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Development and empirical analysis of a self-advocacy readiness scale with a university sample

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DEVELOPMENT AND EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF A SELF-ADVOCACY

READINESS SCALE WITH A UNIVERSITY SAMPLE

by

Katrina R. Harris

Bachelor of Arts
Stephens College
1983

Master of Education
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

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Examination Committee Co-Chair   _Examination Committee Chair_

Dean of the Graduate College

Examination Committee Member

Examination Committee Member

Graduate College Faculty Representative

ABSTRACT

**Development and Empirical Analysis of a Self-Advocacy
Readiness Scale With a University Sample**

By

Katrina R. Harris

Dr. Paul Jones, Examination Committee Co-Chair
Professor of Educational Psychology
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Dr. Randall Astramovich, Examination Co-Chair
Professor of Counselor Education
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Counseling as a profession has been criticized for disregarding the social and

political issues facing clients and students (Bemak & Chung, 2005). Many students in

urban environments are faced with difficulties such as poverty, racism, and oppression

that impact their emotional, social, and academic growth (Bemak & Siroskey-Sabdo,

2005). Further, students in urban schools feel they have little power in a school culture

dominated by the majority group in which differences in culture, class and language are

often perceived as deficits (Bryan, 2005).

The No Child Left Behind Act calls for increasing achievement rates for all

students and bridging the gap between minority/low socioeconomic students and their

peers (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). In fact, over the last eight years, the

Education Trust has had a significant role in transforming the role of school counselors

in closing the academic achievement gap (Colbert, Vernon-Jones, & Pransky, 2006).

School counselors have traditionally focused on the mental well being of students, however, the current emphasis on high test scores and academic success of minority students calls for school counselors to change their focus and find effective academically driven approaches to ensure the long term personal/social and academic success of all students.

Little attention has been given to the concept of self-advocacy in school counseling and its potential to empower marginalized youth in school settings. Furthermore, there has been little research in the area of self-advocacy among minority students in school counseling to promote closing the academic achievement gap. As a result, there is a substantial need for a research study to explore the development of a tool that will help school counselors assess students' readiness to self-advocate.

The purpose of this study was to develop and conduct an empirical analysis of a self-advocacy instrument and to determine if differences exist in response patterns between minority students and non-minority students on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale.

The findings of the analyses indicate that the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale and its subscales produced adequate estimates of internal consistency reliability. Further, exploratory factor analysis revealed the possibility of a self-advocacy construct.

Analysis of minority students and non-minority students' total scores on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale indicated they were not statistically different. Analysis of the five self-advocacy subscales (autonomy, control, experience, knowledge, and motivation) revealed that minority and non-minority students' subscales scores were not statistically different with the exception of the control subscale.

The information gleaned from this study will contribute to additional avenues of research in Counselor Education.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Counseling as a profession has been criticized for disregarding the social and

political issues facing clients and students (Bemak & Chung, 2005). Many students in

urban environments are faced with difficulties such as poverty, racism, and oppression

that impact their emotional, social, and academic growth (Bemak & Siroskey-Sabdo,

2005). Further, students in urban schools feel they have little power in a school culture

dominated by the majority group in which differences in culture, class and language are

often perceived as deficits (Bryan, 2005). Bemak, Chung, and Siroskey-Sabdo (2005)

stated that inner-city youth face a multitude of hurdles such as violence and low

academic expectations inherent of low socioeconomic areas that impede their ability to

learn and succeed in school. These issues along with inequities and barriers in the

school environment may significantly impact minority and disenfranchised students'

academic success.

Limited contact with school counselors and limited knowledge about educational

resources may leave students from minority or oppressed groups feeling marginalized,

ignored, and academically crippled. Nieto (2004) states that children from different

social classes and racial and ethnic groups exhibit low achievement primarily due to the

lack of equitable resources. Nieto further also states that many students "are alienated,

uninvolved, and discouraged by school" and are given little or no control over decisions

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that effect their education (p. 112). Accordingly, schools often "build walls" to keep students out who they believe "don't belong" and teachers establish barriers to discourage students who they perceive to be lazy (Melton, 2004).

The No Child Left Behind Act calls for increasing achievement rates for all students and bridging the gap between minority/low socioeconomic students and their peers (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). In fact, over the last eight years, the Education Trust has had a significant role in transforming the role of school counselors in closing the academic achievement gap (Colbert, Vernon-Jones, & Pransky, 2006). School counselors have traditionally focused on the mental well being of students, however, the current emphasis on high test scores and academic success of minority students calls for school counselors to change their focus and find effective academically driven approaches to ensure the long term personal/social and academic success of all students (Bryan, 2005).

School reform experts have continuously focused on the achievement gap while paying little attention to the role that school counselors have in student achievement (Kaffenberger, Murphy, and Bemak, 2006). Indeed the development of the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) National Model outlined a proactive role for school counselors in ensuring the academic success of all students (Viccora, 2006). School counselors must be actively involved in supporting their schools academic missions and provide services to help students learn more effectively and succeed academically (Fitch & Marshall, 2004).

Williams and Butler (2003) state that school counselors are in a unique position to promote the importance of doing well in school as a requirement for academic

success. School counselors must find ways to help minority and disenfranchised students succeed in the school setting and overcome issues such as oppression and racism (Portman & Portman, 2002). School counselors must develop and promote programs and services that provide opportunities for students to recognize and develop advocacy skills to positively confront social injustices.

Hines and Robinson (2006) stress the importance of school counselors identifying students who need help and ensuring students take full advantage of available services. Minority and disenfranchised students need to know that resources and well-defined support systems are available when they require assistance. Students also need to feel reassured that their schools support their academic success.

In order to bridge the achievement gap school counselors must find innovative ways to assist minority students in achieving their academic goals. The No Child Left Behind initiative requires school counselors to not only develop interventions to increase student achievement but to also substantiate these interventions by collecting data to determine what works and does not work in helping students achieve positive educational outcomes. Gysbers, Lapan, and Stanley (2006) state that school counselors are being asked to show how what they do contributes to student success. In a data driven society, school counselors must come up with reliable and measurable methods that ensure student success.

Statement of the Problem

The academic achievement gap of minority students and low socioeconomic students in comparison to White students and students from middle and upper socioeconomic backgrounds has recently been in the forefront of school counseling literature (Bemak & Chung, 2005). Indeed, there is an epidemic of urban schools in crisis faced with the task of addressing the issues of low student achievement and school reform (Holcomb-McCoy, 2005). As a result of the No Child Left Behind Act the field of school counseling is committed to the task of finding effective ways to close the achievement gap between students from the dominant culture and minority students.

The school culture along with organizational practices contributes to maintaining racial inequities in academic achievement, and school personnel foster stereotypes in their interactions with minority students and their families (Bryan, 2005). Tatum (1997) states that "internalized oppression" (pg. 6) in which individuals believe the stereotypical messages about their ethnic group can be equally harmful as oppression from the dominant group. These factors are significant for high and low achieving minority students.

Hines and Robinson (2006) refer to opportunity gaps in which some students receive resources and support to achieve in school while other students go without. In addition, some students do not have meaningful relationships with adults at their schools who believe in their potential. The result is the polarization and isolation of minority and disenfranchised students.

Advocacy is a concept in counseling that can be traced back to the early beginnings of the profession (Field & Baker, 2004). Kiselica and Robinson (2001) state

that the purpose of advocacy counseling is to help clients increase their sense of personal power to attain sociopolitical changes. For school counselors advocacy involves helping students overcome systemic barriers that impede their personal, social, and academic success. Moreover, through advocacy school counselors can play a role in helping schools close the opportunity gap by providing equitable outcomes for minority students (Hines & Robinson, 2006).

Little attention has been given to the concept of self-advocacy in school counseling and its potential to empower marginalized youth in school settings. Furthermore, there has been little research in the area of self-advocacy among minority students in school counseling to promote closing the academic achievement gap. As a result, there is a substantial need for a research study to explore the development of a tool that will help school counselors assess students' readiness to self-advocate.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to develop and empirically analyze a self-advocacy scale and determine if there are differences in response between minority and non-minority students. The following questions will guide the research:

1.   Is the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale a reliable measure of self-advocacy behavior?

2.   Are the subscale components on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale reliable measures of self-advocacy characteristics?

3.   Do the subscale components on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale adequately assess distinct self-advocacy skills and competencies?

4.	Do the subscale components on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale and the "Big-Five" factor markers on an established scale of core personality traits adequately assess distinct self-advocacy skills and competencies?

5.	Are there significant differences in response patterns on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale total scores between minority students and other students?

6.	Are there significant differences in response patterns on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale subscale scores between minority students and other students?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature indicates there has been discussion about advocacy and

empowerment in counseling from a multicultural and social justice perspective. Lee (as

cited in Astramovich & Harris, 2007) states that counseling professionals should

concentrate their efforts on helping individuals from ethnic groups of color eliminate

institutional and social barriers that prevent their academic or personal development.

Kiselica and Robinson (2001) indicate that advocacy work is necessary to promote the

well being of individuals and includes helping clients create changes in the context of

the environment in which problems occur.

Field and Baker (2004) state that advocacy is an integral part of school

counseling and is an important role for school counselors for outreach services and as

members of educational teams to help students succeed academically, vocationally, and

personally. Counselors can take a proactive approach and work to effect systemic

change by identifying students who are marginalized in the school environment and

either advocating for those students or teaching those students self-advocacy skills.

Advocacy in school counseling has been utilized to encourage students to

challenge systemic and social barriers that prohibit their academic development

(Kiselica & Robinson, 2001). However, lack of contact with school counselors and a

lack of self-advocacy knowledge may leave students from minority or oppressed groups

feeling marginalized, ignored, and academically crippled. In addition, Bemak and Chung (2005) state that the achievement gap among students of color is due, to some extent, to low expectations and outcomes of school counselors.

With the emphasis on high test scores and high academic outcomes minority students may require specific skills to effectively communicate their academic needs to ensure long-term success in school and beyond. School counselors must develop programs to help students communicate their needs in school environments that are often polarizing to minority students. Self-advocacy is a concept that can be utilized to assist minority students in developing skills to advocate for their educational needs to achieve personal and academic success.

Self-Advocacy

The birth of self-advocacy can be traced to Scandinavia in the 1960's when young people with disabilities met to share their life experiences (Traustadottir, 2006). In the United States self-advocacy was initially recognized as a civil rights movement for individuals with disabilities (Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, & Eddy, 2005). This movement sought to construct an atmosphere in which people with disabilities could create their own organizations and advocate on their behalf individually and in groups. The purpose of this movement was to promote self-advocacy and provide a path for adult self-advocacy activism.

The literature indicates that the construct of self-advocacy has been difficult to conceptualize and, therefore, has several definitions. Van Reusen, Bos, Schumaker, and Desler (as cited in Dearing, 2004) state that self advocacy is the "ability to effectively communicate, convey, negotiate, or assert one's own interests, desires, needs, and rights.

The term assumes the ability to make informed decisions. It also means taking responsibility for those actions" (p. 2). Anderson, Seaton, and Dinas (1995) define self-advocacy as having the ability to speak up for yourself and others.

In their review of literature on self-advocacy, Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, and Eddy (2005) discovered over twenty-five definitions of self-advocacy. The most prevalent theme among these definitions is individuals having an understanding of their rights and needs and having the ability to effectively communicate them. Autonomy and assertiveness were also key themes.

Self-advocacy has been described as the "third wave" in meeting the needs of students with disabilities, meaning that advocacy shifted from parents and professionals to being driven by people with disabilities (Wehmeyer, Bersani,& Gagne, as cited by Van-Belle, Marks, Marti, & Chun, 2006). In the learning-disabled literature self-advocacy is an important characteristic of a successful student who is prepared to self-advocate and communicates for the assistance they need.

Self-advocacy is also prevalent in the field of medicine. According to Brashers, Haas, and Neidig (1999) chronic or life threatening illnesses often generate a "self-help" response in which patients become activists and are more involved in interacting with their physicians and even more involved in making decisions related to their health. The patient or activist uses self-advocacy behaviors in the decision making process. Moreover, patients who are self-advocates are assertive in regards to becoming informed about their condition and treatment options and are willing to take responsibility for the outcomes of those treatment options (Dearing, 2004).

Self-advocacy is closely linked to self-determination, another construct used frequently in conjunction with students with learning disabilities. Browder, Wood, Test, Karvonen, and Algozzine (as cited in Astramovich & Harris, 2007) define self-determination as skills and attitudes that individuals utilize to set goals and take responsibility for reaching those goals. Self-advocacy and self-determination are so closely linked that they are used interchangeably. However, according to Field (1996) self-advocacy is a component of self-determination, self-advocacy referring to individuals acting on their behalf and having the ability to communicate their needs to achieve goals.

Self-advocacy is a concept utilized in various fields to assist individuals in developing key behaviors or skills so that they have the ability to speak on their own behalf regarding their life situations. Although the majority of literature is from the field of special education it can be utilized in the school setting when working with minority and disenfranchised youth.

The Relationship Between Self-Determination and Self-Advocacy

Self-determination is a construct with origins in the field of special education and is often seen in the literature with students who have physical, emotional, and learning disabilities. Self-determination is thought of as an inherent right. According to Wehmeyer (1995) individuals with disabilities conceptualize self-determination in terms of rights and freedoms. Rights and freedoms include having equitable opportunities and freedom of expression. Thus, students with learning disabilities are entitled to the same opportunities as able-bodied students.

Eisenman (2007) discusses self-determination in the context of school completion and interventions that can help students develop strategies to engage them in setting meaningful goals. His theory of self-determination explains how adults influence students in developing independence and competence. Eisenman further states that self-determination theory is important in influencing students' "perceived competence" and "self-determined motivation" in achieving educational success (p. 3). In addition, students who are engaged in the in the school environment and have meaningful relationships with adults in the school setting are more likely to stay in school. Therefore, successful self-determination requires a collaborative effort between students and adults.

Miller and Miller (1995) state that self-determination includes characteristics, attitudes, and skills that allow individuals to take charge of their lives. In their qualitative study of cross age peer tutoring for promoting self-determination in students with severe emotional disabilities and behavioral disorders the authors supervised a project in which self-determination was promoted through instruction of problem solving, assertiveness, and self-management skills. College students (with or without a documented disability) and high school students with severe emotional disabilities/behavior disorders (SED/BD) were recruited to learn a curriculum that they would teach to their peers. Self-determined behaviors considered to be significant were setting personal goals, evaluating and prioritizing personal options, self-evaluating academic strengths and weakness, problem solving collaboratively with others, self-monitoring, and communicating effectively with peers, teachers, and parents. Preliminary findings at the time of publication indicate that cross-peer tutoring was an

effective method of involving students in the self-determination process not only for their peers but for themselves as well.

The Influence of Self-Efficacy

There is limited research as to how minority students can advocate for their education needs to succeed academically. However, some research has been conducted in the area of self-efficacy among multicultural groups and academic achievement. Self-efficacy research can potentially inform research regarding self-advocacy among minority students and academic achievement. According to Bandura (1997) to realize their goals individuals have to take control over external events that affect their lives. Cognition and motivation along with affect are largely responsible for determining an individual's level of perceived self-efficacy. Individuals with perceived self-efficacy visualize their goals and potential outcomes.

Bandura (1989) states that individuals must have a strong sense of self-efficacy and resilience in order to persevere in the face of adversity. Further, individuals' self-efficacy beliefs or judgments regarding their capabilities control other events that affect their lives. In the context of the school environment, students who exhibit high self-efficacy beliefs may be better prepared to deal with difficulties and failures related to academic achievement.

There is evidence that self-efficacy impacts assertiveness, academic achievement, and social skills which are all key components of self-advocacy (Schunk, 1991). The more successes an individual experiences the more likely they are to be resilient and persevere. When students believe they can successfully perform a task they are motivated and willing to take control of their actions and overcome their failures.

Pajares (2002) states that students with high self-efficacy are more confident and are persistent when faced with academic challenges. This persistence results in an ability to maintain high academic achievement. Perhaps if minority and other disadvantaged students were encouraged and supported by school counselors, teachers, and administrators to set goals and achieve academically, their self-efficacy beliefs would increase resulting in the ability to self-advocate and achieve academically.

Britner and Pajares (2001) explored self-efficacy beliefs along with motivation and race in middle school science. The authors wanted to ascertain if the science motivation beliefs of middle school students differed in terms of their gender and ethnicity, and if science self-efficacy beliefs predicted science achievement. Motivation variables such as self-regulated learning, achievement goals, and self-concept were controlled to determine if students' confidence and approach to science contributed to science achievement. Participants included 262 seventh grade students (127 male, 135 female; 119 White, 143 African-American) from four urban schools. Students completed several instruments including the Self-efficacy for Self-regulated Learning Scale and the Academic Self Description Questionnaire. The results of the study indicated that girls had higher self-efficacy and achievement than boys. Although White students had higher science grades and reported stronger self-efficacy than African American students, African American students' interest in science was intrinsically based. Further, African American students had strong self-efficacy beliefs even when they exhibited lower achievement.

Britner and Pajares (2001) state that self-efficacy is important to academic motivation, however, little research has been devoted to how this impacts minority

students. Additional research is also needed to determine the effects of socioeconomic status on motivational variables identified in this study. Moreover, they stress the importance of researchers and school administrators investigating students' beliefs about their academic abilities as a predictor of academic performance and making an effort to nurture these beliefs, as they are key to affecting motivation and behavior.

Jinks and Morgan (1999) created the Morgan-Jinks Student Efficacy Scale (MJSES) to determine children's perceptions regarding their self-efficacy and academic performance. The instrument is a 34-item inventory in which students' self-reported grades were the independent variable. The instrument was field tested in three demographically different schools utilizing 900 students primarily in grades sixth through eighth. The goal of the study was to determine if students' self-efficacy beliefs and academic performance correlated with their self-reported grades. The results indicated that students who expressed high self-efficacy beliefs also reported having higher grades than students who expressed low self-efficacy beliefs. In addition, the results suggest that efficacy beliefs contribute to overall student achievement.

Although self-efficacy and self-advocacy are two distinct constructs they do share commonalities in that both are concerned with students' beliefs and confidence in performing certain tasks. In that perceived self-efficacy influences behavior and learning (Jinks & Morgan, 1999) the same can be said of self-advocacy. High self-advocacy beliefs may influence students' willingness to become more engaged in their academic success.

The literature regarding self-efficacy and minority students serves to inform what is missing from the field of school counseling regarding self-advocacy among minority

students, that is, the specific beliefs or characteristic must students possess in order to become competent self-advocates to impact their academic success.

Self-Advocacy and Personality Traits

Dearing (2004) states that self-advocacy involves the concept of individualism and that advocacy behaviors are related to self. The author states that self-advocacy and individualism can be conceptualized by dynamic theory, which focuses on individual differences. Self-advocacy, therefore, occurs through individual growth and development. Dearing (2004) further states that dynamic theory is related to Sigmund Freud's theory of personality involving the id, ego, and superego. Freud believed in unconscious motivation or the power of inner forces to influence behavior (Sigleman, 1999). Thus, biological instincts often determine the unconscious motivation for our actions.

Dearing also references the work of Otto Rank in describing how the ego involves the concept of will and that "will has the capacity to not only use the drives for its own purposes but also to inhibit and control them" (p.11). Rank's theory illustrates that the ego and self-advocacy are closely related and that individuals have the power to be assertive rather than remain helpless.

A well-defined self-advocacy theory in the literature is lacking. However, since much of the literature asserts that self-advocacy is a component of self-determination the literature regarding self-determination theory and personality can also be used to explain self-advocacy behaviors. Ryan and Deci (2000) postulate that self-determination theory explains human motivation and personality that contribute to self-development and behavioral self-regulation. They further state that "social contexts catalyze both within

and between person differences in motivation and personal growth" (p. 68). Specifically, there are situations that enhance intrinsic and extrinsic motivation the result of which is some individuals being more self-motivated than others.

Hicks-Coolick and Kurtz (1997) conducted a qualitative study to determine personal characteristics that contributed to the academic success of learning disabled postsecondary students. The learning disabled directors of nine postsecondary institutions were interviewed and asked a series of questions including how they defined self-advocacy and how students acquired self-advocacy skills. The researchers discovered there were specific characteristics that contributed to a student being successful at self-advocacy. These include: 1) self-awareness; 2) self-acceptance; 3) knowledge of laws, policies, and resources; 4) assertiveness skills; and 5) problem-solving skills.

The five-factor model of personality refers to five broad trait dimensions that can also be used to describe individual differences in personality. The factors represent the most basic dimensions of personality that have been identified in both natural language and in psychological questionnaires (Costa & McCrea, 1992). Although there now appears to be general consensus on the presence of five distinct personality traits and the defining characteristics that best represent each of the five, a variety of labels for the factors have been suggested. The factors are perhaps most often referred to as Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness (Goldberg, 1993; McCrea & Costa, 1985; McCrae & John, 1992).

There are semantic implications in the labels that can be problematic in interpretation. For example, the factor identified as Agreeableness has been labeled as

social adaptability, compliance, thinking vs. feeling, and even love in various studies, and the factor identified as Openness has been called inquiring intellect, intelligence, and intellectual interests (John & Srivasta, 1999). The labels used by McCrae and Costa, forming the acronymn OCEAN, now appear most often in the literature when referring to the five-factor model, but substitution of Roman numerals for the verbal labels has been suggested in order avoid the semantic concerns.

Studies, for example Larsen and Borgen (2006) have found a relationship between personality traits and perceived self-efficacy. The influence, if any, of personality traits and the development of self-advocacy has yet to be examined. However, several of these core personality characteristics provide the framework for developing strategies to promote self-advocacy among minority students.

Autonomy and Self-Regulation

In regards to self-advocacy and self-determination the literature reveals that autonomy and self-regulation are key components in achieving academic as well as personal success. In the educational psychology literature self-regulation includes motivational and cognitive processes and involves individuals controlling and monitoring their behavior (Pintrich, 2000). Individuals set goals for learning and, subsequently, attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation, and behavior in the contexts of their environments. A person's ability to self-regulate is dependent upon the accuracy and consistency of the judgments they make regarding their actions and choices. Therefore, an individual confident in their judgments and decisions becomes self-directed in their behavior, which leads to an ability to evaluate outcomes and make necessary adjustments (Pajares, 2002).

Burton, Lydon, D'Alessandro, and Koestner (2006) state that one approach to self-determination involves the concept of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as predictors of psychological well-being outcomes. In their study of elementary school aged children they hypothesized that intrinsic self-regulation would predict psychological well-being outcomes and positive affect. Participants were 241 children ranging in age from 8 years to 13 years attending schools in Canada. Students were administered the Ryan and Connell's Self-Regulation Scale, which measured different styles of self regulation and reasons for their own behavior in regards to school. Students also completed the Positive and Negative Affect Scale for Children (PANAS-C), which measured students' subjective well-being. In addition, students were asked to provide their grade expectations for their upcoming report cards. After the report cards had been distributed students repeated the PANAS-C to measure psychological well-being and current emotions. The results of the study indicated that identified self-regulation was a positive predictor of students' academic performance. Further, the students who identified more with their education had higher grades. The significance of this study to self-advocacy is that in order for minority and marginalized students to succeed they must not only possess intrinsic self-regulation but they must also be involved in their education and feel they have a vested interest in achieving their academic goals. Such research illustrates how a self-advocacy scale can help school counselors identify students who want to have responsibility for and control over their academic success.

In the realm of self-determination and self-advocacy Wehmeyer, Baker, Blumberg, and Harrison (2004) state that the work in special education illustrates how students with disabilities become "effective self-regulated problem solvers" the result of

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which is control over the educational decision-making process (p. 30). Further, the authors advocate for individuals with disabilities having more responsibility in the planning and decision-making process of their educational goals thus becoming "causal agents in their own lives" (p. 35). This same idea can be applied to minority, marginalized, and oppressed students in the school setting. Students, with the assistance of school counselors, can learn and enhance self-regulated behaviors to achieve positive educational outcomes.

Assertiveness

A key component of self-advocacy is a student's ability to exhibit assertive behaviors. Assertiveness is defined as "confidence and to put oneself forward boldly (p. 81, The Random House College Dictionary, 1982)." In the learning disabled literature assertiveness is noted as a necessary characteristic for self-determined individuals and for self-advocacy. Hicks-Coolick and Kurtz (1997) state that students' knowledge of their rights and resources only make a difference when they assert themselves on their own behalf. When students take the initiative in advocating for themselves and inform teachers and counselors of what they need they are more successful.

Assertiveness also involves students having decision-making skills and knowing what decision is in their best interest. Dearing (2004) states that self-advocacy includes decision-making skills and is the most prevalent feature of self-determination. School counselors can be instrumental in teaching and fostering these skills so that students can be better prepared to make good decisions that impact their academic success.

The literature regarding self-determination and learning disabled students serves as a backdrop for those characteristics and behaviors minority students must possess in

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order to be successful self-advocates. Learning-disabled students who are self-determined are highly motivated and independent. They are assertive about informing educators as to what they need to be successful. Clearly, personality traits such as autonomy and self-regulation are not only necessary for the self-determined individual but also for the individual who wants to be successful at self-advocacy. Self-advocacy requires a student be a "causal agent" who has an understanding of and ability to voice what they need to be academically successful. However, although students can be causal agents in there lives the literature indicates there are mediating factors that may impede minority students' academic success such at socioeconomic status, social justice issues, and perceived lack of power.

The Importance of Social Justice and Empowerment to Self-Advocacy

From a social justice and school counseling perspective, minority students include people of color, women, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning students, students with disabilities, and students living in poverty (Astramovich & Harris, 2007). Traditionally, these groups have been oppressed and marginalized. Further, these groups have often had limited representation and influence among the dominant group in school settings. Nieto (2004) states that social class, race, and poverty, contribute to inequities students face in society as well as their school environments.

Constantine, Hage, Kindaichi, and Bryant (2007) state that social justice involves fairness and equity in resources, rights, and treatment for marginalized groups and those who lack equal power in society. Moreover, social justice includes helping members

from these marginalized or oppressed groups deal with personal, societal, and institutional barriers that inhibit their academic, personal, social, or career development.

According to Kiselica and Robinson (2001) a social justice approach to counseling is "advocacy counseling" (p.388) and consists of counselors acting as advocates on behalf of clients to promote a social cause. Further, the purpose of advocacy counseling is to empower clients and promote sociopolitical changes that are more responsive to clients' needs. To that end, school counselors can promote school climates that are sensitive to minority students' needs. In their review of school counselors at high-achieving schools, Fitch and Marshall (2004) found that students in high-achieving schools reported a sense of belongingness and felt they were treated fairly and respected by school staff.

Social justice is a key component of self-advocacy. Students must have a sense of belongingness at their schools and have a sense that they will receive support throughout all their academic endeavors. School counselors have a unique role in fostering self-advocacy to ensure that minority and marginalized students have equitable access to school resources and that students have opportunities to have their voices heard. School counselors promoting a social justice approach can utilize self-advocacy to help minority students and students from marginalized groups feel that they have a say in their educational goals and success.

Empowerment

A review of the literature indicates that self-advocacy encompasses more than attitudes and characteristics that lead an individual assert their rights. There is another

attribute that is important as well. Self-advocacy like self-determination has its core in empowerment.

McWhirter (as cited in Astramovich & Harris, 2007) states that empowerment involves helping individuals gain an awareness and knowledge of the role of power and privilege in their lives so that they can learn skills necessary to take control over their life circumstances. Further, there are qualities that identify an empowered individual such as assertiveness and independence. Wijeyesinghe, Griffin, and Love (1997) define an empowered individual as one who understands the effect oppression and/or racism has on their lives without responding

as a victim. In essence, the empowered individual has the ability to engage others with the expectation of receiving equitable treatment.

Zimmerman and Cleary (2006) state that one of the goals of secondary education should be to empower students to become independent self-regulated learners. Students who are self-regulated learners have a strong sense of empowerment and are more likely to be successful academically. Matusak (1997) states that empowering others is a way to increase the potential of power and that by enabling others to share in power barriers are removed so that individuals can not only develop confidence and ownership in a part of the process but also take responsibility for that process as well.

Nieto (2004) cites the work of researcher, Jim Cummins, who reviewed several programs whose goal was student empowerment. He found that students who were empowered had positive experiences with their teachers and developed a sense of control over their own lives and the confidence and motivation to succeed academically. Along these same lines, Zimmerman and Cleary (2006) state that empowered students

develop personal agency and effectively and responsibly manage their behavior from high school into the workforce or college environments.

Sprague and Hayes (2000) employ feminist theory to explain self-determination, self-advocacy, and empowerment. The authors state that empowerment is a key characteristic of a social relationship, which fosters the development of an individual's self. Further, empowering relationships are mutual and recognize the unique contribution of the individuals involved. Consequently, school counselors can work collaboratively with students to create opportunities in which students develop and utilize skills that allow them to have control over their academic lives.

In the context of the school environment counselors can be potentially instrumental in empowering minority and marginalized students by fostering their self-development and helping them recognize their potential to succeed academically. Minority students, with the assistance of school counselors, can become more informed of their educational rights and proactively use this knowledge to become advocates for their academic needs.

School Counselors' Role in Advocacy and Student Achievement

Field and Baker (2004) state that it is important to the school counseling profession to define advocacy and to understand how it should be operationalized. Specifically, the profession needs to determine school counselors' beliefs about behaviors related to advocacy and their beliefs regarding student advocacy. In their qualitative study involving nine school counselors Field and Baker (2004) wanted to explore how school counselors defined advocacy and how they advocated on behalf of their students. Counselors were divided into two focus groups and asked six interview

questions that included how counselors defined advocacy and how counselors' school environments either strengthened or inhibited their ability to advocate for students. Three themes emerged from the data: advocacy involved going above and beyond for students; advocacy involved specific behaviors; and, advocacy involved focusing on the student. School counselors also reported that learning to be an advocate was an inherent behavior or something that a counselor would automatically do.

The school counseling profession not only needs to define advocacy but also needs to determine what skills and activities encompass advocacy. According to Trusty and Brown (2005) the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model calls for school counselors to advocate for the academic success of all students and promote school reform. The author outlines specific competencies consisting of dispositions, knowledge, and skills counselors need in order to become effective advocates. These competencies such as empowerment, knowledge of resources, and collaboration skills, can be key in helping students develop self-advocacy competencies.

School counselors play an important role in advocacy and facilitating systemic change. Bryan (2005) discusses the various roles school counselors encompass such as team facilitator, collaborator, and advocate in fostering academic achievement and resilience in minority and poor students. The author defines an advocate as someone who "pleads or argues the cause of another" (pg. 223). School counselors can become advocates and work collaboratively with school personnel, families, and community members to remove systemic barriers such as racism and discrimination that impact student success.

Hines and Robinson (2006) state that school counselors are in a position to be leaders and advocates for all students. They call for school counselors to "champion educational equity" (p. 35) to ensure that every student achieves their dreams. School counselors as advocates can promote social change at their schools and assist students in developing skills to advocate for their academic success. Kaffenberger, Murphy, and Bemak (2006) state that school counselors possess specific skills in teaming and collaboration to advocate for policies and programs that will ensure all students' academic success.

Colbert, Vernon-Jones, and Pransky (2006) state that guidance and school counseling programs within the schools is not enough to solve the academic achievement gap among student groups and stress the need for student competencies focused on the developmental needs of a diverse student population. They discuss their new model, the *School Change Feedback Process* (SCFP), which is a system for promoting school wide change. The basic tenant of this process is that school counselors are integral to education reform and student achievement by eliminating barriers that hinder student development. Further, this process involves identifying factors such as family and community involvement that influence teachers' ability to obtain educational outcomes outlined by education reform. The school counselor's role is to monitor how these factors impact a teacher's ability to achieve student outcomes.

Brigman and Campbell (2003) state that school counselors need to develop, promote, and substantiate interventions that have significant impact on student academic and social success. Moreover, with the focus on the No Child Left Behind Act, school

counselors are increasingly being held responsible to provide data based on their effectiveness at fostering student success and achievement.

The Role of Accountability in Self-Advocacy

Brooks-McNamara and Pedersen (2006) state that school counselors are being held accountable for student success and are in need of strategies for collecting, analyzing, and utilizing data to form collaborative relationships leading to successful academic outcomes for all students. They further state that the school counselor role unlike any other role knows more about the school environment and students, therefore, school counselors must gather and use data to advocate for equitable resources for all students. The researchers further identify specific steps school counselors can take to advocate for systemic change, including working within an advisory team, presenting data, and developing action plans to create change.

Astramovich and Coker (2007) state that counselors are increasingly being held accountable for demonstrating the outcome of their programs and services. The authors present their Accountability Bridge Counseling Program Evaluation Model as a guide for evaluating the effectiveness of services school counselors offer to their student populations. The model is composed of the two cycles: 1) The Counseling Program Evaluation Cycle and 2) The Counseling Context Evaluation Cycle. The first cycle involves program planning and implementation. The second cycle involves obtaining feedback from key stakeholders such as teachers and administrators, strategic planning, and needs assessment. The model is cyclical rather than linear meaning that once objectives have been established the entire evaluation process is repeated and monitored.

In their study, Brigman and Cambpell (2003) evaluated the impact of school counselors' interventions on student achievement. The authors developed a research-based model, Student Success Skills (SSS), focused on fostering a positive impact on student success and achievement. Participants consisted of 180 students randomly selected from three elementary, one middle, and two high schools. Students who scored between the 25th and 50th percentile on the Norm Reference Test (NRT) Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) were selected because they were considered performing below average. The researchers conducted a pre and post test using a state comprehensive assessment for math and reading and a school behavior scale. Students were exposed to the SSS curriculum in both counseling groups and class guidance sessions focused on cognitive, social, and self-management skills. The results of the study indicated that between the pre-test and post-test (six months) the average amount of improvement was 22 percentile points and that seven out of every ten students showed improvement in behavior. These findings strongly suggest that counselor led interventions can have a significant impact on student achievement.

The previous study illustrates two important points; school counselors have a significant impact on student achievement through interventions and school counselors need data to show how they impact student achievement. Stone and Martin (2004) state that school counselors can use data to not only substantiate their role as leaders in the school setting but to also illustrate their impact on student achievement.

The literature indicates that the education reform movement and the No Child Left Behind Act place school counselors in a precarious position. School counselors must be accountable and use data to not only highlight what may be missing from

current school programs but also highlight what can be done to either develop or enhance existing programs. Stone and Martin (2004) state that by collecting and working with data school counselors can contribute to systemic change that provides greater opportunities to all children.

Self-Advocacy Competencies and Skills for Minority Students

Astramovich and Harris (2007) state that using frameworks from multicultural counseling and advocacy as a foundation, school counselors can identify and develop goals to create strategies to help minority students develop self-advocacy competence. Astramovich and Harris further suggest that self-determination, empowerment, and social justice based principles, self-advocacy competencies can be utilized to develop self-advocacy awareness, knowledge, and skills to help facilitate minority students' success in school.

Eiseman (2007) states that it is not only important for students to learn "helpful strategic skills" but it is also important for them to know there are adults who are monitoring their successes and providing support during difficulties (p. 4). School counselors can help students develop self-advocacy competencies and act as a support system when students have questions or concerns. In addition, school counselors can assist students in making informed decisions that impact their educational success.

In their discussion of the *Self-Advocacy Strategy*, a research based approach to help students become more involved in the IEP (Individualized Education Plan) process, Test and Neale (2004) state that including disabled students in the planning of their IEP's gives them the opportunity to use skills related to self-advocacy and goal setting. The *Self-Advocacy Strategy* is a method of fostering motivational and self-determination

skills in students to prepare them to participate in the educational planning process. The strategy includes a five-step plan in which students identify their strengths and area of improvement, learn to provide input in meetings, improve communication skills, ask appropriate questions, and communicate their goals. In their research study Test and Neale (2004) collected baseline data using the Arc's Self-Determination Scale as a pretest. The scale is a 72-item student self-rating scale that provides data on four characteristics of self-determination: 1) autonomy including independence and the extent an individual acts based on beliefs, values, and abilities; 2) self-regulation including cognitive problem solving and goal setting; 3) psychological empowerment or determining positive perception of control and; 4) self-realization including self-knowledge. A single subject design was employed and participants consisted of four teen-aged students (three boys and one girl) who were either learning or emotionally disabled. After baseline data was collected students were introduced to the *Self-Advocacy Strategy*. Following the intervention all students' mean scores increased and they were able to significantly contribute to their IEP meetings.

School counselors can adapt this strategy to show minority students how they can become "causal agents" in their school settings and create opportunities that lead to academic success. Often, minority students feel polarized in school settings, however, this strategy can motivate students to have more control over their education.

The Self-Advocacy Strategy is an example of how school counselors can potentially impact student achievement through their interventions. More importantly, school counselors can either use existing interventions or design interventions to help students develop specific self-advocacy skills to advocate for themselves.

Implications for Future Research

There are several research studies exploring: 1) self-efficacy among minority students and their beliefs regarding academic achievement and; 2) self-advocacy and the learning disabled. However, there is a dearth of empirical research as to how self-advocacy as a construct can be utilized to promote and bridge the gap between minority/low socioeconomic students and their white/high socioeconomic peers.

There is limited literature on what school counselors can do in helping minority students develop self-advocacy skills or competencies to achieve academic and social success. Field and Baker (2004) state that school counselors can not only advocate but also teach self-advocacy skills to empower students so that they can face hurdles or challenges. Additional research is needed to determine how school counselors can foster self-advocacy in minority students and other students from marginalized and oppressed groups. The special education research, which advocates for involving disabled students in their education plans and providing opportunities for them to communicate their needs and desires is a starting point for self-advocacy research for school counselors in advancing the needs of minority students.

School counselors require information about what specific skills students need to self-advocate. In addition, school counselors need information related to students' readiness and willingness to self-advocate. Future research should include obtaining students' perceptions about self-advocacy and what competencies related to awareness, knowledge and skills are necessary to self-advocate.

Self-efficacy scales have been effectively utilized to determine minority students' beliefs about achievement and academic success and self-determination scales

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are effective at determining which students have the skills to contribute to their academic success. These instruments could be employed as models to develop a scale to measure students' level of self-advocacy awareness, knowledge, and skills. The literature regarding self-determination could inform what is missing from self-advocacy research among minority students. According to Baker, Horner, Sappington, and Ard, Jr. (2000) The Arc's Self-Determination Scale is a valid and reliable instrument used for measuring students' level of self-determination. The utility of the scale involves assessing students' beliefs about themselves and their level self-determined behavior, identifying their ability to work with others to determine their strengths and weaknesses in relationship to the self-determination goals, and assessing their progress over time (Wehmeyer, 1995).

Components from self-determination and self-efficacy scales can be integrated and applied to a scale measuring self-advocacy readiness in minority students. Further, a self-advocacy scale could also determine if and when students are ready and/or willing to self-advocate. In addition, this instrument could also determine how often students have contact with school counselors and what counselors can do to help students successfully learn and master self-advocacy skills. Students who often feel marginalized in their school environment may not be ready to self-advocate, however, a self-advocacy scale could provide information to school counselors on how to approach students who are hesitant about learning self-advocacy strategies.

Astramovich and Harris (2007) state that as the United States becomes more diversified self-advocacy research may contribute to the development of programs and curricula that target skills needed by minority students. Accountability is key to school

counsels and the services they provide in and out of the classroom. Self-advocacy research conducted among minority students can provide data to counselors to substantiate existing services and facilitate the development of new services or programs.

Research regarding self-advocacy will add to the body of knowledge in the field by providing school counselors with information to help minority students achieve academic success and bridge the education gap. In addition, data obtained from research studies would provide valuable information to counselors regarding cultural, gender, and socioeconomic differences among students who are ready to self-advocate. Further, self-advocacy research would provide counselor educators with information to educate potential school counselors about how they can foster self-advocacy skills and prepare minority students to self-advocate and succeed academically.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework for this study integrates two significant themes that may contribute to better understanding the needs of clients served by counselors in schools and the community. One theme is historical personality trait theory, the premise that life experiences interact with genetic predispositions to form typical and predictable patterns of responses. The second theme is a contemporary concept of self-advocacy, the premise that perceived self-advocacy exists as a pattern of beliefs, possibly influenced by core personality traits, but entirely distinct to warrant identification as a separate construct.

According to Astramovich and Harris (2007), self-advocacy encompasses principles such as self-determination, empowerment, and social justice. Incorporating

these principles, minority student self-advocacy is defined as students' ability to value their cultural identity, identify personal and educational needs, recognize the influence of social and systemic power structures, and effectively assert and negotiate for their needs while promoting dignity and self-respect of others.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

Advocacy counseling helps students challenge systemic and social barriers that prohibit their academic development (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001). However, research on self-advocacy has been limited and the literature indicates that there have been no significant research studies related to promoting self-advocacy among minority students in the school setting. Self-advocacy is not a new concept, however, it has been underutilized in the field of school counseling. Therefore, research is needed to determine what students know regarding self-advocacy, their willingness to self-advocate, and how school counselors can be instrumental in fostering self-advocacy skills. The field of school counseling is constantly looking for effective approaches to address the needs of minority and disadvantaged youth and the results of a research study devoted to self-advocacy readiness may provide counselors a vehicle to help students succeed and achieve their goals.

According to Astramovich and Harris (2007), school counselors need to establish collaborative relationships with minority students to ensure their academic success. Furthermore, school counselors can play a pivotal role in helping minority students develop specific skills to become self-advocates. This study will add to the body of research with the emergence of an instrument that may determine students' willingness to self-advocate. Counselors can potentially use the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale to

collect data to help them establish competencies to empower students from marginalized and minority groups to learn self-advocacy skills to communicate their academic/social needs. School counselors will also have access to information to assist them in not only becoming better advocates but also fostering empowerment and advocacy skills in minority students. As a result, students will acquire skills they can utilize not only in the school environment but also in real world situations. In addition, counselor educators will have information to educate future school counselors about skills and strategies minority students need to be successful not only academically but also personally and socially.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to develop and empirically analyze a Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale and to determine if there were differences in responses between minority and non minority students. The following questions guided the research:

1. Is the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale a reliable measure of self-advocacy behavior?

2. Are the subscale components on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale reliable measures of self-advocacy characteristics?

3. Do the subscale components on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale adequately assess distinct self-advocacy skills and competencies?

4. Do the subscale components on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale and the "Big Five" factors on an established measure of core personality traits adequately assess distinct self-advocacy skills and competencies?

5. Are there significant differences in response patterns on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale total scores between minority students and non-minority students?

6. Are there significant differences in response patterns on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale subscale scores between minority students and non-minority students?

Hypotheses

1. The Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale will produce adequate estimates of internal consistency reliability in regards to self-advocacy behavior.

2. Subscale components on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale will produce adequate estimates of internal consistency reliability in regards to self-advocacy characteristics.

3. Subscale components on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale will identify distinct self-advocacy skills and competencies related to self-advocacy behavior.

4. Subscale components on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale and the "Big-Five" factors from the established measure of core personality traits will identify distinct self-advocacy skills and competencies related to self-advocacy behavior.

5. Response patterns on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale total scores will not differ among minority students and non-minority students.

6. Response patterns on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale subscale scores will not differ among minority students and non-minority students.

Rationale For Survey Approach

Marshall and Rossman (1999) state that researchers use surveys to obtain

information about characteristics, attitudes, and beliefs. The lack of self-advocacy

survey research in school counseling confirms and substantiates the need for instruments

to help determine which students are ready to advocate and what specific skills minority

students require to empower them to advocate for their needs in school and achieve

equitable access to resources that will help them accomplish academic and

personal/social success.

Rationale for the Item Type

Several sources were consulted in the development of the Self-Advocacy

Readiness Scale including Fowler (1995; 2002), Jinks and Morgan (1999), Corcoran and

Fisher (2000), Wehmeyer (1995), and Bandura (2006). The Arc's Self-Determination

Scale (Wehmeyer), the Children's Self-Efficacy Scale (Bandura, 2006) and the Morgan-

Jinks Student Self-Efficacy Scale (Jinks & Morgan, 1999) served as models for Self-

Advocacy Readiness Scale in terms of format and nomenclature of individual items.

The Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale was originally developed to determine

students' desire for control and their readiness to learn self-advocacy skills to reach their

academic goals. Self-advocacy like self-efficacy is an unobservable constructs whose

effects are based on the magnitude of individuals' responses through self-report

(Corcoran & Fischer, 2000). Therefore, through the use of a standardized measure self-

advocacy readiness is assessed similarly to self-efficacy; students respond to statements

that focus on their beliefs and abilities pertaining to decision-making and control.

Further, a standardized measure provides a structured means to collect and interpret data.

Fowler (1995) states that if a question is attempting to determine how close individuals' perceptions approach a specific statement it is best to use the dimension of truthfulness in the rating agreement. The Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale presents a series of closed ended statements so that participants can identify their willingness to self-advocate based on a five point Likert scale measuring students' desire for control, motivation, autonomy, knowledge, and personal experiences.

A Likert scale format was selected because participants can select an option that closely corresponds to their level of agreement or disagreement on an intensity scale regarding beliefs and perceptions (Corcoran & Fischer, 2000). Furthermore, Likert scales are helpful in ordering people regarding specific attitudes. The Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale requires students to provide judgments along a 5-point Likert continuum ranging from "completely true" to "completely untrue". In addition, Likert scale options can be accommodated for use with a specific population (Jniks & Morgan, 1999). This strategy applies to the development of the self-advocacy scale. High school students were the original target population, therefore, statements are constructed to address the common language of students, grades 9 – 12.

Simple and easy to understand statements are posed and participants' choices include completely untrue, somewhat untrue, somewhat true, and completely true. A neutral option of "not sure" is also included as some students may be uncertain about specific information regarding resources at their school or what opportunities are available to them. Statements are presented to assess students' knowledge of self

advocacy and to determine if students' have an autonomous role in the decision making process related to academic and personal/social goals. In a qualitative study conducted by Dei, Mazzuca, McIsaac, and Zine (1999) researchers administered brief surveys to determine personal characteristics and socioeconomic background of students in relationship to the disengagement of Black high school students. The self-advocacy scale contains statements such as, "I have a role in making decisions that affect my academic success" to assess a student's perception of control, assertiveness, and engagement in the educational process.

One goal of the instrument is to determine specific circumstances in which a student may or not be motivated to self-advocate. Students will respond to experienced based statements to determine if the school environment influences their willingness and ability to learn self-advocacy skills. For example, "My school provides an atmosphere where students can succeed" is an item on the scale that was created to assess individual students' experiences.

A 28 item draft of the self-advocacy scale was developed in the fall of 2006. A pilot test of the draft was conducted at a Las Vegas, Nevada high school with students, grades nine to twelve. As a result of feedback received from the pilot test several items were modified and new items were added.

Instruments

A quantitative approach using two survey instruments was employed to evaluate the self-advocacy instrument as a measure of self-advocacy and to determine if there were differences in response patterns between minority students and other students.

The recently developed 55-item Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale (2008) was used to assess students' beliefs, knowledge, and experience to determine their willingness to advocate for their academic needs (See Appendix A). The self-advocacy questionnaire contains constructs (autonomy, control, experience, knowledge, and motivation) similar to that of the Arc's Self-Determination Scale (Wehmeyer, 1995), which is specifically targeted for use with learning disabled students and measures students' level of self-determination. The self-determination instrument is a student self-report measurement that was tested using 400 adults with intellectual disabilities and has construct validity, discriminative validity, internal consistency, and factorial validity (Lachapelle, Wehmeyer, Haelewyck, Courbois, Keith, Schalock, et al., 2005).

The following five subscales are included in the self-advocacy scale to determine students' willingness to self-advocate: experience, knowledge, control, autonomy, and motivation. Items addressing control, motivation, and autonomy were designed to assess competencies and skills students may need to self-advocate. Items addressing the constructs of experience and knowledge were developed to assess experience and knowledge of advocacy and self-advocacy. In addition, a sub-component of experience is included to assess students' experiences with their college advisors.

The International Personality Pool (IPP), a reliable and valid measure, was incorporated in this study to aid in the analysis of the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale (See Appendix B). The IPP was obtained from the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) website which is a "scientific collaboratory" housing several instruments used to measure personality and other individual differences. A collaboratory is defined as "a computer-supported system that allows scientists to work with each other, facilities, and

data bases without regard to geographical location"(http://ipip.ori.org/ipip/). According to Goldberg, Johnson, Eber, Hogan, Ashton, Cloninger, and Gough (2005) the purpose of the IPIP Web site is to provide quick and convenient access to measures of individual differences. Further, the website houses three major types of information: "a) psychometric characteristics of the current set of IPIP scales, which are continuously being supplemented by new scales; b) keys for scoring the current set of scales; and c) the current total set of IPIP items, which is continuously being supplemented with new items (p. 87)." Reports of studies that utilized IPIP are also available on the website.

Specifically for this study, an established measure of core personality traits consisting of the "Big-Five Factor Markers" which include; extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness was utilized. The instrument consists of 50 items with a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1-5, with 1 being "very inaccurate" and 5 being "very accurate".

Participants and Procedures

The Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale was originally developed for use with high school students, however, because of limited access to this group in the local school district, a convenient and accessible sample population was identified and selected.

The sample for this study was University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) undergraduate students 18 years of age and older (n=195). Participants in the study were selected from the Educational Psychology (EPY) research subject pool, attended the EPY 452 Counseling and Consultation Skills for Teachers classes during the first summer session of 2008, and recruited by an email sent via a List Serve from Student Involvement and Activities. Student Involvement and Activities is a Student Life

organization devoted to supporting student development through co-curricular activities. Students selected from the research subject pool and recruited via email completed an online survey which requested demographic information and consisted of the self-advocacy readiness scale and an established measure of core personality traits. Students who attended the summer session of the EPY 452 class completed paper copies of both instruments.

Eight students recruited via email completed demographic information but failed to complete both instruments and one student from the research pool failed to complete any information, therefore, these students were not included in the final data analyses, thus, reducing the total number of participants, $n=186$.

Demographic information such as gender, ethnicity, age range, class ranking (i.e. freshman, sophomore, etc.), and number of semesters of attendance was requested for comparison with the UNLV's statistical information as well as the College of Education's. Ethnic information was used to determine which students would be assigned to the minority and non-minority groups. In order to protect their anonymity, participants were assigned a subject identification number.

Analyses

The primary focus of this study was the development of a Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale, to determine students' desire for control and their readiness to learn self-advocacy skills to reach their individual academic goals, and to determine if individual differences impact willingness to self-advocate. Self-advocacy and self-determination are interchangeable and closely related given that they are both unobservable constructs whose effects are based on the magnitude of an individual's

response through self-report. Consequently, self-advocacy was measured in a similar fashion to that of self-determination in that students responded to statements that focused on their beliefs and abilities pertaining to the five components of the self-advocacy scale; control, experience, knowledge, autonomy, and motivation.

A reliability analysis was performed to assess the internal consistency reliability of both the Self-Advocacy Readiness and the individual self-advocacy subscale components and to determine if items from the scale were measuring the same entity or characteristic (Corcoran & Fischer, 2000). Cronbach's alpha along with the standard error of measurement was calculated to assess the internal consistency of the overall scale and each subscale.

To determine if self-advocacy beliefs differed in terms of minority students and non-minority students, an independent samples t-test was conducted using the total scores from the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale. Further, independent samples t-tests were conducted to determine if there were differences between minority students and other students on the self-advocacy subscale scores.

Factor analysis is used to organize patterns of correlations among observed variable and to reduce a large amount of observed variables into smaller factors (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Further, exploratory factor analysis can determine if items related to the constructs form subsets or if there are correlations between items. Two separate factor analyses were performed to ascertain if there were distinct self-advocacy skills and competencies related to self-advocacy behavior. The first included the five self-advocacy subscales and the second included the five self-advocacy subscales along with the "Big-Five" factor markers.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to develop and empirically examine a self-

advocacy instrument and determine if there were differences in total scores and subscale

scores between minority and non minority students.

The participants for this study were University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV)

undergraduate students 18 years of age and older (n=195). Students who failed to

complete either instrument were excluded from the analysis reducing the number of

participants, n=186.

Descriptive statistics revealed that of the 186 participants 149 (80%) were female

and 37 (20%) were male. Ethnic groups represented included African American 17

(9.1%), Asian 14 (7.5%), Caucasian 112 (60.2%), Hispanic 30 (16.1%), Native

American 1 (.5%), Pacific Islander 4 (2.2%), and other 8 (4.3%). A majority (75%) of

students who participated in the study were in the 18-25 age range. The average number

of semesters completed was twelve. Detailed participants' demographic characteristics

are presented in Table 1.

The demographic makeup of the student body at UNLV is: 65% non-minority,

35% minority, 56% female, and 44% male. In the College of Education the demographic

composition of students is: 58% Caucasian, 27% minority, and 15%

unknown/undisclosed, 75% female and 25% male. Of those students who participated in the research study 80% were from the College of Education.

Frequency distributions provide information on the number of times a given score occurs, percentages of scores, and cumulative percentages of scores (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 2003). Table 2 illustrates participants' total scores on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale. In future studies, this data may be useful in developing a detailed percentile rank of scores to help counselors determine a student's readiness to self-advocate.

A one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was completed to determine if there were statistically significant differences between the students recruited via email, students from the EPY research subject pool, and students from the EPY 452 classes. The results of the analysis indicated there were no statistically significant differences among the three groups on the total scores of the self-advocacy instrument, $F(2,163)=$ .16, $p = .85$ (See Table 3).

This study addressed six hypotheses. After a restatement of each hypothesis the data analyses procedures that were used as well as results obtained are reported. A discussion of the preliminary analyses is also presented.

Findings

Hypotheses one and two address the reliability of the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale. When evaluating scale reliability Cronbach's alpha is the most common form of internal consistency reliability coefficient used. Many researchers (Pallant, 2007; Corcoran & Fischer, 2000; Santos, 1999) suggest that a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .7 is acceptable while any value above .8 is ideal. Some also suggest that a moderate value

of .6 is common and acceptable in an exploratory research study (http://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/PA765/reliab.htm). However, for the purposes of this study an alpha coefficient of at least .7 will be used as the standard for both total and subscale scores.

In order to further examine the precision of the participants' scores the standard error of measurement (SEM) was calculated to determine the range in which the true scores would fall. (Feldt & Qualls, 1998). The magnitude of the SEM is influenced by both the absolute size of the alpha coefficient and the standard deviation in the sample from which the alpha coefficient was calculated. In general, higher alpha coefficients will result in lower SEM's. Both the alpha coefficient and the standard error of measurement will be used to estimate the reliability of the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale, recognizing that the precision of a scale may be underestimated by the alpha coefficient when the standard deviation of the scale is low.

Hypothesis 1: The Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale will produce adequate estimates of internal consistency reliability in regards to self-advocacy behavior.

A reliability analysis was conducted with the 55-item Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale using SPSS version 16. Cases in which participants did not complete all the items on the instrument were excluded reducing the number of participants, $n = 164$. The reliability statistic revealed an alpha coefficient of .86 which exceeds the standard of .7.

Values on the corrected the item-total correlation statistic should be greater than .3 indicating that items are correlated with the overall scale and are measuring the same basic construct (http://www.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/PA765/ reliab.htm). An item with a low item-total correlation may be an indication that it is not measuring the same

construct as the other items (Santos, 1999). Further, items with low correlations or negative values may need to be dropped or recoded.

The corrected item-total correlation statistic revealed twenty-four items with values below .3 and one negative value for item 21 (-.069). If item 10 or item 21 were deleted the alpha coefficient would increase to .87. The scale statistic revealed that the total mean score was 222.4 with a *SD* of 18.17. The calculated value of the SEM was 6.72. Table 4 provides details on the reliability analysis.

The data from this sample are supportive of the first hypothesis. The total scores on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale appear to have adequate reliability.

Hypothesis 2: Subscale components on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale will produce adequate estimates of internal consistency reliability.

Subscales from this instrument include autonomy, control, experience, knowledge and motivation. The autonomy subscale contains ten items, the control, experience, and motivation subscales contain eleven items, and the knowledge subscale contains twelve items (See Appendix C).

For the subscale of autonomy a reliability analysis was conducted for ten items. Cases in which participants did not complete all the subscale items were excluded and reduced the number of participants, n = 182. The reliability statistic produced an alpha coefficient of .69 (SD = 5.07). The calculated SEM for the autonomy subscale was 2.83.

Corrected item-total correlations ranged from .063 to .492. Two items (21 & 53) had values below .3, however, there were no negative values. The highest alpha coefficient that could be achieved if item 21 on the scale was deleted is .72, which

would exceed the standard of .7. Item 21 in this subscale reads, "I usually don't ask for help when facing new challenges". Table 5 provides details for the autonomy subscale.

For the subscale of control a reliability analysis was conducted for eleven items. Cases in which participants did not complete all the subscale items were excluded and reduced the number of participants, $n = 181$. The reliability statistic produced an alpha coefficient of .66 (SD = 4.19). The calculated SEM for the control subscale was 2.45.

Corrected item-total correlations ranged from .21 to .43. Five items (9, 31, 32, 48, & 49) had values below .3, however, there were no negative values. Deleting an item would not increase the alpha coefficient. Table 6 provides details for the control subscale.

For the subscale of experience a reliability analysis was conducted for eleven items. Cases in which participants did not complete all the subscale items were excluded and reduced the number of participants, $n = 183$. The reliability statistic produced an alpha coefficient of .83 (SD = 7.77). The calculated SEM for the experience subscale was 3.2.

Corrected item-total correlations ranged from .26 to .66. There was only one item (7) with a value below .3 and there were no negative values. The highest alpha coefficient would be .84 if item 7 were deleted. Table 7 provides details for the experience subscale.

For the subscale of knowledge a reliability analysis was conducted for twelve items. Cases in which participants did not complete all the subscale items were excluded and reduced the number of participants, $n = 181$. The reliability statistic produced an

alpha coefficient of .62 (SD = 4.78). The calculated SEM for the knowledge subscale was 2.95.

Corrected item-total correlations ranged from .13 to .42. There were six items (5, 6, 12, 27, 30, & 40) with values below .3, however, there were no negative values. If item 12 were deleted the alpha coefficient would only increase to .63. Table 8 provides details for the knowledge subscale.

For the subscale of motivation a reliability analysis was conducted for eleven items. Cases in which participants did not complete all the subscale items were excluded and reduced the number of participants, $n = 180$. The reliability statistic produced an alpha coefficient of .51 (SD = 4.11). The calculated SEM for the motivation subscale was 2.86.

Corrected item-total correlations ranged from -.07 to .41. There were six items (10, 17, 26, 33, 43, & 44) below .3 with one negative value (-.07) for item 10. Item 10 reads, "I usually need help solving problems". The alpha coefficient would only increase to .58 if this item was deleted. Table 9 provides details for the motivation subscale.

The data from this sample suggest adequate internal consistency reliability for the experience subscale based on the alpha coefficient and standard error of measurement. The alpha coefficients for the four other subscales did not reach the desired standard, however, the amount of error in an instrument is another way to assess reliability. Corcoran and Fischer, (2000) state that in general, the smaller the SEM the more reliable the instrument. The combination of alpha coefficients and low value of SEM's of the autonomy, control, knowledge, and motivation subscales suggest adequate

internal consistency reliability. Therefore, the subscale scores on the Self-Advocacy

Readiness Scale appear to have adequate reliability.

Hypothesis 3: Subscale components on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale will

identify distinct self-advocacy skills and competencies related to self-advocacy

behavior.

In order to determine if there were distinct self-advocacy skills and competencies

related to self-advocacy behavior an exploratory factor analysis was conducted using

SPSS version 16. Scores from the five self-advocacy subscales (autonomy, control,

experience, knowledge, and motivation) were subjected to principal component analysis

(PCA). The results of the analysis revealed one factor accounting for 52.16% of the total

variance. This factor included all five subscale components of the Self-Advocacy

Readiness Scale suggesting a self-advocacy construct (see Table 10).

The resulting data do not support the subscales as independent measures of self-

advocacy skills and competencies, therefore, hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Hypothesis 4: Subscale components on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale and

subscale components from the established measure of core personality traits will identify

distinct self-advocacy skills and competencies related to self-advocacy behavior.

In order to determine if there were distinct self-advocacy skills and competencies

related to self-advocacy behavior an exploratory factor analysis was conducted. Scores

from the five self-advocacy subscales (autonomy, control, experience, knowledge, and

motivation) and scores from the "Big Five" core personality traits (extroversion,

agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness) were subjected to

principle component analysis (PCA). The PCA found a three factor solution, accounting

for approximately 55% of the total variance. The highest factor loading for four of the five self-advocacy subscales (autonomy, experience, knowledge, motivation) was on the first factor. The highest loadings for the second factor were "Big Five" extroversion, openness, and agreeableness traits. The "Big Five" conscientiousness scale had its highest loading on the third factor which also includes the highest loading for "Big Five" neuroticism and the self-advocacy control subscale.

In summary, the strongest loadings were autonomy, knowledge, and motivation on the first factor, openness and extroversion on the second factor, and conscientiousness on the third factor. The control subscale loaded on all three factors, but its highest loading was on factor three with conscientiousness and neuroticism. These data, with the exception of the control subscale, provide support for the self-advocacy subscales and the "Big Five" factors as independent measures of self-advocacy skills and competencies.

Hypothesis 5: Response patterns on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale total scores will not differ between minority students and other students.

An independent samples t-test of the total scores of the self-advocacy readiness scale was conducted. The grouping variable was non-minority students ($n = 101$) and minority students ($n = 64$). The non-minority group included students who identified themselves as Caucasian. The minority group included those students who identified themselves as African American, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, Pacific Islander, and Other. Cases in which participants did not fully complete all items were excluded. The mean of total scores for Non-minority students on the self-advocacy readiness scale was ($M = 222.9$, $SD = 17.35$) compared to that of minority students ($M = 221.63$, SD

19.49). The alpha level was .05. The difference between mean scores was not statistically significant, $t(162) = -.44, p = .66$ (See Table 12). Therefore, the data are not supportive of this hypothesis.

Hypothesis 6: Response patterns on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale subscale scores will not differ between minority students and other students.

An independent samples t-test of the subscales scores of the self-advocacy readiness scale was conducted. The grouping variable was non-minority and minority students. The non-minority group included students who identified themselves as Caucasian. The minority group included those students who identified themselves as African American, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, Pacific Islander, and Other. Cases in which students failed to complete all the items in each subscale were excluded thus reducing the number of participants in each subscale.

For the autonomy subscale 73 minority and 109 non-minority students were included. The subscale mean scores of the minority students (M = 38.51, SD = 4.74) and the subscale mean scores for non-minority students (M = 38.41, SD = 5.38) were compared using an alpha level of .05. The difference between mean scores was not statistically significant, $t(180) = .12, p = .90$ (See Table 13).

For the control subscale 70 minority and 111 non-minority students were included. The subscale mean scores of the minority students (M = 46.14, SD = 4.62) and the subscale mean scores of non-minority students (M = 47.64, SD = 3.81) were compared using an alpha level of .05. The difference between mean scores was statistically significant, $t(179) = -.2.4, p = .02$ (See Table 14).

For the experience subscale 72 minority and 111 non-minority students were included. The subscale mean scores of the minority students (M = 39.44, SD = 8.6) were compared to the subscale mean scores of non-minority students (M = 40.77, SD 7.2) using an alpha level of .05. The difference between mean scores was not statistically significant, $t(181) = -1.13, p = .26$ (See Table 15).

For the knowledge subscale 73 minority and 108 non-minority students were included. The subscale mean scores of the minority students (M = 50.63, SD = 4.98) were compared to the subscale mean scores of non-minority students (M = 49.97, SD = 4.63) using an alpha level of .05. The difference between mean scores was not statistically significant, $t(179) = .91, p = .37$ (See Table 16).

For the motivation subscale 72 minority and 108 non-minority students were included. The subscale mean scores of the minority students (M = 46.25, SD = 4.35) were compared to the subscale mean scores of the non-minority students (M = 45.93, SD = 3.95) using an alpha level of .05. This test was found to be statistically insignificant, $t(178) = .52, p = .61$ (See Table 17).

These data indicate a statistically significant difference between mean scores of minority and non-minority participants on only one of the subscales, control. Substantial support for this hypothesis is evident.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The concept of self-advocacy in school counseling and its potential to empower underrepresented youth in school settings has received minimum attention. Furthermore, there has been little research in the area of utilizing self-advocacy among minority students in school counseling to close the academic achievement gap. As a result, there is a substantial need for a research study to explore the development of a tool that will help school counselors assess students' readiness to self-advocate for their educational success.

In this study, the primary objective was to assess the reliability of the 55 item Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale using an existing reliable and valid scale, the established measure of core personality traits, and to determine if there were significant differences in responses between minority and non minority students and willingness to self-advocate.

The established measure of core personality traits utilized for this study consisted of the "Big-Five Factor Markers" which include; extroversion, agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness. The instrument consisted of 50 items with a 5 point Likert scale with 1 being "very inaccurate" and 5 being "very accurate".

The discussion in this chapter will focus on the six research hypotheses and the results of the analyses. Findings related to each hypothesis are discussed in the

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subsequent section of this chapter. Next, conclusions drawn from these findings are shared. Finally, limitations of the study along with implications for future research will also be discussed.

<div align="center">Discussion of Findings</div>

Hypothesis 1: The Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale will produce adequate estimates of internal consistency reliability in regards to self-advocacy behavior.

The results of the reliability analysis revealed that the 55 item instrument is reliable in measuring self-advocacy readiness behaviors with an alpha coefficient of .86 indicating that approximately 86% of the score variance could be attributed to differences in self-advocacy readiness among individuals while the remaining 14% could be attributed to errors in measurement (Aguinis, Henle, & Ostroff, 2001). When the standard error of measurement (SEM) was calculated the resulting value was 6.72 which is low in comparison to the mean score of 222.4 with a standard deviation of 18.17. The SEM provided information on the instrument's consistency and how much error may occur for an individual's score.

The high alpha coefficient and relatively low SEM confirms the internal consistency reliability of the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale. However, in order to generalize the findings, the scale may need to be administered to another sample of students including students in a high school setting. In addition, having the scale evaluated by an independent panel of high school counselors for content validity would help support its use with that population specifically.

Hypothesis 2: Subscale components on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale will produce adequate estimates of internal consistency reliability.

While the experience subscale produced an alpha coefficient well above the acceptable standard of .7 the remaining other subscales did not. However, both the alpha coefficient and standard error of measurement (SEM) were used to evaluate adequate reliability. The autonomy (2.83), control (2.45), knowledge (2.95), and motivation (2.86) subscales had low SEM's while the experience subscale had the highest SEM at 3.2 indicating more error and less precision than the others.

The low alpha coefficients of the autonomy, control, knowledge, and motivation subscales could be the result of individual items and their influence on the coefficient. For example, if item 21 were deleted from the autonomy subscale the alpha coefficient would increase from .659 to .716 which exceeds the standard of .7. The results of the analysis indicated that subscale items (i.e.7, 9, 10, 21, 31, 32, 48, 49) may need to be reviewed to establish whether they are ambiguous or need to be rewritten or deleted to increase alpha coefficients values. High alpha coefficients and low SEM's for all the self-advocacy subscales will produce greater internal consistency reliability.

Hypothesis 3: Subscale components on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale will identify distinct self-advocacy skills and competencies related to self-advocacy behavior.

Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) recommend having 300 cases for factor analysis and indicate that 150 cases is adequate if there are high marker loading variables (>.80). Pallant (2007) states that sample size may not be as important as the ratio of participants to items and that ideally an instrument should have approximately five to ten participants per item. According to this calculation, if the factor analysis of the self-advocacy scale had been at the item level, the analysis would have required approximately 275 to 550

participants. There were 186 participants in the study, therefore, the self-advocacy subscales (five) rather than all 55 items of the instrument were included in the factor analysis.

Data analysis revealed one distinct factor accounting for 52% of the variance and the rotated component matrix revealed that all five self-advocacy subscales loaded under this factor. Although one goal of this study was to identify distinct factors related to self-advocacy behaviors and competencies, only one factor was identified. However, another goal of this study was to identify a self-advocacy construct. The results of the factor analysis may indicate that a factor or construct related to self-advocacy was identified and measured. All five subscales loading under one component may support this finding.

Hypothesis 4: Subscale components on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale and subscale components from the measure of core personality traits will identify distinct self-advocacy skills and competencies related to self advocacy behavior.

As with hypothesis 3 because the participant to item ratio was insufficient the five subscales from the self-advocacy scale and the "Big Five" components from the established measure of core personality traits were included in the factor analysis. The five self-advocacy subscales include autonomy, control, experience, knowledge, and motivation. The five factors from the measure of core personality traits include extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness. Data analysis revealed three factors accounting for approximately 55% of the variance. The highest factor loading for four of the five self-advocacy subscales (autonomy, experience, knowledge, motivation) was on the first factor. The highest loadings for the second factor were "Big-Five" extroversion, openness, and agreeableness traits. The

"Big- Five" conscientiousness scale had its highest loading on the third factor which also included the highest loading for "Big- Five" neuroticism and the self-advocacy control scale.

The first factor, with the possible exception of the control subscale, suggests the possibility of a distinct self-advocacy construct. The second factor included three core personality traits. The third factor was comprised of two core personality traits and the self-advocacy scale for control.

In summary, the strongest loadings were autonomy, knowledge, and motivation on the first factor, openness and extroversion on the second factor, and conscientiousness on the third factor. The control subscale loaded on all three factors, but its highest loading was on factor three with conscientiousness and neuroticism.

The control subscale is worth noting, however, because it loaded under all three factors, with its strongest loading (.488) under the third factor along with conscientiousness and neuroticism. Interestingly, minority students' control subscale scores were lower than those of Non-minority students accounting for the statistical difference between these two groups. Future studies may be conducted to determine the impact control has on self-advocacy competencies and its specific influence on other behaviors such as conscientiousness, autonomy, motivation, knowledge, and openness.

Hypothesis 5: Response patterns on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale total scores will not differ among minority students and other students.

Data analysis indicated there no statistical difference between the total scores of non-minority students and minority students on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale, $t(162) = -.44, p = .66$. There are several explanations as to why a statistical significance

was not detected between the two groups. The sample size of the non-minority group (n = 101) was approximately 36% more than the sample size of the minority group (n = 64). The focus of the study was to assess minority students' willingness to self-advocate, however, the smaller minority student sample size may not have been adequate to detect a statistical significance.

Another factor that could have attributed to the lack of statistical significance is the difficulty in measuring attitudes and beliefs as opposed to measuring achievement and aptitude (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). McMillan and Schumacher further state that participants' answers can be influenced by "response sets", which include faking, guessing and rushing through items. Response sets are most prevalent with items that use a continuum or Likert scale. Students in this study were required to complete both a 55 item scale and a 50 item scale and may have either skipped or hurried through both scales without paying close attention to the items.

Another explanation for lack of statistical significance between the two groups may be the social desirability of responses. Students may have wanted to be viewed favorably and, therefore may have intentionally responded in a manner that could be interpreted as socially desirable (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Participants in both the non-minority and minority groups may have responded to certain items in a manner reflecting their aspirations, rather than their actual ability at the time both instruments were completed.

Hypothesis 6: Response patterns on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale subscale scores will not differ among minority students and other students.

Data analysis revealed there were no statistical differences among the non-minority and minority students for the subscales of autonomy, experience, knowledge, and motivation. However, there was statistical significance among the two groups for the control subscale, $t(179) = -.2.4, p = .02$. One explanation for the statistical difference in the control subscale may be the cultural differences among the groups. Because of life circumstances, cultural experiences, and family influences minority students may perceive having less control than non-minority students.

Traditionally, Hispanic families are hierarchical in nature with particular authority given to elders, parents, and males (Sue & Sue, 2003). Hispanic students may feel an obligation to their families in regards to doing well in school rather than feeling that have a role in making decisions that impact their academic success. In addition, there is an expectation that children are obedient and not consulted on family decisions.

Because of negative experiences in either elementary or high school, minority, disadvantaged, and marginalized students may have developed a sense of powerlessness and feel as though they have little control of their academic success (Nieto, 2004). Bandura (1997) states that in order for individuals to realize their goals they need to take control over external events that affect their lives. Discrimination and marginalization may lead minority students to perceive themselves as having little control over external events. In their ethnographic study of Black students' disengagement from high school, Dei, Mazzuca, McIsaac, and Zine (1997) found that students felt empowered when they had a sense of agency regarding what occurs in the educational environment. Carey and Boscardin (2003) assert that school personnel's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors have a strong influence on students' sense of self-efficacy and ability to succeed. Students may

feel they have limited control over their academic success when teachers and administrators do not support them.

In summary, the purpose of this study was to empirically evaluate the utility of the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale. The expectation was that the data analysis would provide information to adjust and modify the scale so that it would be become a useful and informative instrument for school counselors' use. An additional expectation was that the information gleaned from the study would contribute to additional avenues of research.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were developed based on quantitative analysis of the data collected from participants in the study.

1. The Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale produced adequate estimates for internal consistency reliability.

2. Based on the alpha coefficient in addition to the standard error of measurement, the self-advocacy subscales produced adequate estimates of internal consistency reliability.

3. A self-advocacy construct was possibly identified.

4. Response patterns on the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale total scores did not differ among minority students and other students.

5. Scores on the self-advocacy control subscale were statistically different between minority students and other students.

Limitations

The sample in this study consisted of 186 students from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The total number of students at this institution total 27,988. Although students were recruited campus wide a majority were from the College of Education, therefore, the results of the study may not represent the self-advocacy beliefs or attitudes of students throughout the institution.

The sample size also impacted the factor analysis. As stated previously, five participants to ten participants to each item are recommended for an item based factor analysis. Therefore, an item based factor analysis for the 55 item self-advocacy scale would have required 275 participants (5 to 1) or 550 participants (10 to 1). Due to the number of participants the subscale scores rather than the 55 items were subjected to the analysis. However, the factor analysis revealed the possibility of a measurable self-advocacy construct that can be explored in future research.

The small sample size of minority students may have also been another limitation. The number of minority students may have contributed to the lack of statistical significance in hypotheses five and six. A sample size either equal to or larger than that of non-minority students may have detected a statistical difference between the two groups regarding the self-advocacy scale and the established measure of core personality traits.

Another limitation may be the social desirability of participants' responses on self-report based instruments. Students may have wanted to be viewed favorably or may have wanted to be perceived as competent in regards to self-advocacy resulting in the underreporting of specific behaviors. This may have been the case in which students completed the instruments in the Counseling and Consultation Skills for Teachers

classes where students may have felt a lack of privacy or hurried in completing items (Couper, Singer, & Tourangeau, 2000).

The sample group may have been another limitation to this study. The Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale was originally developed to assess high school students' knowledge of and ability to self-advocate, however, minority students who graduate from high school and successfully attend and matriculate through college may have acquired skills to advocate for their educational needs to achieve academic success.

Suggestions for Further Research

This study represents an initial contribution to the literature in the development and analysis of a scale to determine students' readiness to self-advocate. Further research may involve modifying the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale for use at the elementary and secondary school level. Modifications could include reducing the number of items, restructuring the wording of items, and eliminating ambiguous items. To that end, having the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale reviewed and evaluated by an independent panel of school counselors would contribute to the validity of the instrument. A valid and reliable scale will enable school counselors to help students develop skills and competencies to self-advocate for their academic success.

The literature indicates that it is essential for school counselors to not only define advocacy but to also understand how it can be utilized in the school environment (Field & Baker, 2004). Therefore, another potential research study may involve investigating school counselors' beliefs and knowledge of self-advocacy and their willingness and ability to teach self-advocacy skills and competencies.

Qualitative studies exploring minority and non minority students' experiences in the high school setting may be helpful in identifying ways self-advocacy influence academic success. Such studies provide students with opportunities to share their perceptions and indicate what conditions in the school setting would motivated them to self-advocate. Results from individual interviews and focus groups would add to the body of knowledge on self-advocacy and its potential to impact students' educational success. Further, students' perspectives and experiences may provide school counselors with a foundation in implementing self-advocacy skills and strategies.

Self-efficacy and self-advocacy are similar in that both constructs are concerned with students' beliefs and judgments which influence their ability to cope with potential barriers and failures in their educational environment. Thus, a comparable study utilizing a self-efficacy scale along with the Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale will be helpful in determining if a true self-advocacy construct exists and is measureable.

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Table 1
Description of Participants

		Frequency	Percent
Age	18-25	141	76%
	26-35	25	14%
	35-45	13	7%
	45+	6	3%
Gender	Female	149	80%
	Male	37	20%
Ethnicity	African American	17	9%
	Asian	14	8%
	Caucasian	112	60%
	Hispanic	30	16%
	Native American	1	1%
	Pacific Islander	4	2%
	Other	8	4%
Class	Freshman	3	2%
	Sophomore	20	11%
	Junior	97	52%
	Senior	64	34%
Semesters at School	Avg.	12	

Table 2

Participants Total Scores on the Self-Advocacy Scale

Score	Frequency	Cumulative Percent
174	1	1
185	1	2
186	2	3
187	1	4
193	3	6
194	2	7
195	1	8
197	1	9
198	1	10
199	1	11
201	3	13
202	2	15
203	3	17
205	5	20
206	4	22
207	4	24
208	2	25
209	5	28
210	4	30
211	4	32
212	3	34
213	5	37
214	5	40
215	5	43
216	3	45
217	1	46
218	2	47
219	1	48
220	2	49
221	6	53
222	4	55
223	4	57
224	3	59
225	2	60
227	4	62
228	2	63
229	4	65
230	3	67
231	4	69
232	5	7

Table 2

Participants Total Scores on the Self-Advocacy Scale (con't)

Score	Frequency	Cumulative Percent
234	3	74
235	2	75
236	3	77
237	3	79
238	1	80
239	4	82
240	3	84
241	1	85
243	4	87
244	1	88
245	5	91
247	2	92
249	1	93
250	1	94
255	2	95
256	1	96
257	1	97
259	2	98
260	1	99
261	1	100
263	1	101
267	1	102
Total	164	

Table 3
Analysis of Variance for Groups

Source	*df*	MS	*F*	*p*
Total SARS				
Between Groups	2	53	.16	.85
Within Groups	161	333.8		
Total	163			

* p < .05

Table 4

Reliability of Self-Advocacy Scale Items

Cases	N	%
Valid	164	88
Excluded	22	12
Total	186	100

Cronbach's Alpha	.86	Standard Error of Measurement	6.72

Scale Statistics	M	SD	N or Items
	222.4	18.18	55

Table 5
Reliability Autonomy Subscale

Cases	N	%		
Valid	182	98		
Excluded	4*	2		
Total	186	100		

	Cronbach's Alpha	SEM		
	.69	2.83		

Scale Statistics		M	SD	N of items
		38.46	5.1	10

* Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Table 6
Reliability Control Subscale

Cases	N		%
Valid	181		97
Excluded	5*		3
Total	186		100

	Cronbach"s Alpha	SEM	
	.66	2.45	

Scale Statistics		M	SD	N of items
		47.1	4.2	11

* Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Table 7
Reliability Experience Subscale

Cases	N	%	
Valid	183	98	
Excluded	3*	2	
Total	186	100	
Cronbach's Alpha	SEM		
.83	3.2		

Scale Statistics	M	SD	N of items
	40.25	7.8	11

* Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Table 8

Reliability Knowledge Subscale

Cases	N	%		
Valid	181	97		
Excluded	5*	3		
Total	186	100		

	Cronbach's Alpha	SEM		
	.62	2.95		

Scale Statistics		M	SD	N of items
		50.24	4.78	12

* Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Table 9

Reliability Motivation Subscale

Cases	N	%		
Valid	180	97		
Excluded*	6	3		
Total	186	100		

	Cronbach's Alpha	SEM		
	.51	2.86		

Scale Statistics		M	SD	N of items
		46.06	4.11	11

* Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Table 10

Factor Analysis – Self-Advocacy Subscales

	Component
	1
Autonomy	.773
Control	.625
Experience	.492
Knowledge	.789
Motivation	.867

Table 11

Factor Analysis – Self-Advocacy Subscales and "Big Five" Components
Rotated Component Matrix

	Component		
	1	2	3
Autonomy	.737		
Control	.322	.420	.488
Experience	.661		
Knowledge	.731		
Motivation	.768		
Extroversion		.663	
Agreeableness		.614	
Conscientiousness			.823
Neuroticism			.512
Openness		.738	

Table 12
Independent Samples T-Test Total Self-Advocacy Scores

	N	M	SD
Minority students	64	221.63	19.50
Caucasian students	100	222.9	17.36

	t-test		
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Total Self-Advocacy Scores	-.44	162	.66

Table 13

Independent Samples T-Test Autonomy Subscale

	N	M	SD
Minority students	73	38.51	4.74
Caucasian students	109	38.41	5.38

	t-test		
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Autonomy	.121	180	.90

p<.05

Table 14

Independent Samples T-Test Control Subscale

	N	M	SD
Minority students	70	46.14	4.62
Caucasian students	111	47.64	3.81

	t-test		
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Control	-2.4	179	.02*

*p<.05

Table 15

Independent Samples T-Test Experience Subscale

	N	M	SD
Minority students	72	39.44	8.6
Caucasian students	111	40.77	7.2

	t-test		
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Experience	-1.13	181	.26

p<.05

Table 16
Independent Samples T-Test Knowledge Subscale

	N	M	SD
Minority students	73	50.63	4.98
Caucasian students	108	49.97	4.63

	t-test		
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Knowledge	.91	179	.37

p<.05

Table 17
Independent Samples T-Test Motivation Subscale

	N	M	SD
Minority students	72	46.25	4.35
Caucasian students	108	45.93	3.95

	t-test		
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Motivation	.52	178	.61

p<.05

APPENDIX

SELF-ADVOCACY READINESS SCALE

The purpose of this survey is to assess students' beliefs, knowledge, and experiences that will help determine their willingness to advocate for their academic needs.

Survey Instructions:

For each of the statements below, please indicate to what extent the statement is either true or untrue for you by circling the corresponding number that best describes your belief or experience. If a statement is completely untrue circle "1", however, if a statement is completely true circle "5". If a statement is somewhat untrue or somewhat true please circle either "2" or "4". If you are unsure if a statement applies to you select "Not Sure". Please keep in mind there are no right or wrong answers.

1	2	3	4	5
Completely Untrue	Somewhat Untrue	Not Sure	Somewhat True	Completely True

1. I like doing my own thinking.   1--2--3--4--5

2. I like when others make decisions for me.   1--2--3--4--5

3. I feel free to express my own opinions even if   1--2--3--4--5
   they are different from others.

4. I have difficulty asking for help when I have a problem.   1--2--3--4--5

5. I understand what advocacy means.   1--2--3--4--5

6. I know what skills I need to succeed in school.   1--2--3--4--5

7. My advisor is available when I need help.   1--2--3--4--5

8. I try to do well in school.   1--2--3--4--5

1	2	3	4	5
Completely Untrue	Somewhat Untrue	Not Sure	Somewhat True	Completely True

9. I like making my own decisions.   1--2--3--4--5

10. I usually need help solving problems.   1--2--3--4--5

11. I feel free to express my feelings.   1--2--3--4--5

12. I don't know how to communicate my academic needs.   1--2--3--4--5

13. I have been treated fairly at my school.   1--2--3--4--5

14. I can ask my advisor for help if I need to.   1--2--3--4--5

15. I understand communicating my needs (self-advocacy)   1--2--3--4--5
    is important to my success in school.

16. Learning how to succeed in school is important to me.   1--2--3--4--5

17. If I had a problem at school I would ask   1--2--3--4--5
    my advisor for help.

18. My school treats some students differently than others.   1--2--3--4--5

19. I control how well I do academically in school.   1--2--3--4--5

20.I have experienced discrimination at my school.   1--2--3--4--5

21. I usually don't ask for help when facing new challenges   1--2--3--4--5

22. I know who to talk to at my school if I need help.   1--2--3--4--5

23. If I have a problem at school there is no one I can ask
    for help.   .   1--2--3--4--5

24. I have never been treated unfairly at my school.   1--2--3--4--5

25. I know about the resources (tutoring, mentoring, etc.)   1--2--3--4--5
    at my school to help me succeed academically.

26.Getting good grades is important to me.   1--2--3--4--5

27. I want to know how I can control my academic   1--2--3--4--5
    success.

	1	2	3	4	5
	Completely Untrue	Somewhat Untrue	Not Sure	Somewhat True	Completely True

28. I have difficulty expressing my feelings to others.   1--2--3--4--5

29. I like helping my friends succeed in school.   1--2--3--4--5

30. I want to learn skills to communicate better with others.   1--2--3--4--5 .

31. I have good negotiation skills.   1--2--3--4--5

32. I want little control of my academic success.   1--2--3--4--5

33. I find it hard making my own decisions.   1--2--3--4--5

34. I am confident in my ability to succeed in school.   1--2--3--4--5

35. I know how to reach my academic goals.   1--2--3--4--5

36. If I need help the staff at my school are there to support me.   1--2--3--4--5

37. I have experienced prejudice at my school.   1--2--3--4--5

38. Before making a decision I try to get all the facts.   1--2--3--4--5

39. I work hard to succeed in school.   1--2--3--4--5

40. I want to know more about self-advocacy.   1--2--3--4--5

41. I have little control over how well I do in school.   1--2--3--4--5

42. My school supports my academic success.   1--2--3--4--5

43. If I have a problem I cannot solve I seek out help.   1--2--3--4--5

44. I want to know more about how I can succeed academically in school.   1--2--3--4--5

45. I can ask my advisor for help if I need to.   1--2--3--4--5

46. I have not experienced discrimination at my school.   1--2--3--4--5

47. If I say I'm going to do something I usually follow through.   1--2--3--4--5

	1	2	3	4	5
	Completely Untrue	Somewhat Untrue	Not Sure	Somewhat True	Completely True

48. I want to have control of my academic success.   1--2--3--4--5

49. I need help making important decisions.   1--2--3--4--5

50. I want to know more about how I can advocate for my
    academic goals.   1--2--3--4--5

51. I'm afraid to ask my advisor for help.   1--2--3--4--5

52. Everyone is treated fairly at my school.   1--2--3--4--5

53. I welcome new challenges with confidence.   1--2--3--4--5

54. My school provides an atmosphere where students can
    succeed.   1--2--3--4--5

55. I have a role in making decisions that affect   1--2--3--4--5
    my academic success.

APPENDIX B

IPP

On this page there are short phrases describing people's behaviors. Use the rating scale below to describe how accurately each statement describes you, as you usually are, not as you wish to be in the future. Indicate your answer by circling the appropriate number. The scale is:

1	2	3	4	5
very inaccurate	moderately inaccurate	not sure	moderately accurate	very accurate

Circle

1 2 3 4 5   Am the life of the party.

1 2 3 4 5   Feel little concern for others.

1 2 3 4 5   Am always prepared.

1 2 3 4 5   Get stressed out easily.

1 2 3 4 5   Have a rich vocabulary.

1 2 3 4 5   Don't talk a lot.

1 2 3 4 5   Am interested in people.

1 2 3 4 5   Leave my belongings around.

1 2 3 4 5   Am relaxed most of the time.

1 2 3 4 5   Have difficulty with abstract ideas.

1 2 3 4 5   Feel comfortable around people.

1 2 3 4 5   Insult people.

1 2 3 4 5   Pay attention to details.

1 2 3 4 5   Worry about things.

1 2 3 4 5   Have a vivid imagination.

1 2 3 4 5   Keep in the background.

1 2 3 4 5   Sympathize with others' feelings.

1 2 3 4 5   Make a mess of things.

1 2 3 4 5   Seldom feel blue.

1 2 3 4 5   Am not interested in abstract ideas.

1 2 3 4 5   Start conversations.

1 2 3 4 5   Am not interested in other's problems.

1 2 3 4 5   Get chores done right away.

1 2 3 4 5   Am easily disturbed.

1 2 3 4 5   Have excellent ideas.

1 2 3 4 5   Have little to say.

1 2 3 4 5   Have a soft heart.

1 2 3 4 5   Forget to put things back in proper place.

1 2 3 4 5   Get upset easily.

1 2 3 4 5   Do not have a good imagination.

1 2 3 4 5   Talk to lots of different people at parties.

1 2 3 4 5   Am not really interested in others.

1 2 3 4 5   Like order.

1 2 3 4 5   Change my mood a lot.

1 2 3 4 5   Am quick to understand things.

1 2 3 4 5   Don't like to draw attention to myself.

1 2 3 4 5   Take time out for others.

1 2 3 4 5   Shirk my duties.

1 2 3 4 5   Have frequent mood swings.

1 2 3 4 5   Use difficult words.

1 2 3 4 5   Don't mind being the center of attention.

1 2 3 4 5   Feel others' emotions.

1 2 3 4 5   Follow a schedule.

1 2 3 4 5   Get irritated easily.

1 2 3 4 5   Spend time reflecting on things.

1 2 3 4 5   Am quiet around strangers.

1 2 3 4 5   Make people feel at ease.

1 2 3 4 5   Am exacting in my work.

1 2 3 4 5   Often feel blue.

1 2 3 4 5   Am full of ideas.

APPENDIX C

Self-Advocacy Readiness Subscale Items

Autonomy

3. I feel free to express my own opinions even if they are different from others.
4. I have difficulty asking for help when I have a problem.
11. I feel free to express my feelings
14. I can ask my advisor for help if I need to.
21. I usually don't ask for help when facing new challenges.
28. I have difficulty expressing my feelings to others.
34. I am confident in my ability to succeed in school.
45. I can ask my advisor for help if I need to.
51. I'm afraid to ask my advisor for help.
53. I welcome new challenges with confidence.

Control

1. I like doing my own thinking.
2. I like when others make decisions for me.
9. I like making my own decisions.
19. I control how well I do academically in school.
31. I have good negotiation skills.
32. I want little control of my academic success.
41. I have little control over how well I do in school.
47. If I say I'm going to do something I usually follow through.
48. I want to have control of my academic success.
49. I need help making important decisions.
55. I have a role in making decisions that affect my academic success.

Experience

7. My advisor is available when I need help.
13. I have been treated fairly at my school.
18. My school treats some students differently than others.
20. I have experienced discrimination at my school
24. I have never been treated unfairly at my school.
36. If I need help the staff at my school are there to support me.
37. I have experienced prejudice at my school.

42. My school supports my academic success.
46. I have not experienced discrimination at my school.
52. Everyone is treated fairly at my school.
54. My school provides an atmosphere where students can succeed.

Knowledge

5. I understand what advocacy means.
6. I know what skills I need to succeed in school.
12. I don't know how to communicate my academic needs.
15. I understand communicating my needs (self-advocacy) is important to my success in school.
16. Learning how to succeed in school is important to me.
22. I know who to talk to at my school if I need help.
25. I know about the resources (tutoring, mentoring, etc.) at my school to help me succeed academically.
27. I want to know how I can control my academic success.
30. I want to learn skills to communicate better with others.
35. I know how to reach my academic goals.
40. I want to know more about self-advocacy.
50. I want to know more about how I can advocate for my academic goals.

Motivation

8. I try to do well in school.
10. I usually need help solving problems.
17. If I had a problem at school I would ask my advisor for help.
23. If I have a problem at school there is no one I can ask for help.
26. Getting good grades is important to me.
29. I like helping my friends succeed in school.
33. I find it hard making my own decisions.
38. Before making a decision I try to get all the facts.
39. I work hard to succeed in school.
43. If I have a problem I cannot solve I seek out help.
44. I want to know more about how I can succeed academically in school.

VITA

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Katrina R. Harris

Local Address:
Department of Educational Psychology
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
4505 Maryland Parkway Box 453003
Las Vegas, NV 89154-3003

Home Address:
9221 Jadecrest Drive
Las Vegas, NV, 89134

Degrees:
Bachelor of Arts, Child Study, 1983
Stephens College

Master of Education, School Counseling, 2004
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Special Honors and Awards:
Graduate Student Scholar, Department of Educational Psychology, 2008
Western Association for Counselor Education and Supervision , Outstanding
Graduate Student, 2008

Publications:
Astramovich, R.L., & Harris, K. (2007). Promoting self-advocacy among
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Dissertation Committee:
Co-Chair, Paul Jones, Ed. D
Co-Chair, Randy Astramovich, Ph. D.
Committee Member, Jesse Brinson, Ph. D.
Graduate Faculty Representative, Cecilia Maldonado-Daniels, Ph. D.