth. That is, they are constrained by culture and enduring social structures that culture mediates (Eisenhart, 2001, pp. 215).

The concept of culture has also become prominent in special education discussions as scholars have begun increasingly to acknowledge the lack of discussion of culture in relation to the policies, transition practices, and pedagogies related to teaching self-determination to people with disabilities. In the field of special education, Kalyanpur and Harry (1999) argue that "culture denotes the shared implicit and explicit rules and traditions that express the beliefs, values, and goals of a group of people" (p. 3). Culture can influence an individual's attitudes, beliefs and values, and it affects an individual's level of self-determined behavior. Cultural

values also impact how self-determination is defined (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001a). Individuals are nurtured within a cultural framework that is infused with the norms and expectations of the particular group (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1999). As individual development is very much interrelated with culture (Rogoff, 2003), the process of becoming self-determined is unlikely to be the same for all individuals with disabilities, especially when it comes to those from diverse cultural, social, economic, ethnic, or linguistic backgrounds. Trainor (2005b) argues that cultural factors, social class, and ethnicity can influence the way students perceive self-determination. Moreover, she points out that different cultural and racial/ethnic groups may hold different ideas about self-determination. Students with diverse backgrounds embrace beliefs and values regarding self-determination that are likely to be incompatible with beliefs and values that are held by teachers whose beliefs and values are shaped by the dominant culture. Trainor's postsecondary transition-focused work has also contributed to the understanding that culture is closely related to the issue of power. Her work acknowledges that neither the boys nor the girls had the opportunity to practice self-determination due to pervasive lack of power (Trainor, 2005b). Later and more broadly, Arzubiaga and her colleagues also signified culture as a product inherently contextualized by power relationships (Arzubiaga, Artiles, King, & Harris-Murri, 2008).

Taking power differentials, particularly as they relate to cultural practices, into consideration allow us to make transition and IEP planning better aligned to the cultural and social contexts in which students live, which is more promising than attempts to override or negate the importance of culture when it comes to ensuring that students live meaningfully self-determined lives. Thus, special educators who grow up in the dominant culture should help each

student learn self-determination in a way that is relevant to the student's cultural standards or norms.

The U.S. population and teaching force. As constructs of culture and social class play significant roles in an individual's process of learning self-determination, teaching self-determination in a way that is arranged according to students' cultural expectations and values is preferable for students with disabilities. Transition planning presents a moment in which special educators must choose a culturally relevant mode of teaching. However, culture that is closely linked to special educators' own life and beliefs may not align with their students' cultural expectations and values. Therefore, special educators may either choose to embrace a culturally relevant or non-culturally relevant means of teaching self-determination during transition planning. The power differentials present in the relationship between student and teacher populations -- whether they are based in institutional relationships, the student's disability, or differences in socioeconomic status, gender, race, sexuality, and/or other identity markers -- in the education system reflect the urgency of rethinking transition components (e.g., strategies and curricula) that are documented in IEPs for promoting self-determination, especially because circumstances and traditions create important differences in defining self-determination for individuals with CLD.

One of the important social and cultural factors that affect the development of self-determination in adolescents is the interaction between adolescent students and their teachers (Zhang, Katsiyannis & Zhang, 2002). According to the statistics of the US Department of Education, from the years 2000 to 2010, the U.S. population increased at a rapid speed, and at the same time, the public school student population became more diverse culturally, ethnically, and linguistically (Census Bureau, 2010; US Department of Education, 2006). The Latino

population has been the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States, increasing from approximately 35 million in 2000 to 50 million in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The growth rate of populations for Asians and African Americans has also increased; the distribution of the population in 2010 was 72 % European American, 16.3 % Latino, 12.6 % African American, 4.8 % Asian American, and 9 % Native American.

The U.S. public school population has likewise been diversifying due to these changes in demographics. Recent statistics indicate that U.S. schools provide approximately 9% of students ages six to 21 (about 5.8 million students) with special education services (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007). Of the 5.8million students who receive special education services, students of color together make up about forty percent of the total (14% Native American/Alaska Native, 12% African American, 9% Latino, and 5% Asian American/Pacific Islander), as compared to the 8% represented by European American students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007). In contrast to the student population, the teaching force in U.S. schools is considerably more homogeneous. Statistics on the demographics of the teaching force in the United States indicate that an overwhelming majority of teachers are white, middle class, and monolingual, and approximately 85% are female (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Utley, Obiakor & Bakken, 2011). In addition, approximately 25% of special education teachers come from a cultural or linguistic background different from their students -- and this difference often means the teacher belongs to the hegemonic socioeconomic and racial group (Office of Special Education Programs, 2002). Teachers' expectations regarding self-determination have become important in the field of special education as the U.S. student population has become increasingly heterogeneous.

Chronosystem. Bronfenbrenner continued to develop the ecological theory of human development until he passed away in 2005 (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield & Karnik, 2009). In the 1980s, Bronfenbrenner (1989) realized that he had previously focused too much on the environmental or contextual factors and not enough on the role a person plays in his or her own development. To address this problem, he added the fifth ecological system,the chronosystem, to the theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). The theory became known as the Bioecological Theory of Human Development (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Bronfenbrenner, 1995).

According to Bronfenbrenner, the chronosystem

> encompasses change or consistency over time not only in the characteristics of the person but also of the environment in which that person lives (e.g., change over the course in family structure, socioeconomic states, employment, place of residence, or the degree of hecticness and ability in everyday life. (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, pp. 1645)

The chronosystem consists of a person's life experiences, both the daily and the major life transitions throughout her or his lifetime. If we apply Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory of Human Development to an individual's development of self-determination, we see that students with disabilities do not develop their self-determination skills in isolation, but rather in relation to their family, home, culture, school, community, and society through a lifelong process of development. Consequently, teaching self-determination related skills to individuals with disabilities should take place in a developmentally and culturally relevant environment. Because self-determination related skills are acquired through complex human interactions over the course of a child's development, the skills and objectives that are appropriate for a five-year-old child may not be appropriate for a 17-year-old adolescent. Likewise, parental expectations of a

child's development of self-determination skills would be different in families who, say, live in Taiwan than from families who, for example, live in America.

The chronosystem also provides ways to comprehend changes due to environmental events and socio-historical circumstances. For example, guidelines and sample forms provided by the Wisconsin DPI in 2006 for schools or educators in relation to IEPs may be different from recent updates due to the reauthorization of the IDEA. These sample forms or documents can help us better understand what and IEP looks like.

In summary, all five bioecological systems are important to an individual's development of self-determination because each system contains norms and rules that may shape that development. Topics mentioned in this chapter help us to better understand all levels of the bioecological model for transition education, which imparts federal and state policies on transition planning and IEP practices. In general, the researchers focus on the examination of direct interactions between students and people in the student's microsystem (e.g., parents, family members, peers and teachers) when discussing students' development of self-determination. While macrosystemic, exosystemic, and chronosystemic interactions (e.g., a student's culture, the government policies that guide their schooling, and the historical changes that affect their life) have continuously impacted the trends in special education and transition education, researchers rarely discuss how these levels of interaction influence students' development of self-determination. I therefore approach this gap in the literature through answering three research questions, discussed in detail in the next chapter, that address how self-determination is incorporated in transition and IEP planning using exosystemic, macrosystemic and chronosystemic levels of analysis.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Self-determination is at the center of efforts in transition planning for students with disabilities in secondary school, yet the research that examines self-determination in this context has mostly focused on the IEP meeting process. How principal defining characteristics of self-determination and even which ones are incorporated into IEP documents themselves has not been thoroughly researched. This gap that exists in the literature undermines our understanding of how self-determination is included in IEPs through the cultural practices. Therefore, this study is an attempt to develop a greater understanding of how self-determination related goals and objectives are integrated into transition and IEP planning. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do the IEP goals address self-determination?
2. How closely do IEP goals and objectives adhere to dominant models of self-determination as operationalized and illustrated in two widely used curricula: *Whose future is it anyway*? and *Steps to Self-Determination*?
3. How do self-determination goals differ for students with high-incidence disabilities as compared to those with low-incidence disabilities?

Research Design

Document Review

Systematic document review is an essential undertaking in special education research because documents provide important insights and background materials for the study of the foundations of educational procedures and practices (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004). Documents that embrace a wide variety of forms and materials contribute to what is known as “material

culture" in anthropology (Hodder, 2001). According to Merriam (2009), documents comprise a broad range of materials of various types (e.g., public records, personal documents, popular culture documents, visual documents, physical material and artifacts, and research-generated documents). Documents can also be categorized into different genres. In special education research, documents may include student records or letter/email correspondences among school officials, teachers, and parents. They may also include memos, report cards, student work samples, program agendas and proposals, and school reports and student IEP documents (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004). Unlike research-generated documents (e.g., diaries, logs of activity, or documents prepared for or generated by researchers during the data collection period), IEPs are confidential records that contract schools to deliver FAPE for students with disabilities (Christle & Yell, 2010). Further, IEP documents at the secondary level include the product of transition planning and provide important insights into the goals and objectives among teachers, students, and their families. Also, IEP documents offer a snapshot of how IEP team members plan to facilitate self-determination related knowledge and skills -- if self-determination has been considered for students' transition planning at all.

Some documents, as is the case with IEPs, contain only text (words), while others may also include images (Bowen, 2009). Miller (1997) points out that "texts are one aspect of the sense-making activities through which we reconstruct, sustain, contest and change our senses of social reality" (p.77). Documents that contain copious amounts of text share common ground with interviews and verbatim transcripts. Thus, documentary material can be used as data in a way similar to how interviews or observations are used (Merriam, 2009).

The collection of data for this study placed emphasis on more contextualized interpretations of IEP documents. As suggested in the literature (Hodder, 2001), documents

require contextualized interpretation because they are a form of written text, and when the text is reread in a different context and time, it yields different meanings. Similarly, IEP documents have to be understood in the context in which they are produced. A brief description of both federal and Wisconsin state requirements for IEP document components are provided to illustrate the importance of including the contextual information for IEPs. The federal provisions require several elements to be included in a student's IEP document. These elements are (a) current performance, (b) annual goals, (c) special education related services, (d) participation with non-disabled children, (e) participation in state and district-wide testing, (f) dates and places (i.e., program or services starting point, frequency and duration of services), (g) transition services (if applicable), and (h) measuring progress (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). In the context of Wisconsin state requirements, IEP documents contain a few essential components: (a) the present level of academic achievement and functional performance; (b) short-term objectives and annual goals; (c) the IEP program summary (i.e., statement of services, participation in regular education classes, extra curricula and non-academic activities, and related); (d) the statement of transition needs (beginning at age 14); and, (e) the measurement and evaluation report (Wisconsin DPI, 2010).

Sample and Sampling Strategies

I conducted a secondary analysis of an existing set of IEPs gathered during a previous study on transition education. The original study, Project Summer (2006-2009), was funded by the Institute for Education Sciences through the U.S. Department of Education. This federally funded research has yielded 15 published studies (see Table 3.1 for descriptions of the studies) in prominent peer-reviewed journals of special education and was conducted by Erik Carter and Audrey Trainor, along with their project team members at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

SELF-DETERMINATION RELATED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the larger, original project was to analyze and identify services and supports that predict successful employment outcomes for secondary school students with disabilities in the state of Wisconsin. Secondary school students with disabilities considered for participation in the original Project Summer study met the following criteria: (a) they received special education and services; (b) their parent/s or guardian consented to their participation; and, (c) the students themselves provided assent or consent to participate (Carter et al., 2010). Project Summer involved various types of data and data sources (e.g., IEPs, interviews, and intervention data).

In qualitative studies, a larger sample size is not necessarily the indicator for a better or more in-depth study. In fact, it is often the case that studies with large sample are less in-depth than studies with small sample sizes. Patton (2002) notes the following:

> A researcher could study a specific set of experiences for a large number of people (seeking breadth) or a more open range of experiences for a smaller number of people (seeking depth). In-depth information from a small number of people can be very valuable, especially if the cases are information rich. Less depth from a larger number of people can be very helpful in exploring a phenomenon and trying to document diversity or understanding variation (Patton, 2002, pp. 244).

Ideally, I would have used every IEP that contained self-determination related skills for in-depth analysis because I was interested in discovering how self-determination goals and objectives differ for students with high-incidence disabilities as compared to students with low-incidence disabilities. First, I screened all IEPs (n = 482) for primary disability classification.

Of 482 IEPs, 348 of them (n = 348) included the student's primary disability label, and 247 of 348 IEPs included race/ethnicity categories (i.e., African American, Native American, Asian American, Latino and European American). I excluded IEPs (n = 134) without primary disability

labels from analysis. Of these 348 IEPs, 218 IEPs did not include keywords, operational definition or goals and objectives related to self-determination skills. One hundred and thirty ((*n* = 130) out of these 348 IEPs were with goals and objectives were explicitly related to self-determination, or key words and synonyms of self-determination being implicitly embedded in goals and objectives.

As per the agreement with the UW IRB, my access was limited; therefore, it was not feasible to capture disability labels from the other databases of Project Summer, and further to associate the captured disability category data with the de-identified IEPs. One action that I did take to justify my decision to exclude 45 out of 134 IEPs was to compare self-determination related goals and objectives in IEPs with disability labels to those without disability labels. In doing this, I found that redundancy or saturation would occur when comparing self-determination related goals and objectives in IEPs with disability labels to those without disability labels. In other words, patterns of goals and objectives repeatedly appeared on IEPs with and without missing disability label data. In qualitative literature, saturation is one criterion for purposeful sampling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Comparing IEPs with and without disability identification, I concluded that excluding IEPs with missing data would not affect the study results because the primary driver for the success of this study is the quality of self-determination related goals and objectives, and not the quantity of IEPs.

Per IRB requirements, all IEPs were redacted and saved in text-searchable PDF files. The IEPs were originally collected before the implementation of an intervention designed to increase students' employment experiences (A. Trainor, personal communication, November 21, 2013). In other words, goals and objectives listed in the IEP documents were not affected by intervention. The length of each IEP varies. Some of the IEPs are brief while others are quite

lengthy, and the number of pages for IEPs is between four to 88 pages. As the vast amount of IEP documents were collected by the Project Summer team, selecting a useful qualitative data analysis software program for systematic organization of data is critical because qualitative data management and analysis is a complex process dealing with a great deal of information.

Criteria for IEP Document Selection

For this project, I examined IEPs in order to study self-determination goals for adolescents with disabilities. Miller and Alvarado (2005) indicate that the selection of documents for content analysis is generally based on a representative or purposive sampling strategy. Criterion sampling, a type of purposeful sampling, was used for this study. Criterion sampling works under predetermined criteria of importance (Patton, 2002); hence, documents were selected via some critical characteristics.

IEP documents that were developed to guide secondary transition planning for students with high-incidence disabilities and low-incidence or severe disabilities were considered eligible for further examination. Hallahan and Kauffiman (1977) proposed a cross-categorical or non-categorical approach to teaching students with high-incidence disabilities (i.e., emotional and behavioral disorders [EBD], learning disabilities [LD], and mild intellectual disabilities [MID]). They indicated that students identified in any one of the three high-incidence categories shared similar academic and behavioral characteristics (Hallahan and Kauffiman, 1977). Low-incidence or severe disabilities include individuals who were identified as having a primary disability such as multiple disabilities, developmental disability [autism], and traumatic brain injury as well as individuals who were eligible for an alternative assessment. There were several reasons for using the disability label as one of my analytical variables: (a) self-determination related goals and objectives can be significantly different for students with high-incidence disabilities as

compared to those with severe disabilities; (b) the question of how self-determination relates to student disability was of interest to this study; and, (c) using the disability label as analytical variable in this study is aligned with the original research purpose of Project Summer.

In addition to coding for the primary disability label and goals and objectives, I also coded demographic variables include age (age-range 13 of to 21), gender, grade (including extended high school programs), race/ethnicity, and IEP participants. It is important to note that the names of IEP participants were de-identified, and I only collected information including position, title, or role for IEP team members. In addition to these variables, I coded annual goals and objectives for each IEP, and transition or postsecondary goals if postsecondary goals were stated in the IEPs.

To examine the extent to which selected IEPs contain transition-related goals and objectives pertaining to self-determination, appropriate IEP documents were selected based on their relevance to self-determination. I used intensity sampling to select relevant and "information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely but not extremely" (Creswell, 2007, p. 158). In the intensity sampling process, IEPs that included student primary disability diagnoses (n = 348) were examined for key words and operational definitions related to self-determination. To check for key words and operational definitions of self-determination in IEPs, I first brought up a search dialog in each of the IEP documents to scan for definition, synonyms, and phrases related to self-determination (see Appendix A). For non-computerized documents or handwritten IEPs where texts were not searchable, I read through each document and manually searched keywords, goals, and objectives for operational definitions and synonyms.

Operational definitions of self-determination and their synonyms came from widely accepted definitions suggested by well-known researchers in the area of self-determination (e.g.,

Wehmeyer, 1996; Field & Hoffman, 1994; Martin & Marshall, 1995). In addition to these operational definitions, I used words or phrases from curricula (e.g., Whose Future Is It Anyway? and Steps to Self-determination) that promote self-determination because these the most commonly used by programs promoting self-determination skills. IEP documents may provide information about student learning with respect to what curricula (e.g., academic subject areas, self-determination, and career development) are followed in order to reach the expected goals and objectives. Therefore, teachers are likely to choose words or phrases from these curricula when writing goals and objectives related to self-determination.

Two numbers (0, and 1) were used for initially coding the IEPs. If self-determination related skills were lacking in the transition planning process and IEP meetings, and nothing related to self-determination was documented in the IEPs, then the IEPs were coded as "zero;" this meant that students had either already mastered self-determination related skills or such skills were not expressed as a concern of the IEP team members. IEPs that were coded as zero were not considered for in-depth analysis. In contrast, I coded IEPs that contained keywords or operational definitions of self-determination as "one." If goals and objectives with keywords or operational definitions related to self-determination were found in a document, it meant that the IEPs goals and objectives were either explicitly or implicitly related to self-determination. Explicit goals are those that are easily identified and understood, or directly and clearly related to the operational definition of self-determination or self-determination component skills, whereas implicit goals do not expressly state the operational definition of self-determination or self-determination component skills. For example, one of the goals included in an IEP was written as, "[name of the student] will improve the ability to express himself and advocate for himself" [IEP 01-21-15]. This goal was coded as one because it contained a goal that was explicitly related to

self-determination component skills, such as learning to speak up for oneself and making one's own decisions (see Appendix B for coding sheet). Another example is an implicit statement from [IEP_04-19-16] that was written as, "Given a specified destination within the community [name of the student] will independently plan and execute the route using proper cane and safety techniques." Initially, this goal seemed not related to self-determination; however, this goal would require the student to learn self-determination component skills such as goal setting, self-monitoring, problem solving and self-instruction as so it was marked as one. Thus, implicit goals were identified through analyzing whether or not the skills stated in IEP goals and objectives were related to self-determination. When IEPs were coded as "one," these IEPs were also analyzed in in a second round to determine if and to what extent the goals and objectives adhered to either of the self-determination curricula-- *Whose future is it anyway*? and *Steps to Self-Determination*?

As for coding demographic variables, I also used search dialog and recorded demographic information in an Excel spreadsheet instead of creating a set of attributes in NVivo. I used Microsoft Excel for coding because the mass of IEP data can be coded easily and instantly. Moreover, Microsoft Excel can perform easily quick sorting, filtering to verify the data entered at the end of the process. The Excel spreadsheet was later uploaded to NVivo for analysis.

Data Management

Initially, all 482 IEPs were organized according to their school district. When redacting the IEPs, a six-digit number (e.g., IEP _01-21-15) was assigned to each document as a participant identification code representing district, number of IEP from a particular district, and age of the student.

The IRB does not allow redacted IEPs to be stored in a personal computer. Therefore, after I obtained IRB approval, two steps were taken to secure the documents. First, I installed Citrix Receiver, a free software program, onto my personal computer in order to use Winstat, a Windows Terminal Server farm. Second, I applied for an encrypted account from the Department of Social Science Computing Cooperative at the UW-Madison to use NVivo software through Wisntat. Winstat not only permitted me to access NVivo from Canada, but also provided me with a place to back-up the NVivo project for data analysis.

In the current study, all IEP documents were uploaded and stored into NVivo 10, which is a data management and analysis software for the organization and storage of qualitative data (Richards, 2005). NVivo software enabled me to tie the text of IEPs and analysis with linking, shaping, searching, and memoing while I was focusing on a specific coding strategy for the content of the reviewed IEP documents. This software program also allowed me to classify, sort, organize, and arrange the selected IEP documents in order to examine complex relationships among the data, such as through the use of tree map (Edhlund & McDougall, 2012), which demonstrate how the IEP goals and objectives are related to self-determination.

NVivo software provides a convenient way for researchers to systematically organize qualitative data, but NVivo does not provide the capability to interpret data (Creswell, 2007; Richards, 2005). My previous experiences in using NVivo involve taking a graduate-level course on data analysis, which prepared me for this work.

Data Analysis

Data analysis occurs in the process of collecting data and between data collection activities and phases (Merriam, 2009). As I worked with existing data collected by Project Summer, rudimentary analysis took place after I gained the approval to access and identify IEP

documents.

Document Analysis

The document analysis method is used by researchers for the systematic evaluation and interpretation of documents. Documents can be treated as data in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge of differences and connections among social phenomena (Bowen, 2009). Many analytic approaches have been suggested for qualitative interpretation of documents. In general, two major approaches have been used to analyze documents: content analytic strategies and context analytic strategies. Content and context analytic strategies can either be inductive or deductive, depending on how researchers analyze the data. When researchers use a philosophic approach (e.g., grounded theory) to look for key patterns and themes in a close study of texts, the resulting content analysis is inductive. However, sometimes a set of codes (e.g., patterns, categories, themes) derived from theory or prior knowledge is used to analyze content (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). This analytical approach is top-down, or deductive reasoning (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; LeCompte, & Schensul, 1999a). In the current study, IEP documents were treated as qualitative data that included content data (e.g., words, phrases, and sentences) and context data (e.g., identity, geographical, and time). Consequently, both content and context analysis approaches were utilized for interpretive procedures.

Researchers use content analytic approaches to analyze the documents as independent resources for understanding aspects of social practice and meaning (Miller & Alvarado, 2005). Content analysis in qualitative studies focuses on the information transmitted or conveyed. Content analysis "involves the simultaneous coding of raw data and the construction of categories that capture relevant characteristics of the document's content" (Merriam, 2009,

p.205). Some researchers (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Patton, 2002) consider content analysis as quantitative analysis, but others consider this a qualitative approach to analyzing text and searching texts for consistencies (e.g., recurring words, patterns, or themes). From a qualitative perspective, "content analysis is used to refer to any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings" (Patton, 2002, p. 453). On the other hand, content analysis may involve counts and percentages (Bernard & Ryan, 2010).

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) define qualitative content analysis as "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (p.1278). In order to use content analysis in a more systematic way for qualitative content analysis, they addressed three approaches (i.e., conventional, directive, and summative content analysis) that provide comprehensive procedures for developing an understanding of the meaning of text. Among three approaches, summative content analysis is relevant to this study. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) indicate that summative content analysis "starts with identifying and quantifying certain words or content text with the purpose of understanding the contextual use of the words or content" (p. 1283). They also mention that summative content analysis can be used in either a quantitative or qualitative way. When quantification is applied to content analysis, the purpose of quantification is to explore the usage rather than the inference of meaning of the particular words or content. However, if counting the frequency of specific words or content is the ultimate analytic goal, then the analysis is considered quantitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). A summative content analysis approach takes both word counts and the process of interpretation of content into consideration (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Using this analytical approach, I focused on

discovering the underlying meaning of the words and their frequencies. In performing word frequency counts, I focused on words with multiple meanings. For instance, the word "independent" could mean free from outside control, not depending on another's authority, to take initiative, or being able to do things by oneself. Also, frequency tables with self-determination component skills for students with high-incidence, and students with low-incidence are provided. To better understand IEP documents in relation to cultural practices, I also qualitatively analyzed IEP documents for themes and their recurring patterns**.** Furthermore, I considered applying a deductive analytical approach to choosing a set of concepts (e.g., self-determination components included in goals) and then to sorting out the data in terms of the categories or concepts into which they fit best (LeCompte, & Schensul, 1999a).

Context analysis strategies that view documents as socially situated elements are fundamentally ethnographic (Miller & Alvarado, 2005). Context analysis allows a researcher to have a holistic perspective about what things actually look like in their natural or cultural context (Patton, 2002). The context and ecological system are rich with clues for interpreting the cultural practice of writing IEPs. If we omit the importance of the context and ecological system, we would not be able to decipher the meaningfulness of self-determination goals and objectives that are incorporated in IEP documents. For this research, the context analysis I-undertook by studying the Wisconsin DPI website regarding the documents provided to educators for transition and IEPs planning. I used information -- such as, "A guide for writing IEPs, Opening doors to self-determination, and Sample special education forms" -- provided on the Internet by the Wisconsin DPI to help me understand the context and the cultural practices of IEPs in Wisconsin, what contents are supposed to be included in IEP documents, and how IEPs should look at the moment they are collected.

Coding Scheme for Self-Determination Component Skills

People who have mastered self-determination component skills (e.g., goal setting, problem solving, self-instruction and self-awareness) are believed to possess the essential characteristics (i.e., self-realization, self-regulation, autonomy and psychological empowerment) of self-determination (Wehmeyer, 1999). Perhaps, self-determination component skills are prerequisites as prior to these essential characteristics. For example, people who are self-realizing are aware of their own character, feelings, desires, strengths and weaknesses. As a result of accurate self-knowledge and self-understanding, people are able to advocate for views or interests. Hence, self-advocacy is the result of being self-determined instead of a skill that should be learned to reach the capacity of self-realization.

Self-determination is a broad and comprehensive concept that makes coding difficult and complicated. I adopted Wehemyer's 12 component skills of self-determination as major source to create a coding scheme (see Figure 3.1) that enabled me to shift through large volumes of IEP data with relative ease in a systematic fashion. This scheme not only allowed me to discover and describe the focus of each IEP goal and objectives but also served as an explicit principle for finding distinct concepts and categories regarding self-determination out of IEP goals and objectives to form the basic units of my analysis.

Coding

"Coding and analysis are not synonymous" (Basit, 2003, p. 145). Coding, which refers to data reduction by a system of labels or words, is one of the most critical aspects of qualitative data analysis (Richards, 2005). Unlike a linear process, coding is an iterative or recursive process that organizes and labels passages of text in all parts of a document, bringing them together in order to develop a topic for study (Richards, 2005). Coding is involved when assigning values to

the descriptive or inferential information complied during a study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). According to Saldaña (2012), the coding process involves "comparing data to data, data to code, code to code, code to category, category to category, category back to data" (p.45).

Coding requires a researcher have the ability to recognize slight differences in the data and to employ appropriate coding method(s) to manage qualitative data. Saldaña (2012) suggests two coding methods – the first cycle and second cycle methods – in his coding manual for qualitative researchers. He points out that the first cycle method involves simple and direct processes that happen during the initial coding of data. Saldaña (2012) selected seven coding approaches (grammatical, elemental, affective, literary and language, exploratory, procedural, and theming) for initial coding. For the second cycle coding methods, he suggests six coding approaches (pattern, focused, axial, theoretical, elaborative, and longitudinal coding) for reorganizing and reanalyzing data coded through the first cycle method.

Richards (2005) recommends three sorts of coding (descriptive, topical, and analytical coding) that can help researchers to easily retrieve specific pieces of data in qualitative research. To explore and discover themes and subthemes from the data systematically, all three types of coding are essential. According to Richards (2005), descriptive codes involve data about participants or the institutions being studied instead of interpretation regarding the data. Descriptive coding is used to store and highlight information regarding characteristics of the participants (e.g., disability type and/or gender). Topic coding, which involves labeling texts according to the subject or topic being studied, happens in the early stage of the coding process (Richards, 2005). Topic coding can be done by allocating passages to corresponding topics. For example, passages such as types of curricula or strategies for promoting self-determination, or related skills such as self-advocacy, autonomy, and self-regulation, can be allocated to the topic

of what is being included in the IEP documents regarding self-determination. "Analytical coding refers to coding that comes from interpretation and reflection on meaning" (Richards, 2005, p.94). At this level of coding, various techniques (e.g., clustering data or identifying metaphors) can be utilized to identify coded texts and create categories.

For coding the IEP documents, I mainly relied on Saldaña's manual for coding methods (2012), and Richard's (2005) coding processes for handling qualitative data because both provide explicit steps, examples, and instruction for novice qualitative researchers. I began data analysis with open coding (free node in NVivo) to identify any segment of data in the IEP documents that might be useful and relevant to the current study. The open coding or free node is the initial coding of data. This stage of coding may not generate specific types of codes or refined categories; instead, the researcher's first sight of IEP documents can generate codes or free nodes. In other words, each free node may have only minimal relationships with the others because data segments coded as free nodes do not comprise as much meaning in the context of the data.

Merriam (2009) indicates that "axial coding is the process of relating categories and properties to each other, refining the category scheme" (p. 200). Axial coding (the tree node in NVivo), which is often hierarchical in nature, is also known as theoretical coding, relational coding, or hierarchical coding. Once I began to notice relationships among free nodes, I progressed from open coding to axial coding by organizing free nodes into a tree node structure. Analytical reasoning, including both inductive and deductive reasoning, was utilized throughout the data coding process. I identified patterns, categories, and themes based on the "bottom up" approach, which is considered the item level of analysis (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999b). The inductive process was particularly important in allowing me to fully understand issues that had

not received much attention to that point, and to search for patterns that were revealed directly from the data. In contrast, LeCompte and Schensul (1999a; 1999b) indicate that researchers should build a coding system deductively from a theoretical framework. Thus, during the top-down (or deductive) coding process, I adopted transition areas for evaluating transition outcomes, as suggested by the Wisconsin DPI and Grigal et al. (1997) for open coding/free node. All free nodes were then categorized into three major transition outcomes (e.g., post-secondary education, employment, and independent living) for tree node/axial coding (see Appendix C for detail). Being engaged in the deductive coding process allowed me to start analyzing data based on previous research, my theoretical framework, and my own experiences. I continually combined the use of inductive and deductive processes that were couched in Saldaña's (2012) coding cycles and Richards' (2005) framework of coding (i.e., descriptive coding, topic coding, and analytical coding) for handling the IEP data. The Table 3.2 provides a brief summary of how IEP goals and objectives coding schema.

Quality Indicators in Document Selection and Analysis

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to ensuring that the research findings are credible and reflect the perspectives of participants and not solely those of the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Techniques (e.g., prolonged and substantial engagement in the field, peer review, member checks, triangulation of data from multiple data sources, and providing detailed descriptions) are suggested for use to enhancing trustworthiness (Creswell, 2007). Prolonged and substantial engagement in special education and research influences my values and insights into the dynamics of ecological self-determination issues. Unlike other types of data (e.g., observation and interviews), the IEP documents are pieces of evidence that directly illustrate the cultural

practices of writing IEPs. However, using existing private/confidential documents (i.e., IEP documents) that have been collected during the course of another study by other researchers required that I provide ample direct quotations and detailed descriptions from IEP documents to enhance overall the trustworthiness of my interpretations so that readers can have a clear picture of the original goals and plans of the actual IEPs.

Another common strategy for ensuring trustworthiness is a debriefing that involves ruling out the possibility of the researchers' biases and misinterpretations. To reduce the possibility of misinterpretation, I contacted the principal investigator who is familiar with the data sets and was in charge of the data collection process for Project Summer (E. Carter, personal communication, July, 21, 2014). In addition, I remained reflective and was continuously in consultation with my advisor, who has undertaken a great amount of qualitative research work, and who was also the co- principal investigator of Project Summer.

Peer review also enhances trustworthiness. I solicited feedback from my colleagues in the special education department, and I have extensively discussed the design and methodology of the study with peers. In addition, I engaged in a peer review process with colleagues and my dissertation committee members when selecting and analyzing IEP documents.

Objectivity

Objectivity is one of the important criteria for assessing rigor in qualitative research (Lincoln, 1995). Objectivity depends upon the thorough description of data collection and analysis procedures to minimize the influence of a researcher's judgment and biases (Martens & McLaughlin, 2004). Although I realize that qualitative research and analytical processes may never be absolutely objective, I have tried to meet this criterion for rigor by providing detailed information regarding all my methodological procedures, processes, and protocols in the

methods section. In addition, strategies for how I address quality indicators (e.g., credibility and trustworthiness) in data collection and analysis have also been provided. I believe these sections have addressed any objectivity issues in my study.

Researcher as Instrument

Three issues that ensure credibility of qualitative research are "rigorous methods, credibility of the researcher, and philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry" (Patton, 2002, p.552-553). To ensure that my study meets these standards, I have studied the work of experts in qualitative research and focused on self-determination, document analysis, and related fields in order to understand and familiarize myself with strategies for identifying guidelines, principles, and frameworks over the years. Additionally, I have previous experience utilizing the document analysis method to explore curricula that promotes self-determination.

A researcher's disposition or bias may compromise researcher credibility. One way that I addressed this issue was to remain cognizant of my role as a researcher. Patton (2002) suggests that researchers should be aware of and explicit about their own dispositions. I have seen a variety of curricula and strategies that promote self-determination, and I have also learned from literature and my experience regarding what types of goals and objectives should be incorporated into students' actual IEPs. By realizing my dispositions, I hope that I have brought various perspectives and more holistic thinking to the study.

A researcher's experience also affects researcher credibility. Merriam (2009) points out that an investigator's skills and intuition are instruments to be used in interpreting data from documents. As Stake (1995) argues:

> One of the principal qualifications of qualitative researchers is experiences. Added to the experience of ordinary looking and thinking, the experience of the qualitative

> research is one of knowing what leads to significant understanding, recognizing good sources of data, and consciously and unconsciously testing out the veracity of their eyes and robustness of their interpretations. It requires sensitivity and skepticism. Much of this methodological knowledge and personality come from hard work under the critical examination of colleagues and mentors. (pp. 45-50)

The credibility of my qualitative inquiry has been bolstered by taking qualitative research courses during my program of study and by my participation in an intensive doctoral research program. I consider myself a novice researcher, but I have gained valuable qualitative research experience and skills by working with knowledgeable mentors including my academic advisor, who is an expert in the field of qualitative research. Participating in different phases of qualitative research projects, including research design, data collection, data analysis, and manuscript writing, has further enhanced my understanding of the research process. All of these transferrable research skills have been put to use in developing and implementing this study. In addition to qualitative research experiences, I earned my bachelor and master's degree in special education, with an emphasis on learning how to develop an effective IEP for students with disabilities. Although I have never had the opportunity to develop IEPs for students in the U.S., I have had the opportunity to apply the skills that I learned in the U.S. to developing IEPs for students with disabilities in my home country of Taiwan.

Procedures for Approval

Approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Wisconsin-Madison was obtained by the principal investigators prior to data collection in the original study in 2006. For the analysis of data collected in the primary study, another IRB approval was required. For the purpose of protecting confidentiality, all IEP documents were redacted

following the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) guidelines (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). FERPA regulates what students' identifiable personal information should be kept confidential in order to lower the risk of being identified by the public. FERPA addresses the scope of personally identifiable information by including seven guidelines: (a) the student's name; (b) the names of guardians or family members; (c) the address of the student's residence; (d) personal identification numbers; (e) indirect identifiers (e.g., social security number, student number or biometric record); (f) other information that, by itself or combined with other attributes, is connected to or likely to connect with a specific student; and, (g) information inquired by a person who an agency of education or institution has the reason to believe knows the background of the student to which the education record relates.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

This chapter presents this study's findings from an analysis of IEP goals and objectives related to self-determination from 482 secondary students from Wisconsin. The investigation of these documents for goals and objectives was guided by three specific research questions:

1. How do IEP goals and objectives address self-determination?
2. How closely do IEP goals and objectives adhere to the dominant model of self-determination as operationalized and illustrated in two widely used curricula, *Steps to Self-Determination and Whose future is it anyway?*
3. How do self-determination goals and objectives differ for students with high-incidence disabilities when compared to those students with low-incidence disabilities?

Of the 482 IEPs screened for primary disability diagnosis, a total of 348 IEPs were eventually used for this study because many of the IEPs (n = 134) did not include primary disability labels. The results of this analysis are divided into two sections. The first section presents the numerical results of the analysis including demographic information, and a number of goals and objectives containing component skills of self-determination. I also contextualize my findings in evidence from the Wisconsin DPI website that contains publicly available information for schools, educators, parents and students. The information I gleaned from the Wisconsin DPI included a teacher's guide for writing IEPs, outlines for teaching self-determination, and sample special education forms. This contextual information allowed me to understand what was required on Wisconsin's IEPs during the time period of my study. Results that are provided in the first section address the first research question, which asks how IEP

goals and objectives address self-determination. The second section offers the results of in-depth analysis of self-determination related goals and objectives. In this section, I report results that correspond to the second and third research questions, and provided direct quotes from IEP goals and objectives. In addition to direct quotes, I present the frequency results for those IEPs that included goals and objectives pertaining to self-determination for student with high-incidence and students with low-incidence disabilities. In the next chapter, I present a holistic understanding of the findings by connecting major themes with the existing literature.

Demographics Gathered from IEPs

After screening IEPs for primary disability labels, 348 out of 482 IEPs were selected for this study. Of the 348 IEPs selected, approximately 66% (n = 231) were identified as having high-incidence disabilities (i.e., CD, EBD, LD), and the remaining 34% (n = 117) were identified with a low-incidence disabilities. Approximately 39% (n = 134) of the total sample of IEPs were developed for female students with disabilities, and 61% (n = 214) of IEPs were developed for male students with disabilities. In terms of race and ethnicity, the majority of IEPs were written for European American students with disabilities, while a few IEPs were developed for students of other races and ethnicities (see Table 2). These IEPs were developed for students ranging in age from 13 to 22 years (M = 17.3). Two percent (n = 8) of IEPs were developed for students in grades six to eight. About 14% (n = 50) of IEPs were developed for students in 9th grade; 23% (n = 80) were developed for students in 10th grade; 28% (n = 97) were written for students in 11^{th,} grade; 29% (n = 100) were written for students in 12th grade; and 2% (n = 7) were written for students in extended programs. The remaining 2% (n = 6) of IEPs did not include the student's grade level.

Table 4.1

Participants' Race/Ethnicity as Documented on IEPs

Race/Ethnicity	Numbers (*n*)	Percentage (%)
African American	9	3
Native American	1	.002
Asian American	4	1
Latino	5	1
European American	228	66
Missing Data	101	29

The Wisconsin DPI is an important environmental context for understanding IEPs that were collected and used in this study because the required components for the IEP forms from Wisconsin DPI influenced how school districts in the state of Wisconsin designed their IEPs. Moreover, the IEP forms suggested by the Wisconsin DPI have affected the sampling strategy I took for the current study. Among all IEP related forms provided by the Wisconsin DPI, the evaluation report and IEP cover sheet form that includes a student's personal information (e.g., primary disability diagnosis, race/ethnicity, age, gender and grade levels) was most influential to the sampling. The evaluation report and IEP cover sheet provided by the Wisconsin DPI did not include a column for primary disability diagnosis. A majority of school districts (n = 21) did not include a column for the primary disability label in the IEP evaluation report and IEP cover sheet. Primary disability diagnosis, race and ethnicity were seldom mentioned in the IEPs although race and ethnicity is one of the most basic participant information that researchers are required to report, and primary disability diagnosis is key information needed in the development

of IEPs. The format and design of the IEP cover sheet from the Wisconsin DPI could contribute to the missing race/ethnicity. The evaluation report and IEP cover sheet included a column for parents to identify their race/ethnicity; however, this column was an optional to parents. Of these 28 school districts which included the evaluation report and IEP cover sheet from in students' IEPs, only one school district required parents to identify their race and ethnicity. As I mentioned in Chapter Three, I intended to use information (i.e., a guide for writing IEPs, opening doors to self-determination, and sample special education forms) provided in the Wisconsin DPI as a means for reflecting on the data and for situating my analysis in my theoretical framework. However, I was only able to use sample special education forms for analysis because "a guide for writing the IEP" was drafted in 2010, and "opening doors to self-determination" was not available until 2013. These guidelines did not exist when my data group of IEPs was developed, so it would be illogical to use them for analysis.

Documentation of Self-Determination

As stated in the methods chapter, I used a coding system to document the extent to which IEPs contained goals and objectives reflective of self-determination. This was done in order to interrogate the premise of the first research question, which asks how IEP goals and objectives address self-determination. As I described in detail in Chapter 3, I used a numerical coding system where a score of 0 indicated an IEP containing no goals and objectives related to self-determination. A score of 1 indicated IEP goals and objectives including keywords or synonyms for self-determination in alignment with the aforementioned curricula, and a score of 1 also represented goals and objectives that were explicitly or implicitly related to self-determination component skills. Goals and objectives that were explicitly related to self-determination were goals that directly address self-determination skills. Contrastingly, goals and objectives were

considered embedded or implicitly related to self-determination when containing synonyms or key words of self-determination to connect goals with other targeted behaviors (e.g., academics, safety skills and daily living skills) or transition areas (e.g., employment, post-secondary education and adult living).

The total sample of 348 IEPs resulted in 218 (63%) zero-coded IEPs, meaning that self-determination concepts were not reflected in these documents. One hundred and thirty (27%) of IEPs that were either explicitly or implicitly related to self-determination in goals and objectives that contain key words included in the operational definitions or self-determination component skills (e.g., choice-making, preference and interests, independence and self-awareness) as identified in Chapter Three. Table 4. 2 provides detailed information on the results for coding on IEPs.

Table 4. 2

Results for Coding on IEPs

IEPs	Number of IEPs (n = 348)	Low-incidence (n = 117)	High- incidence (n = 231)
Without goals and objectives related to key words and synonyms of self-determination	218 (63%)	65 (56%)	153 (66%)
With goals and objectives explicitly and implicitly related to self-determination (e.g., key words and synonyms of self-determination)	130 (37%)	52 (44%)	78 (34%)

Note. The number of IEPs for high-incidence (n =231) and low-incidence (n = 117) were based on the results of screening for primary disability labels. IEPs without disability identification were not included at this stage in analysis.

IEP goals and objectives reflect the IEP team decisions and their underlying values of students with disabilities in a particular year. Interestingly, 63% of IEPs did not include self-determination related goals and objectives for students with disabilities. This result did not only reveal that self-determination was not a targeted set of knowledge and skills by the IEP team of those 218 students, but the result also shows IEP team members' value and knowledge regarding self-determination component skills. Teachers' ability and understanding regarding how to address self-determination in goals and objectives may also be the factor that contributed to the result. There were thirty-seven percent (n = 130) of IEPs keywords or synonyms of self-determination. Many component skills of self-determination (e.g., choice making, decision making and goal setting) were embedded in the IEP goals and objectives while some learning results of self-determination (e.g., independence and self-advocacy) could also be found in the IEP goals and objectives.

Explicit and Implicit Goals and Objectives

Although the goals and objectives addressed in the IEPs were clearly related to self-determination skills, many of these skills were implicitly related to the component skills of self-determination. *Implicit related to self-determination* is a phrase I use to describe a goal statement that is not expressly or unambiguously stated with keywords, synonyms or component skills of self-determination. To answer the first research question interrogating how the IEP goals and objectives address self-determination, I sought to analyze the IEP goals and objectives that promote self-determination. I examined which component skills of self-determination were incorporated in the selected IEPs, and how goals and objectives were associated with self-determination skills. The results and examples I provided are focused on **(**a**)** explicit relationship between goals and self-determination skills, (b) component skills of self-determination that were implicitly embedded in IEP goals and objectives, and (c) goals and objectives that addressed the learning results of self-determination (e.g., independence, self-advocacy, self-management and self-efficacy). .

When IEP goals and objectives specifically address self-determination, these goals and objectives are explicitly in response to functional priorities and concerns of self-determination. The following IEP was an exception to this generalization, providing an example of targeted self-determination. This made it stand out from all of the IEPs that were reviewed.

> [Name of the student] will improve her self-advocacy and self-determination skills for greater independence in the home and community by meeting 3 out of 4 of the following objectives.

[Name of the student] will identify to her special education teacher or other adult: her ability, strategies for overcoming/compensating her disability and accommodation needed a minimum of 1 time per term.

[Name of the student] will advocate for her own needs and desires in 4 out of 5 opportunities

[Name of the student] will assess her strengths, skills and interests to identify 3 careers/jobs that may be appropriate for her and 3 careers/jobs that would not be appropriate. [IEP_13-05-16]

This goal was well developed to promote self-determination because all objectives are tied directly to the goal statement. The objectives under this goal addressed self-determination related skills such as self-advocacy and self-realization (e.g., self-evaluation, knowing strengths, skills and interests).

Some annual goals did not use the language that specifies exactly what the student should accomplish therefore I used the word *implicit* to address this phenomenon. The following examples illustrated goals that require more thoughtfulness when identifying what component skills of self-determination were addressing.

[Name of the student] will independently let employers know of absence and changes in schedule 100% of the time. [IEP_03-03-19]

Use a graphic organizer (web, outline, etc), computer; and other methods to independently complete a writing assignment with a clear beginning, middle, and end, including supporting details, with additional editing from an adult. [IEP_04-24-16]

"The student will independently let employers know of absence and changes in schedule 100% of the time" could be interpreted to mean that the student would take initiative to let employers know when his/her would-be absence or he/she had changes in the work schedule. This goal could promote self-advocacy as well as problem solving skills. The second goal (i.e., IEP_04-24-16) was tied to skills such as self-instruction and possibly self-monitoring because using a graphic organizer and computer require the student's ability in these skills. The following table provides examples and reasons on why IEP goals and objectives were categorized as explicit or implicit).

Table 4.3

Annotations on Explicit and Implicit IEP Goals and Objectives

IEP Goals and Objectives	Reasons to be Explicit or Implicit
[Name of the student] will demonstrate functional independence through food preparation from buying the items, cooking, giving direction. [IEP_05-52-19]	This is an implicit goal although it contains the key word "independence." Self-determination component skills embedded in this goal may include self-instruction, self-monitoring, and problem solving.
[Name of the student] will increase his self-advocacy skills by informing adults when harassment occurs 100% of the time. [IEP_05-06-15].	This is an explicit goal that is focused on self-advocacy.

IEP Goals and Objectives Addressing Self-Determination

Choice-Making

Choice-making is another important self-determination related skill that teachers expected their students to master. Two goal statements related to choice-making are provided in the following IEPs. Both goal statements from the IEP_07-03-19 emphasize making appropriate choices among predetermined options (i.e., extracurricular activities outside of school).

> [Name of the student] will make appropriate choices based on her surroundings and situation in the community in 3 of 4 trials. [IEP_07-03-19]

> [Name of the student] will make an appropriate choice among several options of behaving in 3 of 4 trials. [IEP_07-03-19]

The IEP goals and objectives that promote choice making skills should involve teaching students to identify interests and preferences and then appropriately making a choice, or to ask a question like "Where is he/she from?" and then make a choice based on his/her identity, cultural value and background. The above two quotes first appeared to me that the student was being directed to selecting an option based on what the teachers were able to offer, however, the goals presented in the quotes could also imply that making a choice is to reflect one's cultural values and preferences.

Preference and Interest

Letting students with disabilities express their preferences and interests is essential to maximizing their own potential. Many IEP goals that took students' preferences and interests into consideration focused on careers and post-secondary education. The following statements were provided as examples for understanding how students' preferences and interests were incorporated into the IEPs.

> [Name of the student] will continue to develop vocational readiness and self-advocacy skills, as he explores/develops his vocational interests, aptitude and work related values in the field of auto mechanics. [IEP_01-20-20]

> Giving three vocational tasks; [name of the student] will independently choose the task of preference 4 out of 5 opportunities, and will assess her strengths, skills and interests to identify 3 careers/jobs that may be appropriate for her and 3 careers/jobs that would not be appropriate. [IEP_06-17-18]

> [Name of the student] will identify the pre-requisites required for post-secondary education and/or training needed for careers he has expressed interest in. [IEP_13-05-16]

Although self-advocacy skills were promoted in IEP_01-20-20, more than one of the self - determination component skills were combined in a single goal statement**.**

Problem Solving

Based on the current classification schema, many of the IEP goals and objectives were found addressing problem skills explicitly or implicitly. The following goal (e.g., [IEP_11-07-17]) provides an example on how problem solving skills were explicitly incorporated.

> [Name of the student] will attempt to solve a problem independently and then ask for help 75% of the time. [IEP_11-07-17]

Problem solving skills could contribute to an individual being more self-determined. An individual who are able to work through a problem and find or choose the solution is self-determined. The execution of problem solving includes decision making. Conversely, decision making requires problem solving to a certain degree. Therefore, multiple targeted behaviors were sometimes mixed in one statement. For example, the following goal mixed decision making and problem solving in the statement to guide the employment and homework activities.

> [Name of the student] will apply decision making and problem solving techniques in workplace situations with 80% accuracy as measured by work site evaluations. [IEP_22-02-19]

> [Name of the student] will demonstrate effective decision-making and problem solving skills by breaking down long term projects into manageable steps and handing in 90% of projects and assignments on time. [IEP_06-33-18]

Goals and Objectives Implicitly Related to Self-determination

In addition to the goals and objectives including key words or synonyms that were easily to be identified, self-determination related skills were also implicitly embedded in IEP goals and objectives. Taking the following goal as an example, "looking both ways and crossing at a corner" and "locating and paying for the items" were critical situation that require problem solving skills, however, these phrases did not include key words or synonyms that related to self-determination. Locating and paying for the items requires self-instruction skill that is one of the valuable skills to self-determination because students who learned self-instruction skills know how to decide to plan, act, evaluate, and revise plans as needed. The IEP goal was written as:

> [Name of the student] will increase her community skills by crossing the street safely, looking both ways and crossing at a corner, riding the city bus independently giving the driver her ticket, and using a picture shopping list, locating and paying for the items with no more than a verbal prompts. [IEP_10-16-17]

The IEP statements IEP_04-11-17 and IEP_04-24-16 from the following are identical, and the words "assist teacher" used in both statements may first seemed inappropriate because the teacher became the one who needed help and these students with disabilities became the ones who developed their own learning tasks. However, we know that people who help create and then implement their own adaptations are more likely to use their adaptations. Students' participation in developing and implementing compensatory strategies may require self-

assessment, self-management of antecedents, and possibly self-advocacy. Also the word "independently" refers to implementation of the self-instruction strategies.

> [Name of the student] will assist teachers in developing and implementing compensatory strategies to use independently to increase language skills and to reduce stress level with one cue or less. [IEP_04-11-17]

> [Name of the student] will assist teachers in developing and implementing compensatory strategies to use independently to increase language skills. [IEP_04-24-16]

Often, teachers appear to use the word "independent" for IEP goals and objectives in order to convey the student's capability of performing certain tasks without others' help. When the word "independent" was used in the goals and objectives concerning the student's capability of performing certain tasks without help, then the goals and objectives were implicitly related to self-determination. The following goals and objectives possibly reflect using self-instruction and self-monitoring skills.

> [Name of the student] will be able to independently write a 5 paragraph essay as measured by successful completion of the 10th grade practice writing assessment. [IEP_24-01-14]

Results of Being Self-Determined

Students with disabilities may range in their understanding of skills related to self-determination. In other words, some students may be learning strategies that lead to self-determined behavior while others are self-determined by demonstrating their capacity in self-advocacy, self-management, independence and self-efficacy.

Self-advocacy

SELF-DETERMINATION RELATED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals and objectives for self-advocacy in most IEPs were focused on improving a student's ability to communicate needs, convey feelings, negotiate or assert his or her desires or interests, and disclose his or her disabilities. Except self-advocacy, these IEPs could also be embedded self-determination related skills such as decision making, expressing preferences and interests, self-regulating, and problem solving. The following data are examples of goals and objectives that explicitly address self-advocacy, a result of self-determination.

> [Name of student] will increase her self-advocacy skills by sticking up for herself and letting people know she is uncomfortable in situations 5 out of 5 times. [IEP_10-05-14]

> In order to enhance his self-advocacy skills and to provide understanding to staff who work with him, [name of the student] will disclose the characteristics of his disability, communicate his learning style and list his academic needs and accommodations by participating in formal meetings with at least 2 teachers (one familiar; one unfamiliar) prior to being in their classes. [IEP_05-25-18]

> Advocate for social needs by asking for help when needed in 90% of situations. [IEP_04-24-16]

> Self-advocate for support when struggling with understanding concepts. [IEP_11-12-16]

> In order to enhance his self-advocacy skills and to provide understanding to staff who work with him, [name of the student] will disclose the characteristics of his disability, communicate his learning style and list his academic needs and accommodations by participating in formal meetings with at least 2 teachers (one familiar; one unfamiliar) prior to being in their classes. [IEP_05-25-18]

While some of these are focused on social situations, self-advocacy is also evidenced in IEP goals and objectives that address academics related expectations. In other words, students were expected to learn to use self-advocacy skills to help themselves to complete the standards and benchmarks related to the program through the participation in general curriculum and the meeting of deadlines. The following goal statement illustrates this expectation:

> [Name of the student] will continue to participate in the general education curriculum for all subject areas while demonstrating self-advocacy skills 90% of the time; asking his general education teachers and case manager for assistance and continuing to use the Content Mastery Center on an independent basis. [IEP_16-05-19]

Goals addressed in IEPs with self-advocacy related language prompted the student to get involved in reading, writing, completing homework assignments, and to improve on spelling and pronunciation. Through participating in the general education curriculum, the student from the above quote might master self-awareness and self-evaluation skills through academics. In addition to academics, other annual goals and short-term objectives were developed to promote self-advocacy skills through variety of daily activities.

Self-Regulation

Only two of IEPs clearly indicated that their goals were developed to promote self-regulation. As the first IEP was focused on self-regulation, several self-management strategies such as self-scheduling and planning, self-instruction and self-monitoring might be included in the IEP for the student.

> [Name of the student] will increase tolerance to stimuli and develop self-regulation skills 80% of the time [IEP_24-03-17].

SELF-DETERMINATION RELATED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In IEP_27-05-15, the teacher expected the student to demonstrate improvement in self-regulation strategies as specified and measured by four objectives corresponding to the annual goal of promoting self-regulation.

> When prompted, [name of the student] will demonstrate an ability to understand his own sensory needs as evidenced by selecting an appropriate calming activity when experiencing anxiety 8 out of 10 times.
>
> [Name of the student] will demonstrate increased awareness of the emotions of others as evidenced by sorting facial expression pictures correctly according to angry, frustrated, worried, and confused with 80% accuracy.
>
> [Name of the student] will successfully utilize a visual schedule, scripting, break card, social stories and sensory diet to maintain a calm state throughout his school day as evidenced by limited occurrence of behavioral overreaction.
>
> [Name of the student] will demonstrate an increased awareness of the impact of his behavior upon others as evidenced by his ability to correctly respond to "When I _____. _____ might _____," With fading of prompting over time. Initial prompting will be verbal and visual fading to gestural cue by June.

This IEP goal was explicitly targeting self-regulation. All four objectives developed for this particular goal were related to characteristics of self-determined action although none of each objective explicitly indicated self-regulation. The first two objectives enabled the individual student to learn accurate self-knowledge, solve problem, and make decisions regarding his preferences. In order to obtain the outcomes addressed in these two objectives, self-evaluation,

and self-management strategies (e.g., self-monitoring and self-instruction) were embedded in the last two objectives.

IEP goals and objectives that mixed multiple target skills with self-regulating were very common in this review of IEPs. Although the key word "self-regulation" was not mentioned, self-management related skills were explicitly or implicitly embedded in the following goals. For example, the following goal from the [IEP_05-01-15] is tied to skills such as self- management, self-monitoring and self-instruction because the objectives such as homework, staying on task, or finding a job require the student's ability in decision making, problem solving and planning. The second IEP focused on several self-management skills such as self-scheduling/planning, self-instruction and self-monitoring.

> [Name of the student] will increase his self-advocacy to an age-appropriate level to aid in transition by completing the below objectives (i.e., homework, stay on task, study for tests, apply, interview for a student custodial job during the school year). [IEP_05-01-15]

> [Name of the student] will increase her independence in organizing and completing class work. [IEP_11-07-17]

Autonomy

"Independent" (and independence/independently) is a commonly used word in IEPs. The word "independent" consists of multiple meanings and was frequently used in the IEPs. Using a word frequency query in NVivo, I found that the words "independent," "independence," and "independently" appeared 101 times in 130 IEPs that were coded as implicitly or explicitly related to self-determination. While the meaning of "independence" in some IEPs mapped onto self-determination, some of them did not. When the word "independent" did not connect to or

parallel with the component skills of self-determination, then self-determination was not the target skill in question. For example, the following goals and objectives stated in IEP_03-03-19 and IEP_07-13-19 were not associated with the component skills of self-determination. For example,

> [Name of the student] will increase her independent reading to level 4 on an informal reading inventory. [IEP_03-03-19]
>
> [Name of the student] will increase her independence level by volunteering in the community once per quarter. [IEP_07-13-19]

The goal addressed in IEP_03-03-19 contained the word "independent," but this goal was intended to improve the student's target skills in reading instead of developing independence. In terms of the goal statement IEP_07-13-19, I suspected how independence was related to volunteering. The ambiguousness of the language made this goal statement less likely to be linked with self-determination related skills. This goal, however, could be promoting some important skills including decision making, planning and possibly self-monitoring.

The use of "independent" sometimes is referred to an individual taking initiative for his or her action without others' influence or control, aligning with Wehmeyer's (1997) definition of self-determination. The coming IEPs were likely to be developed to promote students' ability in taking greater control over and responsibility for their learning, and becoming causal agents in their lives. Several IEPs goals and objectives in the following examples provided evidence of this usage of "independent" related skills.

> Utilizing the city bus system, [name of the student] will independently plan and execute simple bus routes to specified destinations. [IEP_04-19-16]

> [Name of the student] will increase his independence by knowing if an assignment was given in Economics class and seeking out the information from peers and/or teachers. [IEP_15-09-18]
>
> [Name of the student] will identify one destination of personal interest to which he will travel independently outside of school hours or mobility lesson time at least once every two months. [Name of the student] will increase his independent mobility through interactions with the community, using his cane, remaining senses, and appropriate assistance as measured by anecdotal record. Given the opportunity, [name of the student] will independently initiate a conversation with a peer 70% of the time. Given the opportunity, [name of the student] will independently take up to 6 turns within a conversation 70% of the time. [IEP_05-43-17]
>
> After high school, I will live independently in an apartment style living situation. [IEP_16-01-15]
>
> Following graduation, I will live independently in my own apartment. [IEP_05-41-17]

Although self-determination component skills were not explicitly stated, these goals could include skills such as self-instruction, self-monitoring, problem solving, self-instruction, and goal setting (e.g., IEP_16-01-15 and IEP_05-43-17).

In addition to behavioral autonomy, the word “independent” was also referred to a student moves from being largely dependent upon others’ support to being independent that is a process of which the student learn or become self-determined. Thus the word of “independent” was also used in reference to daily living and independent living. The following IEPs included

the goal for independence as a significant characteristic a student would need to improve his/her ability for self-determination in everyday life. For example,

> [Name of the student] will increase his independent performance of self-help skills in the areas of eating, teethbrushing, grooming, dressing, toileting and mobility as measured by mastering a minimum of 4 out of 6 short term objectives. [IEP_10-01-17]
>
> [Name of the student] will increase his independent living skills to a level of understanding basic needs to live independently- to include hygiene. [IEP_03-10-17]

The goal statements presented here were focused on daily living or life skills. The IEP_10-01-17 and IEP_ 03-10-17 (i.e., self-help skills and hygiene) given here could be focusing on the self-determination related skills such as self-monitoring, problem solving and self-instruction. These two students were expected to progress from dependence to independence rather than to learn basic life and living skills because skills such as cooking that typically lead to more self-determination could be included in teaching skills like managing picture recipe cards in these areas.

Goals and Objectives Related to Transition Areas

To prepare students with disabilities for future environments and post-school life, goals and objectives were related to the component skills of self-determination accentuated transition areas including academics, employment, basic life and living skills, postsecondary education, leisure/recreation, and transportation. IEP goals and objectives that focus on student's self-determination related skills, and strengths and levels of independence in academics may enhance students' full potential for self-fulfillment and meaningful participation in secondary schools and society. Hence, self-determination was often integrated into IEP goals and objectives for

different subject areas and transition domains. Recognizing the contributions of self-determination to transition outcomes for secondary school students with disabilities, I organized IEP goals and objectives by frequency counts of transition domains to provide some insights into the first research question: How do the IEP goals address self-determination?

The next section provides information on the total number of IEP goals and objective in relation to self-determination and transition domains and examples on how IEP goals and objectives in relation to self-determination are embedded in academic subject areas and transition domains.

Table 4.4

Numbers of Goals and Objectives Related to Self-determination in Transition Areas

Transition Areas	Number of Goals and Objectives
Academics	43
Daily Living/ Life skills	69
Employment	18
Post-secondary education	3
Transportation	3

Note. These results were based on the 130 IEPs that were identified with explicitly and implicitly goals and objectives related to self-determination.

Academics

Self-determination within functional academic goals is important to student with disabilities. Twenty-five percent (n = 33) of IEPs that contained self-determination related goals

and objectives addressed academics. The academics-focused goals were often associated with self-regulation (e.g., self-instruction and self-monitoring), independence, and self-advocacy intended to improve a student's deficient subject areas such as language arts, computer usage, and general curricula. The following statements (i.e., IEP_04-24-16 and IEP_05-43-17) brought out what teachers expected their students to improve in reading and writing ability by demonstrating self-determination component skills such as self-instruction and possibly self-monitoring skills.

> Use a graphic organizer (web, outline, etc), computer; and other methods to independently complete a writing assignment with a clear beginning, middle, and end, including supporting details, with additional editing from an adult. [IEP_04-24-16]

> Upon instruction, [name of the student] will independently write up to 3 paragraphs on topic using age appropriate grammar. Upon instruction, [name of the student] will independently use new vocabulary correctly in sentences with 80% accuracy. [IEP_05-43-17]

Employment

Approximately ten percent (n = 17) of the IEPs had goals and objectives related to employment. Goals and objectives related to a career or job are essential components in IEPs as employment for students with disabilities is one of the desirable postsecondary outcomes. Employment-related goals and objectives which are intended to uncover the student's aptitude for employment and work in a supported employment setting were often implicitly addressed as self-determination related skills.

> [Name of the student] will travel and find employment to live independently in the areas he travels. [IEP_01-05-16]
>
> After high school, I will work independently with others in a sheltered employment setting to complete job tasks. [IEP_05-55-20]
>
> [Name of the student] will independently complete a job application by supplying personal information in the appropriate spaces 5/5 trials. [IEP_12-21-16]

The above examples indicated that students with disabilities were expected to independently complete their work and follow workplace rules, as well as to complete a job application. Skills required for completing a job application were different from writing a paragraph for class assignments or projects because completing a job application may require the student to carefully read through the application forms for which he or she was applying, and fill out the application form by following all instructions that were given. These three examples reflect skills including goal setting, problem solving, decision making, choice making, self-evaluation and self-awareness.

Goals for employment focused on enhancing students' ability to work independently. Both informing employers of absences, and completing work under minimal direction and supervision also appeared in some IEPs as goals and objectives related to employment. The following goals that include self-determination component skills (e.g., problem solving, self-advocacy, self-assessment) state that:

> [Name of the student] will identify changes in a routine and ask for help if needed 85% of the time. [IEP_01-26-19]

[Name of the student] will demonstrate self-advocacy at work. [IEP_06-29-19]

Basic Life and Living Skills

Forty-five percent (n = 59) of IEPs included goals and objectives related to students' life/living skills. Students with disabilities were expected to learn life and living skills (e.g., maintaining hygiene, buttoning jeans, and preparing food) and to increase them to a level of understanding for independent living. IEP goals and objectives included various life and living skills because each student's needs and abilities are different. A couple of the selected IEPs included the following benchmarks for increasing the student's basic life and living skills by

> (a) preparing a simple food without assistance twice per week, (b) carrying out, without assistance, what she needs to do when she feels "fuzzy" that is (1) check her blood sugar level; (2) report the level to adult; (3) with necessary food or beverage as needed for blood sugar level, and (c) will create a list of physical activities that she likes and can perform for 20-30 minutes independently. [IEP_13-02-20]

> (a) identifying money amounts, make change, count money using all coins and dollar bills, (b) gaining skills in consumer math including check writing so he will become more independent at school, home and out in the community with 75% accuracy. [IEP_15-07-17]

These benchmarks implied some of the important skills that related to self-determination. For instance, the benchmark (a) from the IEP_13-02-20 might include self-instruction, and the benchmark (b) self-assessment, problem solving, self-instruction and decision making. The benchmarks included in the IEP_15-07-17 might incorporate skills such as self-instruction and problem solving.

Postsecondary Education

Postsecondary education is one of the major transition outcomes for students with disabilities, yet only 2% of IEPs (n = 3) indicated that goals and objectives were addressing self-determination related skills to promote postsecondary education outcomes. The following statements implied that self-determination component skills such as self-instruction, self-assessment, decision making, self-awareness and possibly self-advocacy and problem solving were the major skills to these students.

> [Name of the student] will utilize the guidance office to explore both 2-year and 4-year education opportunities after high school. [IEP_01-21-15]

> [Name of the student] will explore the entrance requirements and program requirements of at least one post-secondary institution of his choice and complete the necessary application materials. [IEP_06-18-18]

> [Name of the student] will be able to describe disability and post-secondary needs. [IEP_06-33-18]

Transportation

Being able to move freely and easily between places is vital to access opportunities for employment, education, and community life. Individuals with disabilities, however, often encounter a barrier to their mobility. Approximately 2% (n = 3) of IEP goals and objective were developed to enhance the student's capability and performance in mobility. The following IEPs, which focused on goals and objectives in relation to transition domains, provided some basic understanding on what skills related to self-determination were incorporated.

[Name of the student] will increase her community skills by crossing the street safely. Looking both ways and crossing at a corner, riding the city bus independently giving the driver her ticket. [IEP_10-16-17]

[Name of the student] will use public transportation independently with no more than one prompt per area. [IEP_05-52-19]

[Name of the student] will demonstrate increased daily living skills include dependently boarding public transportation, giving the driver a ticket, sitting, and pulling the cord at the appropriate time to exit the bus. [IEP_06-17-18]

Taking the previous goals and objectives as examples (i.e., IEP_10-16-17 and IEP_ 06-17-18) for analysis, these goals express that students were expected to improve their mobility by "riding the city bus independently, giving the driver the ticket, sitting and pulling the cord at the appropriate time to exit the bus." Several component skills of self-determination such as self-instruction, problem solving, decision making were embedded in these goals.

Dominant Models of Self-Determination

Steps to Self-Determination and *Whose Future Is It Anyway?* are well-known, classroom-based self-determination curricula. These two curricula were built upon the self-determination concepts, beliefs, and skills that have long been valued in both U.S. society and the field of special education (see my earlier discussion in Chapter Two on the role of independence and individuality in American culture and thus self-determination theory). The fundamental beliefs and principles underlying these two curricula were quite similar in terms of what essential component skills of self-determination should be learned. Therefore, skills emphasized in these

two curricula align with self-determination domains, mainly, autonomy and self-realization, self-regulation, and psychological empowerment.

Steps to Self-Determination and *Whose Future Is It Anyway?* both underscore skills including: (1) knowing and valuing oneself (i.e., preferences and interests, disabilities, learning needs, planning meetings, choosing short-term goals, and choosing people to attend the IEP meeting); (2) learning how to make decisions and planning the steps to reach short-term and long-term goals; (3) identifying barriers, resolving conflicts, and problem solving; and, (4) communication skills, including skills such as listening, assertive communication, negotiation and persuasion.

Both curricula incorporated content and activities that teach students with disabilities how to make decisions, and what steps and actions they need to take to reach their goals. Also these two curricula provide many ways of representation and teaching methods to improve students' self-determination. These teaching strategies include role-play, story-telling, inviting guest speakers with disabilities (Steps to Self-determination), and famous people with disabilities (Whose Future Is It Anyway?). Different teaching strategies enriched the content of both curricula, but the connections among self-determination, family and culture were not addressed in the curricula. Consequently, I used these curricula to analyze how IEP goals and objectives align with the dominant model of self-determination as these IEP goals and objectives were developed based on the dominant cultural practices that influence how self-determination is defined. The following information (see Table 4.3) provides details on how many goals addressed the skill areas identified in curricula.

SELF-DETERMINATION RELATED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Table 4.5

IEP Goals and Objectives Addressed Skills Areas related to Steps to Self-Determination, and Whose future is it anyway?

Self-Determination	Component skill	Number of IEPs
Autonomy		
Independence		
	Goal setting/attainment	7
	Choice making	7
	Decision making	12
	Problem solving	61
Self-realization		
Self-advocacy		63
	Self-awareness	14
	Self-evaluation	23
	Self-understanding including	
	(preference and interests)	8
Self-regulation		
Self-management		5
	Self-instruction	40
	Self-monitoring	31
	Self-observation	5
	Self-reinforcement	
Psychological empowerment		
Self-efficacy		
	Internal locus of control	
	Positive outcome expectancy	

Note. This result is based on the total number of IEPs (n = 130). IEPs may include multiple self-determination related skills. Each self-determination component skill was only coded once per IEP.

SELF-DETERMINATION RELATED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

IEP goals and objectives in this review addressed more skills related to autonomy, self-realization and self-regulation than skills related to psychological empowerment. Most IEP goals and objectives were frequently related to skills of decision making, problem solving, choice making, self-advocacy, self-instruction, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation. These skills enhance an individual's behavioral autonomy, self-realization and self-regulation. The IEP goals and objectives that promote behavioral autonomy focused on improving the student's ability in making choices from various options based on preferences, making decisions by weighing adequacy of solutions, and responding effectively to his/her environment in order to help students gradually make progress from dependence and interdependence to independent.

The following IEPs and statements illustrate how these skills (e.g., autonomy, self-realization and self-regulation) were incorporated into goals and objectives. Some of the goals that I use as examples for the previous section may also be found in this section for analytical purposes.

> [Name of the student] will apply decision making and problem solving techniques in workplace situations with 80% accuracy as measured by work site evaluations. [IEP_22-02-19]

> [Name of the student] will continue to develop age appropriate social and problem-solving behaviors. [IEP_12-35-19]

> [Name of the student] will make appropriate choices based on her surroundings and situation in the community in 3 of 4 trials. [IEP_07-03-19]

SELF-DETERMINATION RELATED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

[Name of the student] will increase his independent mobility through and interactions with his com by community, using his cane, remaining senses, and appropriate assistance as measured by objective criteria listed below:

Given the opportunity, [name of the student] will independently initiate a conversation with a peer 70% of the time. [IEP_05-43-17]

Given the opportunity, [name of the student] will independently take up to 6 turns within a conversation 70% of the time. [IEP_05-43-17]

IEP goals and objectives that were focused on self-realization, particularly, were linked to skills such as self-advocacy, preference and interests, and self-awareness. Few IEPs in the following list illustrate these skills.

[Name of the student] will verbally advocate for himself in work and social situations with one cue or less. [IEP_04-30-20]

[Name of the student] will practice self-advocacy skills and identify how to use them in terms of school, work and social settings. [IEP_21-01-18]

[Name of the student] will increase his self-advocacy by seeking assistance with problematic material in 4 out 5 opportunities. [IEP_10-24-16]

[Name of the student] will clearly communicate his disability related needs to teachers and/or supervisors 2 out of 5 times. [IEP_08-13-15]

[Name of the student] Will increase her self-advocacy skills by sticking up for herself and letting people know she is uncomfortable in situations 5 out of 5 times. [IEP_10-05-14]

Self-regulation related IEP goals and objectives involve skills such as self-instruction, self-monitoring (e.g., IEP_01-31-19), and sometimes problem solving and decision making skills as well (IEP_27-05-15). For instance,

> [Name of the student] will independently prepare for work and use appropriate conduct at work 90% of the time. [IEP_01-31-19]

> [Name of the student] will demonstrate improvement in self-regulation strategies as specified and measured by the following objectives: will demonstrate increased awareness of the emotions of others as evidenced by sorting facial expression pictures correctly according to angry, frustrated, worried and confused with 80% accuracy. [IEP_27-05-15]

In general, IEP goals and objectives were closely adhered to the dominant model of self-determination especially three universal domains including autonomy, self-realization and self-regulation. Although teaching students with disabilities to lead them to believing that they have control over their future and realizing that their own decisions and efforts in changing or influencing their life and post-secondary outcomes is important, surprisingly, none of goals and objectives were found to directly address psychological empowerment (e.g., internal locus of control and self-efficacy).

High-Incidence and Low-Incidence Disabilities

This section examined self-determination related goals and objectives among secondary school students with high-incidence and low-incidence disabilities by different age groups. With age information included in the IEPs, I used chronosystem analysis to examine self-

determination goals and objectives for various age groups by comparing the frequency counts of self-determination and related skills included in the IEP goals and objectives.

In general, goals and objectives that are explicitly or implicitly related to self-determination for students with high-incidence and students with low-incidence disabilities were focused on similar component skills. Table 4.4 and Table 4.5 provides a clear picture on the comparison of frequency rate of self-determination skills appear on the IEP goals and objectives for both groups of students.

Table 4.6

Self-determination Component Skills for Students with High-Incidence Disabilities

Part of self-determination and related skills	High-incidence disabilities *(n* = 78*)*		
	Age		
	13-15 (n =6)	16-17 (n =35)	18-21 (n =37)
Independence		13	14
Self-advocacy	2	17	15
Self-management			
Goal setting and attainment		1	4
Choice making	1	1	4
Decision making	1	2	4
Problem solving	3	16	18
Self-awareness	1	4	3
Self-evaluation		6	4
Self-understanding (preference and interests)	1	2	4
Self-instruction	2	11	9
Self-monitoring	2	10	7
Self-observation			2
Self-reinforcement			

Table 4. 7

Self-determination Component Skills for Students with Low-Incidence Disabilities

Part of self-determination and related skills	Low-incidence disabilities (*n* = 52)		
	Age		
	13-15 (n = 12)	16-17 (n = 16)	18-21 (n = 24)
Independence	2	3	14
Self-advocacy	5	11	15
Self-management	2	4	
Goal setting and attainment			4
Choice making			4
Decision making	2		4
Problem solving	2	8	18
Self-awareness		3	3
Self-evaluation		7	4
Self-understanding (preference and interests)			4
Self-instruction	4	4	9
Self-monitoring	3	4	7
Self-observation	1	1	2
Self-reinforcement			

From the results of frequency tables, IEP goals and objectives developed for students with high-incidence and students with low-incidence disabilities addressed similar self-determination related skills. For both groups of students IEP goals and objectives focused on problem solving, self-instruction, self-monitoring skills. Besides, skills related to self-regulation, self-advocacy and independence were also essential elements in IEP goals and objectives for students with high-incidence, and low-incidence disabilities.

SELF-DETERMINATION RELATED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following two IEP goals implicitly indicate similar self-determination related skills for students with high-incidence disabilities (i.e., IEP_24-01-14), and those with low-incidence disabilities (i.e., IEP_05-43-17).

> Upon instruction, [name of the student] will independently write up to 3 paragraphs on topic using age appropriate grammar. [IEP_05-43-17]

> [Name of the student] will be able to independently write a 5 paragraph essay as measured by successful completion of the 10th grade practice writing assessment. [IEP_24-01-14]

The similar IEP goals and objectives for both students with high-incidence disabilities, and those with low-incidence disabilities, however, cannot be translated to similar expectation from the IEP team because IEP goals and objectives for both groups of students did not always focus on the same level of self-determination related skills. One of the following reviewed IEPs for the student with high-incidence disabilities [IEP_12-35-19] addressed problem solving, self-instruction, and self-monitoring skills for math focusing on basic calculation, money, whole number operation and calculator skills that the IEP team agreed was important. On the other hand, instead of math skills, the IEP goal, IEP_04-24-16, that was developed for the student with low-incidence disabilities focused on an adaptation/accommodation to writing and editing. Learning to use a graphic organizer and/or computer to independently complete a writing assignment requires several self-management and independence related skills (e.g., self-instruction, self-monitoring, and problem solving skills).

> [Name of the student] will maintain an 80% average in daily math skills to include calculations, problem-solving, money, time and calculator skills; Given whole number

operations, [Name of the student] will solve problems with a calculator with 90% accuracy from an adult. [IEP_12-35-19]

Use a graphic organizer (web, outline, etc), computer; and other methods to independently complete a writing assignment with a clear beginning, middle, and end, including supporting details, with additional editing. [IEP_04-24-16]

Both math and writing require problem solving skills, but the skill level of math and writing skills was difficult to be identified without further information. For example, whole number operations could be either very simple (e.g., positive number calculation) or abstract when involving negative numbers operation. If the IEP goal that was written for students with high-incidence disabilities focused on easy problem solving skills (e.g., calculating positive numbers using a calculator) then the teacher's did not set his/her expectation properly for the student with high-incidence disabilities because students with high-incidence disabilities are probably capable of learning higher level of problem solving skills that promote independence.

There were several themes merged from data analysis. These themes, which I explain further in Chapter Five include, component skills of self-determination addressed in IEP goals and objectives, connections between goals and objectives and curricula, and goals related to self-determination for students with high-incidence and low-incidence disabilities. In addition to these themes, limitations of the current study are discussed and implications for practice and future research are provided in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

The term "IEP," which lays out the school's commitment to providing special education and related services to students with disabilities, made its first appearance in 1975 in Public Law 94-142. The law mandates that:

> The local educational agency or intermediate educational unit will establish, or revise, whichever is appropriate, an individualized education program for each handicapped child at the beginning of each handicapped child at the beginning of each school year and will then review and, if appropriate revise, its provisions periodically, but not less than annually. (P. L. 94-142)

For the past 40 years, schools and teachers have been required to develop and implement IEPs to meet the needs of their students with disabilities; however, the origins of policy development in supporting transition planning and self-determination began in the 1990s. Students with stronger self-determination related skills are more likely to succeed in making the transition to adulthood, and to have better transition outcomes including independent living, employment and post-secondary education (Wehmeyer & Palmer, 2003). Given all of the effort that has been invested by schools and teachers into creating these documents, we would expect that IEP goals and objectives are developed in relation to self-determination to help students smooth their transition from secondary school life to adult life. However, this has not been the case during the course of my study. Hence, I investigated those IEP goals and objectives that particularly pertain to self-determination for secondary students with disabilities through a document review process. IEPs collected by the Project Summer research team provided me with

a glimpse into what goals and objectives were included in IEPs and how goals and objectives addressed self-determination for students with disabilities in the state of Wisconsin between 2006 and 2009.

My study provides a holistic view of major findings that can contribute to knowledge-building for transition planning by schools as it relates to fostering self-determination in secondary school students with disabilities. This chapter begins with a summary of the findings, and then grounds the findings within the Bioecological Theory of Human Development. In the remainder of this chapter, I address the limitations of the study, implications and recommendations for practice and research.

Synthesis of Findings and Interpretations

Sociodemographic Characteristics of IEPs

Beginning in 2010, the Wisconsin DPI has provided teachers with writing samples and guidelines for IEPs (i.e., *A guide for writing IEPs*); particularly interesting to this study is the document "*Opening doors to self-determination*" (Wisconsin DPI, 2010). These guidelines are represented in two separate documents that do not correspond with each other. To increase purposeful attention to transition and self-determination, guidelines provided to teachers should connect self-determination component skills more explicitly with the guidelines for writing IEPs because students with disabilities are more likely to be prepared for transition demands when self-determination has been promoted in their curriculum. In doing so, teachers would have a clearer idea regarding how to incorporate self-determination related skills in IEP goals and objectives.

Summary of Findings

The first finding was that 218 out of 348 of IEPs, or approximately 63%, did not include goals and objectives related to self-determination. After separating the results based on disability categories (i.e., high-incidence disabilities versus low-incidence disabilities), I found that 65 out of 117 IEPs of students with low-incidence disabilities, or 56%, did not contain goals and objectives related to the component skills of self-determination. The results for students with high-incidence disabilities also revealed a very high percentage of IEPs -- 153 out of 231, or 66% -- lacking in goals and objectives promoting self-determination.

I believe that there are four potential claims that can be made based on this numerical finding: one, 66% of students with high-incidence disabilities, and more than half of low-incidence disabilities at the time that their IEPs were collected had strong self-determination related skills; two, other skill areas (i.e., reading, writing, and math) were of more concern than self-determination related skills, as perceived by IEP participants (e.g., parents, students with disabilities, general educators, special educators, transition specialists, and services providers); three, IEP participants did not value or were not aware of the importance of self-determination; and four, the criteria (e.g., the primary disability label and synonyms for self-determination) that I used for the IEP selection might also influence these results because when goals did not incorporate the keywords or synonyms of self-determination, the IEP was likely to be excluded from the in-depth analysis.

As my primary and only data source came from IEPs, I took a further step to increase my confidence in the interpretation of these findings by using two previously published studies from Project Summer. The main rationale for examining precedence and concurrence within these two

published studies was that the IEPs I analyzed were developed for participants before they were involved in the studies. Also, these two studies provided insights into perspectives on self-determination as held by students with disabilities, parents, and teachers.

The first study investigated self-determination skills and opportunities for students with low-incidence disabilities. According to Carter et al. (2009), 135 adolescents with low-incidence disabilities (i.e., severe intellectual and developmental disabilities) were assessed and observed by their teachers and parents for self-determination skills and opportunities. Teachers and parents held different opinions regarding the students' capacities for self-determination. Some teachers reported that students with low-incidence disabilities possessed and demonstrated limited self-determination capacity and knowledge. Parents and teachers, however, agreed that more opportunities should be provided at home and school to these students so that they could be engaged in self-determined behavior. Moreover, teachers who participated in the study indicated that "opportunities were sometimes to almost always available for students to engage in self-determination behaviors at school" (p. 184). The second study that examined self-determination capacities and opportunities for youth with high-incidence disabilities also indicated that "students sometimes demonstrated capacity in self-determination" and "frequent opportunities were available for students to engage in self-determined behaviors at school" (p. 72).

Because teachers from both studies reported that students with low-incidence disabilities had limited self-determination capacities, I should have found more goals and objectives that directly addressed self-determination related skills that I did in my study. Besides, the results for previous studies indicated that opportunities for self-determined behavior were available to students with high-incidence or low-incidence disabilities at schools, so I expected that the IEPs

I reviewed would have included more self-determination related goals and objectives to guide their instructional activities and students' learning opportunities.

Although my findings diverge from with the results from previous studies of the Project Summer team, I ultimately viewed these inconsistencies as a strength that led me to uncovering deeper meanings in the IEP data. In conclusion, if the quantity of the IEP goals and objectives related to self-determination in the present study represent a fair estimate of what was being planned for promoting self-determination related skills to students with high-incidence or low-incidence disabilities, then a greater focus should be placed on the number of appropriate goals and objectives that promote self-determination skills.

Autonomy

As the IEP review demonstrated, teachers need to know what skills comprise self-determination as well as how to effectively incorporate the component skills of self-determination into goals and objectives before they can develop appropriate IEP goals and objectives in relation to self-determination for their students with disabilities. Wehmeyer (1997) notes that:

> Autonomous individuals have the capacity to indicate preferences, make choices based on those preferences, and initiate action based on these selections. Persons who are self-determined are able to act based on the basis of personal beliefs and values thoughts and emotions, and likes and dislikes instead of exclusively on social norms or individual group pressure. (p.117)

Goals and objectives promoting autonomy may be related to skills like choice-making, decision making, problem-solving, goal-setting/attainment, and independence. For choice-making,

teachers should teach their students to choose from alternatives based on interests and preferences. Decision-making skills allow students with disabilities to weigh alternative solutions before taking action. Problem-solving skills help students with disabilities to adequately respond to obstacles in order to function effectively in the schools and communities they live. Goal-setting and attainment skills allow students to set goals and perform necessary actions to reach and maintain goals they have developed. Independent skills allow students to take initiative. With these skills, an individual with disabilities may move from being largely dependent upon others for care and support to progress from dependence to independence (Wehmeyer, 1997, 1999).

Many of IEP goals and objectives explicitly or implicitly addressed skills related to autonomy. Some of IEP goals being reviewed were written in first person because the goals were set by the students. Having an "I" statement in the IEP goals and objectives may or may not connect with the word "independent" or "autonomous." These statements; however, revealed that IEP teams were trying to align IEP goals and objectives with self-determination because setting ones' own goals is a move toward independent or autonomous. IEP goals and objectives related to autonomy seemed to be a likely choice for teachers to include in their students' IEPs. Skills such as problem solving, choice making and decision making can be used in teaching basic self-care to students with low-incidence disabilities. Moreover, setting goals for independent living after high school is essential for both students with high-incidence and those with low-incidence disabilities.

Self-Regulation

SELF-DETERMINATION RELATED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Self-regulating individuals develop goals, perform necessary actions to achieve their goals, and modify their actions to improve the outcome. Self-regulation comprises skills such as self-monitoring, self-instruction, self-evaluation, self-reinforcement, and observational learning strategies (Wehmeyer, 1999). As indicated in the IEPs, students with disabilities were taught how to monitor their emotions and behavior. As important as self-regulation is to the student's social development (e.g., developing internal control and coping skills, increasing the awareness of other's emotion), self-regulatory goals also emphasize skills like degrading the frequency of inappropriate behavior such as tantrums or aggressive outbursts, increasing the length of time on-task, and augmenting the frequency of self-reflection, self-reinforcements, and self-monitoring. Few of the reviewed IEPs explicitly indicated that their goals and objectives were developed to promote self-regulation, and most examples of goals and objectives implicitly correspond with the self-management strategies.

Occasionally, I found that goals were not consistent with their objectives. The teacher who developed the goal for self-regulation in [IEP_27-05-15] specifically indicated that all objectives were targeting self-regulation. However, one objective that was developed for this goal was not tied to self-regulation. The teacher seemed confused about which skills related to self-regulation. For example, the mismatched objective from this particular goal was to "demonstrate an ability to understand the emotions of others as evidenced by selecting an appropriate facial expression pictures" [IEP_27-05-15]. This objective should be aimed at teaching the student self-knowledge and choice- making instead of self-regulation related skills because choice-making, as well as knowing and understanding oneself, are necessary for autonomy and self-realization.

Self-Realization

When people acquire self-realization, they have an accurate conception of their strengths, weakness, needs, legal rights, and responsibilities. By applying self-realization to their ecological contexts, people may be more capable of speaking up or defending themselves. In other words, people learn self-realization before they advocate for themselves. For example, students with disabilities should make their own decisions on whether or not they want to discourse their disabilities to disability resource center and their professors, or request for accommodations (e.g., note taking, assistive/adaptive technology and test accommodations). These who successfully enter post-secondary education institutions (e.g., colleges or universities) need to know themselves well so they are able to identify their personal goals, knowing their legal rights and responsibilities, and communicating what supports they need to others. Self-advocacy and knowing one's own needs and strengths are two different, but equally important, skills that help an individual become a self-determined person. Teachers who developed the IEPs in this study placed high value on self-advocacy as the results indicated that approximately 44% of the IEPs for students with high-incidence disabilities included this element while 60% of IEPs for students with low-incidence disabilities address skills that promote self-advocacy.

Psychological Empowerment

According to Wehmeyer (1999), people who are psychologically empowered believe that they possess the skills and opportunities to control critical circumstances, and by taking control of their environment, they can expect positive outcomes. Although psychological empowerment is important to an individual's self-determination, no IEP goals and objectives were found addressed this essential skill. IEP goals and objectives reviewed in this study did not focus on skills like internal locus of control, self-efficacy, and outcome expectations that are crucial to psychological empowerment. In this study, some self-determination related component skills

such as self-management, self-evaluation, self-monitoring, and self-instruction, however, reflect internal locus of control. In addition to these self-determination component skills, goals and objectives focused on self-advocacy could be considered psychological empowerment.

IEP goals and objectives that implicitly addressed self-determination related skills were commonly found in this review. I also noticed that self-determination component skills sometimes blurred together in some IEPs. The blurring of self-determination component skills may reveal that teachers seemed unaware of the difference between some of the skills (e.g., a teacher was confused disability knowledge, knowing needs and strengths with self-advocacy [IEP_05-25-18]). Several possibilities may contribute to teachers' lack of clarity on the IEP goals and objectives. First, the way that IEP goals and objectives were written might be reflective of restrictions placed by the IEP template format (that is the format of the IEP and the information provided by the Wisconsin DPI somehow influenced the production of IEPs). Second, teachers might be lacking sufficient knowledge about self-determination as evidenced by the fact that they did not demonstrate their ability to promote self-determination by incorporating self-determination component skills into IEP goals and objectives in a more meaningful way. Third, teachers' lack of clarity on IEP goals and objectives might be reflective of their resistance to the system of simplicity -- were more convenient for teachers to develop the IEP. Also, it was possible that these component skills were inseparable from each other because they are not discrete skills, which leads teachers to combining them in one IEP goal.

Connections between Goals and Objectives and Curricula

Steps to Self-determination and *Whose Future Is It Anyway*? provide many avenues to the representation of and teaching methods aimed at improving students' self-determination. These teaching strategies include role-play, storytelling, inviting guest speakers with disabilities (*Steps*

to Self-determination), and lists of famous people with disabilities (*Whose Future Is It Anyway?*). Teaching strategies addressed in these two curricula might be helpful to the teachers' knowledge of self-determination. Also, these curricula may somehow help teachers develop more specific and measurable goals and objectives. Keywords and synonyms (e.g., choice-making, decision-making, independence-developing, problem-solving, etc.) were found in the IEP goals and objectives, and the connections between self-determination curricula and students' learning goals and objectives were evident in my review.

It should be noted that these two curricula represent the dominant cultural perspectives on self-determination, and do not accentuate and facilitate opportunities for embracing different perspectives from parents or family members with different backgrounds (e.g., CLD). For instance, these two curricula are focused on teaching students to know themselves, and to understand and accept their disabilities, but not teaching students to know, for instance, where they come from, for example, culturally. Asking a question like "Where is a person from?" has many hidden meanings that can include a student's identity, cultural values, and background. Thus, the interrelation between culture and disabilities, and the cultural influences on disabilities were lacking in the content.

Researchers indicate that cultural identity that may impact a student's transition planning and self-determination, and is therefore an essential part of the education of student with disabilities (Eisenhart, 2001; Goff, & Thomans, 2007; Kalyanpur & Harry, 1999; Trainor, 2002, 2005b). Therefore, the structure of a self-determination oriented curriculum should include activities or information that can initiate collaboration among students, parents, and teachers. Family involvement and collaboration is very valuable to enhancing students' ability to advocate, evaluate, and make choices in their life. The importance of collaboration and family involvement

has been documented for transition planning. For example, researchers indicated that transition achievements are likely to be limited if collaboration with students' families is absent from the scene (Craig & Ferrara, 2005). Since self-determination is one of the most important features or outcomes of transition, engaging family members in the self-determination planning and teaching process is essential. Families with CLD, however, may not hold the same value and beliefs about self-determination (e.g., how self-determination is defined in their native language; what goals and decisions are appropriate for their culture). Thus, self-determination curricula should facilitate family involvement by providing space for family members to express their concerns and to communicate their opinions.

More importantly, self-determination should be taught from multiple perspectives in order to resolve the possible conflicts among students, their families, and teachers when setting goals or making future plans. Thus, IEP goals and future plans should conform to the student's cultural expectations and determinants because parents, family members, and in some cases community members, are great resources for providing the different perspectives on cultural expectations and determinants regarding self-determination.

Goals for High-Incidence and Low-incidence Disabilities

By comparing IEP goals and objectives related to self-determination for youth served under high-incidence disabilities and low incidence disabilities, I found that goals and objectives written for both students with high-incidence and those with low-incidence disabilities were identical in terms of the self-determination component skills. IEP goals and objective for students with high-incidence and those with low-incidence disabilities highlighted self-advocacy, independence, and self-determination related skills such as problem solving, self-evaluation, self-instruction, and self-monitoring. These findings suggest that the disability label is not a

potential influence on the goals and objectives in relation to self-determination. One explanation for these findings might be that people with disabilities have challenges that relate to self-determination.

The student's age seems to impact the focus of IEP goals and objectives in relation to self-determination component skills. IEP goals and objectives developed for students, age range from 18 to 21, focused more on goal setting and attainment, and choice making as compared to those developed for younger students (age range from 13 to 15 or from 16 to 17) identified with low-incidence disabilities. IEP goals and objectives developed for older students (age range from 18 to 21) with high-incidence disabilities focused more on goal setting and attainment, choice making and decision making as compared to those developed for students who were in high-incidence disability group and younger (age range from 16 to 17).

Goals Related to Transition Areas

Employment, post-secondary education, and independent living are major and desirable postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, & Levine, 2005). Goals and objectives related to improving these post-secondary outcomes are essential components in IEPs, as these outcomes for students with disabilities are desirable steps toward financial self-sufficiency and may contribute to one's quality of life. However, the findings that resulted from this detailed analysis of IEPs indicated goals and objectives addressing self-determination component skills in relation to transition outcomes such as employment, post-secondary education, and independent living were mostly implicitly. Very few goals and objectives were developed to explicitly improve outcomes for postsecondary education.

Limitations

There are benefits to using IEP documents in research. For one, IEP document reviews are unobtrusive in that they can be used without imposing on participants. Also, IEP documents can be checked and re-checked for reliability. Despite these benefits, this research still has several limitations. A major problem is that IEPs may not have been written with the same quality (e.g., components of IEP content and format). The drawback to using IEPs as secondary sources was the limited ability to access the original research sites for demographic information (e.g., primary disability diagnoses, race/ethnicities, disability labels and grade levels).

Primary disability labels and race/ethnicity categories are addressed in the IEP cover sheet, which also provides a summary of basic student information including gender, grade, date of birth, name of students and their guardians, phone numbers, school district information, mailing address, etc. the forms and formats of IEPs vary widely by school districts. In some school districts, IEP forms did correspond to the sample IEP forms provided by the Wisconsin DPI; others adapted the essential components from the Wisconsin DPI in creating their own style of forms, such as evaluation reports and IEP cover sheets, referral forms, and agreements on IEP participant attendance at IEP meetings. The required components in the IEP cover sheet provided by the Wisconsin DPI, and the inconsistency of the IEP formats discovered throughout school districts in the state of Wisconsin, may reflect why student disability labels and race/ethnicity categories were not included in many of the reviewed IEPs. Additional information, however, is needed to elucidate whether the primary disability labels were missing from the IEP documents, or whether these labels did indeed exist in other databases belonging to Project Summer. Making contact with school sites where IEPs were collected would have minimized the number of IEPs with missing data. Ideally, the number of IEPs would have been more evenly distributed across

disabilities and race/ethnicities. A sample with more diversity would have benefited the findings. Unfortunately, IEPs that were used in this study represented a narrow range of ethnicities.

Another limitation was the analytical decision I took. IEP goals and objectives were developed based on the student's present level of performance that was not included in my analysis. By analyzing goals and objectives without considering the present level of performance, the connection could not be made between the student's ability in terms of self-determination and the need to include self-determination in the IEP goals and objectives.

A possible improvement in future work based on this study would be to observe students, teachers, and classes for academics and transition-related activities. Observing classes and activities could elicit greater information regarding students' abilities in regards to self-determination. In addition, a greater depth of information may have been obtained by observing what was really being done to promote skills related to self-determination, as there can be a wide gap between what is written and what is performed. Because of this, an observation would also allow me to ensure whether teachers used the IEPs as a blueprint for constructing their instruction or activities aimed at helping their students for self-determination related skills.

Implications for Practice and Future Research

In this section, I offer some recommendations for professionals in Wisconsin school districts and educators who are in charge of developing IEP goals and objectives for students with disabilities. Suggestions for future research are also included.

Implication for Practice

This document review generated four major findings. First, a large number of IEPs did not include self-determination related skills in their goals and objectives. Second, strong connection was found between IEP goals and objectives and the two major curricula that promote self-determination component skills. Third, goals and objectives for students with low-incidence disabilities were more specific and clearly written with a proper level of difficulty than goals and objectives that were developed for students with high-incidence disabilities. Last, IEP goals and objectives needed to address more fully the transition areas of employment and post-secondary education as these relate to self-determination for students with high-incidence and low-incidence disabilities.

In light of these findings, I have three recommendations for practices. The first recommendation is for professionals in the Wisconsin DPI to improve the format of IEP documents, and incorporate the guide "Opening doors to self-determination" into "A guide for writing IEPs." Because the "Opening door to self-determination" is a curriculum guide that did not teach special educators how to address self-determination component skills in the IEPs. The second recommendation is for educational leaders (e.g., principals at the school level, superintendents at the district level, and staff in the Department of Education at the state level) to acknowledge the value of identifying self-determination component skills for students with high-incidence or low-incidence disabilities. Also, professional development should be provided to general education teachers, special education teachers, and transition services specialists to enhance their knowledge of self-determination and IEP writing. The third recommendation is for educators, including general educators, special education teachers, and transition experts, to incorporate self-determination component skills in their students' IEP goals and objectives.

Implications for Future Research

This study has laid the groundwork for further research that extends beyond the scope of this study. The limitations presented in my study can act as guides to directions for future research on this topic. First, as I mentioned in the previous section, I used existing IEPs to address the questions, and some important information was not available on the IEPs (i.e., disability labels and race/ethnicity categories). Therefore, multiple data collection methods (e.g., observation, focus groups, and interviews) rather than merely focusing on IEP documents may be more beneficial to this study. Second, because my analyses did not include the student's present level of performance, directly observing the students' present levels of performance would provide a more comprehensive view of why self-determination was lacking in the goals and objectives. Third, because I was not able to analyze IEPs from different cultural perspectives, it is essential for future work to further explore IEPs that are developed for students with CLD backgrounds. Four, perception of self-determination may differ among students with disabilities, their family members and educators, and families may not hold the same value and beliefs about self-determination (e.g., how self-determination is defined in their native language; what goals and decisions are appropriate for being self-determined in their culture) as those of students with disabilities or educators (Trainor, 2005b). Therefore, the self-determination curriculum should facilitate open communication and opportunities for improving students' recognition of their own cultural values. As I was not able to examine how IEP goals and objectives were aligned with the curricula for students with CLD backgrounds, future research could consider providing additional insight into meaningful IEP goals and objectives that align with culturally responsive self-determination curricula for CLD students with disabilities. By engaging students' microsystems in the self-determination teaching process may improve self-

determination curricula development and help initiate collaboration among students, parents and teachers in developing culturally relevant IEP goals and objectives for their students.

APPENDIX A

Synonyms for Self-Determination

Wehmeyer (1995)

Autonomy
Synonyms: behavioral autonomy, independence, risk-taking, safety skills the freedom to make decisions, choice-making based on preferences and interests, problem-solving, goal-setting/attainment

Self-realization
Synonyms: self-knowledge/awareness, including personal strengths and limitations, self-evaluation,

Self-regulation
Synonyms: making appropriate decisions, examining and evaluating a plan of action, self-observation and reinforcement skills, self-instruction skills, self-advocacy skills.

Psychological empowerment
Synonym: individual's belief and behavior lead to outcomes/expectations, internal locus of control, positive attributions of efficacy

Field et al. (1998a)

Self-determination
Synonyms: defining and achieving goals, knowing and valuing oneself, taking opportunities for choice-making, engaging in goal-directed, self-regulating, exhibiting autonomous behavior, understanding one's strengths and limitations together with a belief in oneself as capable and effective, taking control of one's life

Martin & Marshall (1995)

Self-determination
Synonyms: awareness of personal needs, choosing goals, making his or her needs known, evaluating progress toward meeting goals, adjusting

Curricula (*Whose Future Is It Anyway?* & *Steps to Self-determination*)

Types of words or phrases teachers might use in IEPs: student-directed, your preferences and interests, identifying goals in your plan, keeping track of goals and objectives, steps to planning a meeting, planning meeting, choosing people to attend meeting, asking "what is important to me?," setting goals, choosing short-term goals, a journey to self-determination, assertive communication, negotiation, conflict resolution, self-advocacy, knowing yourself (strengths and weakness), planning for and assessing your future, acting on your goals, problem solving, take control of your life, knowing your rights and responsibilities.

APPENDIX B

Coding Sheet for IEP Goals and Objectives Related to Self-Determination

Conceptual framework IEP #	IEPs without keywords and Synonym	IEPs include keywords, phrases, or synonym related to component skills of self-determination	IEPs include goals and objectives related to curricula that promote self-determination	Total score	Goals and objectives
00-00-00					

SELF-DETERMINATION RELATED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

APPENDIX C

Transition Areas and Outcomes

Coding	Transition Areas	
Open Coding (Free node)	Wisconsin DPI	Grigal et al. (1997)
	Instruction	Post-secondary education
	Post-school adult living	Vocational training
	Community experience	Integrated employment
	Daily living	Continuing adult education
	Employment	Adult services
	Related services	Independent living
	Functional vocational evaluation	Community participation
		Living arrangement
		Homemaking needs
		Transportation
		Medical
		Relationships
		Financial
		Leisure/recreation
		Advocacy/legal
Axial Coding (Tree node)	Transition Outcomes	
	Education	Post-secondary education
	Employment	Employment
	Independent	Independent living

SELF-DETERMINATION RELATED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Table 3.1

Description of Studies related to Project Summer

Authors	Title of Study	Sample Size and Participant Characteristics	Research Design: Sampling or Recruitment
Carter, Austin, et al. (2011).	Factors associated with the early work experiences of adolescents with severe disabilities	Parents, youth, teachers, and schools from Data was collected by National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS-2 from 2000-2010)	Two-stage sampling (i.e., stratified sampling based on geographic region, and then random selection from 12 disability categories.
Carter, Austin, & Trainor (2012).	Predictors of postschool employment outcomes for young adults with severe disabilities	Data was collected by NLTS-2 from parent's interview, parent-youth interview, student's school program survey, and the school characteristics survey from 2000-2010.	Stratified random sample
Carter, Brock, & Trainor (2014).	Transition assessment and planning for youth with severe intellectual and developmental disabilities	134 youth with severe intellectual and developmental disabilities.	Transition Assessment: Transition Planning Inventory (TPI).
Carter, Ditchman, et al. (2010).	Summer employment and community experiences of transition-age youth with severe disabilities	136 high school students with severe disabilities were phone interviewed for their employment and community experiences	Phone interviews

Table 3.1

Description of Studies related to Project Summer (continued)

Authors	Title of Study	Sample Size and Participant Characteristics	Research Design: Sampling or Recruitment
Carter, Owens, Trainor, Sun & Swedeen (2009).	Self-determination skills and opportunities of adolescents with severe disabilities.	135 high school students with significant intellectual and developmental disabilities including students who were identified with CD (85.3%); Autism (10.3%) & Orthopedic Impairment (4.4%) Male (51.1%) European American = 86.7% African American = 11.1% Others = 2.1%	Students were assessed by their teachers or parents for participation
Carter, Trainor, Cakiroglu, et al. (2009).	Exploring school-employer partnerships to expand career development and early work experiences for youth with disabilities	135 Representatives from 122 chambers of commerce, and 13 employer networks including Executive directors/presidents, coordinators, secretaries, chamber staff, chairperson and treasurer	Survey

Table 3.1

Description of Studies related to Project Summer (continued)

Authors	Title of Study	Sample Size and Participant Characteristics	Research Design: Sampling or Recruitment
Carter, Trainor, Cakiroglu, Swedeen, & Owens (2010).	Availability of and access to career development activities for transition-age youth with disabilities	Administrators or school staff who were familiar with the career, vocational, and other transition-related programs available in their high school for youth with severe disabilities or emotional behavior and disorder.	Survey/Questionnaire
Carter, Trainor, Ditchman, & Owens (2011).	A pilot study connecting youth with emotional and behavioral difficulties to summer work experiences	57 youth with EBD	Randomized Experimental Design Intervention (post-test only)
Carter, Trainor, Ditchman, Swedeen & Owens (2009)	Evaluation of a multi-component intervention package to increase summer work experiences for transition-age youth with severe disabilities	67 youth with severe disabilities. 74.6 were eligible for the state's alternative assessment	Randomized experimental design Participants were invited by school liaisons

Table 3.1

Description of Studies related to Project Summer (continued)

Authors	Title of Study	Sample Size and Participant Characteristics	Research Design: Sampling or Recruitment
Carter, Trainor, Ditchman, Swedeen, & Owens (2011).	Community-based work experiences of adolescents with high-incidence disabilities	220 youth with high-incidence disabilities (i.e., 66 emotional/behavior disorders, 66 intellectual disabilities and 97 learning disabilities	Structured telephone interviews in mid-June and early August to obtain information regarding employment and summer activities
Carter, Trainor, Owen, et al. (2010).	Self-determination prospects of youth with high-incidence disabilities: Divergent perspectives and related factors	196 high school student with CD (*n* = 49); EBD (*n* = 50), or LD (*n* = 97) were assessed by themselves or their teachers for the self-determination capacities and opportunities using the AIR Self-Determination Scale	Participants were recruited by project liaisons including teachers, transition staff and administrators
Carter, Trainor, Sun, & Owens (2009).	Assessing the transition-related strengths and needs of adolescents with high-incidence disabilities: Youth, teacher, and parent perspectives	160 students with disabilities qualified for special education services under categories of EBD (*n* = 59) and LD (*n* = 101), 99 teachers and parents	Transition Assessment: Transition Planning Inventory (TPI)

Table 3. 1

Description of Studies related to Project Summer (continued)

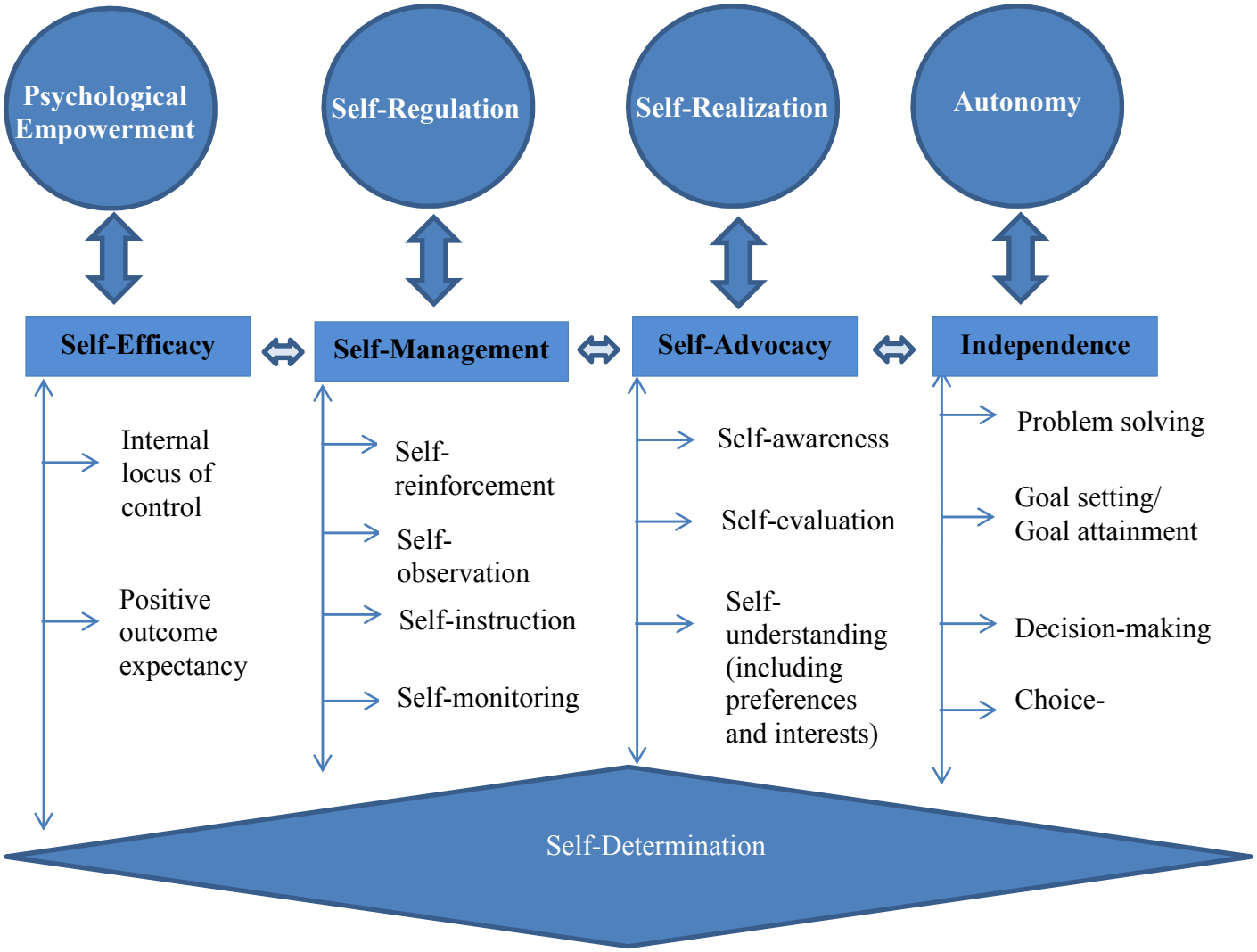
Authors	Title of Study	Sample Size and Participant Characteristics	Research Design: Sampling or Recruitment
Trainor, Carter, Owens, & Swedeen (2008).	Special educators' perceptions of summer employment and community participation opportunities for youth with disabilities	14 teachers (4 men and 10 women) from 10 schools	Interview
Trainor et al., (2011).	Perspectives of adolescents with disabilities on summer employment and community experiences.	16 students with learning disabilities, cognitive, emotional and behavioral disorder	Focus group interviews
Trainor, Carter, Swedeen, & Pickett (2012).	Community conversations: An approach for expanding and connecting opportunities for employment for adolescents with disabilities	239 community members (i.e., employers, community leaders, teachers, school staff, organizations and agencies serving youth, high school students	World Café Process Observations and Survey

Table 3.2

Types of Coding Applied to IEP Goals and Objectives

	Types of Coding		
	Descriptive Coding	Topic Coding	Analytical Coding
IEP goals and objectives	Attributes (Age & Primary disability)	What topics were discussed in the IEP statement?	What self-determination component skills were embedded in the goals and objectives?
[Name of the student] will advocate for himself with his teachers in order to turn assignments in on time at a proficient level. [IEP_04-07-17]	Age 17 Low-incidence Disabilities [Autism]	Speak up Assignments Proficient level	Self-advocacy Self- evaluation Self-monitoring
After high school, I will live independently. [IEP_02-08-17]	Age 17 High-incidence Disability [EBD]	Independent living	Goal setting

Figure 3.1. Self-Determination Component Skills



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