

THE FORGOTTEN MINORITY:  
WHEN BEING WHO YOU ARE DEFINES WHO YOU WILL BE

A Thesis

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Graduate and Professional Studies in Education

Abstract  
of  
THE FORGOTTEN MINORITY:  
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Adrienne Lynn Currington

If students with disabilities have successfully completed the requirements for being accepted into college and are also successful in completing the admission process, their ability to succeed (in receiving a degree) may be mitigated due to multiple factors such as lack of services and accommodations, lack of awareness of services that are available, and most often a student's failure to self-identify. Over the decades, many of these issues have been addressed with changes to federal and state regulations associated with "disabled" students. The 504 of Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other guiding laws have attempted to address issues related to the lack of services, accommodations, and awareness of services for disabled students.

Considering recent progress, the current issue for students with disabilities is one of self-identification. When students receive services in kindergarten through high school, their IEP (Individual Education Plan) is mandated to be evaluated, reviewed, and updated annually, or every two years. Once a student is enrolled in an institution of

higher education, the student must self-identify in order to receive any services. If students are unaware of the resources available to them, or are too embarrassed to seek assistance, they will struggle in silence, resulting in a negative experience in college and, in many cases, a failure to graduate.

Over the years, students with disabilities in higher education have become the “forgotten minority.” This group consists of any student who has limited vision, hearing impairment, learning disability, developmental disability, emotional disability, or illness, physical disabilities, and learning difficulties that span a broad scale from very severe impairments to minor struggles. The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between when students self-identify for services for students with disabilities and the impact it has on their success for degree attainment.

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my Family: My loving, caring, and unbelievably supportive husband, Mali Deshan Currington. To you I say: “I love this.” To my children: Andrea Toscano, Rosiland Toscano, Mali Oni Currington, Layla Currington, Micaiah Currington and Arielle Currington, this is for you all. Remember, in the words of your dad - “this is a plateau not a pinnacle,” see y’all soon.

Give it all to Jesus Christ

and he will supply all your needs, wants and desires!

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background**

As the Johnson family sat down to eat dinner like they had every night before, Ms. Johnson did not expect this night would begin her lifelong search and mission to understand the needs of individuals with disabilities. Ms. Johnson sat with her two daughters, Anastasia and Sarah, sharing information from their day. Sarah, the youngest, went first. Ms. Johnson asked Sarah, who was three years old at the time, “How was your day?” Sarah began to speak; however, Ms. Johnson could not understand anything Sarah was saying. She asked Sarah to repeat herself and she did, but Ms. Johnson was still unable to understand her daughter. Ms. Johnson turned to Anastasia, who was four years old at the time, and who’d recently started kindergarten in the past month. She asked her, “What did Sarah say?” Anastasia hunched her shoulders and replied, “I don’t know, Mommy.” Ms. Johnson had asked Anastasia countless times in the past to tell her what Sarah was saying since she could understand her sister. To Ms. Johnson’s surprise, this was the first time Anastasia was unable to translate.

That night was the beginning of a whole new lifestyle for the Johnson family. Ms. Johnson instantly became a parent advocate for her child with special needs. Anastasia became the “normal” child, the smarter kid, the one most likely to succeed, and Sarah was labeled the child with disabilities and one of the “forgotten minority.” Sarah’s

disabilities were primarily educational and not physical; therefore, her disability was considered unfounded.

Students with learning disabilities attend college less frequently than their peers without disabilities, according to Rath and Royer (2000, p. 354). When students with disabilities complete requirements for college admission, their ability to succeed in obtaining a college degree may be weakened due to multiple factors such as lack of services and accommodations, lack of awareness of services that are available, and most often, a student's failure to self-identify. Over decades, these issues have been addressed by changes to federal and state regulations associated with disabled students. Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and other guiding laws have attempted to address issues related to the lack of services, accommodations, and awareness of services for disabled students.

Considering recent progress, the current issue for students with disabilities is to self-identify as a student with disabilities in order to receive services. When students receive services in kindergarten through high school, their IEP (Individual Education Plan) is evaluated, reviewed, and is recommended to be updated annually or every two years. Once the student is enrolled in an institution of higher education, the student must self-identify to receive any services. Students in higher education must be their own advocates while in high school; since they are minors, parents and/or guardians advocate on their behalf. Self-determination is a required quality for students with disabilities if they are to achieve academically in college (Brockelman, 2009, p. 272). If students are

unaware of the resources available to them, or too embarrassed to seek assistance, they will struggle in silence resulting in negative experiences in college and, in many cases, failure to graduate. Disabled students who are skilled at self-advocacy are more likely to have a sense of control over their lives and feel more confident and competent. This sense of confidence and competence inspires people to a greater level of self-determination (“Self-advocacy-Why it’s important,” 2012).

Students with disabilities in higher education are the forgotten minority (Vodicka, 1971, p. 220). This group consists of any student who has a vision or hearing impairment, mental retardation or illness, difficulty with physical activities, and learning difficulties that span a broad scale from very severe impairments to minor struggles. The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between the moment students self-identify for services for students with disabilities and the impact it has on their success for degree attainment.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the availability of disability services on college campuses, students with disabilities struggle to attain their degrees. The purpose of this research is a case study to evaluate how well students perform when receiving services from SSWD (Services to Students with Disabilities). This thesis will explore the social, psychological, and cultural factors that prevent students from seeking assistance in a timely fashion and highlight the inequities of student access, student achievement based of self-advocacy, and self-identification of students with disabilities in a larger university. This study will

also offer examples of obstacles facing students who choose to self-identify and what can be done by college campuses to mitigate these obstacles.

This study will address the following questions:

1. Do students who self-identify at the start of their college career have a more positive experience and a better chance of completing their degree versus students who self-identify only once they are struggling in their college career?
2. Are there any social and/or psychological reasons that prevent disabled students from self-identifying while in college, which may hinder their success?
3. What outreach efforts are being made to reach high schools, schools directors, parent advocacy groups, and individual parents, to encourage students with disabilities to seek services once they enter higher education without violating the students' rights?

Finally, this study will compare the differences between the student experience of those who seek out disability services early in their academic career and those who identify as needing services later.

### **Definition of Terms**

504 (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973)

A federal law designed to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance from the U.S.



Department of Education (ED). Section 504 states: "No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States...shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance..." Section 504 regulations require a school district to provide a "free appropriate public education" (FAPE) to each qualified student with a disability who is in the school district's jurisdiction, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability. Under Section 504, FAPE consists of the provision of regular or special education and related aids and services designed to meet the student's individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of non-disabled students (United States Department of Education, n.d., para. 3).

#### Advocacy

The act or process of supporting a cause or proposal: the act or process for advocating something (Advocacy, n.d.).

#### Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

An act passed in 1990 that prohibits discrimination and ensures equal opportunity for persons with disabilities in employment, state and local government services, public accommodations, commercial facilities, and transportation. It also mandates the establishment of TDD/telephone relay services (ADA.gov, n.d.).

### Disability Identity

Processing a positive sense of self and feeling of connection to, or solidarity with, the disabled community (Dunn & Burcaw, 2013, p. 2).

### Graduation

Completing all the required elements to receive a college diploma.

### Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

An Act that was passed by Congress in 1996 which provides the ability to transfer and continue health insurance coverage for millions of American workers and their families when they change or lose their jobs. It reduces health care fraud and abuse, mandates industry-wide standards for health care information on electronic billing and other processes and requires the protection and confidential handling of protected health information (HIPAA, n.d., para. 1).

### Individual Education Plan (IEP)

An educational plan that is designed for one student and must be a truly individualized document. The IEP creates an opportunity for teachers, parents, school administrators, related service personnel, and students (when appropriate) to work together to improve educational results for children with disabilities. The IEP is the cornerstone of a quality education for each child with a disability (A Guide to the Individualized Education Program, n.d., Introduction).

### Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

A law that makes free appropriate public education available to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children (About IDEA, n.d., para. 1).

### Learning Disability (LD)

A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, whether spoken or written, which may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations.

Disorders included - Includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

Disorders not included - Does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantages (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, n.d., para. 1-3).

### Resilience

A set of attributes that provide people with the strength and fortitude to confront the overwhelming obstacles they are bound to face in life (Sagor, 1996, para. 4).

### Retention

An ability to retain things in mind; specifically: a preservation of the after effects of experience and learning that makes recall or recognition possible (Retention, n.d.)

### Self-advocacy

The act of representing oneself and one's interests by speaking up for oneself. It means explaining one's learning disability to others, and telling them how one uses strengths and accommodations to succeed (Learning Disabilities Association of America, 2017, para. 1).

### Self-determination

The usage of self-determination as a personality construct. Nirje's use of the term, although still pertaining to the rights of a particular group of people (e.g., people with mental retardation), is nonetheless a call for personal self-determination or self-governance. Nirje (1972) identified making choices, asserting one-self, self-management, self-knowledge, decision making, self-advocacy, self-efficacy, self-regulation, autonomy, and independence (albeit often not using those terms), as the salient features of this personal self-determination. His is a call for a wide range of action, that enable people to control their lives and their destinies, including choice over personal activities, control over education, independence, participation in decisions, information on which to make decisions and solve problems, and so forth (Wehmeyer, 1998, p.6).

Individuals who 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 an individual's presence, making his or her needs known, evaluating progress towards meeting goals, adjusting performance, and

creating unique approaches to solve problems (Wehmeyer & Schalock, 2001, p. 2).

### Self-identification

The process each student must undergo if he or she is seeking services from the disabilities office at a post-secondary campus. The student must contact the specified department and identify as a student who need services. The process includes providing documentation of their disability, testing that is provided by the department, medical documentation, and paperwork from previous schools from which the student was receiving services.

### Services to Students with Disabilities (SSWD)

The department which offers a wide range of support services and accommodations for students to ensure students with disabilities have equal access and opportunity to pursue their educational goals (California State University, Sacramento, n.d., para. 1).

### **Significance of the Study**

Understanding the factors influencing a student's choice to self-identify as needing disability services is important to administrators of educational institutions because it has been well established that receiving appropriate services increases retention and graduation rates of disabled students.

### **Organization of the Study**

This study will consist of five chapters. Chapter 2 covers the historical context, laws, and regulations that protect and assist students with disabilities in K-12 and post-

secondary education. The literature reviews theoretical frameworks relevant to identity development and student growth and development concepts. The chapter will make a connection between the social and/or psychological reasons disabled students choose not to self-identify and the challenges they face while obtaining their degree.

Chapter 3 covers the research methods and data collection techniques used for this study. Chapter 4 discusses the data collected from survey questionnaires and interviews. The survey was designed to select participants for a follow-up interview which was used for the case study and will assist in understanding the trends, findings and results. The interview gives context and insight to the raw data taken from the survey questionnaire. Chapter 5 summarizes the thesis and provides recommendations based on the findings of the study.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will cover the historical context, laws, and regulations which protect and assist students with disabilities in education. It covers federal and state laws that span over five decades beginning with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) to the current Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Theoretical frameworks relevant to Chickering's Identity Development and Disability Identity Development Theory will be explored.

As more special need students enter K-12, and multiple types of “needs” are recognized, laws in the United States change to meet the requirements of the students. These changes that greatly affect children in K-12 must now be reviewed and extended to postsecondary education. Thus far, the legislation written and enacted has focused on students in primary education, however, many special needs children are entering postsecondary education. These students who never thought of furthering their education beyond grade school are now entering postsecondary education with little to no regulations on how to meet their needs. Under FAPE (Section 504), only students in K-12 are covered. Further discussion of FAPE will be explored in Chapter 5, including a discussion whether they could be expanded to Post-Secondary Education. Federal regulations created a transition from K-12 to daily living and personal care, but there is a

lack of education regulations and laws for special needs people entering postsecondary education.

### **Historical Context**

For years students with disabilities did not receive services and education. Education was not always a right, and there were no expectations for students with special needs to progress their education. There was a belief that disabled students should not and could not be educated. Since there was no classification for these students, all of them were labeled with behavioral issues. Students who exhibited any behavior other than “normal” were overlooked and considered unable to be taught and were a nuisance in schools (Saled & Duhaney, 2011, pg. 6). In the United States, students with disabilities other than physical were classified based on their behaviors. There was no classification for students who didn’t have a physical disability. Students who suffered from learning disabilities consisted of students who had trouble with reading, language disorders and developmental delays, were all label under psychological disorders.

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed a bill called the Elementary and Secondary Education Act which set aside federal funding for primary and secondary education allowing equal access to education. Even with this legislation, the needs of children with special needs were not met. Until parents started advocating for their children, the school districts were not equipped or willing to assist students with any form of disability, except for a physical disability.



Precedence was set in a September 1971 court case; *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children versus the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, which sided in favor of students with intellectual and learning disabilities, stating that any school receiving public funding must meet the individual needs of the disabled students. In December 1971, another court case, *Mills v. Board of Education*, found that it was unlawful for the District of Columbia Board of Education to deny individual access to publicly funded education. These rulings marked an exceptional day for students with mental disabilities, learning disabilities, and behavioral issues.

The court cases opened the eyes of lawmakers and in 1972, a congressional investigation by the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped uncovered out of the 8 million children that required special education services, 3.9 million had their educational needs met, 2.5 million were receiving substandard education, and 1.75 million were not in school at all.

With this information, in 1975 the Department of Education officially recognized the identification of students with special needs by passing Public Law 94-142: The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA). This law covered multiple areas: equal access to education for all children with disabilities, ensuring that children receive one free meal per day, and requiring that each state governed compliance within their public-school system. This law allowed for students to be identified as having learning disabilities for special education services in public schools.

In 1976, Public Law 99-457 amended Public Law 94-142 (Boyer, 1979), which required that families with children who were born with disabilities receive services. The

previous public laws stated that children with disabilities were not able to receive services until the age of three. This changed the way children with disabilities were educated in K-12. It mandated that school districts provide services to all students classified with special needs. This was a start, however, there were still many flaws within the educational system. It was a struggle for the school districts to implement such a new radical policy. Each state was told to implement and create access for the students without any guidelines. As students with special needs started entering school, districts had to review their practices, policies, and services to make sure they complied. With all the changes and updates happening within the federal government and state entities, there was still no voice for parents to advocate for their children.

In 1986, President Reagan signed the Handicapped Children Protection Act which created Individual Education Plans (IEPs). These plans allowed parents to have input in their children's educational development. An IEP followed special needs children throughout their K-12 years. This was a step in the right direction, however, Congress realized that children with special needs needed assistance beyond 12th grade, and in January 1990, it overhauled Public Law 94-142 mandating that an Individual Transition Plan (ITP) be created to help students transition to postsecondary life. Also, traumatic brain injury and autism were added to disability categories.

The Handicapped Children Act was amended yet again in 1997 and was renamed to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It allowed states to expand the developmental delay definition age to include children aged six to nine. Another important aspect of the Act was mandating that all students have the same access to

curriculum no matter the disability. Federal regulations created a transition from K-12 to daily living and personal care, but there is a lack of education regulations and laws for special needs students entering postsecondary education.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed in 1990 and continued the work of the of 1973 Rehabilitation Act. According to the website ADA.org, the Rehabilitation Act prohibits discrimination based on disability in programs conducted by federal agencies, receiving federal financial assistance, in federal employment, and in the employment practices of federal contractors. The standards for determining employment discrimination under the Rehabilitation Act are the same as those used in Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA.gov).

ADA prohibits discrimination based on one's disability, which includes religion, sex, national origin, etc. "ADA requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations to employees with disabilities and imposes accessibility requirements on public accommodations" (CA.gov). ADA applied those standards to private sector businesses and sought to eliminate barriers to disabled access in buildings, transportation, and communication. To a large degree, the passage of the ADA supplants the employment provisions of 504 accommodations and reinforces the accessibility requirements of 504 accommodations with more specific regulations" (Council of Educators for Students with Disabilities, Inc.).

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Chickering's Identity Development**

Chickering's Theory of Identity Development is a very important theory, which discusses the stages of student development during their college years. Chickering covers 7 steps/vectors (a-d vectors are developed during their freshman and sophomore years; e-g vectors are developed during their Junior and Senior years) (Dickson & McMahan, 1991).

Chickering's Identity Theory (Chickering, 1969) is broken down into seven vectors within two components; students in their freshman and sophomore year of college is one component and Junior and Senior students in college is the second components. It is theorized that the first two years of college, students are working through developmental competencies, managing their emotions, learning to solve problems on their own and developing mature interpersonal relationships. In their later years, students are establishing identity, developing purpose and developing integrity.

#### **Freshman and sophomore years**

The first vector of component one is developing competence. Developing competence for a college student focuses on three aspects of the student development - intellectual competence, physical and manual skills, and interpersonal competence (Chickering, 1969). Intellectual competence refers to a student's ability to problem solve and come up with solutions to solve said problems, have confidence when engaging, and work cooperatively with a group (Peterson, 1971). Physical and manual competence are typically developed through athletic and artistic achievement such as good

sportsmanship, healthy sense of competition, wellness and/or creativity. The habits and skills developed from these activities are translated to other areas in student life (Rempel, McElroy & Bridges, 2017, p. 83). Interpersonal competence has one specific component, effective interaction. Effective interactions are social skills students need to achieve their goals (Buhrmester, Furman, Wittenberg, & Reis, 1988). When students learn to rely on their abilities, accept feedback from others, and are able to constructively use the feedback that is received, their sense of self-assurance is firm (Chickering, 1969).

The second vector of the first component is managing emotions – students are learning to control their emotions appropriately. When young adults are at home with their parents/guardians any time they encounter fear, stress, or irritations; their parents are the ones who deal with the emotional component. Once a student enters college, they are required to face all of these obstacles themselves. They need to learn appropriate channels for releasing stress before they explode, dealing with fears before they are immobilized, and healing emotional wounds before they infect other relationships (Abiddin & Ismail, 2012). Young students move from dependence to having to figure out how to navigate school, their lives, and activities surrounding them, in a short period of time.

The third vector of the first component is solving problems on one's own (Moving through Autonomy toward Interdependence). Arnold and Arnold (1997) described this component as a key developmental step for students is learning to function with relative self-sufficiency, to take responsibility for pursuing self-chosen goals, and to be less bound by others' opinions. Movement requires both emotional and instrumental

independence, and later recognition and acceptance of interdependence. Chickering and Reisser (1993), the authors of the developmental vectors, argued that “developing autonomy culminates in the recognition that one cannot operate in a vacuum and that greater autonomy enables healthier forms of interdependence” (p. 47). The need to be independent and the longing for inclusion become better balanced. Interdependence means respecting the autonomy of others and looking for ways to give and take with an ever-expanding circle of friends (Chickering, 1969).

The fourth vector of the first component is developing mature interpersonal relationships - developing mature relationships involves (1) tolerance and appreciation of differences and (2) capacity for intimacy. Tolerance can be seen in both an intercultural and an interpersonal context. Attributes of mature interpersonal relationships include awareness, breadth of experience, openness, curiosity, and objectivity which help students refine first impressions, reduce bias and ethnocentrism, increase empathy and altruism, and enjoy diversity (Chickering, et al., 2012). Tolerance and appreciation of differences increases the capacity for healthy intimacy. Developing mature interpersonal relationships leads to a “more in-depth sharing and less clinging, more acceptance of flaws and appreciation of assets, more selectivity in choosing nurturing relationships, and more long-lasting relationships that endure through crises, distance, and separation” (Altbach & King, 1997, p. 16).

### **Junior and senior years – second component**

The second component of Chickering’s Student Development Theories is, Establishing Identity, Developing Purpose and Developing Integrity. The first vector of

the second component is establishing identity - identity formation requires that the other vectors in the first component are met. Development of identity focuses on the student's awareness of (1) comfort with body and appearance, (2) comfort with gender and sexual orientation, (3) sense of self in a social, historical, and cultural context, (4) clarification of self-concept through roles and life-style, (5) sense of self in response to feedback from valued others, (6) self-acceptance and self-esteem, and (7) personal stability and integration (Chickering - et al.. -2012). Baumeister and Muraven (1996) mentioned that it "also includes reflecting on one's family of origin and ethnic heritage, defining self as a part of a religious or cultural tradition, and seeing self within a social and historical context as establishing identity" (p. 408). It involves gaining a sense of how one is seen and evaluated by others. It leads to clarity and stability and a feeling of warmth for the core self as capable, familiar, and worthwhile (Chickering, 1969).

The second vector of the second component, developing purpose, entails an increasing ability to be intentional, to assess one's interests and options, to clarify goals, to make plans, and to persist despite obstacles. It requires formulating plans for action and a set of priorities that integrate three major elements: (1) vocational plans and aspirations, (2) personal interests, and (3) interpersonal and family commitments (Altbach & Arnold, 1997, p.18). Vocations can include paid work, unpaid work, or both. Vocational plans come from one's interests and can turn into aspirations that have meaning and value. Family is considered because most people's intimate relationships, long-term and partnerships, are determined and designed based on the type of relationship with family.

The last vector of the second component is Developing Integrity. Altbach and Arnold (1997) explained Chickering's developing integrity as closely related to establishing identity and clarifying purposes. They discuss how core values and beliefs provide the foundation for interpreting experience, guiding behavior, and maintaining self-respect. Developing integrity involves three sequential but overlapping stages: (1) humanizing values-shifting away from automatic application of uncompromising beliefs and using principled thinking in balancing one's own self-interest with the interests of one's fellow human beings, (2) personalizing values-consciously affirming core values and beliefs while respecting other points of view, and (3) developing congruence-matching personal values with socially appropriate behaviors (Altbach & Arnold, 1997, p.19).

### **Disability Identity Development**

Disability Identity Development (Theory) is a relatively new concept in the psychology community. Several scholars have attempted to define Disability Identity. Johnstone's (cited in Dunn & Burcaw, 2013) definition focuses on the internal component and defines it as a personal construction. Dunn and Burcaw (2013) saw Disability Identity as the possession of a positive sense of self and feelings of connection to, or solidarity with, the disability community. Gill's (1997) stage conceptualization of disability identity development (p. 41) while Gibson's (2002) three-stage model focuses on theoretical perspective, which defined disability identity development to passive awareness, realization, and acceptance (p. 154). When reviewing Disability Identity Development theory in reference to college students, Forber-Pratt, Lycw, Mueller, and



Samples (2017) described Disability Identity Development as the following five concepts: communal attachment, affirmation of disability, disability identity politics and activism, personal meaning and disability (p. 200).

Communal attachment focuses on the importance of community. People who have common experiences dealing with their disabilities are more likely to engage with their peers who have had similar experiences. Forber-Pratt, et al. (2017) suggested that a sense of communal attachment, a community-based form of identity integration, is like “coming home” for many people with disabilities. Similarly, Chickering’s (1969) developing mature interpersonal relationship vector, forming meaningfully and long-lasting relationships with students, faculty, and administrators are invaluable for students.

Affirmation of disability helps students assert their strength and weakness of their disabilities. Dunn and Burcaw’s (2013) argument for disability identity looked at a student’s positive sense of self, feelings and connection to, or solidarity with the disability community and is believed to help the student adapt to their disability and navigating social stresses and daily hassles. Students affirming their disability have a feeling of being included in society, having the same rights and responsibilities as other citizens, and sense a of being recognized and treated like everyone else within a group or society.

Disability identity politics and activism is an important construct in disability identity because of the stigma associated to students with disabilities (Putnam, 2005). Political advocacy and activism emphasize three themes which are relevant to disability identity as understood within psychological contexts: self-worth, pride, and awareness of

discrimination. Putnam (2005) described self-worth as the viewing oneself as a person of worth, of equal value in society as people without physical or mental disabilities, which is central to the development of a positive minority group identity for people experiencing disabilities (p. 190). Dunn and Burcaw (2013) added that the idea of valuing oneself is dependent on an individual's ability to perform activities or tasks viewed as important to the self, others and society more generally (e.g., performing activities of daily living). A sense of self-worth enables people with disabilities to see themselves as possessing the same worth as individuals who have not experienced a disability (p. 149). Self-worth and pride are similar. Dunn and Burcaw (2013) define pride as being proud of one's identity and, in the process, acknowledging the possession of a socially-devalued quality, such as a mental or a physical disability. Pride encourages people with disabilities to "claim" rather than deny, or mask disability (p. 152). This concept is necessary for developmental growth of disabled students based on Putnam's (2005) research: "feelings of pride run counter to social and cultural beliefs that disability is tragedy and that persons with physical or mental disabilities would rather not be who they are" (p. 191). It is believed that students with disabilities are often targets of discrimination on a daily basis including bias, prejudice and unfair treatment (Dunn & Burcaw, 2013, p. 148). Continued negative attitudes and discriminatory behavior are burdensome on students managing emotions and learning to solve their problems as discussed in Chickering's Identity Development (Chickering, 1969).

Personal meaning and disability focus on the individual's understanding, finding meaning, and searching for the significance and benefits associated with their disability.

The importance of this aspect of disability identity represents personal acceptance of one's disability. Dunn and Burcaw (2013, November) stated that "constructive acceptance of one's life situation, then, can solidify the meaning of disability while promoting a favorable disability identity." Putnam (2005) argued "the experience of disability is different for each person depending on his or her unique impairment and disability experiences; for many individuals, disability is not a primary identity, but is incorporated into their overall sense of self" (p.192).

### **Summary**

This chapter covered the historical context, laws, and regulations which protect and assist students with disabilities in education, and reviewed Chickering's Identity Development and Disability Identity Development Theories. Federal and state laws were cited including the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA), Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Chickering's Theory of Identity Development (Chickering, 1969) discussed student development during college years. The two stages of student development reviewed seven vectors during students' college years, as freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors. During stage one (freshman and sophomore), college students were working through developmental competencies, managing their emotions, learning to solve problems on their own and developing mature interpersonal relationships. During stage two, students' junior and senior years, they were establishing identity, developing purpose and developing integrity.

Disability Identity Development Theory discussed five concepts: communal attachment, affirmation of disability, disability identity politics and activism, personal meaning and disability. Communal attachment and affirmation of disability focused on the importance of community which helps students assert their strengths and weakness of their disability. Disability identity politics and activism reviewed three themes which were relevant to disability identity: self-worth, pride, and awareness of discrimination, which allows for students with disabilities to advocate for themselves. Lastly, personal meaning and disability was reviewed in reference to the Disability Identity Development Theory (Dunn & Burcaw, 2013). This focused on individuals' understanding, significance and the benefits associated with their disability.

## Chapter 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this research is a case study to evaluate how well students perform when receiving services from SSWD. It will explore the social, psychological, and cultural factors that prevent students from seeking assistance in a timely fashion and to highlight the inequities of student access, student achievement based of self-advocacy, and self-identification of students with disabilities in a larger university. The research methodology for this study utilized a mixed methods design, a quantitative online survey, and a qualitative in-person interview to answer the following research questions:

1. Do students who self-identify at the start of their college career have a more positive experience and a better chance of completing their degree versus students who self-identify only once they are struggling in their college career?
2. Are there any social and/or psychological reasons that prevent disabled students from self-identifying while in college, which may hinder their success?
3. What outreach efforts are being made to reach high schools, schools directors, parent advocacy groups, and individual parents, to encourage students with disabilities to seek services once they enter higher education without violating the students' rights?

This chapter gives an explanation and outline of the methodology and design for this study.

### **Setting of the Study**

This study took place at a large public university in Northern California, which serves over 30,000 students annually. Out of a population of 30,000, the Services to Students with Disabilities (SSWD) office served 1,000 students, according to the SSWD Assessment and Planning Report for 2016-2017 (California State University, Sacramento, n.d.). Disability categories included: Attention Deficit/Hyperactive Disorder (18%), Psychological/Psychiatric disabilities (17%), Learning Disabilities (15%), and Mobility and Other Functional Limitations (33%). The population of students with disabilities is steadily increasing in post-secondary education. According to the data for the past four years at this university, SSWD served approximately 985 students with disabilities in 2015-2016 based on census enrollment data from the Enrollment Reporting System - Student report. SSWD served approximately 800 students with disabilities in 2014-2015 and approximately 780 students with disabilities in 2012-2013 (California State University, Sacramento, 2018).

### **Population and Sample**

The goal of this study was to understand the factors influencing a student's choice to self-identify as needing disability services; since it has been well-established that receiving appropriate services increases the retention and graduation rates of this population. Because of this, the researcher focused the sample population on students

who were receiving services, excluding students classified under Temporary Disabilities, from SSWD.

Students fitting these criteria were identified with the assistance of the SSWD office at this institution. Because of the protected status of this population, the researcher provided the department with a consent form, and a link to the survey for the students to participate. Students who participated in the survey were given the option to participate in an in-person follow-up interview. Students interested in the in-person interview of this study contacted the researcher by email or phone. The researcher did not receive the names, student identification numbers, or any other identifying information about the students who received the survey portion of the research. Students who participated in the interview provided their contact information (name, email and/or phone number) only for the researcher to follow-up with them.

A total of 820 students were emailed; 771 undergraduates and 49 graduates. Sixty-six (66) responses were collected from the interview, 54 surveys completed, and 5 surveys were incomplete. A total of 7 students contacted the researcher for an in-person interview, and of the 7, 3 were interviewed. The final participants of the study included 54 students for the survey portion, and 3 for the follow-up interview. Of the 54 final survey respondents, 16 were graduates, 41 were undergraduates, and 2 did not identify their academic level.

### **Design of the Study**

A quantitative method was used to conduct the online survey and a qualitative method was used to conduct the follow-up in-person interviews of the SSWD students.

Graduate and undergraduate students were utilized for this study to gain a holistic review of when the student began receiving services during their career at the university. Only one group was excluded from the survey - students who were classified as receiving services because of temporary disabilities. Using the online survey generator, Qualtrics.com, student data was collected from a one-time survey compilation of the questionnaire (see Appendix B). Students who participated in the interview portion (see Appendix C) of this study met with the researcher in a public location. Participation was voluntary, and subjects had the opportunity to discontinue participation at any time. No incentives were offered for participation.

#### **Data Collection Procedures**

To reach this population, an invitation to participate in the study was sent by the SSWD department to the students' campus emails. The emailed invitation contained a link for students to complete the questionnaire anonymously via Qualtrics.com. Students who received this link had the opportunity to self-select to participate by following the link and completing the questionnaire. No direct identifiers were collected, and all responses remained anonymous.

#### **Data Analysis Procedures**

The data was gathered over a four-month span and analyzed using descriptive and correlational statistics. Data was collected from Qualtrics.com for the survey and entered into Microsoft Excel for further review. The interview was transcribed by the researcher. All results gained from data analysis will be discussed in Chapter 4.



### **Limitations of the Study**

The limitations of this study include concerns regarding the method of data collection. Data was collected from a convenience sample of students at a single educational institution. Also, because data was collected by means of self-reported surveys, there is an unavoidable risk of bias in self-reporting in student responses. This limitation was addressed by keeping the study participants anonymous to reduce any potential for social desirability bias.

Additional limitations of this study surrounded access to the student population. The invitation for participation in the study was sent to 820 students, 771 undergraduate and 49 graduates. A total of 54 responses were collected. This yielded roughly a 6% response rate, far shy of the 30% response rate that was desired for the study. Another limitation of the study was that there was no equal representation for academic levels. The participants' academic level identification was 98% undergraduates and 2% graduates. This led to a disproportionate representation of academic levels within the data.

### **Summary**

The primary goal of this study was to provide an understanding of disabled students who receive services through SSWD and to evaluate the student experience and benefits of self-identifying for services earlier in the student's academic career in the institutions of higher education. The secondary goal was also to determine if a relationship exists between student early intervention (self-identifying), retention, and completion of educational goals.

The research was conducted online and in-person with students from California State University, Sacramento in Northern California. The survey consisted of 11 questions and an 11-question in-person interview. The survey focused on the services students received and involvement in student life. The interview focused on the personal experience of the students and the impact of the services the students received from SSWD on their academic career. This study was conducted with 54 students who self-identified as students with disabilities. Of the 54 students, 3 students were interviewed. The survey data was collected online via Qualtrics.com, and with an in-person interview. The researcher entered the data into Microsoft Excel for analysis using descriptive and correlational statistics, and the researcher transcribed the interview responses.

## Chapter 4

### DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this research is a case study to evaluate how well students perform when receiving services from SSWD. It explores the social, psychological, and cultural factors that prevent students from seeking assistance in a timely fashion and highlights the inequities of student access, student achievement based on self-advocacy, and self-identification of students with disabilities in a larger university. The researcher hopes to expand the understanding of how valuable it is for students with disabilities to advocate, self-identify, and connect to the campus community. This study was conducted at one of the 23 State Universities in California. A quantitative and qualitative study was conducted via an online survey and an in-person interview to address the following research questions:

1. Do students who self-identify at the start of their college career have a more positive experience and a better chance of completing their degree versus students who self-identify only once they are struggling in their college career?
2. Are there any social and/or psychological reasons that prevent disabled students from self-identifying while in college, which may hinder their success?

3. What outreach efforts are being made to reach high schools, schools directors, parent advocacy groups, and individual parents, to encourage students with disabilities to seek services once they enter higher education without violating the students' rights?

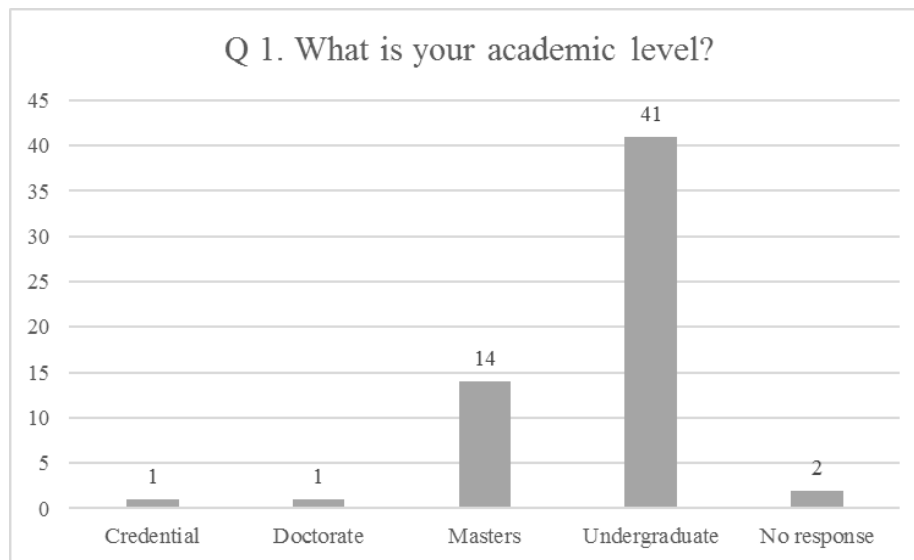
This chapter presents the finding from the questionnaire and interviews conducted. The interview questions are categorized by student background and services students received. The interviews are analyzed based on themes that emerged from the 11 questions discussed. The data analysis will address the primary research questions on the topics of the benefit of self-identifying, the social and psychological impacts of self-identification, and how receiving services for disabilities impacts students' educational experiences.

### **Findings and Analysis of the Data**

#### **Academic Level**

Most of the respondents (41 out of 59) surveyed were seeking bachelor's degrees. The second largest group consisted of those seeking master's degrees (14 out of 59). The remaining respondents were seeking Teaching Credentials and doctorate degrees. Two respondents did not answer the question.

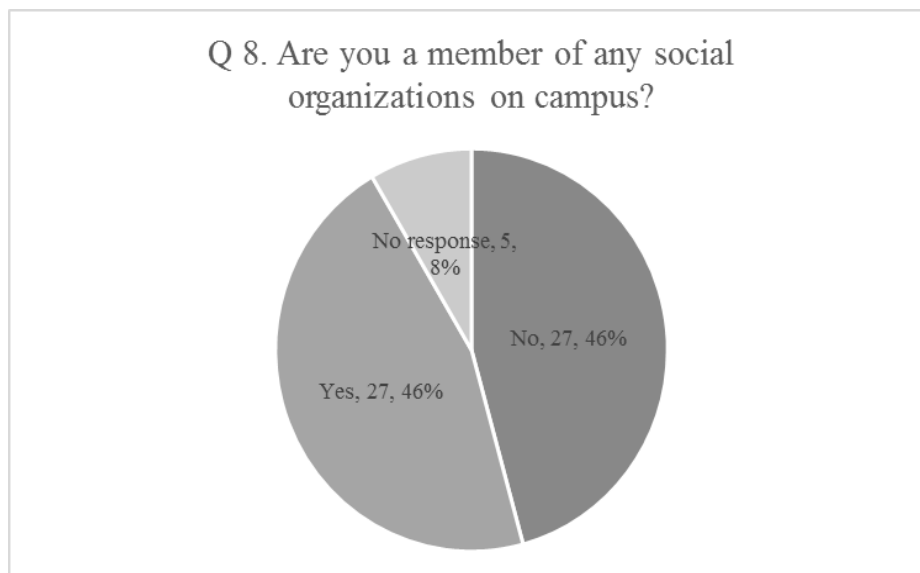
*Figure 1.* Survey Response to Academic Level



### **Self-Identity and Campus Connectivity**

Half of the respondents surveyed are members of a social organization on campus, while the other half are not. Also, 5 of the 59 respondents did not answer the question. When it comes to the general population so of this campus, 6% of students surveyed were participating in on-campus social events/organizations while 84% did not (OIR, 2009). This demonstrates that students with disabilities have a higher eagerness to engage with the campus community.

Figure 2. Survey Response to Social Organization Connectivity



Most respondents who participate in social organizations on campus were in educational related organizations (14 out of 59). The second largest group were social organizations (13 out of 59). Finally, sports and miscellaneous organizations were the least common. 32 out of 59 respondents did not respond.

Table 1

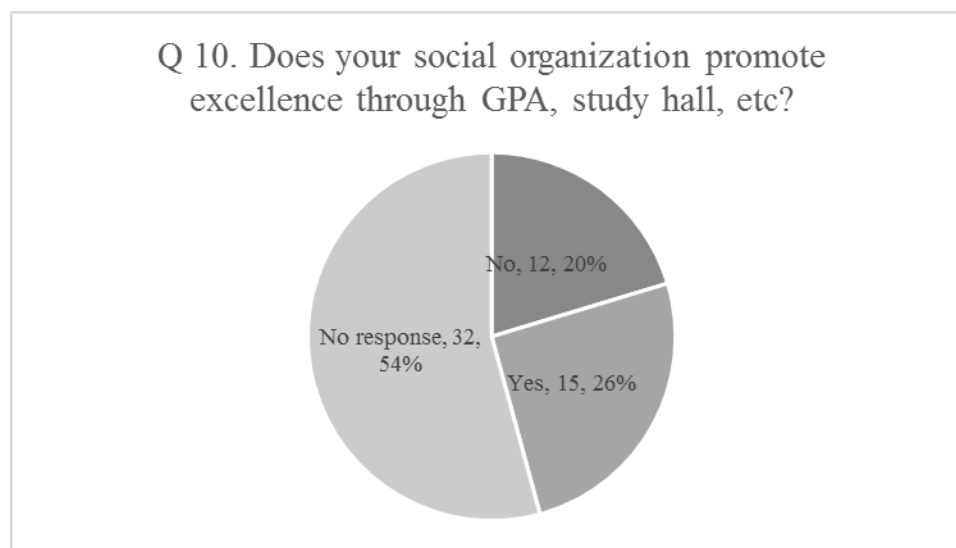
*Survey Question #9: Types of Campus Engagement*

Education	Sport	Social	Misc.	No response
14	3	13	4	32

Out of the respondents who participate in social organizations on campus, 56% (15 out of 27) said their organization promotes academic excellence through GPA requirements, study halls, etc., while 44% (12 out of 27) said their organizations does not

promote academic excellence. The remaining 32 respondents did not answer the question because they do not participate in any on campus organizations.

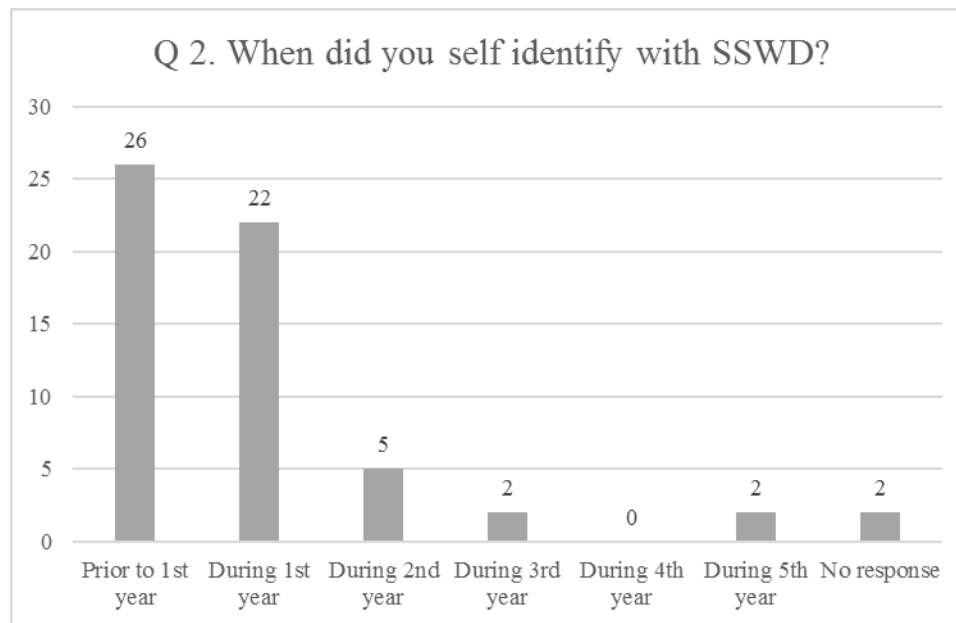
*Figure 3.* - Survey Response to Academic Excellence in Social Organizations



### **Self-Advocacy**

Most respondents surveyed self-identified with SSWD during their first year of enrollment (48 out of 59). Some of the reasons given for self-identifying during the first year of enrollment based on the interviews conducted include precautionary measures in case services are needed later on in the academic career and the continuation of services received during K-12 years. The remaining respondents self-identified later in their academic careers (9 out of 59). One reason is that students were not aware of services available to them until they start having academic challenges.

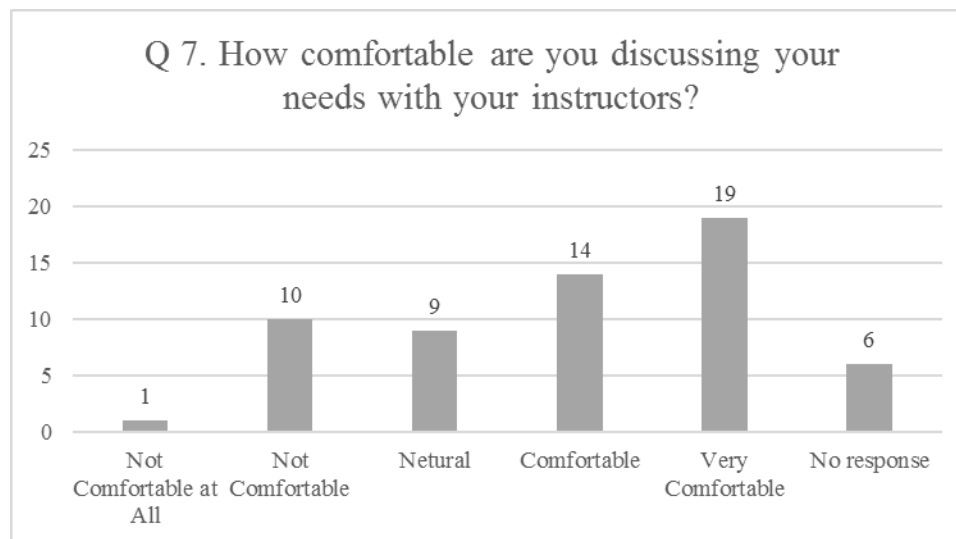
Figure 4. Survey Response to Time of Self-Identification



Most respondents surveyed (33 out of 59) are either very comfortable or comfortable discussing their needs with their instructors. The other respondents surveyed were either neutral, not comfortable, or not comfortable at all discussing their needs with their instructors (20 out of 59). One of the reasons mentioned in the follow-up interview for being uncomfortable discussing needs with the instructor is fear of the instructor's unwillingness to accommodate the student, instructors expressing disdain for the services received. Six of the 59 respondents did not respond to the question.



Figure 5. Survey Responses to Comfort with Self-Advocacy



### Services Received

Of the responses to the open-ended survey question, there was a wide-range of services offered to the students. In order of services mentioned, extended test time was the most common, followed by classroom assistance (note takers, ASL signer, personal assistants, recorded sessions, and lecture notes from instructor), personal accommodations (eating in the classroom, permission to stand up and stretch during lectures, and disabled desk seating at front of classroom ), retention services (recorded textbooks, textbooks in Braille, and priority registration), and non-educational services (disabled parking and transportation services). Eleven (11) of the respondents are either not currently receiving services or answered with an unrelated response.

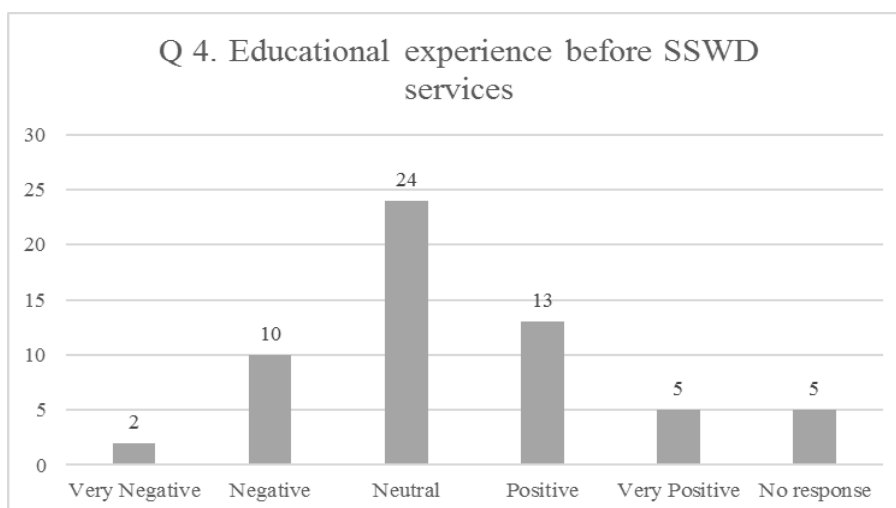
Table 2

*Survey Question #3* Types of Services Received from SSWD

Extended test time	Class assistance	Retention services	Personal accommodations	No services	Non-education services	Unrelated
35	15	13	14	2	4	9

**Before SSWD**

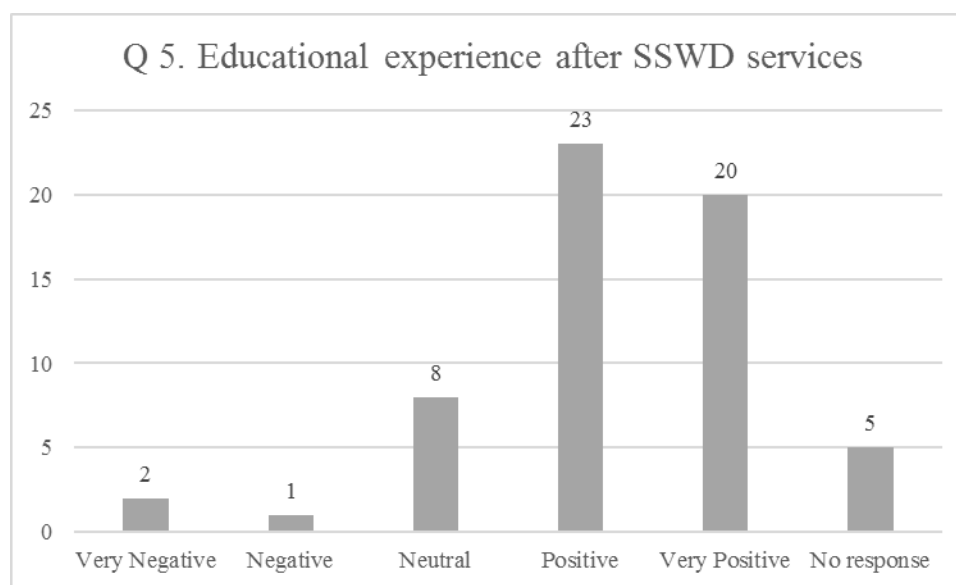
Most of the respondents surveyed (24 out of 59) had a neutral educational experience prior to receiving SSWD services. One of the reasons so many respondents had a neutral experience is because they could figure out ways to mitigate or deal with their disabilities so that their educational experience was not impacted. 15 of the respondents had a positive or very positive experience, and 12 had a negative or very negative experience. Some of the examples given from the follow-up interviews for having a negative educational experience prior to SSWD services included academic and physical difficulties. 5 of the respondents did not answer the question.

*Figure 6.* Survey Response to Experience Before SSWD

### After SSWD

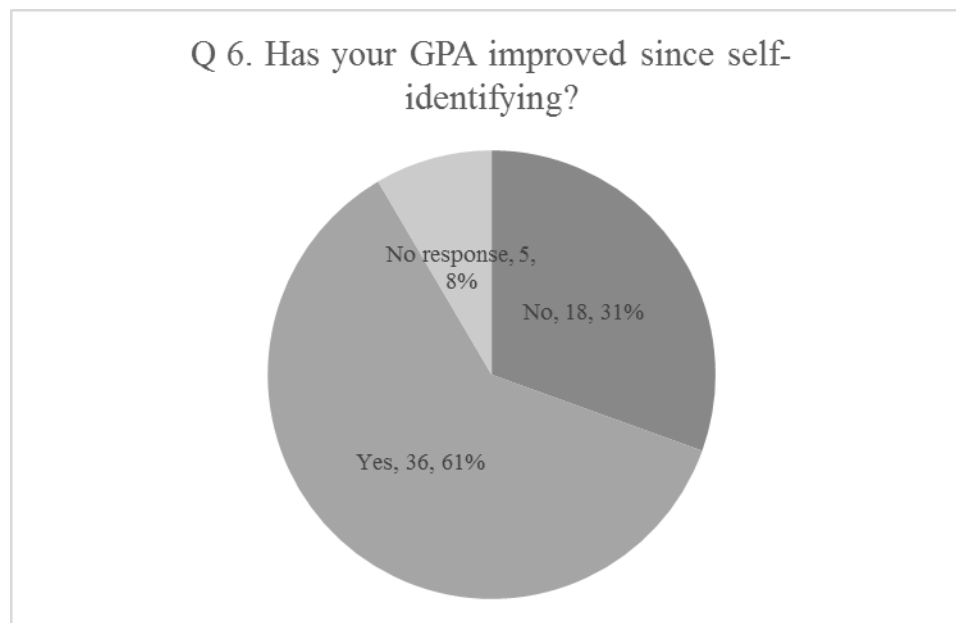
Forty-three (43) out of 59 respondents had a positive or very positive educational experience after receiving SSWD services. Most of the students received services that were able to assist with their educational needs. The rest of the respondents (11 out of 59) had either a neutral, negative, or very negative experience. These respondents had the same experience prior to receiving SSWD services and did not change their minds afterwards. One of the reasons is the social implications of being a disabled student.

*Figure 7.* Survey Response to Experience After SSWD



Sixty-one percent (61%) of the respondents improved their GPAs since self-identifying with SSWD. Thirty-one percent (31%) of the respondents did not improve their GPAs. Eight percent (8%) of the respondents did not answer the question.

Figure 8. Survey Responses to GPA Improvement



### Summary

The purpose of this research was to evaluate how well students perform when receiving services from SSWD. A quantitative and qualitative study was conducted via an online survey and an in-person interview focused around self-identity, self-advocacy and types of services received. The quantitative study came from 59 students receiving services from Services to Student with Disabilities department. All of the students surveyed were currently enrolled and actively attending the campus of study at the time of their participation. Five students opted to be interviewed for the qualitative portion of the study. Three of the five students were selected for the case study.

Self-identity concentrated on student background, reasons for identifying and campus connectivity. Analysis of the gathered data from the interviews resulted in; one

undergrad student, two post baccalaureate students (Master and EDD degree seeking) were interviewed. All students expressed they were in need of additional service to be successful and wanted the additional benefits student with disabilities received, such as priority registration, greater access to classroom and facilities and assistance beyond regular services. All students are heavily involved with the SSWD department and engage with others student with disabilities on campus. Of the three students interviewed only one participates in activities and organizations on campus.

Self-advocacy focused on when the students chose to self-identify, how comfortable they were discussing their needs with their instructors and if there were any social and/or psychological factors that prevented the students from self-identifying. Analysis of the gathered data from the interviews revealed one student chose to identify once they started having trouble academically, and the other students self-identified as a precautionary measure. All of the students interviewed agreed there were social variables which deterred them from self-identifying. One student shared they did not want to identify because of the negative responds they would receive from other students if they knew the student was getting additional support, and they were worried of about the negative respond received from instructors when they are required to provide services beyond the scope of the class. Only one of the three students voiced their concern about classmates feeling they had an unfair advantage since they received additional services for their disability.

Finally, services received focused on how the college addressed the needs of the students and how it affected their experience. Analysis of the gathered data from the

interviewees established; two of the three students received services, services such as classroom assistance, additional test time and other personal accommodations which improved their overall experience and increased their GPA. Of the students receiving services all of the stated the services has definitely impacted their educational experience positively and based on that their educational goal had changed; for example, one student has decided to continue their education beyond the undergrad career.

## Chapter 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Summary**

This study took place at a public university in Northern California and reflects the experiences of disabled students who identified as needing support and services from the SSWD department at this particular institution. The study is a response to the question of there being social, psychological, and cultural factors that prevent students from seeking assistance in a timely fashion. The study also highlights the inequities of student access, student achievement (based on self-advocacy), and self-identification of students with disabilities in a larger university. Research from Marshak, et al. (2010) explored disabled student experiences, documenting challenging situations disabled students face in their pursuit of higher education. When students with disabilities complete requirements for college admission, their ability to succeed in obtaining a college degree is impacted from normal developmental requirements as well as the developmental strains the disabled students experience with their disability. The researcher wanted to better understand how well disabled students perform when receiving services from SSWD and expand the understanding of how valuable it is for students with disabilities to advocate, self-identify, and connect to the campus community. A quantitative and qualitative research method were used to conduct this study via an online survey and in person interviews. The survey questions were designed to select students to interview for the case study; the data from both answer the following case study questions:

1. Do students who self-identify at the start of their college career have a more positive experience and a better chance of completing their degree versus students who self-identify only once they are struggling in their college career?
2. Are there any social and/or psychological reasons that prevent disabled students from self-identifying while in college, which may hinder their success?
3. What outreach efforts are being made to reach high schools, schools directors, parent advocacy groups, and individual parents, to encourage students with disabilities to seek services once they enter higher education without violating the students' rights?

The existing literature on disabled students in college indicates, students with disabilities attend college less frequently than their peers without disabilities according to Rath and Royer (2002, p. 354). There is a requirement for disabled students to self-identify, be skilled in self-determination, self-advocacy and self-resilience if they are to achieve academically in college (Brockelman, 2009). The experiences a disabled student has greatly impacts the student's success in college, scholars argue; Disability Identity Development Theory is the process in which the disabled student experiences a positive sense of self and feeling of connection to, or solidarity with, the disabled community (Dunn & Burcaw, 2013). When disabled students are navigating their transition from K-12 to postsecondary education, it is imperative that they are aware of the Disability Identity. Disability Identity Theory (Dunn & Burcaw, 2013) incorporates the student's



ability to self-identify, to be skilled in self-determination, and to be able to self-advocate (Stuntzner & Hartley, 2015). Self-identification includes providing documentation of their disabilities, testing that is provided by the department, medical documentation, and paperwork from previous schools from which the student was receiving services (United State Department of Education, n.d.). Self-determination supports disabled student's taking control and making decisions that affect one's life. Self-determination provides students with the skills and abilities to make choices, make decisions, problem solve, set and attain goals, self-advocate and independently perform; these are skills needed to manage one's own life (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Research applying SD/SDT to different areas in social psychology has increased considerably since the 2000s (Shakespeare & Watson, 1997). Shahnasarian (2001) argued that the self-concept and real challenges that sometimes confront persons with disabilities can have broad implications for personal development in terms of education, career, and community life (p. 276). Moreover, Yanchak (2005) argued that persons with disabilities often encounter difficulty forming a secure vocational identity because of self-identity issues rather than decision-making problems (p. 135).

### **Conclusions**

The study revealed several critical findings. It suggests that self-determination and self-identity is imperative for Disabled students to be successful beyond K through 12. These findings, in addition suggested self-advocacy is a key component to navigate postsecondary system for a positive experience. Also, the study additionally shed light

on the need for more to be done to adequately support students with disabilities so they are successful in higher education.

Self-determination is a concept that is critical for students because, according to Nirje (1972), self-determination for a disabled student is defined as the student's ability to make choices, asserting one- self, self-management, self-knowledge, decision making, self-advocacy, self-efficacy, self-regulation, autonomy, and independence (p. 182). Self-determination is a requirement for students to be successful. Self-determination falls within the Disability Identity Development Theory (Dunn & Burcaw, 2013) discussion under communal attachment and affirmation, as well as personal meaning and disability. Communal attachment and affirmation of disability focus primarily on the importance of community which helps students assert their strengths and weaknesses of their disability. Personal meaning and disability focused on individuals' understanding, significance and the benefits associated with their disability. Also revealed in the analysis was the need for students with disabilities to feel connected to a community which improves their success of receiving a degree.

Self-identity concentrated on student background, reasons for identifying and campus connectivity. The analysis revealed all students were heavily involved with the SSWD department and engage with other students with disabilities on campus. Of the three students interviewed only one participates in activities and organizations on campus; however, all of them viewed the SSWD department as a community. A community where they were understood, where they were able to voice their concerns and issues and relied on assistance from other students who were similar to them for

support and navigating the campus. Students with disabilities transitioning to a postsecondary setting are often required to advocate for their needs (Shaw, Keenan, Madaus & Banerjee, 2010). This includes advocating for appropriate and necessary accommodations. Chickering (1969) even discusses a similar concept in his Student Development Theory – where students’ developmental competencies, learning to solve problems on their own and developing mature interpersonal relationships where stages in which students went through as a transition into to adulthood.

While there is still no clear data to describe every postsecondary transition experience for students who need disabled services, the literature review and study’s findings indicate that more participation from students in their post-secondary planning will contribute to completion of their degrees. This information is expressly seen in the data however, based on the student interviews all students expressed a desire for being aware of the services, understanding of options available to them because of their disabilities and attaining service entering their college careers. The sentiment among the group was they were not aware nor prepared for advocating for themselves. All students expressed they were in need of additional services to be successful and wanted the additional benefits students with disabilities received, such as priority registration, greater access to classroom and facilities and assistance beyond regular services; however, they were unaware of how to advocate for themselves.

Self-advocacy focused on when the students chose to self-identify, how comfortable they were discussing their needs with their instructor and if there were any social and/or psychological factors that prevented the student from self-identifying.

Analysis of the data from the interviews revealed; one student chose to identify once they started having trouble academically, and the other students self-identified as a precautionary measure. Outreach efforts must be made at the high schools, for parents, and high school administrators to encourage students with disabilities to self-identify once they enter college. Analysis of the data from the interviewees established, services received focused on how the college addressed the needs of the students and how it affected their experience. Two of the three students received services, services such as classroom assistance, additional test time and other personal accommodations which improved their overall experience and increased their GPA. There are few empirical studies examining the validity of accommodations at the postsecondary level (Linstrom, 2007). Of the students receiving services all stated the services had definitely impacted their educational experiences positively and, based on that, their educational goals had changed; for example, one student decided to continue their education beyond the undergrad career.

### **Recommendations**

The study aimed to investigate how well students perform when receiving services from SSWD. It explored the social, psychological, and cultural factors that prevent students from seeking assistance in a timely fashion and highlights the inequities of student access, student achievement based of self-advocacy, and self-identification of students with disabilities in a larger university. Some of the finding were addressed by adopting the suggested recommendations. As well as more research to have a complete understanding of this population of students and their needs while attaining a degree.

Transitional plans are already part of student IEP's in high school students, however; transition plans is based on a high school student's individual needs, strengths, skills, and interests. Transition services are activities that prepare students with disabilities to move from school to post-school life. The plan does not focus on self-determination, which promotes self-advocacy and self-identification. The IDEA (2004) has established an age requirement for the start of transition planning at the age of 16. IEP teams are expected to include transition planning in the first IEP that will be in effect when the child turns 16 years of age. The transitional plan is the template for mapping out short-term to long-term adult outcomes from which annual goals and objectives are defined. As part of the transition planning process, schools may teach students how to self-advocate for their needs while in postsecondary settings. School counselors, administrators or special education instructors in a high school may consider counseling students with disabilities on seeking services, once accepted to college. Also, they may assist students with applying for programs, college preparedness exams and courses such as ACT/SAT test preparation. Utilizing and designing person-centered planning models in transition planning, incorporating universal design principles in developing postsecondary courses and materials, providing peer mentoring for students, providing educational coaching, and communication skills, and enhancing self-determination and self-advocacy skills (Durodoye, Combes, & Bryant, 2004) will promote a positive college experience and increase the students' possibilities of degree attainment.

Intrusive outreach efforts need to be created to reach advocates for student with disabilities. Counselors from SSWD department in colleges should participate in all

college recruitment efforts in their local school districts, junior high schools and high schools. All events at the college where future students are exploring the campus SSWD staff should have a presence, such as social and education groups involvement. The data and analysis infer that all school administrators who engage with disabled students should receive additional training and information from local colleges to assist, encourage and inform students of the benefits of seeking services once in college. Also, the data and analysis suggests that all new college students who received IEP services in high school be required to identify. Once they accept admission to colleges, students will then be automatically identified, and outreach efforts can begin immediately.

Future research studies into the topics of social, psychological, and cultural factors that prevent students from seeking assistance in a timely fashion highlights the inequities of student access, student achievement based on self-advocacy, and self-identification of students with disabilities. A limitation of this study was the inability to survey student with disabilities in the university who were not receiving services.

Another important consideration for future studies is to take a comprehensive look at both group of students, those how self-identify and those who do not and ask the questions of both groups: how is their educational experience? Why did they choose not to self-identify? Did they have similar concerns and issues? What is their success rate? How do they maintain without services? and How does campus connectivity help them?

It is the hope of the researcher that the present study will serve to expand the understanding of how well students perform when receiving services from SSWD, the social, psychological, and cultural factors that prevent students from seeking assistance in

a timely fashion, highlights the inequities of student access, student achievement based on self-advocacy, and self-identification of students with disabilities. It is important that advancements continue to be made for students with disabilities to access services, receive support and be connected to the campus community to achievement their educational goals. As the students with disabilities enter colleges and universities they should be aware that just because one is part the Forgotten Minority, that does not define who one is or determine who one will be. There are services, communities and programs that are available for them to succeed.

APPENDICES



## APPENDIX A

### INFORMED CONSENT

You are invited to participate in an IRB approved research study which will involve an online survey and in person interview (is you choose). My name is Adrienne Currington, and I am a Graduate Student at California State University, Sacramento, with the College of Education.

The purpose of this research is a case study to evaluate how well students perform when receiving services from SSWD. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to fill out an online survey, which will be conducted through Qualtrics, an online web based survey application. If you choose to participate in the interview portion of the case study the Researcher's contact information is provided at the end of the survey. Your participation in the online survey will last 20-30 minutes and the interview will last 45 minute to an hour (is you choice to participate in the interview). Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and will not impact any services you are receiving from SSWD. You may decline to participate at any time, it will not result in loss of services with SSWD, and participation in research will not hurt or harm your eligibility for services from SSWD.

Risks associated with this study are not anticipated to be greater than those risks encountered in daily life. However, if you experience feeling of anger, resentment, embarrassment or frustration when recalling experiences you have been through with your disability and experiences inquiring/receiving services due to disability, while filling out the survey and/or participating in the interview, you may skip or decline further participation at any time during the survey and interview. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research project ,please call the Office of Research Affairs, California State University, Sacramento, (916) 278-5674, or email [irb@csus.edu](mailto:irb@csus.edu).

Your participation in this project is voluntary. Even after you agree to participate, you may decide to leave the study at any time.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Measures to insure your confidentiality are all data will be stored in Qualtrics secured account and the researcher will be the only one with access to the data. The data obtained will be maintained in a safe, locked location and will be destroyed after a period of years after the study is completed.

By clicking on the link below you indicate that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may

withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled, you have the option to print a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.

APPENDIX B  
SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. What is your academic level?
  - a. Undergraduate
  - b. Masters
  - c. Credential
  - d. Doctorate
  
2. When did you self-identify with SSWD?
  - a. Prior to your first semester
  - b. During your first year of enrollment
  - c. During your second year of enrollment
  - d. During your third year of enrollment
  - e. During your fourth year of enrollment
  - f. During your fifth year of enrollment or later
  
3. What types of services are you using or receiving from SSWD?
  - a. Open ended
  
4. Please rate your educational experience before you started receiving services from SSWD.

1-Very Negative	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10- Very Positive
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5. Please rate your education experience after you started receiving services from SSWD.

1-Very Negative	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10- Very Positive
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6. Has your GPA improved since you self-identified with SSWD?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
7. How comfortable are you with discussing your educational needs with your instructors?

1-Not Comfortable at All	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10- Very Comfortable
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8. Are you a member of any social organizations on campus (i.e. clubs, sports, Greek organizations, student leadership)?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
9. If yes, please list the organization.
  - a. Open ended
  
10. Does this organization promote educational excellence through required GPA, mandatory study hall, or similar policy?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
11. Are you willing to be participating in an in-person interview?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
12. If yes, please contact researcher at the information listed below.

Researcher - Adrienne Currington

Number - 916-308-0910 (may leave message)

email - [martina@csus.edu](mailto:martina@csus.edu) or [adriennemar@yahoo.com](mailto:adriennemar@yahoo.com)

## APPENDIX C

## IN-PERSON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did you self-identify with SSWD?
2. Have you experienced any extenuating academic challenges while receiving services from SSWD?
3. How do you believe receiving services from SSWD has impacted your educational experience?
4. How have your educational/professional goals changed since you started receiving services?
5. Did you self-identify with SSWD as a precautionary measure, or because you were already experiencing academic difficulties?
6. Were there any factors that impacted the timing of your self-identification?
7. Were there any social variables that encouraged or deterred you from self-identifying as needing disability services?
8. In retrospect, are you satisfied with your decision to seek services at the time you did, or do you wish you had self-identified earlier or later? Why?
9. Do you receive any educational support from off-campus programs?
10. Do you believe you have an unfair advantage or disadvantage in comparison to other students as a result of the services you receive?
11. Do you believe that you classmates feel you have an unfair advantage or disadvantage in comparison to other students as a result of the services you receive?

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