

CONSIDERATION OF WHY SOME CHIROPRACTIC STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
CHOOSE NOT TO UTILIZE ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS:
A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Karen G. Canup

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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“We know that equality of individual ability has never existed and never will, but we do insist that equality of opportunity still must be sought.” – Franklin D. Roosevelt (1936)

Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of students with disabilities (SWD) at a chiropractic college in the United States that led to their decision not to utilize the academic accommodations available to them. The theory that guided this study is Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory. This qualitative study was conducted using the transcendental phenomenological approach. The research participants were students enrolled in a Doctor of Chiropractic (DC) program who had received a diagnosis that made them eligible for academic accommodations at any point in their academic career. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with participants, followed by focus groups, and the completion of journal prompts to triangulate and validate the data. The researcher practiced Epoché to see the participants' experience more clearly and then analyzed the data with open coding and horizontalization to develop textural and structural descriptions. The study identifies personal, institutional, and social barriers to accommodations utilization by SWD enrolled in a DC program. The study offers implications for policy and practice that may improve the experiences of SWD enrolled in a DC program.

Keywords: accommodations, chiropractic, higher education, disabilities, self-determination

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Dave, and our children, Raleigh and Rachel, as it is only through their sacrifice that I have been able to invest the time needed to pursue my doctoral degree. Thank you for loving me through it all!

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I cannot miss the opportunity to acknowledge the support of Dr. Edwin Cordero. As my boss and mentor, he has been a constant supporter and advocate. Without his encouragement, I would have never started my doctoral journey. A special thank you to my parents, Mac and Kathy Geddings, and my special uncle and aunt, Wayne and Gloria Watts. You have always been my biggest fans and constant supporters. Thank you for always believing in me and encouraging me. My committee members, Dr. Kristy Motte and Dr. Jerry Woodbridge, provided helpful feedback at a pace that spurred me onward and strengthened this study and document. I am forever grateful!

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	4
Copyright Page	5
Dedication.....	6
Acknowledgments	7
List of Tables.....	13
List of Figures.....	14
List of Abbreviations	15
CHAPTER ONE.....	16
Overview	16
Background.....	17
Historical Context.....	17
Social Context	20
Theoretical Context	22
Problem Statement.....	25
Purpose Statement	26
Significance of the Study.....	27
Theoretical Significance	27
Empirical Significance	28
Practical Significance	28
Research Questions	29
Central Research Question	29
Sub-Question One	30

Sub-Question Two.....	30
Sub-Question Three.....	30
Definitions	30
Summary.....	31
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	33
Overview	33
Theoretical Framework	33
Autonomy	34
Competence	34
Relatedness	35
Related Literature	35
Accommodations.....	37
External Barriers to Utilizing Accommodations	44
Internal Barriers to Utilizing Accommodations	50
Recommended Improvements	54
Summary.....	62
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS.....	65
Overview	65
Research Design	65
Research Questions	67
Central Research Question	67
Sub-Question One	67
Sub-Question Two.....	68

	10
Sub-Question Three.....	68
Setting and Participants	68
Site.....	68
Participants	73
Researcher Positionality	74
Interpretive Framework.....	75
Philosophical Assumptions	76
Researcher’s Role.....	77
Procedures	78
Permissions.....	78
Recruitment Plan	78
Data Collection Plan.....	80
Individual Interviews.....	80
Focus Groups.....	84
Journal Prompts	85
Data Synthesis	87
Trustworthiness	87
Credibility.....	88
Transferability	89
Dependability	89
Confirmability	90
Ethical Considerations.....	90
Summary.....	91

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS	92
Overview	92
Participants	92
Results	95
Personal Barriers to Accommodations Use	95
Institutional Barriers to Accommodations Use	99
Social Barriers to Accommodations Use.....	106
Outlier Data and Findings	107
Research Question Responses	108
Central Research Question	109
Sub-Question One	109
Sub-Question Two.....	110
Sub-Question Three.....	111
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION	113
Overview	113
Discussion.....	113
Interpretation of Findings	113
Implications for Policy or Practice	118
Theoretical and Empirical Implications	121
Limitations and Delimitations	124
Recommendations for Future Research.....	126
Conclusion	126
References	128

Appendix A	144
Appendix B.....	146
Appendix C.....	147
Appendix D	148
Appendix E.....	151
Appendix F	153
Appendix G	154
Appendix H	155
Appendix I.....	158
Appendix J.....	164
Appendix K	165
Appendix L.....	176
Appendix M.....	178

List of Tables

Table 1. Student Participants.....	93
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List of Figures

Figure 1. XYZ Chiropractic College Students by Ethnicity.....	69
Figure 2. XYZ Chiropractic Students Registered for Accommodations by Ethnicity.....	70
Figure 3. XYZ Chiropractic College Employees by Ethnicity.....	71
Figure 4. XYZ Chiropractic College Faculty by Ethnicity.....	72
Figure 5. XYZ Chiropractic College Student Participants by Ethnicity.....	94
Figure 6. XYZ Chiropractic College Student Participants by Age When Diagnosed.....	94

List of Abbreviations

Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)

Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC)

Disability Support Services (DSS)

Doctor of Chiropractic (DC)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES)

Students with Disabilities (SWD)

The Council on Chiropractic Education (CCE)

U. S. Department of Education (USDE)

CHAPTER ONE

Overview

Many students with disabilities (SWD) enrolled in higher education programs who qualify for academic accommodations are not utilizing the accommodations for which they are eligible, which in turn hinders their academic performance and negatively impacts institutional success rates (Abreu et al., 2016; Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019; Lombardi et al., 2018; McGregor et al., 2016). As more significant numbers of SWD are enrolling in higher education (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2018), and higher education is struggling with dismal retention and success rates (Baker et al., 2017; Hunt, 2006; Selingo, 2013), this is a problem that needs to be addressed. As many as 96% of higher education classrooms in the United States have SWD (De Los Santos et al., 2019). Higher education institutions that receive federal funding are required by law to provide reasonable accommodations to SWD so that these students have equal access to education (Rehabilitation Act, 1973). Research has demonstrated that these accommodations effectively improve academic performance, yet many SWD forego the opportunity to utilize their accommodations (Abreu et al., 2016; Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019; Lombardi et al., 2018; McGregor et al., 2016). This phenomenological study considered the experiences of SWD enrolled in a DC program to understand better why these students decided not to take advantage of the accommodations available to them. Further, the study aimed to consider, from the students' perspective, what the institution could do differently to change this decision and potentially improve the students' academic performance and inevitably the institution's success rate. Chapter One considers the background that has led to this problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions that were explored, the significance of the study, and offers definitions of terminology cited throughout the study.

Background

Higher education institutions are required by federal law to provide academic accommodations to SWD to provide these students with an equal opportunity for education (Rehabilitation Act, 1973). While the number of SWD enrolling in higher education is on the rise (NCES, n.d., 2005, 2018), and despite evidence to indicate the use of accommodations is critical to their academic success, many students choose not to utilize these services (Abreu et al., 2016; Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019; Lombardi et al., 2018; McGregor et al., 2016). The choice by these students to not utilize accommodations is a missed opportunity for both the students and their institutions as the student's accommodations use is associated with higher GPAs (Abreu et al., 2016) and higher persistence rates (Mamiseishvili & Kocj, 2011). Students who persist stand to gain the economic value of a degree and institutions can potentially improve success rates with increased accommodation utilization. The historical, social, and theoretical contexts for the background will be discussed in the following sections.

Historical Context

The historical context for this study encompasses the history of accommodations in higher education and the history of chiropractic education. As this study focused on students in a DC program, it is important to consider the history of chiropractic education as it is a unique environment within the higher academic space. Having the context of some of the struggles encountered in establishing formal chiropractic education provides insight into how the chiropractic educational environment may differ from more traditional programs.

Accommodations in Higher Education

Throughout the history of higher education, as the number of students has grown, so has the need for additional support services for students. As early as the 1930s and 1940s, almost

everyone observing the increasing numbers of undergraduate students and the growing diversity within the undergraduate population agreed that establishing an extensive extra-academic support structure was necessary and probably inevitable (Lucas, 2006). While universities often add amenities to compete for students (Selingo, 2013), some support services are required by law. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (1973), as amended, established that programs and activities receiving federal assistance could not discriminate against or exclude individuals with disabilities from services. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, 1990) defined an individual with a disability as someone with “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment” (Sec., 12102, 1). Further, citing this act, the U.S. Department of Justice (2020) has clarified the obligation for reasonable accommodations to note that while institutions must make reasonable modifications to procedures, practices, and policies where necessary to avoid discrimination, they [the entity] are not required to make accommodations they can demonstrate would fundamentally alter the nature of the program, activity, or service being provided. In the higher education context, accommodations include adjustments to the learning environment for instruction or testing to prevent discrimination based on disability (Kim & Lee, 2016). Examples of such accommodations include additional time on tests, alternate textbook formats (e.g., audiobooks), lectures in sign language, or note-taking services. Nineteen percent of undergraduates in 2015–2016 reported having a disability (NCES, 2018), compared to 11% of postsecondary students reporting a disability in 2003–2004 (NCES, n.d., 2005). As the number of SWD enrolled in institutions of higher education increases, it is essential to ensure they are provided appropriate support to be successful. While reasonable accommodations are designed to ensure all students

have equal access to higher education, their intent is not to guarantee success after enrollment (Weis et al., 2016). Kutscher and Tuckwiller (2019), in their mixed systematic review of the literature, noted that despite identifying student access to and utilization of disability services as critical to their success, many SWD decided not to access the disability services for which they were eligible.

Chiropractic Education

Chiropractic education began in 1897 when Daniel David (D.D.) Palmer, who performed the first chiropractic adjustment on September 18, 1895, decided to teach chiropractic and founded the Palmer School and Cure in Davenport, Iowa (Peterson & Wiese, 1995). Chiropractic is based upon the premise that the body can heal itself through the nervous system “by applying specific forces to the spine” (Redwood & Cleveland, 2003, p. 17). Some did not readily accept this new approach to healthcare, and Palmer was found guilty of practicing medicine without a license in March 1906 (Peterson & Wiese, 1995). Palmer was not the only early chiropractor to spend time in prison for practicing, but despite this, the number of chiropractic schools in the United States grew from 17 in 1906 to 82 in 1925. The economic depression of the late 1920s had a significant impact on the enrollment in chiropractic schools, and by 1932 the number of schools had declined to 59. The Council on Chiropractic Education (CCE) was established in 1947 to improve the educational standards of the chiropractic profession (Peterson & Wiese, 1995). The CCE (n.d.), which is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) and the Council for Higher Education as the accrediting body for chiropractic programs, currently accredits 16 DC degree programs at 19 locations within the United States and one in Puerto Rico. Despite the efforts by the CCE and the fact that chiropractic is a licensed health care profession in

most regions of the world today, chiropractic was not allowed into hospitals in the United States until the American Hospital Association changed its anti-chiropractic stance in 1987 (Green et al., 2020). In the following year, an injunction kept the American Medical Association from preventing medical doctors from collaborating with chiropractors. It was not until 1995 that chiropractors were included in the United States military health services on a trial basis, and chiropractors had to demonstrate the benefit of chiropractic care before permanent services were established for the military in 2000. Over 20 years later, chiropractic care is still unavailable at approximately 85% of military health care facilities. The example of the military offers insight into the struggle chiropractors have endured to be accepted into healthcare and society at large.

Social Context

Some students with documented disabilities wait until they are close to, or even beyond, academic dismissal before making the institution aware of their disability (L. Jones, personal communication, October 19, 2021). Federal law requires institutions to provide reasonable accommodations to allow equal access to educational opportunities. Some studies have shown that only about one third of students who self-report as having disabilities utilize accommodations (McGregor et al., 2016; Newman & Maduas, 2015), yet those who use accommodations report more contact with faculty and less difficulty with assignments (McGregor et al., 2016). Abreu et al. (2016) found evidence of the value Student Disability Services provided to SWD in supporting them throughout their academic journey; however, their results also indicated that SWD are not fully utilizing the services offered by the department of Student Disability Services. Another study (Meeks et al., 2021) analyzed data from the 2020 graduation questionnaire ($N = 16,630$) administered by the Association of American Medical

Colleges (2020), which indicated that while approximately 7.6% of medical students anonymously reported a disability through a questionnaire, only 4.6% of these medical students formally reported their disability and requested accommodations. College completion is associated with higher income, lower unemployment rates, higher job satisfaction, and better health (Baker et al., 2017). These potential benefits provide several reasons for SWD to utilize all accommodations available to them to bolster their chances for academic success and highlight the importance of research to explore the experiences of SWD and consider why they choose not to use accommodations.

The transition to higher education marks a significant change for students. In the K–12 environment, it is incumbent upon the school to identify students in need of accommodations and establish individualized learning plans. In higher education, students must self-disclose any disabilities and self-advocate by communicating with their institution's student disabilities services office to document their needs and register for accommodations (Slaughter et al., 2020; Toutain, 2019). Many institutions further require students awarded accommodations to provide their accommodations letter directly to individual instructors, again requiring students to communicate their needs. A significant need among high school SWD is training in the importance of disability disclosure and assistance in strategies for self-advocacy before entering college or the workplace (Mamboleo et al., 2020). If accommodations can improve the academic outcomes of SWD, a growing sector of the student population, both students and institutions will benefit. While students increase their opportunities for success and completing their degree with the utilization of accommodations, institutions stand to better their retention rates and completion rates, potentially attracting additional prospective students, as Selingo (2013) noted an increase emphasis on these metrics in the college selection process.

As previously noted, the most recent statistics available from the NCES (2018) indicate that over 19% of undergraduate students reported having a disability and nearly 12% of post-baccalaureate students reported having a disability during the 2015–16 academic year. These numbers are up from 11.3% of undergraduate students and 6.7% of post-baccalaureate students reporting disabilities in the 2003–04 academic year (USDE, 2005). Hence, accommodations impact a significant portion of the student population. It has also been demonstrated that students who complete their degrees are more employable and have higher life-long earnings expectations (Baker et al., 2017; Selingo, 2013). Coupling the value of successfully earning a degree with indications that utilizing accommodations leads to more academic success for SWD (Abreu et al., 2016; Kim & Lee, 2016) highlights the importance of determining why many eligible students do not use them. As Nelson Mandela stated in 1990, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” (Ratcliffe, 2017, p. 1). If increasing accommodation utilization leads to improved academic success among SWD, consideration of the experiences of SWD and how to improve accommodations utilization could have a noticeable impact on our society.

Theoretical Context

A variety of theories have been utilized to explore the experiences of SWD and their decision-making around accommodations utilization, including Tinto’s (1975) theory of student integration. The student integration theory asserts that student retention at a higher education institution largely depends on the degree to which the student is academically and socially integrated into the higher education institution. In reviewing the literature on student utilization of accommodations, evidence points to the level of integration also being an indicator of a student’s willingness to request and utilize accommodations (Bialka et al, 2017; Hong, 2015).

Students who are more fully integrated into the higher education institution are more likely to build relationships with others within the institution. Throughout the literature, the importance of the relationships between students and faculty is highlighted as having the potential to facilitate students gaining the accommodations and support they need or serving as a deterrent to students pursuing this support (Ehlinger & Ropers, 2020; Hong, 2015; Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019; Lyman et al., 2016; Toutain, 2019). Campus relationships significantly impact student persistence (Davidson & Wilson, 2013), and positive relationships with faculty increase students' willingness to request and utilize accommodations (Hong, 2015). Meaningful relationships with faculty and staff were of primary importance for SWD ($N = 3$) who developed feelings of belongingness and acceptance on campus (Skeens, 2020) and encouraging these students to utilize accommodations. Similarly, Vaccaro et al. (2015) studied the sense of belonging among college SWD. Three themes emerged from their findings: the ability to self-advocate, understanding of the student role, and supportive relationships.

The student involvement theory (Astin, 1999) has also been used to consider the experiences of SWD and their decisions on whether to utilize accommodations. Alexander W. Astin developed the student involvement theory in 1984, and while similar to Tinto's (1975) theory of student integration, Astin incorporated behavioral aspects into his theory (Milem & Berger, 1997). The student involvement theory asserts that the greater the student's involvement at their college, both academically and socially, the greater the student's learning and personal development from the college experience (Astin, 1984). Involved students invest significant time in their academic studies, participate in athletics, student government, or other extracurricular activities, and interact with faculty. On the other hand, students who neglect their studies, abstain from extracurricular activities, and rarely interact with faculty or other students are considered

uninvolved (Astin, 1999). The student involvement theory asserts that increased involvement on campus leads to more significant learning and development for students. Students' involvement on campus influences their perceptions of institutional support and peer support (Milem & Berger, 1997). Further, students' perceptions of support appear to have an impact on their institutional commitment.

Ehlinger and Ropers (2020) considered the experiences of SWD through a transformational framework grounded in the social justice perspective of disability which "acknowledges both the systemic oppression experienced by people with disabilities as well as their empowerment and involvement in the process of pursuing equitable access" (p. 336). Social justice theories seek to bring about change or transformation to address social issues in society (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Ehlinger and Ropers sought to recognize and challenge the ableism present in higher education institutions through their approach. Rather than focusing on accommodations, Ehlinger and Ropers focused on the experiences of SWD and highlighted changes that could be made in classrooms to create more equitable educational environments.

While each of these theories has offered a perspective on the experiences of SWD, as Ehlinger and Ropers (2020) noted in their study, more scholarship is needed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the higher education experiences of SWD. This study utilized the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), focused on the conditions of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Deci and Ryan asserted that if any of these conditions were unsupported, an individual's drive to succeed and level of performance would suffer. While the importance of relatedness, particularly relationships with faculty, is well documented throughout the current literature on SWD through the lens of persistence, student integration, and student

involvement theories, this study added the consideration of autonomy and competence to deepen the understanding of the experiences and decision making of SWD in a DC program.

Problem Statement

The problem is that in a DC program, many SWD who qualify for academic accommodations are not utilizing the accommodations they are eligible for. This hinders their academic performance and negatively impacts institutional success rates (Abreu et al., 2016; Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019; Lombardi et al., 2018; McGregor et al., 2016). CCE (2022), the accrediting agency for DC programs in the United States, requires programs maintain a minimum two-year average completion rate of 70%. This completion rate is calculated at 150% of the time normally designated for completion of the DC degree or 21 quarters for a 14-quarter program. Completion rates for CCE accredited programs published in 2018 indicated 15 of the 16 programs accredited at the time of publication exceeded the 70% completion rate benchmark (Chronicle of Chiropractic, 2018). For context, the overall six-year completion rate for first-time, full-time undergraduate students who began a bachelor's degree program at a four-year institution in the fall of 2013 was 63 % (Irwin et al., 2021). While the referenced completion data for DC programs and bachelor's programs was not disaggregated to provide completion rates for SWD, a longitudinal study that followed students eight years beyond high school found of the population that entered college that 34% of the students who had been enrolled in special education programs in high school completed their bachelor's degree compared to 51% of the students who were not in special education (Newman et al., 2011). Further, it is estimated that as of 2018 approximately 35.2% of adults 21 to 64 years old in the United States without a disability had attained a bachelor's degree or higher, while only 15.2% of individuals with a disability aged 21 to 64 years old in the United States had attained a bachelor's degree or higher

(Yang & Tan, 2022). Increasing numbers of SWD are enrolling in higher education institutions (NCES, n.d., 2005, 2018). By law, institutions are required to offer students with documented disabilities accommodations that permit equal access to education for these students (Rehabilitation Act, 1973), yet many eligible students are not utilizing these allowable accommodations (Abreu et al., 2016; Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019; Lombardi et al., 2018; McGregor et al., 2016; Meeks et al., 2021). The utilization of accommodations has been linked to higher academic performance by students (Abreu et al., 2016; Kim & Lee, 2016), so researchers and educators need to understand why these students are choosing to forego this benefit. While most studies focused on barriers to utilization of accommodations have been conducted on samples of exclusively, or primarily, undergraduate students (Cole & Cawthon, 2015; Ehlinger & Ropers, 2020; Hong, 2015; Lyman et al., 2016; Mamboleo et al., 2020; Squires & Counterline, 2018), student veterans (Kranke et al., 2017), or high school students (Lopez et al., 2020; McGahee et al., 2021), this study aimed to narrow a gap in the literature by focusing on graduate students in a DC program.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of SWD at a chiropractic college in the United States that led to their decision not to utilize the academic accommodations available to them. At this stage in the research, SWD at a chiropractic college is defined as students currently enrolled in a DC program in the United States who received a diagnosis that made them eligible at any point in their academic career for academic accommodations. The experiences of SWD at a chiropractic college in the United States that led to their decision not to utilize the academic accommodations available to them was explored through the lens of the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Significance of the Study

This study aimed to understand the experiences of SWD that led to their decision not to utilize accommodations because it may lead to insight into changes higher education institutions can make to improve the experiences of these students. Considering the students' perceptions of improvements that can be made (i.e., changes to accommodations application procedures, faculty development) uncovered ideas that could increase utilization of accommodations and, ultimately, academic success. This study also offered the opportunity to add to the current literature by studying SWD in a DC program, a sector not previously considered, and by focusing on the qualities of autonomy and competence in the self-determination theory to view SWD through a fresh lens and expand the application of this theory.

Theoretical Significance

Considering why SWD participating in a chiropractic program do not utilize the academic accommodations available offered a fresh perspective on self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Self-determination theory focuses on an individual's desire for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. This study uncovered the competence experiences of SWD in the DC programs outside of accommodations. Furthermore, recognizing that students may make their accommodation decisions in the context of the relationships they have built on campus furthered an understanding of relatedness as it pertains to doctoral SWD. The literature demonstrates that positive relationships with faculty increase the likelihood that students will utilize accommodations (Ehlinger & Ropers, 2020; Hong, 2015; Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019; Lyman et al., 2016; Toutain, 2019), but further understanding of the autonomy, competence, and relatedness of doctoral SWD is needed. As the accommodations decision-making process of

students in a DC program is not well documented in current literature, this study extended this theory by applying it to SWD who are navigating a DC program.

Empirical Significance

As the experience of SWD in a chiropractic program who chose not to utilize the accommodations available to them had not been documented in the literature, the research findings extended the current literature. While the accommodations experiences of many undergraduate SWD (e.g., Abreu et al., 2016; Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019; McGregor et al., 2016), a number of graduate students (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019; Squires et al., 2018), and even the disability disclosure experiences of some medical students had been considered (Meeks et al., 2021), the experience of chiropractic students added a fresh perspective and permitted the construction of new knowledge. The DC program is a specialized, professional program, and the students enrolled in this program have a different educational experience than students in other programs. Despite the significant financial investment in pursuing a doctoral degree, it is estimated that between 40% and 60% of doctoral students do not complete their program (Boone et al., 2020). While the body of literature on doctoral persistence had considered students in nursing programs (Cohen, 2011; Volkert et al., 2018), students in education programs (Hoskins & Goldberg, 2005; Ivankova & Stick, 2007; Jones et al., 2019), students in distance programs (Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2018; Studebaker & Curtis, 2021), and student from backgrounds of poverty (Rockinson-Szaokiw et al., 2014), consideration of students in a DC program added new knowledge to the literature.

Practical Significance

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the experiences of SWD at a chiropractic college in the United States that led to their decision not to utilize the academic

accommodations available to them. Accommodations are required by law to provide equal access to education to those with disabilities. Many students who are eligible for accommodations are not utilizing them (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019; Lombardi et al., 2018; McGregor et al., 2016; Meeks et al., 2021; Newman & Madaus, 2015), yet accommodation utilization appears to improve academic performance among SWD (Abreu et al., 2016; Francis et al., 2018; Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019; McGregor et al., 2016; Slaughter et al., 2020).

Understanding the challenges or roadblocks between SWD and university accommodations may help clear the path to accommodations for future students. This in turn may benefit student completion rates and university retention while attracting future SWD because of the program's reputation.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of SWD in a DC program that influenced their decision not to utilize the academic accommodations for which they are eligible. The central research question and sub questions were designed to explore these experiences and the students' perceptions of experiences that impacted their decision not to utilize accommodations or any barriers they encountered in trying to use accommodations. Further, the study was designed to allow participants to offer their perception of changes their institution could have made to increase their utilization of accommodations.

Central Research Question

What are the shared experiences of SWD in the DC program who chose not to utilize accommodations?

Sub-Question One

What are the competence experiences of SWD in a DC program who chose not to utilize accommodations?

Sub-Question Two

What are the relatedness experiences of SWD in a DC program who chose not to utilize accommodations?

Sub-Question Three

What are the autonomy experiences of SWD in a DC program who chose not to utilize accommodations?

Definitions

1. *Ableism* – “A pervasive system of discrimination and exclusion that oppresses people with disabilities” (Bialka et al., 2017, p. 157).
2. *Academic success* – while defined differently from institution to institution, academic success often refers to metrics like grade point average, retention, and on-time graduation (Squires & Counterline, 2018).
3. *Accessibility* – the extent to which a service, product, or environment eliminates barriers and allows equal use of components and services for a diverse population of students (Kettler et al., 2018).
4. *Accommodations* – Adjustments to the learning environment regarding instructional or testing situations are provided to prevent discrimination based on disability (Kim & Lee, 2016). Examples of such accommodations include additional time on tests, alternate textbook formats such as audiobooks, lectures in sign language, or note-taking services.

5. *Epoché* – Epoché involves setting aside biases and preconceived ideas to see the phenomenon as if for the first time (Moustakas, 1994).
6. *Individual with a disability* – “A person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment” (U.S. Department of Justice, 2020, para. 2).
7. *Reasonable accommodations* – Adjustments to the learning environment are designed to ensure all students have equal access to higher education; their intent is not to guarantee students’ success after enrollment (Weis et al., 2016).
8. *Self-advocacy* – “The ability to communicate one’s needs and wants and to make decisions about the supports necessary to achieve them” (Vaccaro et al., 2015, p.673).
 With the transition into higher education requiring SWD to move from an environment where the learning institution is required to identify and meet needs for accommodations to a requirement for self-disclosure of disabilities and requests for accommodations, self-advocacy is a necessary trait for many SWD to persist in higher education.

Summary

The number of SWD enrolling in higher education institutions is rising (NCES, n.d., 2005, 2018). Federal law requires institutions to offer equal access to education to persons with disabilities (Rehabilitation Act, 1973). While the legal requirement is for accommodations to provide equal access, not equal success, research indicates that utilization of accommodations leads to increased academic success (Abreu et al., 2016; Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019; Lombardi et al., 2018; McGregor et al., 2016). Unfortunately, many students who have documented disabilities and are eligible for accommodations are not utilizing the accommodations available

(Hong, 2015; Kranke et al., 2017; Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019; Newman & Madaus, 2015). Some are never bothering to register with their institution's office of disability services, and some are registering but not utilizing their offered accommodations (Hong, 2015; Kranke et al., 2017; Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019; Newman & Madaus, 2015). As the utilization of accommodations stands to improve students' performance, it is puzzling to think that many students are choosing not to use these accommodations. Students, however, are not the only ones to gain from these accommodations. Higher education institutions operate within an increasingly competitive industry where education outcomes and completion rates factor into institution selection criteria (Hunt, 2006; Selingo, 2013). As both the eligible student and the institution stand to gain from accommodation utilization, it is essential to consider why some students elect not to use accommodations. This study specifically considered the experiences of students enrolled in a DC program to evaluate if their experiences align with the findings in the current body of literature and explore how their experiences may differ. An inclusive environment that empowers all students with the tools for academic success should be a goal for every higher education institution. Countering the barriers to accommodations utilization is one significant step along this journey.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter describes the theoretical framework that guided this study, offers empirical context for the investigation by sharing the relevant literature, and demonstrates the need for the current study as the body of literature does not address the study's proposed research questions. It begins with an overview of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and continues with a literature review that provides information on the decision-making of higher education SWD in determining whether to self-disclose their disability, whether to utilize academic accommodations, and both external and internal barriers to disclosure and utilization for SWD. The literature is limited in its consideration of graduate students and does not explicitly address students in a DC program. The current study sought to fill this gap in the literature.

Theoretical Framework

The self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) presents a perspective on human motivation and personality that focuses on how social and cultural factors encourage or undermine individuals' sense of motivation and their well-being and quality of performance. In their book, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*, Deci and Ryan share how their research around motivation and personality led to the development of the self-determination theory. The self-determination theory focuses on the conditions of autonomy, competence, and relatedness as those most likely to foster motivation and produce positive outcomes, including enhanced performance, persistence, and creativity. Additionally, the self-determination theory asserts that to the degree any of these three conditions are unsupported or thwarted, motivation and performance will suffer detrimental effects (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Students' desires to be autonomous, competent, and related to those around them help offer

perspective to consider the experiences of chiropractic SWD. One study ($N = 31$) of SWD noted significant distinctions in willingness to disclose, attitudes towards accommodations, and self-determination between students who elected to request and utilize accommodations and those who chose not to pursue accommodations (Cole & Cawthon, 2015). For the current study, autonomy, competence, and relatedness underpinned the examination of SWD in a DC program who chose not to utilize accommodations.

Autonomy

The first of the basic needs that Deci and Ryan (1985) identified within the self-determination theory is autonomy, or “the need to self-regulate one’s experiences and actions” (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 10). An individual feels autonomous when their actions are self-endorsed and align with the individual’s genuine interests and values. Ryan and Deci noted that individuals engage in behavior wholeheartedly when the decision to engage is autonomous instead of the conflict and incongruence individuals feel when they are influenced to take actions against their own volition. The provision of autonomy support, relative to control, was linked to more positive outcomes, such as increased satisfaction, enhanced well-being, and greater intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). As considered in the self-determination theory, autonomy reflects an adaptive advantage. The autonomous individual has specifically considered their needs relative to their environment and has self-regulated their actions accordingly.

Competence

In the self-determination theory, competence refers to individuals’ need to feel they can function effectively in essential life situations or that they have achieved mastery (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Unfortunately, competence is quickly thwarted, especially when challenges are daunting, negative feedback and criticism are prevalent, or the individual’s feelings of effectiveness are

undermined by comparison. Deci and Ryan (2000) noted that while the needs for competence and autonomy alone are not sufficient to define intrinsic motivation, they are essential elements of intrinsic motivation. They further described intrinsically motivated behaviors as “those that are freely engaged out of interest without the necessity of separable consequences, and to be maintained, they require satisfaction of the needs for autonomy and competence” (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 233).

Relatedness

Ryan and Deci (2017) noted that people most typically feel relatedness when they “feel cared for by others” (p. 11); however, relatedness also includes social connection and the feeling of belonging among a group. Relatedness can be described as an individual’s sense of feeling that they are an integral part of some social context beyond themselves. While autonomy and competence are more critical to intrinsic motivation, relatedness also plays a role in maintaining intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Although relatedness may not be a vital, proximal factor for intrinsic motivation, it serves as a foundational support base that makes the growth and vibrancy of intrinsic motivation more likely. An environment that provides the supports students need to achieve autonomy fosters and initiates opportunities for students to experience a sense of competence, personal autonomy, and relatedness (Bartholomew et al., 2011).

Related Literature

The literature that follows overviews a variety of topics that provide a context for the proposed study. The literature will provide an understanding of SWD, accommodations, potential barriers to accommodation use, and recommended improvements to the accommodations process offered in the literature. Growing numbers of SWD are enrolling in postsecondary institutions. Nineteen percent of undergraduates in 2015–2016 reported having a

disability (NCES, 2018), compared to eleven percent of postsecondary students declaring a disability in 2003–2004 (NCES, 2005). Similarly, in the 2015–2016 academic year 11.9% of graduate students reported having a disability (NCES, 2018), while only 6.7% of graduate students declared a disability in 2003–2004 (NCES, 2005). As the number of SWD enrolled in institutions of higher education increases, it is essential to ensure they are provided appropriate support to be successful. Despite the access and use of disability support services (DSS), including accommodations, being viewed as critical to the success of SWD (Bolt et al., 2011; Cawthon & Cole, 2010), many of these students choose not to utilize support services (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019).

Some students with documented disabilities wait until they are close to, or even beyond, academic dismissal before making the institution aware of their disability (L. Jones, personal communication, October 19, 2021). Federal law requires institutions to provide reasonable accommodations to allow equal access to educational opportunities (Abreu et al., 2016; Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019; Lombardi et al., 2018; McGregor et al., 2016; Meeks et al., 2021). Some studies have shown that only about one-third of students who self-report as having disabilities utilize accommodations (McGregor et al., 2016; Newman et al., 2021), yet those who use accommodations report more contact with faculty and less difficulty with assignments (McGregor et al., 2016). As Abreu et al. noted, “while our results demonstrate the value of SDS [Student Disability Services] in supporting students throughout their academic careers, our findings also indicate that students are not fully utilizing the services provided by SDS” (p. 327).

The transition to higher education marks a significant change for SWD. In the K–12 environment, it is incumbent upon the school to identify students in need of accommodations and establish individualized learning plans (Cawthon & Cole, 2010; Hadley, 2018; Thompson-

Ebanks & Jarman, 2018; Toutain, 2019; Vaccaro et al., 2015). In higher education, students are required to self-disclose any disabilities and self-advocate by communicating with their institution's student disabilities services office to document their needs and register for accommodations (Cawthon & Cole, 2010; Hadley, 2018; Thompson-Ebanks & Jarman, 2018; Toutain, 2019; Vaccaro et al., 2015). Many institutions further require students awarded accommodations to provide their accommodations letter directly to individual instructors requiring students to communicate their needs again (Mamboleo et al., 2020). This requirement highlights the need for secondary transition professionals to assist high school SWD in recognizing the importance of disability disclosure and self-advocacy before entering college or the workplace.

Accommodations

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and Title II of the ADA of 1990 (Title II), as amended, have similar provisions prohibiting discrimination based on disability (USDE, 2011). Except for private institutions that do not receive federal financial assistance, nearly every college and university in the U.S. is subject to one or both laws (USDE, 2011). Discrimination may involve SWD having unequal access to an institution's electronic and information technologies (McCrea, 2017). In other words, an institution must provide SWD equal access to services and materials.

Accessibility is how a service, product, or environment eliminates barriers and allows equal use of components and services for a diverse population of students (Kettler et al., 2018). Accessibility is necessary for effective instruction and accurate testing. To provide accessibility and comply with Section 504 and Title II, higher education institutions have DSS that include academic accommodations. Accommodations are adjustments or modifications to academic

requirements necessary to ensure that academic requirements do not discriminate or have the effect of discriminating against a qualified student or applicant who has a disability (USDE, 2011). Accommodations should provide SWD an equal opportunity to participate, but accommodations should not alter the academic standards or rigor of the course by substantially reducing or modifying essential requirements (Hadley & Archer, 2017). Institutions are not required to provide accommodations that would fundamentally alter the program or produce an excessive logistical or financial hardship (Cawthon & Cole, 2010). Higher education SWD must navigate the process of obtaining accommodations while also considering which type of accommodation(s) will be most effective for their situation, so knowledge about one's disability and educational needs is essential for SWD to successfully transition into higher education.

Obtaining Accommodations

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004 requires secondary schools to provide a wide range of accommodations for SWD (Hadley, 2018; Hadley & Archer, 2017). It is incumbent upon secondary schools to identify their SWD needs and develop individualized learning plans to benefit them (Hadley, 2018; Hadley & Archer, 2017; Thompson-Ebanks & Jarman, 2018; Toutain, 2019; Vaccaro et al., 2015). The transition to higher education marks a significant change for SWD as students are expected to become their own advocates (De Los Santos et al., 2019; Hadley, 2018; Hadley & Archer, 2017; Thompson-Ebanks & Jarman, 2018; Toutain, 2019; Vaccaro et al., 2015). In higher education, the disclosure of a disability is always voluntary (USDE, 2011). SWD must self-identify on college and university campuses as, by law, higher education faculty, administrators, and support staff cannot seek to identify these students. While students have no obligation to inform their college or university that they have a disability, they must self-identify as having a disability to gain access

to support services such as academic accommodations (USDE, 2011). Students at higher education institutions are responsible for self-identifying, registering with the disability services office at their institution, and requesting and utilizing accommodations (Toutain, 2019). Beyond self-identifying as having a disability, to obtain accommodations, students must also provide documentation of the learning disability and the need for requested services (Hadley & Archer, 2017; Vaccaro et al., 2015). Colleges and universities do not follow a standard set of guidelines for documentation. Still, most require documentation from an assessment performed within three years of the students' college application (Hadley & Archer, 2017). Provided their documentation requirements comply with Section 504 and Title II, institutions can set their documentation requirements, so requirements vary among colleges and universities (USDE, 2011). Most institutions require aptitude and achievement tests, with the diagnosis of a learning disability as the discrepancy between aptitude and achievement (Hadley & Archer, 2017). Further, the testing documentation should explain any accommodations or strategies necessary for the student to participate in the institution's academic program.

Types of Accommodations

Academic accommodations may include extended time on tests and assignments, reduced course loads, and the provision of auxiliary services and aids (USDE, 2011). The purpose of examination accommodations is to provide SWD equal access to testing materials to allow them to demonstrate their learning similarly to their classmates without disabilities (Weis & Beauchemin, 2020). Services and aids provided to students may include recording devices, screen readers, voice recognition, and other adaptive hardware or software for computers, note-takers, readers, graphic organizers, use of calculators, and other devices designed to ensure SWD can participate in the institution's programs (Bolt et al., 2011; McGahee et al., 2021; USDE,

2011). Institutions are not required to provide personal devices or services such as eyeglasses or other individually prescribed aids (USDE, 2011). Academic accommodations can be divided into four key types: presentation, scheduling, setting, and response (Bolt et al., 2011; Thurlow et al., 1995). There is no specific set of guidelines for determining appropriate accommodations for SWD (Thurlow et al., 1995). Institutions must provide reasonable accommodations to provide SWD equal access to education, which means that some individual students must be granted multiple types of accommodations (Bolt et al., 2011).

Presentation. Presentation accommodations involve changes in how material is presented to a student (Bolt et al., 2011). Presentation accommodations may include modifications like material being read aloud to a student by an assistant, a computer, or another recording device (Bolt et al., 2011; Lovett & Lewandowski, 2015; McGahee et al., 2021; Stone & Cook, 2018; USDE, 2011). Presentation accommodations could also involve an instructor reading directions for an assignment or test aloud, providing printed materials in large print, or permitting a student to use a dictionary (Bolt et al., 2011; Lovett & Lewandowski, 2015). Braille is a common presentation accommodation for students with visual impairments, and certain math and science tests may require tactile representations of shapes and graphs (Lovett & Lewandowski, 2015; Stone & Cook, 2018). Sound amplification systems may be provided to students with hearing impairments as well as having test instructions signed to them and access to a clock to help with time management, as instructors often offer oral directions and timing cues (Lovett & Lewandowski, 2015). Students who become overwhelmed with too much information on a page or screen may be accommodated by limitations of the amount of material displayed at once or the provision of colored overlays to place over a portion of the text or screen (Lovett & Lewandowski, 2015; Stone & Cook, 2018).

Scheduling. Scheduling accommodations involve modifications to the amount of time a student is given to complete a task (Bolt et al., 2011). Multiple studies have found extended time on tests to be the most frequently accessed academic support (Abreu et al., 2016; Bolt et al., 2011; Francis et al., 2018). Permitting a student more frequent breaks during a task is also considered a scheduling accommodation (Bolt et al., 2011).

Setting. Setting accommodations involve changes to the physical environment where a student completes a task (Bolt et al., 2011). A reduced distraction environment for test-taking is one of the more frequently utilized accommodations (Abreu et al., 2016; Bolt et al., 2011; Francis et al., 2018). A reduced distraction environment may be an individual testing area or testing in a small group setting (Bolt et al., 2011) instead of testing in a classroom with all classmates.

Response. Response accommodations involve modifications to how a student responds to a test or assignment (Bolt et al., 2011). An institution may allow students to dictate their responses to a scribe or a recording device. Alternatively, an institution may provide a student with a word processor with spell-checking functionality to support the composition of the student's responses.

Effectiveness of Accommodations

The literature reveals inconsistencies in the reporting of the effectiveness of academic accommodations. Sireci et al. (2005) noted the difficulty in finding consistent conclusions around the effectiveness of accommodations due to the wide variety of accommodations, the range of ways accommodations are implemented, and the heterogeneity of SWD who receive accommodations. Studies analyzing the effectiveness of testing accommodations have been guided by the interaction and deferential boost hypotheses (Weis & Beauchemin, 2020). Both

ideas are grounded in the assumption that SWD earn lower test scores than students without disabilities when they complete tests under ordinary conditions. The lower test scores of SWD reflect their unequal access to test materials caused by their disabilities rather than accurately reflecting the students' skills and knowledge (Dembitzer & Kettler, 2018). The objective of accommodations is to promote fairness in testing and generate more accurate interpretations of students' test scores (Sireci et al., 2005). The differential boost theory asserts that SWD benefit more from test accommodations than students without disabilities (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001). In other words, if an accommodation increases test scores for SWD substantially more than it boosts test scores for students without disabilities, it is a valid accommodation. The interaction hypothesis states that when accommodations are given to SWD who need them, their test scores will increase compared to the scores they would have attained under normal conditions; however, students without disabilities will not achieve higher scores when testing with those accommodations (Sireci et al., 2005).

A review of the literature supports Sireci et al.'s (2005) claims of inconsistency in the research around the effectiveness of accommodations. Some studies (Abreu et al., 2016; Kim & Lee, 2016) found a significant positive relationship between the utilization of support services or accommodations and student grade point averages. Students participating in these studies perceived the most useful accommodations were extended time on tests (Abreu et al., 2016; Bolt et al., 2011; Francis et al., 2018; Kim & Lee, 2016), modification of exam materials (Kim & Lee, 2016), a reduced-distraction testing environment, and permission to record lectures (Abreu et al., 2016). Students with accommodations also reported more contact with faculty and less difficulty with assignments (McGregor et al., 2016). On the other hand, Weis and Beauchemin (2020; $N = 1634$) looked specifically at separate room testing, and their findings did not suggest this

accommodation mitigated the effects of ADHD, learning disabilities, and test anxiety. Extended time accommodation provides multiple benefits to students, including reduced anxiety, the opportunity to demonstrate true abilities, and improved grades (Abreu et al., 2016; Francis et al., 2018; Slaughter et al., 2020). Despite the multiple benefits of extended time, students voiced at least two potential consequences: the extra time may lead to changing correct answers to incorrect answers when time is remaining after test completion and scheduling concerns (Slaughter et al., 2020). For instance, extra time for one exam may leave students finishing one exam while their next class has started (Lyman et al., 2016). Similarly, additional time to submit an assignment may lead to the student continuing to focus on the topic of the work while classroom discussions have transitioned to the next topic (Lyman et al., 2016). Testing in another environment, whether it be for an extended time accommodation or reduced distractions, takes SWD out of the classroom environment causing them to miss out on any assistance the instructor may offer the rest of the class during the test, which can sometimes be significant (Marshak et al., 2010).

The use of disability-related academic accommodations during the first year of higher education is strongly associated with persistence in year two for SWD (Mamiseishvili & Koch, 2011; Newman et al., 2021). Newman et al.'s secondary analysis of a nationally representative longitudinal dataset ($N = 2330$) found that 75% of students who accessed support services persisted in their program, while the propensity-adjusted persistence rate for students who did not access support was only 56%. Other studies could not predict academic success from using academic accommodations (De Los Santos et al., 2019). While the variety of accommodations available and the diversity among SWD make consistent supporting data of the effectiveness of academic accommodations unattainable (Sireci et al., 2005), there is evidence that academic

accommodations can lead to higher grades among SWD (Abreu et al., 2016; Kim & Lee, 2016), higher rates of persistence among SWD (Mamiseishvili & Koch, 2011; Newman et al., 2021), and evidence that SWD perceive accommodations to be effective (Abreu et al., 2016; Bolt et al., 2011; Francis et al., 2018; Kim & Lee, 2016).

External Barriers to Utilizing Accommodations

SWD encounter many external barriers that may hinder their ability or willingness to disclose their disabilities and utilize academic accommodations. For instance, Slaughter et al. (2020; $N = 21$) found that 100% of their participants reported benefits from extended time accommodations; yet 100% of their participants also reported experiencing obstacles in attempting to attain or utilize their extra time accommodations. One such obstacle is faculty relationships, which often play an essential role in this decision-making process around accommodation utilization (Ehlinger & Ropers, 2020; Hong, 2015; Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019; Lipka et al., 2019; Lyman et al., 2016; Toutain, 2019). Other potential factors include communication from the disability services office (Gin et al., 2020; Hong, 2015; Skeens, 2020), faculty and staff lack of knowledge relevant to accommodations (Becker & Palladino, 2016; Francis et al., 2019; Gillespie-Lynch et al., 2017; Thompson-Ebanks & Jarman, 2018; Toutain, 2019; Walker, 2016), the effectiveness (or perceived effectiveness) of accommodations (Francis et al., 2019; Lyman et al., 2016; Squires et al., 2018), confidentiality concerns (Francis et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2021; Toutain, 2019), ableism (Bialka et al., 2017; Ehlinger & Ropers, 2020), inexperience with using the accommodations offered (Marshak et al., 2010), and the complexities of the documentation process (Squires et al., 2018).

Institutional Barriers

Some of the external barriers to accommodations use lie at the institutional level. For instance, ineffective institutional communication of support services (Gin et al., 2020; Hong, 2015; Skeens, 2020), ineffective accommodations (or the perception that accommodations are not effective; Francis et al., 2019, Squires et al., 2018), ableism (Bialka et al., 2017; Ehlinger & Ropers, 2020), and the complexities of the documentation process (Squires et al., 2018) are all barriers that institutions can work to eliminate. As institutions work to remove these barriers, SWD may be more inclined to request and use accommodations.

Institutional Communication. Lack of clarity or efficiency in the institution's communication of how to request accommodations is a common barrier to accommodations use (Gin et al., 2020; Hong, 2015; Skeens, 2020). As noted earlier, in the higher education environment SWD are responsible for self-identifying, registering with the disability resource office on their campus, and requesting and utilizing accommodations (Hadley, 2018; Thompson-Ebanks & Jarman, 2018; Toutain, 2019; Vaccaro et al., 2015). Students are being asked to take on this new role of self-advocacy in a new environment, so this is a significant barrier to students when institutions do not clearly communicate their policies and procedures. Gin et al. noted that some students are not aware of the disability services offered on their campus. Even those aware have difficulty utilizing the services because of the time and effort it can take to access the services. Timmerman and Mulvihill (2015) also referenced the complexities of the accommodations process and the importance of providing information to help students navigate this process.

Ineffectiveness or insufficiency of accommodations. Unfortunately, sometimes even when the institution provides accommodations, they are either ineffective or insufficient (Francis

et al., 2019). Some students encounter faculty who are either unwilling or unable to provide the students' accommodations (Toutain, 2019). Further, students struggle to identify which accommodations could be helpful to them. Other students note that some accommodations are ineffective or even put them further behind in their classes. For instance, one student stated that deadline extensions just caused him to fall further behind as he was still working on the assignment with the extension while his classmates had moved on to new material (Lyman et al., 2016). Students note that testing in an alternate environment leaves them without access to the instructor during the exam. They cannot ask questions, and/or they sometimes miss out on information the instructor shares with the rest of the class during the exam (Slaughter et al., 2020). Other students choose not to pursue accommodations because they are uncertain of their potential helpfulness (Squires et al., 2018).

Ableism. Ableism is “a pervasive system of discrimination and exclusion that oppresses people with disabilities” (Bialka et al., 2017, p. 157). Ehlinger and Ropers (2020) evidenced experiences with ableism negatively impact students' ability to learn and thrive during their higher education tenure. Ableism, and the fear of ableism, work to prevent SWD from disclosing their disabilities and requesting academic accommodations. In a study of the classroom experiences of college SWD ($N = 13$), researchers found that “when participants felt misunderstood and judged negatively for behaviors and characteristics that were linked to their disabilities, their reactions ranged from frustration with others' ignorance to a self-assessment that they were morally deficient and worthy of self-hatred” (Ehlinger & Ropers, 2020, p. 345).

Complexities of the documentation process. The requirement for students to provide a formal diagnosis of their qualifying disability to be eligible for accommodations requires an investment of time and money by the student (Squires et al., 2018). Some students expressed that

the cost of getting a formal diagnosis and the long waiting period to access testing services prevented them from applying for accommodation services. Mamboleo et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of SWD being educated, before entering college, on the disability disclosure process so that they are better prepared to navigate the process.

Faculty Barriers

External barriers specific to faculty also deter SWD from seeking and using academic accommodations. Students' relationships with faculty (Ehlinger & Ropers, 2020; Hong, 2015; Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019; Lyman et al., 2016; Toutain, 2019; Yssel et al., 2016) and faculty knowledge about accommodations (Becker & Palladino, 2016; Francis et al., 2019; Gillespie-Lynch et al., 2017; Thompson-Ebanks & Jarman, 2018; Toutain, 2019; Walker, 2016) are significant factors in determining if SWD are willing to seek accommodations. Further, whether faculty demonstrate the provision of discreet, confidential opportunities for students to disclose their disabilities and accommodation needs (Smith et al., 2021; Toutain, 2019) contributes to students' decision-making around accommodations.

Faculty Relationships. The most cited barrier to students requesting and utilizing accommodations was students' perception of how faculty would view them if they disclosed their disability and need for accommodations (Hong, 2015). Some students noted they were treated differently than "normal" students after disclosing their disability, and others revealed fear of being treated differently if they disclosed their disability (Hong, 2015; Kranke et al., 2017). In their study ($N = 13$) focused on the classroom experiences of college SWD, researchers noted, "this study echoes previous scholarly findings that instructors can be powerful facilitators and significant barriers to student learning" (Ehlinger & Ropers, 2020, p. 346). Throughout the literature, the importance of the relationship between students and faculty is highlighted as

having the potential to facilitate students gaining the accommodations and support, they need or serving as a deterrent to students pursuing this support (Ehlinger & Ropers, 2020; Hong, 2015; Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019; Lyman et al., 2016; Toutain, 2019; Yssel et al., 2016). Students cited a positive relationship with a faculty member as integral to academic success and overcoming obstacles (Skeens, 2020; Timmerman & Mulvihill, 2015; Yssel et al., 2016). Rao (2004) noted the importance of the faculty-student relationship in the process of the student establishing their identity within the classroom and university. Becker & Palladino (2016) expressed those students were more likely to disclose their disability to instructors who made themselves available to students and whom students perceived were willing to work with students and help students succeed. Scott et al. (2016) acknowledged the significance of faculty members in suggesting that disability services offices should form partnerships with faculty to improve the services and utilization of services offered to students. Faculty play an integral role in the academic experience for all students but can be particularly critical in determining the success of SWD.

Faculty and Staff Knowledge. In addition to not clearly communicating information surrounding disabilities services to students, some institutions are not providing appropriate training and development to faculty and staff to equip them to support SWD. Faculty and support staff's lack of knowledge relevant to accommodations was commonly cited as a barrier to utilizing accommodations (Becker & Palladino, 2016; Francis et al., 2019; Gillespie-Lynch et al., 2017; Thompson-Ebanks & Jarman, 2018; Toutain, 2019; Walker, 2016). Kutscher and Tuckwiller (2019) noted, "research suggests that faculty who have had prior training are more likely to report attitudes that are supportive of SWD, indicating that faculty development could positively influence the adoption of inclusive perspectives and practices" (p. 152). Participants in

Francis et al.'s (2018) study ($N = 109$) recommended faculty training to prevent faculty from treating disabled students as cheaters and to not demand medical records from them, to provide training to help professors identify disabilities, and to encourage professors to automatically email the disability disclosure form to students rather than making students initiate disclosure on their own. Becker and Palladino echoed the importance of faculty being knowledgeable of the ADA requirements and the accommodations offerings at their institution. Culp et al. (2017) noted that the attitudes of faculty could be improved with knowledge of persons with disabilities and experience with persons with disabilities. Support staff, particularly those who work in the office of student disability services, also need training. Some students reported difficulty identifying the accommodations they needed and staff that were either unable or unwilling to assist them in this process (Hong, 2015; Toutain, 2019).

Confidentiality. SWD are also concerned about the failure of faculty or staff to maintain the confidentiality of their disability (Toutain, 2019). Students spoke about being ashamed or embarrassed because instructors disclosed their disability without their consent (Francis et al., 2019). Once this happens to a student, or a student witnesses it happening to another student, it serves as a barrier to any future self-disclosure of disability. Smith et al. (2021) advocated for faculty members to provide opportunities for students to privately disclose their disabilities and accommodation needs to make them more comfortable with disclosure. Participants in their study ($N = 155$) reported a lack of consistent access to private settings for disclosure. Students who fear judgment or ableism will not disclose their disabilities or need for accommodations if they are not confident their disclosure will be handled confidentially.

Internal Barriers to Utilizing Accommodations

Students also deal with internal barriers beyond the external obstacles to disclosing disabilities and utilizing accommodations. Many students enter college lacking the self-advocacy and self-determination skills needed to buoy their disclosure and application for accommodations (Gin et al., 2020; Hong, 2015; Toutain, 2019). Further, students fear the stigma associated with being labeled as disabled and worry about how this may impact their future (Ehlinger & Ropers, 2020; Francis et al., 2018; Hong, 2015; Lyman et al., 2016; Toutain, 2019; Vaccaro et al., 2018). Students also desire to be self-sufficient (Hong, 2015; Kranke et al., 2017; Lyman et al., 2016; Timmerman & Mulvihill, 2015), and some even worry that despite their diagnosis, they do not deserve accommodations and they may be jeopardizing their academic integrity by utilizing them (Francis et al., 2018; Hong, 2015; Lyman et al., 2016).

Skill Related Barriers

Some SWD transition from high school to college without the requisite skills to succeed in higher education. Students may lack self-advocacy skills (Gin et al., 2020; Hong, 2015; Toutain, 2019), self-determination skills (Burke et al., 2020; Newman et al., 2019), experience with using accommodations (Marshak et al., 2010), or the discernment to recognize they are not sacrificing academic integrity by using approved accommodations (Francis et al., 2018; Hong, 2015; Lyman et al., 2016; Thompson-Ebanks & Jarman, 2018). Building these skills can better prepare SWD for a successful higher education journey.

Lack of Self-Advocacy Skills. The research shows that many SWD lack self-advocacy skills and have difficulty talking to their professors about their need for accommodations (Gin et al., 2020; Hong, 2015; Toutain, 2019). “Self-advocacy is the ability to communicate one’s needs and wants and to make decisions about the supports necessary to achieve them” (Vaccaro et al.,

2015, p. 673). While many students lack self-advocacy skills, these skills are especially important for SWD as they transition to higher education and the new environment of only receiving academic accommodations if they request them. In some studies of college SWD, participants identified their need to gain self-advocacy skills and to practice self-advocacy to be empowered to succeed in higher education and the real world beyond college (Gillespie-Lynch et al., 2017; Hadley, 2018). Some students voiced frustration that their attempts to self-advocate were thwarted by their lack of knowledge of which accommodations would be effective or which accommodations were potentially available to them (Hong, 2015). Further, some students who utilized accommodations credited their advocacy skills as the primary factor in facilitating their accommodations (Bolt et al., 2011).

Self-Determination. The promotion of self-determination among young people with disabilities has been shown to improve their ability to set and achieve academic and transition-related goals beyond higher education (Burke et al., 2020; Newman et al., 2019). Burke et al. considered the skills associated with self-determination to be decision-making, choice-making, goal setting and attainment, problem-solving, planning, self-advocacy, and self-management. Promoting these skills, or self-determination, is a critical element to enable SWD to achieve the academic success and quality of life they desire. Students who lack self-determination skills seem reluctant to request academic accommodations despite the potential favorable impact accommodations may have on their academic performance (Yssel et al., 2016). Sometimes this self-determination may lead to students choosing to try to demonstrate their autonomy and function without accommodations, but it may also lead students to utilize the supports because they see them as necessary to achieve the academic success and independence they desire (Thompson-Ebanks & Jarman, 2018). The decision of whether to utilize accommodations is

complicated by the desire to demonstrate independence combined with the consideration that the use of accommodations will likely increase the likelihood of success.

Inexperience with Accommodations Use. Some SWD face the challenge of attempting to utilize adaptive equipment or support services they did not utilize in high school (Marshak et al., 2010). SWD may find that while they could succeed in high school without accommodations, the challenges of the unfamiliar college environment and academic rigor present a need for support. The difficulty is often compounded for students when offered adaptive material or equipment with which they have no experience. For instance, some students are given audiobooks, assistive software, or assistive technology for the first time when their accommodations are approved at the higher education institution. These students are forced to learn to use new tools amid adapting to the academic rigor of college.

Academic Integrity Concerns. Some students expressed concerns that other students would view them as taking advantage of the system by utilizing their accommodations (Hong, 2015), leading some to even doubt, despite their diagnosis, if they were disabled enough to warrant services (Lyman et al., 2016). Some students who disclose their disability and utilize accommodations feel compelled to prove to others they have a disability to prevent others from thinking they are faking a disability, questioning if they are trying to gain an unfair advantage over other students, or questioning if their accommodation is warranted (Thompson-Ebanks & Jarman, 2018). Frustration from having their academic integrity questioned led participants in Francis et al.'s (2018) study ($N = 109$) to recommend faculty training to prevent faculty from treating disabled students as cheaters, not demand medical records from them, and provide training to help professors identify disabilities.

Disposition Related Barriers

The disposition of some students deters them from seeking and using accommodations. Some students are hampered by the fear of social stigma (Ehlinger & Ropers, 2020; Francis et al., 2018; Hong, 2015; Toutain, 2019; Vaccaro et al., 2018) or the fear that disclosing their disability may negatively impact their future opportunities (Lyman et al., 2016). Students may also have a desire for self-sufficiency that keeps them from seeking support services (Hong, 2015; Kranke et al., 2017; Lyman et al., 2016).

Fear of Stigma. SWD fear the social stigma associated with being identified as having a disability (Ehlinger & Ropers, 2020; Francis et al., 2018; Hong, 2015; Toutain, 2019; Vaccaro et al., 2018). In their study of the classroom experiences of college SWD ($N = 13$), Ehlinger and Ropers found that “experiences with stigma, oppression, and ableism affect students’ ability to learn and thrive” (p. 347). Hong observed that among participants in her study ($N = 16$) the fear of being ostracized by their friends if they disclosed their disability greatly outweighed the importance of academic success in the minds of SWD. Francis et al. ($N = 109$) found that some students felt professors treated them like cheaters for utilizing their accommodations. De Los Santos et al. (2019) noted that faculty might develop a negative attitude toward SWD and create a negative feedback loop. It is difficult for students to feel supported and competent when they feel isolated by their disability. Walker (2016) advocated for more inclusive academic support spaces to help eliminate the stigma tied to accommodation utilization. For instance, support services such as tutoring are available to all students through a learning center rather than reserving services for only students with documented disabilities.

Fear of Future Implications. Students’ internal struggles with whether to disclose their disability and seek accommodations extend beyond the timeframe of their educational pursuits.

Some students fear that faculty knowing they have a disability will negatively impact their future opportunities (Lyman et al., 2016). Students specifically mentioned concerns relative to future letters of recommendation and future job opportunities.

Desire to be Self-Sufficient. For many students, not utilizing accommodations is a matter of the student's desire to be self-sufficient (Hong, 2015; Kranke et al., 2017; Lyman et al., 2016). Some students want to "prove they can do college without accommodations" (Timmerman & Mulvihill, 2015, p. 1612). Similarly, some "students delayed asking for help because they wanted to 'prove' that they could perform like any college student" (Hong, 2015, p. 221). Squires et al. (2018) found that the most frequent explanation in their survey for why students did not pursue accommodations was a desire for independence. For some students, not pursuing accommodations through their institution meant they utilized self-employed support. Students researched strategies such as note-taking tips they could employ themselves rather than using the institution-provided note-taking services. Individuals desire to feel autonomous and competent, so it is not surprising that some students choose not to pursue accommodations to prove they can be successful without them. The higher education model of having to self-disclose and self-advocate, rather than the burden being on the institution to identify accommodation needs, enables this mindset.

Recommended Improvements

The literature offers a range of recommendations to encourage SWD to utilize their accommodations (e.g., De Los Santos et al., 2019; Hong, 2015; Toutain, 2019). The recommendations can be segregated into suggestions for institutions, faculty tips, curriculum suggestions, and advice for students. These suggestions reiterate the findings of the research found in the literature.

Recommendations for Institutions

The research offers higher education institutions specific suggestions of changes they can implement to help improve accommodation utilization. Based on the research, institutions should consider training for faculty and staff (Hong, 2015; Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019; Toutain, 2019), making improvements to communication about DSS (Hong, 2015; Toutain, 2019), developing more efficient processes around support services (De Los Santos et al., 2019; Skeens, 2020), utilizing predictive analytics to monitor student progress, and implementing a mentoring program (Squires & Counterline, 2018). If these recommendations lead to increased utilization of accommodations, they may also lead to increased academic success (Abreu et al., 2016; Francis et al., 2018; Slaughter et al., 2020) and persistence (Mamiseishvili & Koch, 2011; Newman et al., 2021).

Training. Institutions should provide training to faculty and staff relevant to disability law and accommodations. Research has shown that more educated faculty and staff are more willing to provide accommodations to students (Hong, 2015; Toutain, 2019). Kutscher and Tuckwiller (2019) found that faculty who had prior training on working with SWD were more likely to report a supportive attitude towards SWD and more likely to adopt inclusive practices in their classrooms. The more awareness faculty of an institution has about SWD, the more likely SWD are to persist at this institution and be academically successful (Walker, 2016).

Communication. Institutions should enhance the clarity and prominence of communication relevant to disability services (Hong, 2015). Students should know where and how they document their disabilities and request accommodations (Skeens, 2020), and institutions should work to ensure this is not a cumbersome or intimidating process. The transition from K–12 to higher education represents a tremendous change with their new

environment requiring them to self-advocate to receive accommodations. In their previous environment, school officials were required to identify and meet their accommodations needs with no request from the student (Toutain, 2019). Clear communication from disability services departments to simplify the steps of self-advocacy can encourage students to pursue the accommodations to which they are entitled.

Improve Processes. Higher education institutions must research the most effective ways to communicate with their students and educate their faculty and staff to improve their institutional processes with SWD in higher education (De Los Santos et al., 2019). While clear communication of disability support information is critical (Hong, 2015; Skeens, 2020), it is also essential that the processes themselves are efficient and straightforward (De Los Santos et al., 2019). Students sometimes choose not to utilize accommodations because they do not understand the process to request accommodations or find the process to either obtain or use accommodations too cumbersome (De Los Santos et al., 2019; Hong, 2015). While higher education institutions cannot seek to identify SWD (USDE, 2011), institutions should work to simplify the process for students to self-identify and submit their requests for accommodations (De Los Santos et al., 2019; Hong, 2015).

Utilizing Predictive Analytics. Institutions can help SWD achieve academic success by using predictive analytics to keep students supported and on track before academic consequences (Squires & Counterline, 2018). Monitoring students' progress through predictive analytics offers educational support staff data they can use to encourage students who are starting to show signs of struggle to seek support services before their academic situation becomes dire. The data from predictive learning analytics can assist instructors and support staff in recommending specific strategies to at-risk students (Squires & Counterline, 2018). SWD benefit from

universally available support services on college campuses (Newman et al., 2021), so even if SWD have not self-identified, predictive analytics may lead to these students receiving academic support and experiencing increased success. Once these students see the benefit of the support services, they may choose to self-identify to apply for more specific accommodations.

Mentoring. A student-based mentoring program with faculty facilitation is also recommended to help build relationships and foster their integration and involvement on campus (Squires & Counterline, 2018). Faculty should play an integral role in planning and encouraging, but students should feel responsible for their educational futures. As students' progress through their higher education journeys, they also progress in the mentoring program from new mentees to eventual leaders and mentors (Squires & Counterline, 2018). SWD have indicated that mentors played a significant role in their perseverance and overcoming the obstacles their disabilities presented while pursuing their education (Timmerman & Mulvihill, 2015).

Universally Available Supports. SWD benefit from support services available to the entire student body (Newman et al., 2021). As mentioned earlier, approximately two-thirds of SWD do not report their disability to their higher education institution and apply for accommodations (Newman & Madaus, 2015). Recent studies (Newman et al., 2021; Walker, 2016) suggested that SWD benefit from inclusive support services such as tutors and writing centers available to all students independent of disclosing the disability to their institution.

Recommendations for Faculty

Faculty members can either be powerful facilitators or significant obstacles to student learning among SWD (Ehlinger & Ropers, 2020; Hong, 2015; Marshak et al., 2010). Faculty play an integral role in the academic journey of SWD, and the literature offers suggestions to

help faculty succeed in their role. Faculty often lack sufficient knowledge of SWD and accommodations provisions (Becker & Palladino, 2016; Francis et al., 2019; Gillespie-Lynch et al., 2017; Thompson-Ebanks & Jarman, 2018; Toutain, 2019; Walker, 2016), so instructors need to be informed. Some potential accommodations, like extended time for assignments (Abreu et al., 2016; Bolt et al., 2011; Francis et al., 2018), require faculty to navigate the need to provide reasonable accommodations within the confines of grade submission deadlines. Well-informed faculty may be better positioned to offer creative solutions like providing assignment details to students with extended accommodations earlier or adjusting the class assignment schedule to allow extra time for the assignment for eligible SWD without missing the grading submission deadline. Faculty also need to seek to build positive relationships with students, as relationships with their faculty are instrumental in providing students the confidence to disclose their disabilities and seek services (Ehlinger & Ropers, 2020; Hong, 2015; Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019; Lyman et al., 2016; Toutain, 2019; Yssel et al., 2016).

Build Relationships. SWD need optimal contact with their faculty members to understand that their instructors are available and willing to help them achieve success (Becker & Palladino, 2016). Students recognize that a positive relationship with faculty is key to their academic success (Skeens, 2020; Timmerman & Mulvihill, 2015; Yssel et al., 2016). On the other hand, when students feel faculty are not aware of or sensitive to their needs, students feel intimidated and rejected (Gibbons et al., 2015). Thankfully, most faculty also seem to recognize the vital role they play for SWD and demonstrate a willingness to work with students even beyond ADA compliance (Becker & Palladino, 2016; Rao, 2004). Students are more likely to disclose their disability to faculty members who make themselves available and seem willing to

help students succeed (Becker & Palladino, 2016), so faculty trying to build positive relationships with students is key to the success of SWD.

Be Informed. Faculty are critical players in their institution's quest to maintain ADA compliance (Becker & Palladino, 2016); as such, faculty must be informed about SWD and the nuances of ADA compliance. While knowledge for compliance's sake is critical, thankfully, most faculty present an attitude of desiring to facilitate the success of SWD well beyond any compliance-related obligations. Many institutions do not provide sufficient faculty training to equip faculty to effectively accommodate the learning needs of SWD (De Los Santos et al., 2019). In these cases, faculty must take the responsibility to be informed about SWD and how to best support their success. The more awareness faculty have about SWD, the more likely SWD are to persist and be successful while studying under these faculty members (Walker, 2016). Professional development increases instructors' efficacy and willingness to try ideas in class (Becker & Palladino, 2016).

Curriculum Recommendations

As colleges and universities consider how to serve SWD best, at least two changes to curricula are options: universal design and integration of self-determination. Universal design takes a more proactive approach to provide SWD an equal opportunity for education by considering inclusivity and equal accessibility in the creation of the classroom and curriculum rather than trying to offer modifications to the original design to accommodate SWD (Black et al., 2020; Gibbons et al., 2015; Gin et al., 2020; Squires & Counterline, 2018). Higher education institutions may also promote the building of self-determination skills through the curriculum to better prepare SWD to self-advocate and gain the accommodations they need to succeed academically (Burke et al., 2020).

Universal Design. Some studies suggest that institutions should go beyond offering accommodations and move towards universal design (Black et al., 2020; Gibbons et al., 2015; Gin et al., 2020; Squires & Counterline, 2018). Some see the implementation of universal design concepts as superior to accommodations as universal design includes designing the curriculum and classroom experience with equal access to everyone in mind, while accommodations are developed separately by disability services and not truly incorporated by instructors. Accommodations are more of an afterthought. In other words, given the classroom environment and syllabus, accommodations are the result of considering what institutions can offer SWD to offset inequities in the presentation or testing. Universal design is more proactive and considers equal accessibility in designing the classroom and curriculum (Black et al., 2020; Gibbons et al., 2015; Gin et al., 2020; Squires & Counterline, 2018). As universal design will take time, institutions need to work to immediately implement the other recommendations so that SWD feel they are a valued segment of the population and are supported in their academic journey.

Promotion of Self-Determination. Implementation of practices to promote self-determination impacts outcomes for SWD throughout their higher education journey and beyond (Burke et al., 2020). Promoting self-determination is critical to enabling students to achieve their education-related goals and assist them in positive post-school employment, community participation, and quality of life outcomes. By continuing to focus on and improve instruction to build self-determination, institutions can further enhance the capacity of SWD to set and achieve goals as causal agents in their own lives.

Recommendations for Students

The literature offers SWD suggestions to increase their likelihood of a successful transition into higher education. SWD need to be informed about support services at their higher education institution and their legal rights (Becker & Palladino, 2016). Students need to compile this information to self-advocate for their educational needs (Gin et al., 2020; Hong, 2015; Toutain, 2019). Once students secure approval for any needed academic accommodations, they must follow through and use these accommodations to gain the potential benefit (Abreu et al., 2016; Francis et al., 2018; Kim & Lee, 2016; Mamiseishvili & Koch, 2011; Newman et al., 2021; Slaughter et al. 2020).

Self-Advocacy. SWD need to enter higher education prepared to self-advocate (Gin et al., 2020; Hong, 2015; Toutain, 2019). Students need to have knowledge of their disabilities and their essential educational needs and be able to communicate this information to DSS staff and faculty to successfully navigate the transition to higher education (Cole & Cawthon, 2015). Unfortunately, many students do not have a final individualized education plan meeting in high school to prepare them to request specific accommodations in college. Hence, students need to gather this information before beginning their higher education journey. Further, many students are not provided information about who at their higher education institution they should contact to request accommodations nor how to obtain the necessary documentation to make this request (Cawthon & Cole, 2015), leaving it to students to seek out this information and self-advocate. The more informed SWD are about support systems on campus and their legal rights, the more successful they are in higher education (Becker & Palladino, 2016).

Utilization. Knowing how to request accommodations and getting approval can only help SWD if they utilize the accommodations they are granted. Studies (Abreu et al., 2016; Kim &

Lee, 2016) have found a significant positive relationship between the utilization of support services or accommodations and student grade point averages, and students using accommodations also reported more contact with faculty and less difficulty with assignments (McGregor et al., 2016). Extended time accommodation provides multiple benefits to students, including reduced anxiety, the opportunity to demonstrate true abilities, and improved grades (Abreu et al., 2016; Francis et al., 2018; Slaughter et al., 2020). The use of disability-related academic accommodations during the first year of higher education is strongly associated with persistence in year two for SWD (Mamiseishvili & Koch, 2011; Newman et al., 2021). Evidence that academic accommodations can lead to higher grades among SWD (Abreu et al., 2016; Kim & Lee, 2016), higher rates of persistence among SWD (Mamiseishvili & Koch, 2011; Newman et al., 2021), and evidence that SWD perceive accommodations to be effective (Abreu et al., 2016; Bolt et al., 2011; Francis et al., 2018; Kim & Lee, 2016) support SWD utilizing the accommodations for which they are eligible.

Summary

Accommodations are required by law to provide equal access to education to those with disabilities (Abreu et al., 2016; Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019; Lombardi et al., 2018; McGregor et al., 2016; Meeks et al., 2021). Many students who are eligible for accommodations are not utilizing them (Lombardi et al., 2018; Lyman et al., 2016; Newman & Madaus, 2015), yet accommodation utilization appears to improve academic performance among SWD (Abreu et al., 2016; Francis et al., 2018; Slaughter et al. 2020). Improved academic outcomes will benefit students and institutions (Selingo, 2013; Squires & Counterline, 2018). Common barriers to accommodation utilization include faculty's perceived willingness to provide accommodations (Hong, 2015; Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019; Rao, 2004), the ease or difficulty of the

accommodations request process (Hong, 2015), the lack of knowledge or training of faculty and staff (Becker & Palladino, 2016; Francis et al., 2018; Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019; Skeens, 2020), the ineffectiveness of accommodations (Francis et al., 2019; Lyman et al., 2016; Squires et al., 2018; Toutain, 2019), students' fear of social stigma (Kranke et al., 2017; Lyman et al., 2016; Shallish, 2015), students' level of self-advocacy skill (Gin et al., 2020; Hong, 2015; Toutain, 2019), students' self-determination (Burke et al., 2020; Newman et al., 2019; Yssel et al., 2016), students' desire to be self-sufficient (Hong, 2015; Kranke et al., 2017; Lyman et al., 2016; Timmerman & Mulvihill, 2015), students' fear of the harmful impact disclosure of their disability and use of accommodations may have on their future opportunities (Lyman et al., 2016), and students' concerns around academic integrity (Francis et al., 2018; Hong, 2015; Lyman et al., 2016; Thompson-Ebanks & Jarman, 2018). Recommendations to improve the experience of students needing accommodations include training for faculty and staff (Hong, 2015; Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019; Toutain, 2019), improved communication and efficiency of disability services policies and procedures (Hong, 2015; Skeens, 2020; Toutain, 2019), and use of predictive analytics to monitor student progress and identify those who may need accommodations but have not requested them (Squires & Counterline, 2019). Additional recommendations to improve the experience of SWD include opportunities to relate with a mentor (Timmerman & Mulvihill, 2015) and the implementation of universal design concepts (Black et al., 2020; Gibbons et al., 2015; Squires & Counterline, 2018), which go much further than typical accommodations in making the classroom learning experience equally accessible to students of all abilities. Students are encouraged to build their self-advocacy skills (Gin et al., 2020; Hong, 2015; Toutain, 2019) and use their accommodations (Abreu et al., 2016; Kim & Lee, 2016). Faculty tips include building relationships with students (Skeens, 2020; Timmerman

& Mulvihill, 2015; Yssel et al., 2016) and being informed about accommodations processes and requirements (Becker & Palladino, 2016).

The published literature on student utilization of accommodations provides common perspectives on barriers to utilization of accommodations and actionable recommendations for institutions desiring to improve their services to SWD. Most of the studies analyzed in the literature were based upon small sample sizes or primarily undergraduate students at singular institutions or within a limited geographic region (e.g., Bialka et al., 2017; Ehlinger & Ropers, 2020; Francis et al., 2019; Lyman et al., 2016; Skeens, 2020; Timmerman & Mulvihill, 2015), so limits on the generalizability of these findings should be noted. Even the studies that included some graduate students in their samples (Francis et al., 2018; Squires et al., 2018) offered no distinctions between the undergraduate and graduate participants, so there is a significant opportunity to add to the literature. Additionally, Francis et al. (2018) emphasized the need for future research to consider the experiences and perspectives of SWD who did not register with student disability services, as most studies selected their sample from only students who had at least registered with disability services. The body of literature on accommodation experiences of SWD offers only limited information around the experiences of graduate SWD and offers no insight into the experiences of SWD in a DC program. The aim of this study was to address this gap in literature and practice.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This transcendental phenomenological study aimed to understand the experiences of SWD enrolled in a DC program that contributed to their decision not to utilize the academic accommodations for which they were eligible. The objective was to understand the experiences of these students better, why they chose not to use the accommodations available to them, and their perceptions of what their college can do to increase the utilization of accommodations. The sections of this chapter will explain, in progressively greater detail, the research design utilized for this study.

Participants were selected through purposeful criterion sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The sampling process did not begin until permission had been secured from the IRB at Liberty University. An email was sent to students at the site school asking for volunteers to participate in the study if they have ever received a diagnosis that qualified them for accommodations at any level of education and had at some point in their career as a chiropractic student not utilized academic accommodations. My positionality as the researcher, the selected theories for the interpretative framework, and my philosophical assumptions are all considered. Data was collected through interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts. Data was analyzed and synthesized into a report of findings. The research plan included measures to conduct a trustworthy and ethical study.

Research Design

Qualitative research is an appropriate design when seeking a deep understanding of complex issues (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As detailed in chapter two, the current literature details numerous barriers (internal and external) that may impact the decision of SWD not to use

accommodations making the issue complex. Creswell and Poth noted that to gain a detailed understanding of an issue, one must talk directly to people and allow them to tell their stories unencumbered by any preconceived notions of the researcher. Further, qualitative research is the appropriate approach when a researcher wants to empower people to share their stories, when the researcher wants to hear the voices of the study participants, and the researcher seeks to minimize any power dynamics between researcher and participant. As this study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the decision-making of SWD, share the stories of SWD from their perspective, empower SWD to tell their stories, hear the voices of SWD, and encourage the sharing of SWD without any encumbrance due to power dynamics, qualitative research was the appropriate method for this study.

This qualitative study utilized the transcendental phenomenological approach to see the examined experience as if for the first time (Moustakas, 1994). Transcendental phenomenology seeks to remove preconceived notions and ideas to reach a transcendental state of freshness to see an experience for the first time without biases or prejudices. The transcendental phenomenological approach was valid for this study as, through Epoché (Husserl, 1913/2017; Moustakas, 1994), it allowed consideration of the experiences of chiropractic SWD to be considered without any preconceived notions of those experiences. “In transcendental phenomenology, the goal is to illuminate the essence of a phenomenon, the entirety of it, without the corruption of personal bias” (Peoples, 2021, p. 57). To maintain the integrity of the study, the phenomenological approach called for systematic collection, organization, analysis, and validation of data (Moustakas, 1994).

Moustakas (1994) credited Husserl (1965) with the development of transcendental phenomenology. While based on philosophy, Husserl's approach was a scientific mission, and he

provided a systematic and disciplined methodology for investigation and analysis (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl's (1975) method called for the discovery of knowledge "by reference to things and facts themselves, as these are given in actual experience and intuition" (p. 6). The reflection that occurs throughout the approach provides a resource for analyzing the information gathered and synthesizing this information to form descriptions of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenal experience becomes increasingly clear and more extensive in meaning as it is considered and reconsidered through reflection. Transcendental phenomenology is a systematic study of phenomena "as we see them and as they appear to us in consciousness" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 49).

Research Questions

The central research question and three sub-questions were designed to explore the experiences of chiropractic SWD, consider why some of these students choose not to utilize the academic accommodation available to them, and learn from the students' perspective any improvements the students believe institutions could implement to increase the utilization of academic accommodations.

Central Research Question

What are the shared experiences of SWD in the DC program who chose not to utilize accommodations?

Sub-Question One

What are the competence experiences of SWD in a DC program who chose not to utilize accommodations?

Sub-Question Two

What are the relatedness experiences of SWD in a DC program who chose not to utilize accommodations?

Sub-Question Three

What are the autonomy experiences of SWD in a DC program who chose not to utilize accommodations?

Setting and Participants

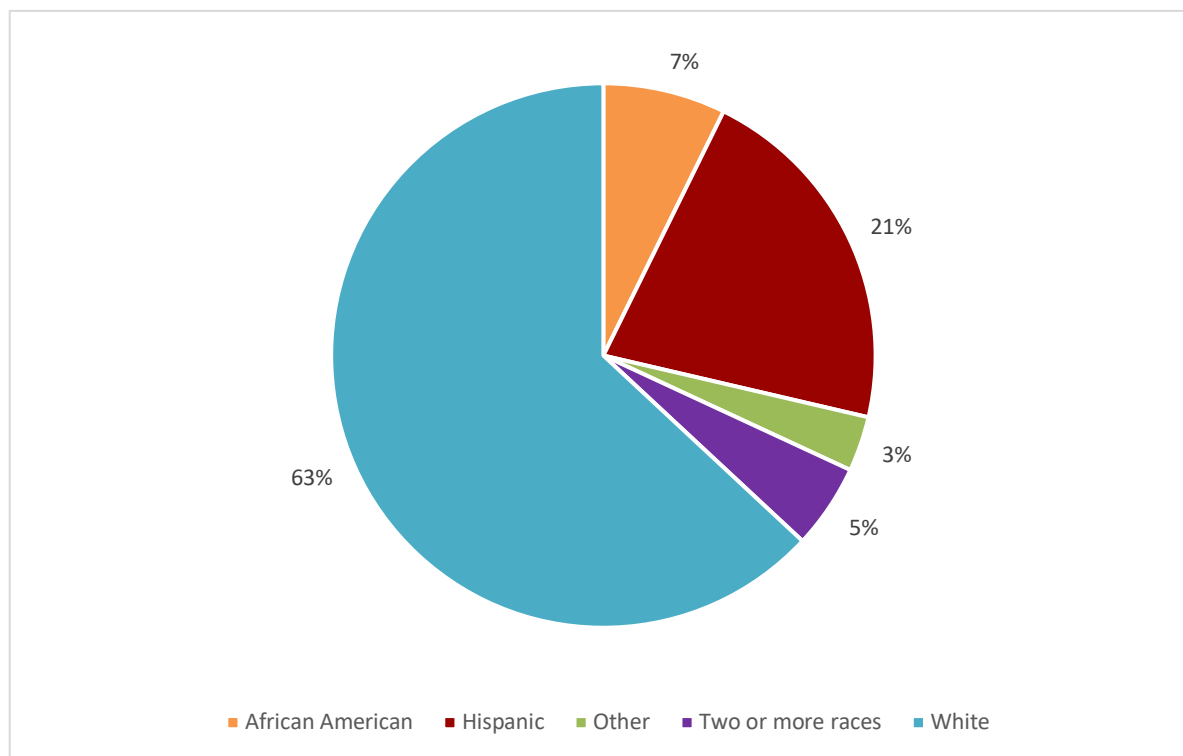
This study included SWD attending an accredited chiropractic college in the United States. Participation was open to any students in the chiropractic program who had ever been diagnosed with a disability that qualified them for academic accommodations but elected to not register with disability services. Students must have received a professional diagnosis and not simply have self-diagnosed, as it is imperative that participants have experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Site

The site for this study was one of the nineteen accredited chiropractic colleges (American Chiropractic Association, n.d.) in the United States located in the southeastern United States. The site, XYZ Chiropractic College (XYZ), is a graduate institution offering only the DC program. Approximately 400 students are enrolled at this not-for-profit institution which a president and governing board lead. The student population at XYZ is 51% male and 49% female (XYZ Chiropractic College, 2022). Students are 63% White, 21% Hispanic, 7% African American, 5% of two or more races, and 3% other (XYZ Chiropractic College, 2022; see Figure 1).

Figure 1

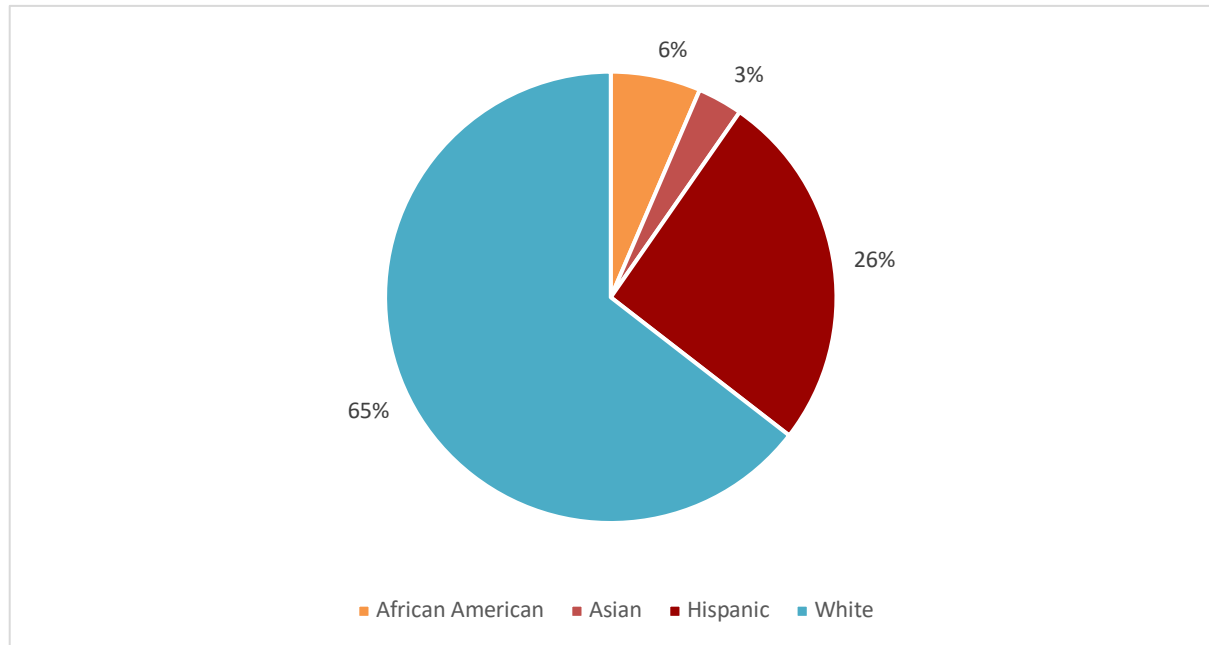
XYZ Chiropractic College Students by Ethnicity



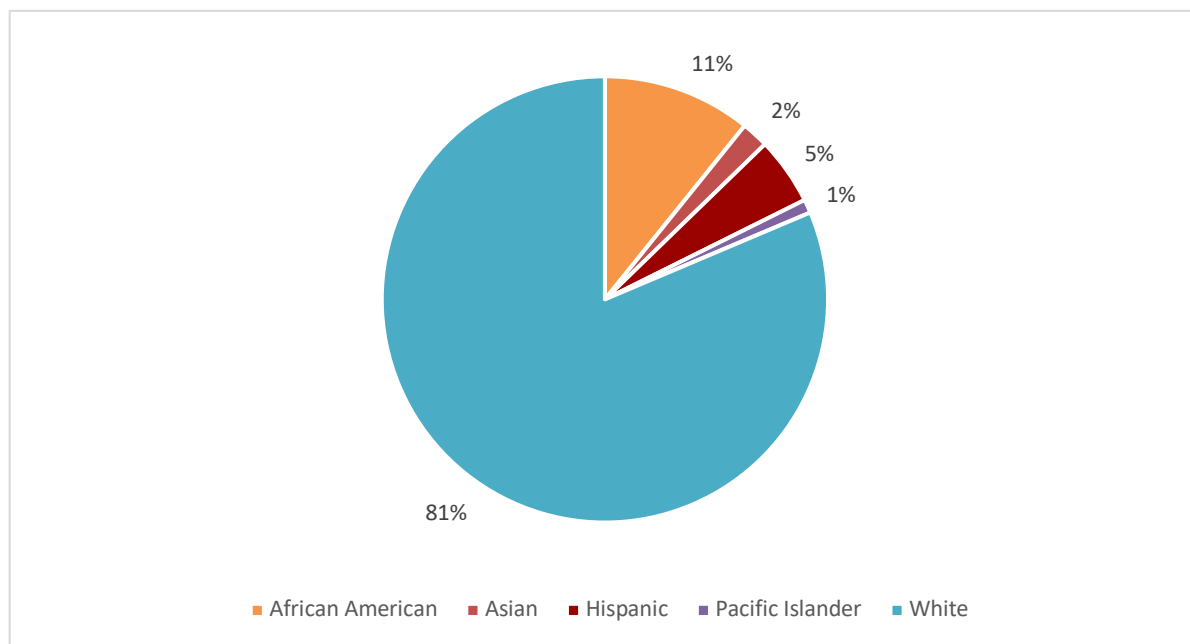
The students at XYZ college who are registered with the Department of Student Affairs to receive academic accommodations represent 8% of the total student population (J. Smith, personal communication, March 23, 2022). Most registered students (61%) are male, while 39% of students registered for accommodations are female. The subset of students registered for accommodations has a similar demographic composition to the total student population: 65% White, 26% Hispanic, 6% African American, and 3% Asian (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

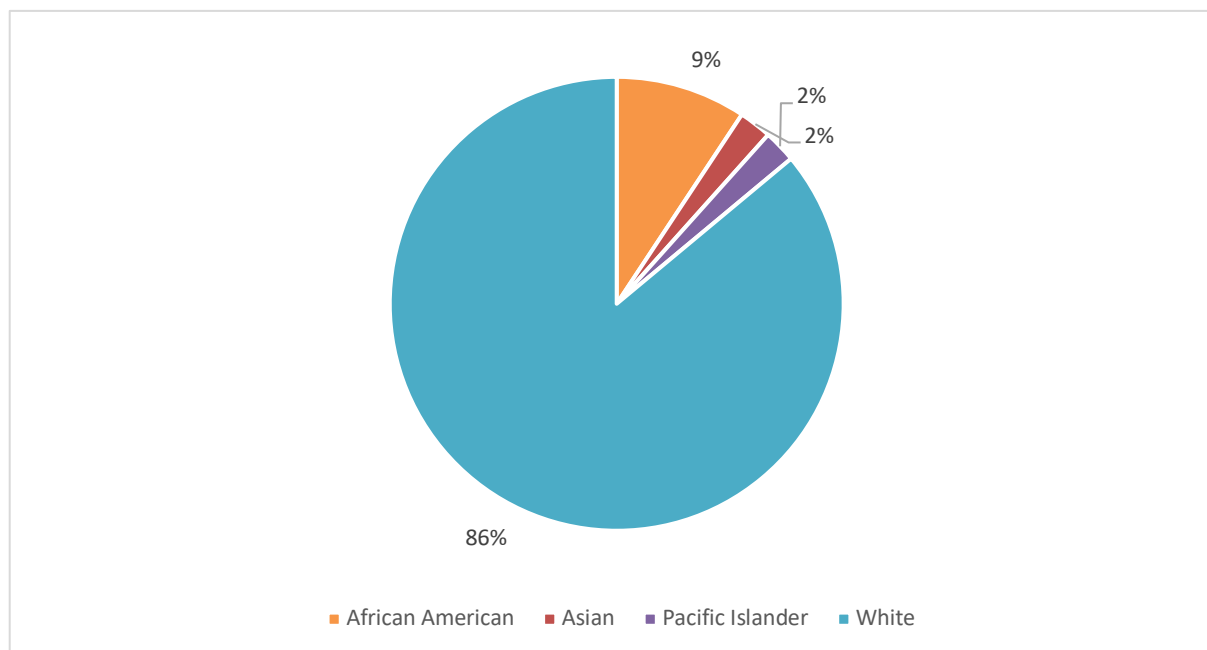
XYZ Chiropractic College Students Registered for Accommodations by Ethnicity



The college employees, including faculty and staff, are 64% female and 37% male (M. Smith, personal communication, March 21, 2022). The employee group is less ethnically diverse than the student population, as 81% are White, 11% are African American, 5% are Hispanic, 2% are Asian, and 1% identify as Pacific Islander (see Figure 3).

Figure 3*XYZ Chiropractic College Employees by Ethnicity*

Analysis of the demographic data of the faculty of XYZ shows a similar makeup to the workforce inclusive of staff, as 63% of faculty are female, and 37% are male. Further, faculty members are 86% White, 9% African American, 2% Asian, and 2% Pacific Islander (see Figure 4).

Figure 4*XYZ Chiropractic College Faculty by Ethnicity*

Academic accommodations for students at XYZ are provided through the Department of Student Affairs. Students who inquire about accommodations are sent an email with an application to request accommodations and information about the supplemental documentation required with the application (J. Smith, personal communication, March 23, 2022). The required documentation must come from an individual qualified to make the type of diagnosis that is reported, must include a formal diagnosis, must include an explanation of how the diagnosis was determined and details of relevant assessments, tests, or interviews, must indicate how the diagnosis may inhibit the student's participation in the college's program, and must offer recommendations of appropriate academic accommodations based upon the diagnosis. The Director of Student Affairs receives applications for accommodations and documentation. The director then consults with the Vice-President for Student Affairs and follows up with the student for any additional information needed to decide on awarding accommodations. When requested

accommodations require significant modifications and are outside the scope of what the college has previously awarded, the Vice-President Student Affairs calls a meeting of the college's Accommodations Committee to consider the request (J. Smith, personal communication, March 23, 2022). When accommodations are approved, the Director for Student Affairs (Director) sends an email to the student and schedules a meeting with the student and the Student Affairs Coordinator for Activities and Testing Center (Coordinator). At this meeting, the Director reviews the accommodations approved based on the documentation and the coordinator explains to the student the details and processes for using accommodations. For instance, accommodated students are required to complete a link each quarter listing their instructors for the upcoming quarter to allow the Department of Student Affairs to notify instructors of the student's accommodation status. Further, the students utilize a link in the college's automated system to request accommodations use for upcoming tests, quizzes, or exams. Upon this request, the coordinator informs the appropriate instructor, verifies the setup requirements for the testing center, reserves appropriate testing center space (i.e., private room or corral in a small group space), and proctors the testing environment.

This site was selected for multiple reasons with the primary reason being convenience. The purpose of this study was to consider the experience of chiropractic students and XYZ is one of the few chiropractic colleges that offers only the DC program. The leadership of XYZ expressed interest in the potential benefits of learning more about the experiences of chiropractic SWD.

Participants

Participants in this study were 10 chiropractic SWD. A phenomenological study considers a group of individuals who have all experienced the same phenomenon (Creswell &

Poth, 2018). The intent was to identify a heterogeneous group of individuals that may vary in size from three to four individuals to 10 to 15 individuals. Once I determined saturation was reached, I stopped recruiting efforts and ended data collection with 10 participants. Purposeful criterion sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018) was utilized to select participants. This means participants were strategically selecting as individuals who met a specific criterion, in this case having experienced the phenomenon of being a student with disabilities in a DC program, to have information-rich cases for analysis (Patton, 2015). With the approval of the IRB and the Department of Student Affairs, I emailed a confidential survey to all students at the site school asking for volunteers among anyone who has ever received a diagnosis that qualified them for accommodations at any level of education that have at some point in their career as a chiropractic student not utilized academic accommodations. The study was not limited to only those students who had applied for accommodations as the experiences of SWD who never applied are significant to this study; however, the limitation to those who had received a diagnosis qualifying them for accommodations in the past was essential to avoid including students who had only self-diagnosed. An essential criterion for selection was that the participant must have experienced the phenomenon of focus (Moustakas, 1994). The goal was to achieve a demographically diverse sample of students who qualified for accommodations.

Researcher Positionality

I have served as an administrator at the site chiropractic college for 10 years. I have been married for over 26 years, and my husband and I have two young adult children. I am a certified public accountant and began my career in public accounting as an auditor. My current institution of employment is a former audit client. I initially accepted the position of Director of Finance with my institution in 2012. I was promoted to Chief Financial Officer in 2013 when my former

boss left the institution and added the role of Chief Operating Officer in 2019. I do not serve on the Admission or Academic Affairs Committees, which make decisions around students at my institution, and I do not have authority over students.

I am a Christian with a Biblical worldview. My research questions stem from my Biblical worldview, my experience as an administrator hearing stories of students who were facing academic dismissal who said they probably would have been successful if they had utilized the accommodations for which they were eligible, and the desire for every student to have the opportunities and resources they need to be successful in their academic endeavors. Scripture commands, “My brothers and sisters, believers in our Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism” (*New International Version*, 1973/2011, James 2:1). Identifying and working to eliminate barriers preventing disabled students from utilizing accommodations for which they are eligible helps put all students on an equal playing field and avoid favoritism. I have a niece and nephew who are both on the autism spectrum, so I have a particular interest in ensuring SWD receive the reasonable accommodations for which they are eligible. As an administrator, I want students to be provided every opportunity to succeed, and I also want to see the college achieve high success and completion rates.

Interpretive Framework

This study was conducted through the social constructivism interpretive framework. In social constructivism, people seek to understand the world in which they live by developing subjective meanings of their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Social constructivism values each individual’s unique experiences (Patton, 2015) and using it, researchers gain understanding through interpreting participant perceptions (Lincoln et al., 2018). Social constructivism involves constructing knowledge through lived experiences and interactions with others. For researchers,

social constructivism requires participation in the research process with participants to ensure that the knowledge constructed through the study reflects the participants' reality. Approaching research from a social constructivist lens acknowledges multiple perspectives of the same data. When the various perspectives of individuals who have experienced a phenomenon coalesce around consensus, valid knowledge is constructed (Lincoln et al., 2018).

Philosophical Assumptions

Philosophical assumptions are deeply held beliefs that have been developed through educational training, scholarly meetings, and advice received from others (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Philosophical assumptions include an ontological assumption, or belief about reality's nature; epistemological assumption, or thoughts about what counts as knowledge; and axiological assumption, or values. This researcher's ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions influenced this phenomenological study.

Ontological Assumption

The ontological assumption relates to one's beliefs about the nature of reality and its characteristics. "When researchers conduct qualitative research, they are embracing the idea of multiple realities" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 20). This study was influenced by the belief that individuals view their experiences differently (Moustakas, 1994). Knowledge will be constructed as the experiences of each participant are considered individually and collectively analyzed.

Epistemological Assumption

The epistemological assumption considers what counts as knowledge and how knowledge claims are justified (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Specific to this study, the epistemological assumption addressed the relationship between what was being researched and the researcher. A transcendental phenomenological study aims to set aside everyday

understandings and judgments and see everything that is perceived through the study as if for the first time (Moustakas, 1994). The epistemological assumption that influenced this study is that knowledge begins with describing the phenomenon and is constructed through collaboration between the participant and the researcher. As a higher education administrator, I have witnessed the disability services functions of my institution through a different lens than the SWD utilizing these services. I set aside my perceptions to look at this process through the lens of the student participants to gain the knowledge to be gleaned from their experiences.

Axiological Assumption

The axiological assumption relates the values of the researcher and the role of values in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Lincoln et al. (2018) noted that values could significantly impact a study as they influence a researcher's choice of problem, paradigm, theoretical framework, methods, and presentation. I am a conservative Christian with a Biblical worldview, and the values inherent in this worldview impacted my selection of topic, paradigm, and methods and influenced my analysis of data and communication of the results of this study. I believe in the inherent value of each human created by God and desire to see each individual have an opportunity to be successful in higher education.

Researcher's Role

I served as the human instrument in this study. I recruited participants, collected data, analyzed, reflected upon data, and reported findings. I serve as an administrator at the institution where I recruited student participants. While I am an administrator at this institution, my office is in an office building separate from the academic and clinical spaces and I do not have any authority over students. I do not serve on either the admissions or academic affairs committees, and I do not interact with students on any regular basis. I do have a role that includes budgetary

authority, so I am hopeful that if participants realize my role on campus, they will feel empowered to share their experiences with someone who may be able to enact potential suggested changes.

Procedures

The procedures for this transcendental phenomenological study were based upon the work of Moustakas (1994). This section will discuss the researcher's process of obtaining site permission, completing the IRB application, recruiting participants, collecting data, analyzing, reflecting upon data, and reporting findings. I have detailed each of the procedures performed in the following sections. I followed the research plan will be carefully to ensure an ethical study.

Permissions

As soon as I successfully defended my prospectus, I completed the IRB application for Liberty University (see Appendix A). I secured approval from Liberty University before recruiting participants or collecting any data. I met with the IRB chair at XYZ Chiropractic College to discuss my study and provided the IRB chair with a draft of my prospectus prior to submitting to the Liberty University IRB. The IRB Chair at XYZ Chiropractic College emailed me conditional site approval contingent upon study approval by the Liberty University IRB (see Appendix B). I closely adhered to all conditions of permission from both institutions.

Recruitment Plan

I recruited participants for this study through purposeful criterion sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I emailed a confidential survey (see Appendix C) through the bcc feature of Microsoft Outlook to all students at XYZ Chiropractic College asking for volunteers who had received a diagnosis that qualified them for accommodations at any level of education and had chosen not to use the accommodations for which they were eligible at some point during their

time as a chiropractic student. The study was not limited to only those students who had applied for accommodations as the experiences of SWD who never applied were significant to this study; however, the limitation to those who had received a diagnosis qualifying them for accommodations in the past was essential to avoid including students who had only self-diagnosed. An essential criterion for selection was that the participant must have experienced the phenomenon of focus (Moustakas, 1994). The goal was to achieve a demographically diverse sample of 10 to 15 students who qualify for accommodations. The final number of participants was dependent upon when saturation was met. As students replied to my email volunteering to participate, I emailed them attaching the consent form (see Appendix D) and offering to answer any questions they had about the consent form. When a student submitted their consent form, I scheduled an interview with them via email, offering an in-person option or an interview via Teams. With the permission of each participant, I recorded all interviews, and as they were completed, I prepared a transcription of each interview.

Once interviews were conducted, I scheduled three focus group times, emailed participants with the times, and provided a link for participants to sign up for the most convenient time. The link limited the number of students who signed up for a time slot so that no more than six students signed up for one focus group. The focus groups were conducted through Microsoft Teams so that students could use pseudonyms and disable their video if they preferred not to be identifiable to other participants. Upon their completion of a focus group session, I emailed each participant the study journal prompts requesting their completion and submission of responses to me within two weeks. I prepared transcriptions of the focus group sessions. I emailed each participant the transcript of their interview and the transcript of the focus group they participated in, requesting they review the transcripts for accuracy. Upon receiving their

journal prompt responses, I emailed the participants a \$50 Amazon gift card as their compensation for participation in the study.

Data Collection Plan

No data collection began until after IRB approval was secured from Liberty University. I attempted to reach rigor in data collection by collecting data through three different methods. Data in phenomenological studies comes primarily from in-depth interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018); as such, the first step in the data collection plan for this study was an in-depth interview of each participant. The one-on-one interviews were followed by focus group interviews to validate the data collected in the one-on-one interviews, identify any relevant information that may have been missed in the one-on-one interviews, and to explore the themes that have started to develop through initial analysis. The aim of a focus group is not to reach a consensus, but to explore a variety of perspectives (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Finally, I solicited responses to journal prompts from the participants. Journal prompts served as a complement to the interviews and focus groups. Participant journal prompt responses provided the advantage of being in the participants' language and words as they had time to carefully consider their responses (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Individual Interviews

I conducted an in-depth, semi-structured interview with each study participant. I attempted to conduct interviews in person in a comfortable location for the participant; however, if a participant preferred a virtual interview due to fears around the current pandemic or other concerns, I conducted the interview through Microsoft Teams. A semi-structured interview "seeks to obtain descriptions of the interviewees' lived world with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 31). Semi-structured

interviews combine the strength of carefully considering the wording of questions in advance with the ability to deviate from the question guide to gather more helpful information (Patten & Newhart, 2017). A semi-structured interview allowed me to reword a question if a participant did not understand a question or ask a follow-up question that probed further if the participant did not fully answer the question or offered unexpected, relevant information to explore. “Evidence from phenomenological research is derived from first-person reports of life experiences” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 84). I recorded each interview to prepare a word-for-word transcription for data analysis. I began each interview by explaining the purpose of the interview, allowing the participant to provide consent to be recorded, and answering any questions the participant may have about the interview.

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please describe your overall experience at chiropractic college. CRQ
2. How has your disability affected your experience at chiropractic college? CRQ
3. If you have applied for accommodations, can you please describe your experience contacting Student Affairs and requesting accommodations? CRQ, SQ2
 - a. What parts of this process were helpful or efficient? CRQ
 - b. What parts of this process were not beneficial or efficient? CRQ
 - c. If you have not contacted Student Affairs to request accommodations, why not?
CRQ
4. Can you please describe your experiences with faculty members concerning academic accommodations? CRQ, SQ2
5. How have your experiences with other students been concerning academic accommodations? CRQ, SQ2

6. How have your experiences with the Department of Student Affairs staff been concerning academic accommodations? CRQ, SQ2
7. Can you please describe a situation in which you felt like you did not have access to accommodations or services that would have been helpful to you in your education? CRQ
8. As a Doctor of Chiropractic program student, do you feel you are in an environment that is welcoming to accommodations use? CRQ
9. Can you please share with me why you have sometimes not utilized accommodations for which you were approved? CRQ
10. Why do you think other students eligible for accommodations may not apply for accommodations or may not use accommodations? CRQ, SQ1, SQ2, SQ3
11. If you were in charge of student affairs, what would you do differently regarding accommodation services? CRQ
 - a. What would you do the same? CRQ
12. What advice would you offer a student with a similar disability about accommodation services at chiropractic college? CRQ
13. What additional questions should I have asked to understand your experience better? CRQ
14. Please share with me how this interview has been for you. CRQ

Questions 1 through 6 and 12 are broad questions that attempted to explore the participant's experience as a student with disabilities in the DC program. Broad questions may facilitate obtaining a rich, substantive description of the participant's experience of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Question 7 asked participants to recall a specific situation in their experience as a disabled student not having access to the accommodations, they felt they

needed. To gain rich, experiential data, it may be helpful to remain concrete and ask the person to think of a specific instance or situation (Van Manen, 2014). Question 8 attempted to learn if there were unique pressures concerning accommodations within the DC program environment. In questions 9 through 12, I was looking to gain insight into the participant's decision-making around the utilization of accommodations and interviewing for a conceptual analysis of the participant's understanding of their experience (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Questions 13 and 14 offered participants any opportunity to share any other information they would like to share and to provide me feedback on their interview experience. Experts will review these questions prior to use for data collection.

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis began with epoché, or bracketing, which involves setting aside biases and preconceived ideas to see the phenomenon as if for the first time (Moustakas, 1994). I first fully described my own experience with the phenomenon so that I could bracket out my preconceived ideas and prejudices (see Appendix H). “The challenge of the Epoché is to be transparent to ourselves, to allow whatever is before us in consciousness to disclose itself so that we may see with new eyes in a naïve and completely open manner” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 86). In other words, in the process of a researcher becoming transparent in viewing experiences presented to them, the researcher also becomes transparent with themselves. Once I prepared word-for-word transcriptions of interviews, I read through each transcription and jotted down any preliminary words or phrases as notes (Saldaña, 2021). Next, I employed initial or open coding to break down the data into discrete parts and examine it for similarities. I used in-vivo coding, which involves using the participants' own words (Saldaña, 2021), to ensure I captured the unique, authentic experiences of everyone (see Appendix I). I also considered the elements of the self-

determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), namely autonomy, competence, and relatedness when coding to assess if responses related to one or more of these elements. I utilized horizontalization to identify significant statements, initially treating them all as equally valuable but eventually eliminating irrelevant, repetitive, and overlapping statements leaving only the horizons (Moustakas, 1994). These horizons were grouped into clusters or themes for synthesis with the data collected from the focus groups and journal prompts (see Appendix J).

Focus Groups

Three focus groups of two to five participants were conducted to complement the one-on-one interviews. I offered three times to best accommodate participant schedules and all ten participants participated in one of the focus groups. The group interaction inherent in focus groups facilitated the expression of viewpoints usually not accessible from the participants (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Focus groups work when participants feel comfortable (Krueger & Casey, 2015), so I conducted focus group interviews via Microsoft Teams, offering participants the opportunity to use an alias only known to me and block their video during the focus group.

Focus Group Questions

1. Please describe how you believe your overall experience at chiropractic college is different from the experience of students who do not have a disability. CRQ
2. Can you share your recollection of a specific incident that led to you not wanting to utilize accommodations? CRQ
3. What is the most challenging step in the process of utilizing accommodations? CRQ
4. If you could offer only one specific recommendation to the institution to improve the experience of SWD, what would you recommend? CRQ

Question 1 is a broad question that attempted to explore the experience of the participants as SWD in the DC program and how the participants perceived their student experience to be different from the experience of other students. Broad questions may facilitate obtaining a rich, substantive description of the participant's experience of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Questions 2 through 4 asked participants to recall or consider specific situations. To gain rich, experiential data, it may be helpful to remain concrete and ask the person to think of a particular instance or situation (Van Manen, 2014). These questions were reviewed by experts before being used for data collection.

Focus Group Data Analysis Plan

The same initial steps of analysis were used for focus groups, namely epoché or bracketing, preparing transcriptions (see Appendix K) and jotting down any preliminary words or phrases as notes (Saldaña, 2021). The open coding of focus group transcripts, like the coding of the interview transcripts, involved in-vivo coding, using the participants' own words (Saldaña, 2021), and consideration of the elements of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Coding was followed by horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994) and the development of clusters or themes for synthesis with the data collected from the interviews and journal prompts.

Journal Prompts

Journal prompts are an excellent complement to interviews. They can enrich participant perspectives because there is typically much more time for participants to draft, edit, and submit responses to the prompts. Journal prompts provide data in the participants' words and language because they have had time to carefully consider their responses (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). I gave the journal prompts to the participants after the focus groups and asked that they return

responses via email within two weeks. All ten participants returned their journal prompts (see Appendix L).

Journal Prompts

1. In one to two paragraphs, can you please share your experience with being diagnosed and your experience with academic accommodations before entering the doctoral program?
CRQ
2. Can you please share your experience with accommodations in the Doctor of Chiropractic program in one to two paragraphs, and how (if at all) it differs from your experiences with academic accommodations before entering the program? CRQ
3. Please share in one to two paragraphs what, in your experience, is the most significant determining factor for SWD's decision to utilize or not utilize academic accommodations. CRQ

Questions 1 and 2 are broad questions that attempted to explore participants' experiences as SWD earlier in their academic career and their experience as SWD in the DC program and their views on the academic accommodations process. Broad questions may facilitate obtaining a rich, substantive description of the participant's experience of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Question 3 asked the participants to consider a specific factor or situation. To gain rich, experiential data, it may be helpful to remain concrete and ask the person to think of a specific instance or situation (Van Manen, 2014). These prompts were reviewed by experts before use for data collection.

Journal Prompts Data Analysis Plan

Similarly, to the analyses of the interviews and focus groups, data analysis of the journal prompts began with epoché, or bracketing (Moustakas, 1994). Having described my own

experience with the phenomenon, I bracketed out my preconceived ideas and prejudices. I read through each journal response and jotted down any preliminary words or phrases as notes (Saldaña, 2021). Next, I employed initial or open coding to break down the data into discrete parts and examine it for similarities and incorporated in-vivo coding, using the participants' own words as codes (Saldaña, 2021) to capture the essence of the individuals' experiences in my coding. I utilized horizontalization to identify significant statements, working to eventually eliminate irrelevant, repetitive, and overlapping statements leaving only the horizons (Moustakas, 1994). I grouped the horizons into clusters or themes for synthesis with the data collected from the one-on-one interviews and focus groups.

Data Synthesis

After all the data had been analyzed, I considered the clusters and themes from each data collection method and worked to synthesize the meanings to communicate the “essence” (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I developed a textural description of what happened and then created a structural description through imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994) of how the participants experienced the phenomenon. I communicated the essence by composing a composite description from the textural and structural descriptions.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) countered criticism of the perceived lack of rigor, reliability, and objectivity in qualitative research by developing parallel terms for these characteristics of quantitative research to apply to qualitative research, namely, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. This section describes the measures included in the research plan to ensure a rigorous study that achieves Lincoln and Guba's elements of trustworthiness. Further, this section addresses the ethical considerations of this study.

Credibility

Lincoln and Guba (1985) considered credibility a truth factor. They noted the importance of carrying out an inquiry in such a way that the probability that the findings are credible is enhanced and to demonstrate the credibility of the findings “by having them approved by the constructors of the multiple realities being constructed” (p. 296). I achieved credibility through triangulation and member checking. I used multiple methods of data collection and verified the accuracy of my data with the participants.

Triangulation

The technique of triangulation is another way to improve the probability of the validity of research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation involves the use of multiple methods of data collection, multiple sources of data, multiple theories, or multiple investigators (Denzin, 1978). I achieved triangulation in this study by utilizing three data collection methods to explore the participants' experiences and by collecting data from 10 participants. Data collection method triangulation was achieved by using one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts with 10 participants.

Member Checking

After completing transcriptions of the one-on-one interviews and focus groups, I read back through the interview transcripts myself for accuracy and then sent them to the respective participants for their accuracy verification. Soliciting participants' views of credibility is “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). One participant noted three minor edits to his interview transcript which were carefully corrected. The other participants approved their transcripts as prepared.

Transferability

Transferability shows that the findings may have applicability in other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which is largely achieved through thick descriptions when describing research findings (Geertz, 1973). I worked to compile rich descriptions from data collection to paint a picture of the experiences of chiropractic SWD. All participants in this study were attending the same chiropractic college, limiting the transferability of the findings; however, since the literature offers no insights into SWD in a chiropractic program, this study may be the first step toward an improved understanding of the experiences of chiropractic SWD.

Dependability

Dependability shows that the findings are consistent and could be repeated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which can be demonstrated through an adequate description of the procedures undertaken for the study. Dependability was accomplished through an inquiry audit, which at Liberty University occurs with a thorough review of the process and the products of the research by the dissertation committee and the qualitative research director. As the researcher, I maintained a detailed record of all processes, events, and documents. This is important because it allows another researcher to retrace the study path that led to the finding. The audit trail (see Appendix M) is useful in seeking peer feedback on the validity of procedures and data interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I documented and tracked my memos. Memos are key thoughts or ideas that come to the researcher as they read through transcripts and data. Memoing also lended more detail to my audit trail. Memoing lends credibility to the qualitative process because “The qualitative researcher should expect to uncover some information through informed hunches, intuition, and serendipitous occurrences that, in turn, will lead to a richer and

more powerful explanation of the setting, context, and participants in any given study” (Janesick, 2011, p. 148).

Confirmability

Confirmability is a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the respondents shape the findings of a study and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I employed three techniques to establish the confirmability of this study. First, I created a detailed audit trail of all procedures, raw data, analyzed data, and the final report. Second, I established triangulation as described above through data collection methods and theories utilized for the interpretive framework. Finally, I was reflective in undertaking this study and documented all my reflective memoing.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations related to three principles must guide ethical research: respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I submitted my research proposal to the IRB for approval and did not begin any research procedures until my proposal was approved. Experts reviewed my interview questions. I provided all participants with the consent form in Appendix D. I also explained to all participants that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. I assigned an alias to the site institution and assigned aliases to all participants. I stored study data in a password-protected MacBook Pro with the encryption security function enabled to provide a secure location for data. I could not guarantee participants’ anonymity nor confidentiality in the focus group process. However, I stressed the importance of confidentiality to all participants, and I explained this risk to participants. I believe the potential benefit of improving the experience and success rates of SWD outweighs this risk, particularly given the measures planned to mitigate this risk.

Summary

This transcendental phenomenological study aimed to understand the experiences of SWD enrolled in a DC program that contributed to their decision not to utilize the academic accommodations for which they are eligible. The objective of the findings is to understand the experiences of these students better, why they chose not to utilize the accommodations available to them, and their perceptions of what their college can do to increase the utilization of accommodations. Transcendental phenomenology uses systematic methods of analysis to construct a picture of an experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

No recruiting or data collection occurred until permission had been secured from the IRB at Liberty University. Participants were selected through purposeful criterion sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data were collected through interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts. During data analysis, epoché, or bracketing (Moustakas, 1994), was utilized to bracket out preconceived ideas and suppositions so that the experience could be seen as if for the first time as experienced by the participants. Systematic data analysis was synthesized into a textural description of what happened and a structural description of how the participants experienced the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The final findings were communicated as the “essence” by composing a composite description from the textural and structural descriptions. The research plan included measures to conduct a trustworthy study by establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Further, careful consideration was taken in the planning to ensure an ethical study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the experiences of SWD at a chiropractic college in the United States that led to their decision not to utilize the academic accommodations available to them. This chapter presents the findings from the analysis of the data collected through this study. It begins with information about the study participants. It continues by sharing the personal, institutional, and social barriers that have at times proven inhibitive to utilizing their academic accommodations in the DC program. The chapter concludes by addressing the study research questions.

Participants

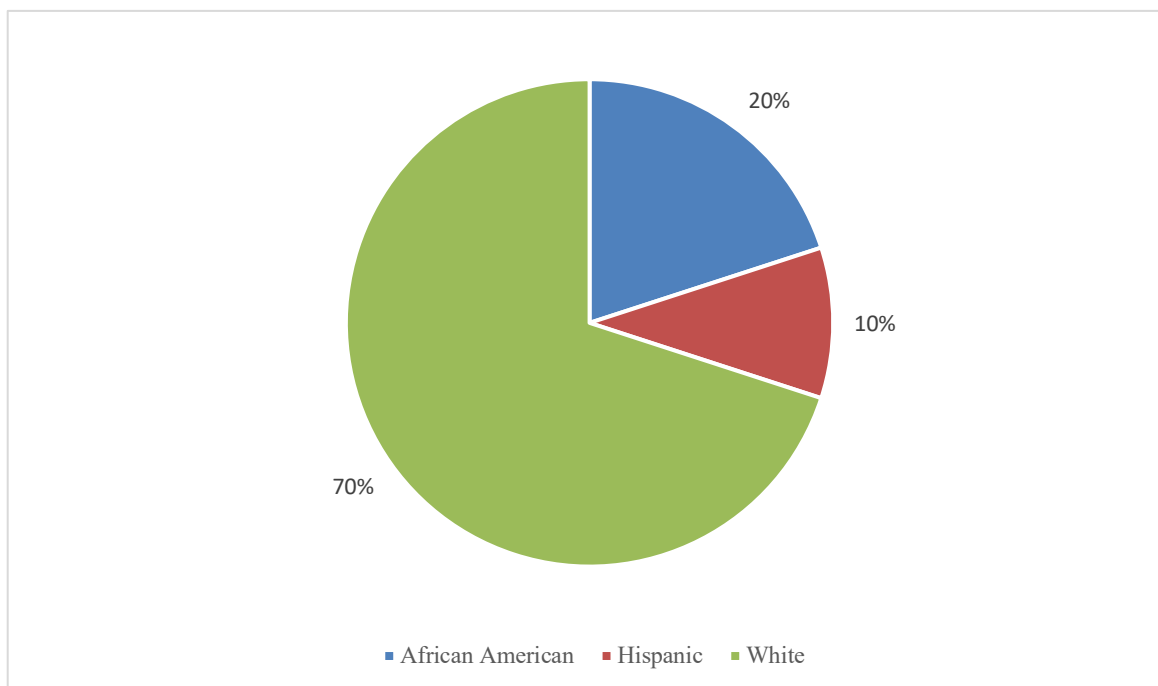
This study included SWD attending an accredited chiropractic college in the southeastern United States. Participation was open to any student in the chiropractic program who had ever been diagnosed with a disability that qualified them for academic accommodations and who does not always utilize academic accommodations, whether they elected to register with disability services or not. The intent was to identify a heterogeneous group of 10 to 15 individuals. While some diversity was achieved, male students and Hispanic students are underrepresented in comparison to the demographic makeup of the entire student population of XYZ Chiropractic College shown in Chapter 3. In contrast, female students, white students, and African American students are relatively overrepresented. Table 1 and Figures 5 and 6 offer more detailed information about the study participants.

Table 1***Student Participants***

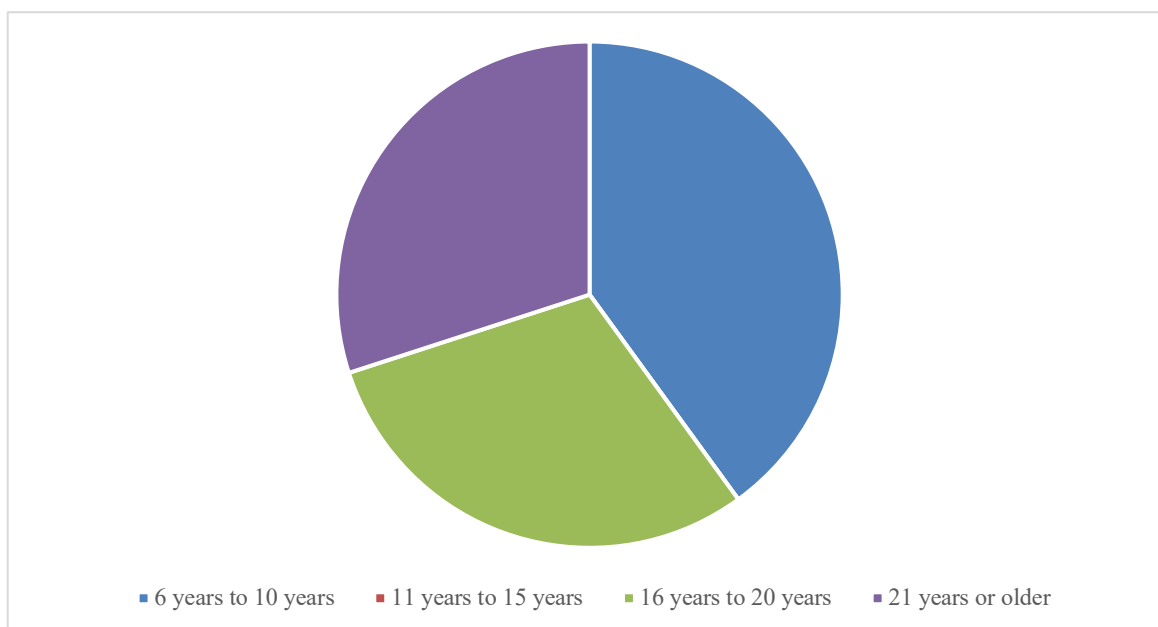
Student Participant	Applied for Accommodations at Chiropractic College	Gender	Ethnicity	Disability (-ies)	Years of Age at Diagnosis
Candace	Yes	Female	White	ADHD and anxiety	6 to 10
Elizabeth	Yes	Female	African American	Not disclosed	16 to 20
Lila	Yes	Female	White	ADHD	16 to 20
Philip	Yes	Male	White	ADHD and anxiety	6 to 10
Tonya	Yes	Female	African American	Anxiety	21 or older
Kevin	Yes	Male	White	ADHD	6 to 10
Samantha	No	Female	White	Dyslexia	6 to 10
Isabelle	Yes	Female	Hispanic	ADD and anxiety	21 or older
Hannah	Yes	Female	White	ADHD	21 or older
Alicia	No	Female	White	Anxiety	16 to 20

Figure 5

XYZ Chiropractic College Student Participants by Ethnicity

**Figure 6**

XYZ Chiropractic College Student Participants by Age When Diagnosed



Results

The data collected from student participants through interviews, focus groups, and journal prompt responses were analyzed and organized into themes and subthemes. While most of the students were quick to express gratitude for the accommodations and assistance they received, their responses throughout the data collection process uncovered barriers to the utilization of their accommodations. The prominent themes found through data analysis were personal barriers to accommodations use, institutional barriers to accommodations use, and social barriers to accommodations use. Personal barriers included perceived bias, negative past experiences using accommodations, the perceived impact of the accommodations, and the perceived difficulty level of the class or assignment. Institutional barriers the students shared include the complexity and expense of the qualification process, complications with the use of accommodations, communication failures, and a lack of support from faculty and staff. Finally, students also shared that social barriers such as perceived discrimination and the desire to compete influence their accommodation decisions.

Personal Barriers to Accommodations Use

The first theme identified in this study is personal barriers. Students face personal barriers that may discourage them from disclosing their disabilities or utilizing accommodations for which they are eligible. Participants in this study discussed barriers such as perceived bias, a history of negative experiences when utilizing accommodations, their perception of the impact accommodations will have, and their perception of the level of difficulty of the class, assignment, or program for which accommodations are available. Students sometimes consider all these factors when determining if they will seek or utilize academic accommodations. These factors are discussed below as subthemes of personal barriers to accommodation use.

Perceived Bias

SWD often feel their use of accommodations highlights their differences and places them in an undesirable light. During her interview, Elizabeth stated, “I did not use accommodations during undergrad because it made me feel less than and separate from the other students. I had to eventually give in and request accommodations at [XYZ Chiropractic College].” Elizabeth noted that she completed her undergraduate program a year early despite not using her accommodations. Samantha perceived bias early on and offered in her journal prompt responses, “I was diagnosed in elementary school. I believe this labeled me as a child without much potential, and I was often blamed more quickly and harshly than other children.” This perception of bias led Samantha to ask her parents to allow her to stop attending the special sessions her school offered for dyslexic children. They agreed, and despite struggles, including not being able to complete her SATs and ACTs in the allotted time, she did not consider accommodations again until her undergraduate days at a large state university. She noted in her interview that when she mentioned her disability to professors at this university, “They really encouraged me to drop their classes because they said if you're, if you're a person who has trouble, you shouldn't be here.” Alicia also felt others had a negative perception of those using accommodations. She stated in her interview, “I have normally kind of pressed down the difficult parts of the anxiety I deal with where I'm like no, I'll just deal with it.” The perception of being viewed as different or less than led these students to prefer to find a way to cope and succeed without accommodations rather than utilize the accommodations for which they were eligible.

Negative Experiences with Prior Use of Accommodations

While perceived biases discouraged some students from utilizing their accommodations, other students were discouraged by negative experiences from their past use of accommodations.

During her focus group interaction, Candace related the embarrassment of having to leave the room and go to the accommodations testing space when her professor announced a pop quiz. She noted, “It’s like in front of everyone I have to like gather my iPad and things and then walk out, and so I had definitely considered just not using it for those pop quizzes.” During the same focus group session, Hannah shared the difficulty of having to wait until last to take practical exams if she wanted to use her accommodations and “the building anxiety” as her classmates left the room after completing the exam, talking about how hard it was. In her interview, Samantha shared the frustration of trying to use audiobooks for her textbooks, “I could not get textbooks on audio because typically they want the latest version, and it takes years for the, um, the audio recording to come out for the textbook, so that was always frustrating.” These negative experiences led these SWD to abandon or consider abandoning their academic accommodations.

Perceived Impact of Accommodations

While most of the participants spoke of the positive impact of accommodations, other students felt any gain from accommodations was not worth the effort. Lila mentioned in her journal prompt responses that her “grades improved drastically” after she secured accommodations. Similarly, Hannah noted in her journal, “Once I finally got the accommodations I needed, I stopped failing classes and started to see a bright future ahead.” Tonya noted in her journal that the extra time allowed her to think through test questions. Philip noted in his journal that while accommodations helped him focus on tests, his grades are “similar” to those he earned before using accommodations. On the other hand, Samantha journaled, “The reason I decided not to use accommodations is because there is not a fair value exchange. I do not receive enough benefit from accommodations for the amount of effort and money if (sic) would require.” Kevin also noted in his journal he would not benefit from

accommodations in the chiropractic program “because I only need help with math, and it is not part of the curriculum.” Whether the students felt they gained a positive effect from accommodations or not, their perception of the effect influenced their decision on accommodations utilization.

Perceived Level of Difficulty

Related to their perception of the benefit of accommodations, most of the participants noted at least some consideration of the perceived level of difficulty of a program, class, or test in making their decision to use or decline accommodations. In her interview, Candace stated:

If I feel very confident in the material and I feel like it’s gonna be a straightforward test that’s just like, you know, I’m gonna get done with it quick, I’m not gonna have to think too hard on it, then I’m not using my accommodations.

Interestingly, Candace and Philip were among the majority of participants who indicated they did not use accommodations in their undergraduate program, but the intensity and rigor of the quarter-based chiropractic college curriculum led them to seek assistance. Only Isabelle and Kevin noted the use of accommodations during their undergraduate program. Lila noted in her journal prompt responses, “Upon entering this doctoral program, I had no idea how stressful it was to achieve the academic support I needed.” Elizabeth noted in her journal that while she did not use accommodations during her undergraduate program, chiropractic school is “difficult and overwhelming.” She further stated that depending upon the level of difficulty of the class, she will sometimes not use accommodations because “it allows me to build the confidence and not have anxiety when I am in the classroom with my classmates.” Philip also uses accommodations in chiropractic school after not using them during his undergraduate or master’s programs, but noted during his interview, “If it’s not really necessary for boards or if it’s not really necessary in

general, if it's not weighted much, if it's not gonna bring my GPA down. Then, yeah, I would not ask for accommodations." The participants communicated a desire to succeed in the program without accommodations when they felt they could.

Institutional Barriers to Accommodations Use

The second theme identified in this study is institutional barriers to accommodations use. Students noted they encountered institutional barriers that inhibited their application for or utilization of accommodations for which they are eligible. Participants in this study shared barriers such as the complexity and expense of the qualification process, complications with the utilization of accommodations, the failure of the institution to communicate pertinent information, and the level of support students perceive from faculty and staff. Based upon the data collected in this study, some students determine from these barriers that they are not in an environment that is welcoming to their use of accommodations. These barriers are further explored as subthemes in the sections below.

The Complexity and Expense of the Qualification Process

To be approved for accommodations, students must provide documentation of their disability. For some students, the process proved relatively simple. Philip noted during his interview that you just had to "send your stuff from your psychiatry or from your previous schools of accommodation and that was it." Isabelle also described the process as "pretty quick and easygoing" in her interview. While Tonya initially said the process "wasn't hard at all," she elaborated in her interview to note that she had to wait a quarter to get accommodations because of the time it took to get a documented diagnosis. Other students found the process much more difficult and expensive. While participating in the third focus group, Lila described the qualification process as "the most challenging part." She said, "there's a lot of red tape, there's a

lot of back and forth, there's a lot of waiting involved." Lila also noted that she had to pay \$300 for her psychological evaluation. Samantha was in the same focus group and lamented "finding a counselor, figuring out how to pay for it, doing all of that, it really prevented me from even exploring what options were available to me." The required qualification process to establish eligibility for accommodations is a barrier to at least some students.

Complications With the Utilization of Accommodations

Several students encountered issues when trying to use their accommodations which could make them less likely to use the accommodations again. Every student participant commented on the 48-hour rule. According to the participants, students must submit a request to utilize their accommodations a minimum of 48 business hours before the relevant quiz or test. Lila exclaimed her frustration with this rule during her interview, "If you forget to file for an exam or accommodation, you don't get s**t. You literally get nothing." Candace shared in the first focus group that this is especially hard on Mondays, "so then you have to submit it like, I don't even know, Thursday I guess." Isabelle related in her interview that an exception to the rule was made for her and some classmates during a busy midterms week, but she noted the staff member "made it clear that it was only gonna be one time." Isabelle further described the rule as "incredibly stressful" in her journal. Students also shared that faculty disorganization makes the rule even more difficult. Philip journaled, "Instructors will change test dates the day before impacting accommodation requests," and Tonya shared in her journal that she "wishes teachers would stick to a date so those with accommodations can have everything squared away without complications." In his interview, Philip shared the rule as the one thing he would change about the accommodations process if he was in charge and added, "I mean, I have ADHD and you

have ten classes to deal with like and when one thing, like one little thing can just slip. Like, I even forget to eat.”

While the 48-hour rule was the most common complaint about the utilization process, it was not the only complication students voiced. Hannah shared during her interview that she had, “had lots of mess-ups on my accommodations.” She attributed the errors such as incorrect times being set on testing timers to staff turnover and potentially a lack of training. She further felt that she was “blacklisted” by the staff after expressing her concerns. Elizabeth noted during her interview: “Although it is supposed to be a quiet space, the people in the accommodations center are sometimes loud in the hallway right outside the testing center.” Elizabeth also took a practical exam which she thought her accommodations would allow her to take in a separate room, but instead she was in the same room with everyone else. Other students noted a lack of clarity around if they were able to use accommodations for practical exams. Lila shared in her interview, “I don’t know if I can even take accommodations for my practicals.” Tonya also journaled about the uncertainty around practical exams, but added, “Just recently I found out that accommodations can be used for lab practicals only if the professor agrees to it.” Candace described during her interview that the accommodations testing center gets crowded during final exams and she sometimes does not get to use a private room as is her typical accommodation, “When there's a lot of testing and the rooms get filled with certain people who have other accommodations then I’m out in a cubicle and that kind of makes it like a different transition.” Candace had also noted during her interview how much she appreciated the typical routine in the accommodations center as, “I know what to expect, which is huge for me to not be like totally thrown off.” So, situations in which the routine is not followed, and she must test in a different

space, serve as a discouragement to her. Students who suffer from anxiety seem especially susceptible to unexpected complications in using their accommodations.

Failure to Communicate Pertinent Information

It is clear from the complications in the utilization of accommodations shared by participants, such as the lack of clarity around accommodations for practical exams, that communication lapses serve as barriers to accommodations use. Other instances noted by participants in which a failure to communicate important information can impede the use of accommodations include failing to provide students with information about how to qualify for accommodations and the types of accommodations available, failing to educate the campus community about accommodations and the importance of an inclusive environment, and failing to ensure a line of communication between students and instructors during testing. The subtheme of communication issues appeared among the data of nine of the 10 participants with specific examples explored in the following sections.

Information about applying for accommodations. For SWD to apply for accommodations, they must know how to apply. It is also helpful to these students to have information about the types of accommodations potentially provided. Most of the student participants in this study indicated that information about accommodations was not clearly communicated or readily available. Tonya lamented during her interview that she wished she had known about the potential for accommodations sooner and said, “I would definitely try to meet up with first quarter students, most definitely, and tell them everything about accommodations and what they need and like just give them a list of all the materials.” In Samantha’s interview, she shared, “I feel like a lot of times when we talk about accommodations, they’re like, go apply for accommodations, but like, how does one do that?” Hannah noted in her interview, “I didn’t

understand fully what I could ask for, and I never wanted to feel like I was a burden on somebody.” Both Candace and Alicia initially assumed academic accommodations would not be provided to individuals with their diagnoses. Candace stated during the first focus group, “I didn’t even realize that, you know, the things that like I’ve been diagnosed with were even something that you could get accommodations for.” Alicia mentioned during her interview, “Whenever I think of test-taking accommodations, I think of the more standard ones for people with like visual disabilities or hearing disabilities or anything like that that would prevent them from physically taking the exam with the rest of the class.” Candace and Hannah both mentioned in their interviews and focus groups that they only pursued accommodations because their advisors recommended them after seeing them struggling in the program. Alicia journaled, “The options for accommodations at [XYZ Chiropractic College] are very broad, but not many students know this; especially, if they have not received accommodations in the past.” Lila emphasized during the third focus group that the institution should communicate information about accommodations before students arrive on campus. She suggested an email stating, “Hey, if anyone has accommodations make sure you have X documentation immediately, or else you will face delays in getting what you need to be successful.”

Information About Accommodations to the Campus Community. The participants also noticed a lack of information and understanding among the broader campus, which can also serve as a barrier. Hannah journaled that a lack of understanding of accommodations and what they provide students seems the most significant factor in making accommodations decisions. She shared:

There have been many occasions that I have experienced my instructors saying openly that accommodations are a pain to deal with and on the flip side hearing student affairs

not understanding how messing up an accommodation during a test can truly affect a student.

In her one-on-one interview, Isabelle conveyed that due to other students' ignorance of accommodations, "they would think that we had an advantage over them because we had like extra time and less distractions." Candace also shared during her interview that she felt negative feedback from others stemmed from a lack of understanding about accommodations and "what that even entails." Not knowing about the availability of accommodations is clearly a barrier to using them and having those around you question the validity of your accommodations use due to their lack of understanding can also serve as a barrier.

Information Between Accommodated Students and Instructors During Tests.

Several students expressed concern about missing information shared by professors while they were in the accommodations testing center rather than in the classroom taking a test. Isabelle participated in the third focus group and expressed, "the only reason that I wouldn't take accommodations sometimes would be if I know that the professor would answer questions during the test that, um, they won't give me that information in the accommodation room."

Isabelle journaled that she weighs the expected difficulty of the test and the need for extra time against being in the classroom to hear any information the professor may share, "Where I didn't feel the need for extra time, I rather take the test in the classroom and listen to everyone."

Elizabeth also noted during her interview that the professor is not in the accommodations space but in the classroom, "So you have to ask the person who has no clue on even the subject of the question." She communicated that this sometimes leads her to decide to take a test in the classroom rather than use her accommodations, "Just because if I have a question, then I can ask the question like right then and there versus having to wait and then come back to the question."

Lila also shared during the third focus group, “I’ve had to sacrifice being able to ask a question during an exam because the professor wasn’t able to respond since they were proctoring their own class ... I’ve asked questions during exams and just didn’t get the answer before I finished.” Further, Lila noted during her interview that extended time on tests causes her to miss some lecture time if the test is only slated to take part of the class period. Clearly, the lack of communication and the sharing of information can be a barrier to SWD’s use of accommodations.

Lack of Support from Faculty and Staff

The level of support students feel from faculty and staff impacts their decision to utilize or decline accommodations. The students communicated mixed reviews on the level of support they perceived. In their interviews, Tonya, Isabelle, and Kevin both shared positive perspectives of the support offered by faculty and staff. Tonya noted the staff, “Tried to work with me to get accommodations, but it was just, I didn’t have enough documentation. So, they were still trying to help me.” (Tonya was eventually approved for accommodations after receiving a formal diagnosis, but the process took a quarter). Hannah shared during her interview that, “We have a lot of instructors willing to work with us and help us figure it out.” She also said, “Instructors kind of make it difficult because there are some that make you feel like you shouldn’t use your accommodations because it makes it too hard.” Samantha shared in the third focus group that being discouraged by instructors from using accommodations in the past is what kept her from seeking accommodations at chiropractic school. She noted, “The lack of support from teachers is definitely a big one [factor] for me personally.” The support some students felt from faculty and staff encouraged them to persevere through the process and gain accommodations. In contrast,

the lack of support felt by other student participants discouraged them from pursuing accommodations.

Social Barriers to Accommodations Use

The third theme to emerge from the data is social barriers that may impact accommodations utilization. Some students perceive they are being viewed negatively by others for using accommodations or that accommodations use will induce a negative perception from others. Academic programs are sometimes viewed as competitive spaces, and some SWD consider how using accommodations impacts their ability to compete on a level playing field with others.

Perceived Discrimination

SWD often feel discriminated against or isolated, even if that is not the intent of those around them. Perceived discrimination appeared in the data collected from five of the ten participants. Elizabeth shared in her journal prompt responses, “When they told me that I would be in a different room other than the one my classmates were in I freaked out and didn’t do accommodations my whole undergrad years.” She also shared during the second focus group that “being put in a separate room is a constant reminder of being different,” that it is “mentally daunting,” and that it “weighs me down.” Alicia was so struck by an event she witnessed that she shared it in her interview and during her focus group interaction. Her focus group recollection of the incident:

There was a lab practical where a man in my class got accommodations because he’s dyslexic and so he didn’t, well he wasn’t counted off for spelling on the lab. And because of that, it, people viewed it as it being a lot easier for him, and they were like well, of course, he did well, he didn’t have to focus on any of the spelling. And so that viewpoint,

I was like, “Oh, maybe I shouldn’t be getting accommodations either if people view it so negatively.”

Competition

Some students viewed their academic program as a competition and saw using accommodations as somehow forfeiting the competition. Alicia explained this feeling in her interview when she noted that students “are trying to prove something, I think, whether to themselves or those around them. Because it’s not an easy program, and a lot of people see it as a competition.” She later added that “taking accommodations would be losing the competition, in my opinion.” Philip noted in his journal that he “viewed academics as a competition” and stated in his interview, “I had accommodations in undergrad, I just never took them because I am competitive.” For some students, rather than recognizing the objective of accommodations as giving them an equitable opportunity to succeed, they viewed the accommodations as giving them an unfair advantage in a competition.

Outlier Data and Findings

While most of the participants shared similar barriers, concerns, and recommendations, their backgrounds and experiences all varied. The two outlier findings within the data highlighted the unique situation of one participant. Kevin attended an undergraduate institution that provided extensive support, including complimentary assessments for the accommodations qualification process. While he used accommodations regularly in his undergraduate program, he maintains a 3.9 GPA in chiropractic school without accommodations.

Outlier Finding #1

Kevin found the process to qualify for accommodations very simple and expressed disbelief that failure to use accommodations would be a barrier to a student’s success at XYZ

Chiropractic College. In his interview, Kevin, who applied and qualified for accommodations but does not use them, noted, “I’m surprised by somebody that that would be a barrier to succeeding.” Kevin noted in his journal prompt responses that his prior institution “offered free assessments for learning disability in order to meet the requirements for receiving accommodations,” so having this documentation coming into chiropractic school likely eased his burden in the qualification process. He also stated in his interview, “I don’t perceive anything other than a supportive environment ... I never for me felt like that would have been something that would have kept me from seeking accommodations was like, you know, like judgment or anything.” Kevin’s perspective could be different from the view of other students as he does not utilize his accommodations.

Outlier Finding #2

Kevin is also the only participant who used accommodations during his undergraduate program but does not use them in the DC program. Most participants noted that the intensity of classes within the quarter system of the DC program pushed them towards accommodations use. Kevin, however, noted in his journal prompt responses, “The accommodations at [XYZ Chiropractic College] are identical to what I was offered at [ABC Undergraduate Institution], as far as I can tell. I have not utilized them, however, because I only need help with math, and it is not part of the curriculum.” Kevin’s experiences provided a unique perspective and insight to the study.

Research Question Responses

This study was designed to consider a central research question around the experiences of SWD in the DC program, along with three sub-questions. This section offers concise, direct

answers to each of the research questions based upon the findings of this study communicated in the preceding sections of this chapter. Further analysis of the findings follows in Chapter Five.

Central Research Question

What are the shared experiences of SWD in the DC program who chose not to utilize accommodations?

The participants' perspective is that academic accommodations are helpful and offer SWD an improved opportunity for academic success. However, the participants have been frustrated by situations where they did not know about accommodations opportunities, found processes for qualifying for or utilizing accommodations cumbersome and difficult, felt judged for using accommodations, or felt unsupported on their academic journey because of their need for accommodations. Samantha summarized their experiences during the third focus group, stating:

I think that an overall theme is we're already struggling with a number of factors and we have to pick our battles and this is, at least for me, it's been a battle that I have not picked, and it shouldn't have even been a battle in the first place.

Sub-Question One

What are the competence experiences of SWD in a DC program who chose not to utilize accommodations?

Participants related tension between the desire to demonstrate competence and the decision to utilize accommodations that may help them achieve confidence. All the participants indicated some consideration of the level of difficulty of a class or assignment in their decision of whether to utilize accommodations. Elizabeth noted in her journal prompts, "There are times

when I don't do accommodations because it allows me to build confidence and not have anxiety when I'm in the classroom with my classmates." Candace shared in her interview:

If I feel very confident in the material and I feel like it's gonna be a straightforward test that's just like, you know, I'm gonna get done with it quick, I'm not gonna have to think too hard on it, then I'm not using my accommodations.

During his interview, Philip shared, "I don't like having people telling me I can't do things. So, I always got to prove other people wrong." Elizabeth conveyed during her interview that focusing on her end goal helps her reconcile her concern with her use of accommodations and her desire to demonstrate competence. She said:

Once we graduate, they're not going to ask us if we had accommodations. They're going to ask are we a great adjuster and do we have a degree. And that is what it is at the end of the day.

Sub-Question Two

What are the relatedness experiences of SWD in a DC program who chose not to utilize accommodations?

Students shared that their decisions around accommodations use were impacted by relatedness concerns. Participants expressed strain around relationships with other students and faculty factoring into their decision-making. As mentioned earlier, Samantha shared that professors encouraged her to drop their course if she mentioned her disability or the need for accommodations. Hannah conveyed in her interview how the lack of support she felt from faculty and staff made her academic journey more difficult:

I don't think that being in this program I have had the amount of support that I could have had. I don't think that I have had somebody that I knew I could report to or lean on or ask for help.

Elizabeth coped with her disability throughout her undergraduate experience to avoid feeling "less than and separate from other students." Now in her doctoral program, she noted that the most common comment she hears from other students is, "I wish I had accommodations."

Elizabeth went on to point out the obvious irony in that she constantly thinks, "I wish I could be in the classroom. I wish I could do it in 50 minutes." Alicia also shared the negative reaction she witnessed from other students when a classmate scored well on a lab practical when he used his accommodations. This experience deterred Alicia from considering using accommodations herself. Lila shared during the third focus group, "It definitely seems to be a little bit more paralyzing when you are not the same or the standard that is the average student." When SWD perceive from the faculty and students around them a desire for SWD to not utilize accommodations or even envy towards them for their access to accommodations, their ability to relate to these faculty and students is unavoidably affected.

Sub-Question Three

What are the autonomy experiences of SWD in a DC program who chose not to utilize accommodations?

As an autonomous person has specifically considered their needs relative to their environment and has self-regulated their actions accordingly (Deci & Ryan, 2000), the desire for autonomy clearly factors into decision-making around accommodations. Students consider their environment as to their perceptions of the attitudes of faculty, staff, and other students towards their accommodations use. They also weigh in the process of securing accommodations and

these environmental factors trigger a decision for students like Samantha who noted, “I do not receive enough benefit from accommodations for the amount of effort and money it would require.” Participants consider their needs relative to the environment as they evaluate the difficulty of the class or assignment in making their accommodation use decision. Every participant mentioned consideration of the level of difficulty of the relevant task in their decision-making. Philip went so far as to recommend during his interview that SWD should only use accommodations for important classes with a heavy impact and further added in his journal “there is no need to use academic accommodations for every test.”

Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the experiences of SWD at a chiropractic college in the United States that led to their decision not to utilize the academic accommodations available to them. This chapter presents the personal, institutional, and social barriers to accommodations use gleaned from the study participant responses. SWD face a sometimes complex and expensive process to qualify for accommodations, often without having clear information about the process or the accommodations potentially available to them. Students also struggle with perceived discrimination against them because of their need for or use of accommodations and the thought that they are not competing fairly against the other students in the academic program if they use their accommodations. These findings answer the research questions around the shared experiences of SWD who choose not to utilize accommodations, specifically considering their experiences of competency, relatedness, and autonomy.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of SWD at a chiropractic college in the United States that led to their decision not to utilize the academic accommodations available to them. This chapter offers an analysis of the findings delineated in Chapter Four. The following discussion includes interpretation of findings, implications for policy and practice, theoretical and empirical implications, limitations and delimitations, and recommendations for future research.

Discussion

This section discusses the study's findings considering the developed themes. The interpretation of findings includes a summary of themes extracted from the data followed by my interpretations. Implications for policy and practice as well as theoretical and empirical implications are shared. The discussion concludes by noting the limitations and delimitations of the study and offering recommendations for future research.

Interpretation of Findings

I found three themes and several subthemes while analyzing the data collected in this study. These themes include personal, institutional, and social barriers to accommodations use. The subthemes expanded the themes to offer richer insight into the research questions posed in this study. The themes and interpretations of findings relevant to those themes are shared in the following sections.

The research question central to this transcendental phenomenological study considers the shared experiences of SWD in the DC program who chose not to utilize accommodations. To maintain alignment with the self-determination lens of the study, the three sub-questions focused

on SWD shared experiences of competence, relatedness, and autonomy. Ten SWD enrolled in a DC program participated in individual interviews, focus groups, and responded to journal prompts as part of this study. The three themes that emerged from the horizons of the data collected in this study are personal, institutional, and social barriers to accommodations use by SWD enrolled in a DC program. Each theme is supported by multiple subthemes.

The first theme highlighted in the data collected during this study is personal barriers to accommodations use. Student participants shared personal barriers like perceived bias, a history of negative experiences when utilizing accommodations, their perception of the impact accommodations will have, and their perception of the level of difficulty of the class, assignment, or program for which accommodations are available. Each barrier factored into students' decisions around accommodations use and sometimes discouraged students from seeking or utilizing accommodations.

The second theme identified in this study is institutional barriers to accommodations use. Participants shared several institutional barriers that inhibited their application for or utilization of accommodations for which they are eligible. Students discussed barriers such as the complexity and cost of the qualification process, difficulties with the utilization of accommodations, a lack of communication of information pertinent to gaining or using accommodations, and the level of support students perceive from faculty and staff. Based upon the anecdotes shared by the study participants, some students determine from these barriers that they are not in an environment that is welcoming to their use of accommodations.

The third theme discovered in the data is social barriers that may impact accommodations utilization. Students shared that when they perceive others view their use of accommodations negatively or that others will view their use of accommodations negatively, they are less likely to

use accommodations. Participants also discussed that academic programs are viewed as competitive spaces by some students, and some SWD consider how using accommodations may be viewed, by themselves or others, as giving them an unfair advantage in the competition.

Accommodations Should be Viewed as an Opportunity, not an Obligation

While institutions are required by law to provide reasonable accommodations to SWD (USDE, 2011), institutional barriers to accommodations use are prevalent in the literature and emerged in this study. Institutional barriers highlighted in the literature include ineffective institutional communication of support services (Gin et al., 2020; Hong, 2015; Skeens, 2020), ineffective accommodations (or the perception that accommodations are not effective; Francis et al., 2019, Squires et al., 2018), ableism (Bialka et al., 2017; Ehlinger & Ropers, 2020), and the complexities of the documentation process (Squires et al., 2018). Student participants in this study talked about these same barriers. The literature offers evidence that accommodations use can lead to higher student grade point averages (Abreu et al., 2016; Kim & Lee, 2016) and improved persistence (Mamiseishvili & Koch, 2011; Newman et al., 2021). Nine of the ten students participating in this study shared about positive impacts from accommodations they have experienced or witnessed, with Hannah expressing in her journal prompt responses, “Once I finally got the accommodations I needed, I stopped failing classes and started to see a bright future ahead.” With the potential accommodations offer for improving success rates and retention, it is difficult to comprehend why institutions do not work to eliminate institutional barriers to accommodations use (especially barriers like the complexity of the process and the lack of communication of pertinent information which seem easy to address) unless they are providing accommodations to maintain compliance rather than promoting accommodations as an opportunity to provide a more equitable learning experience for SWD. As higher education is

struggling with dismal retention and success rates (Baker et al., 2017; Hunt, 2006; Selingo, 2013), accommodations provide an opportunity for institutions to improve success rates and retention. Instead of simplifying the process and making information readily available, institutions tend to simply make accommodations available if students can figure out how to qualify.

Tension Exists Between Accommodation use and Benefits

The difficulties students encounter in using accommodations cause students to weigh out if the benefits are worth the effort. Samantha noted in her journal prompt responses, “The reason I decided not to use accommodations is because there is not a fair value exchange. I do not receive enough benefit from accommodations for the amount of effort and money if (sic) would require.” Squires et al. (2018) highlighted that the requirement for students to provide a formal diagnosis to qualify for accommodations requires an investment of money and time from the student. Beyond the initial qualification process, students must consider missing out on information the instructor may share with the rest of the class during an exam or the ability to ask the instructor questions during the exam (Slaughter et al., 2020). Elizabeth, Isabelle, and Lila emphasized this concern with Isabelle sharing during her focus group:

The only reason that I wouldn't take accommodations sometimes would be if I know that the professor would answer questions during the test that, um, they won't give me that information in the accommodation room, and that would make me not want to take them again.

Students are forced to weigh the investment required to qualify for accommodations initially against the potential benefits, and then once they have qualified, each opportunity to use

accommodations presents another decision of weighing what they may miss out on against what they may gain.

Students Struggle with the Desire to Accomplish Success and the Need for Accommodations to Achieve Success

A student's decision about accommodations use is complicated by the desire to demonstrate independence juxtaposed against the thought that using accommodations will likely increase their odds of success. Each participant in this study shared consideration of the level of difficulty of an assignment, test, class, or program in deciding on accommodations use. Not utilizing accommodations is a matter of the desire to be self-sufficient for many students (Hong, 2015; Kranke et al., 2017; Lyman et al., 2016). While some students want to "prove they can do college without accommodations" (Timmerman & Mulvihill, 2015, p. 1612). Elizabeth, who completed her undergraduate program a year early without using accommodations, noted that the instances in which she can succeed in her doctoral program without accommodations help her "build confidence and lessens the anxiety she feels when she is in the classroom with her classmates." The participant responses make it clear that the students do not want to use accommodations if they can be successful without them. The self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) focused on the conditions of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, asserting that if any of these conditions were unsupported, an individual's drive to succeed and level of performance would suffer. Decisions around accommodations seem to create an inner conflict within some students around if autonomy and competence must be demonstrated without support or if it is better to accept the help of accommodations in achieving autonomy and competence. Thompson-Ebanks & Jarman (2018) found that sometimes self-determination leads students to try to demonstrate their function and autonomy without accommodations, but that it may also

lead students to use supports because they recognize them as necessary to achieve the independence and academic success they desire.

Implications for Policy or Practice

The findings of this study considered with the current literature offer implications for policy and practice. Policy implications include policy changes to better inform and prepare students to self-advocate for accommodations when they enter higher education and policy adjustments to provide flexibility in advance notification requirements for accommodations use. Practice implications focus on improving communication around accommodations to students, accommodations education and training for faculty and staff, and streamlining the accommodations qualification process.

Implications for Policy

The transition from secondary to higher education is a significant change for students and involves SWD taking responsibility to self-identify and self-advocate for their eligible accommodations (De Los Santos et al., 2019; Hadley, 2018; Hadley & Archer, 2017; Thompson-Ebanks & Jarman, 2018; Toutain, 2019; Vaccaro et al., 2015). Secondary schools must identify SWD and create individualized learning plans to benefit these students (Hadley, 2018; Hadley & Archer, 2017; Thompson-Ebanks & Jarman, 2018; Toutain, 2019; Vaccaro et al., 2015). This policy should be extended to mandate that secondary schools provide students with an updated individualized learning plan complete with diagnoses and recommended accommodations that students can share with their higher education institution to facilitate their accommodations requests. The literature notes the investment of time and money often required from students to gain accommodations (Squires et al., 2018) and the importance of students being educated about their disabilities, the accommodations process, and the need to self-advocate before entering

higher education (Mamboleo et al., 2020). Most students who participated in this study noted either the expense, complexity, or uncertainty around the accommodations request process as a barrier to their accommodations use. Samantha went so far as to say consideration of the time and money required to gain accommodations led to her decision to navigate the program without accommodations. This policy change to require secondary schools to provide SWD with the information they need to request accommodations at their higher education institution would eliminate this barrier for SWD.

A second policy implication, which is site-specific but may have application at other institutions, is to alter the 48-hour policy to make accommodations more accessible to students. According to all study participants, XYZ Chiropractic College requires SWD to file an accommodation request at least 48 business hours before any test, quiz, or exam for which they want to utilize their accommodations. Each of the ten participants in this study found this rule problematic. Elizabeth recommended changing the 48 hours rule to 24 hours to “still allow planning but offer some grace.” Philip voiced in the focus group that requiring instructors to include a testing schedule in their syllabi would help students plan accommodations requests and avoid missing accommodations due to the 48-hour rule, while Isabelle felt requesting accommodations each time they were going to be used was unnecessary as “they should assume that we are always going to use accommodations.” With every student participant raising objection to the 48-hour rule, a policy change should be considered. It is difficult to suggest a specific policy without knowing more about the planning required between the accommodations services center and faculty, but a policy review to consider allowing more flexibility in the advance notification requirement seems reasonable.

Implications for Practice

The study participants offered several recommendations for the college to potentially improve the experiences of SWD. Lila emphasized during the third focus group that the institution should communicate information about accommodations before students arrive on campus. She suggested an email stating, “Hey, if anyone has accommodations make sure you have X documentation immediately, or else you will face delays in getting what you need to be successful.” Similarly, Samantha suggested during the same focus group that the college should streamline the process of setting up accommodations and offer funding to cover the costs of evaluations. These recommendations align with the literature as Hong (2015) noted that institutions should enhance the clarity and prominence of communication relevant to disability services, Skeens (2020) emphasized that students should know where and how to document their disabilities and request accommodations, and De Los Santos et al. (2019) emphasized the need for processes to be straightforward and efficient. Overall, the participants felt it was key for SWD to have access to accommodations from the start to ensure they did not fall into a precarious academic position, and efficient and effective communication can eliminate some of the barriers SWD face.

Philip and Hannah both suggested a counselor who specializes in educational disabilities. Hannah also noted in her journal that she wished “there would have been more steps in place to protect the students and a better understanding of all the diagnoses/accommodations provided by the student affairs staff.” Hannah felt someone with an ADA certification should oversee the accommodations process and noted the need for campus-wide training about accommodations so that faculty and students have a better understanding of what accommodations are and what they mean to SWD. Research has shown that more educated faculty and staff are more willing to

accommodate students (Hong, 2015; Toutain, 2019). Kutscher and Tuckwiller (2019) found that faculty who had prior training in working with SWD were more likely to report a supportive attitude towards SWD and more likely to implement inclusive practices in their classrooms. The more knowledge faculty of an institution has about SWD, the more likely SWD are to persist at the institution and be academically successful (Walker, 2016). The literature supports the participants' recommendation to have an educated, trained specialist working in the accommodations space and providing training to faculty and staff. The literature in conjunction with the data from the study suggests this implication for practice may be applicable beyond the site institution.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

This study offers theoretical and empirical implications. It extends the application of the self-determination theory to a new segment of students by considering the experiences of SWD enrolled in a doctoral program. The study offers unique insight into the autonomy and competence decision-making of SWD who could complete their undergraduate program without accommodations but find the rigor of their doctoral program forcing them to consider using accommodations. This study also extends empirical knowledge by exploring the accommodations decision-making process of students in a DC program, a student population not included in the current literature focused on accommodations utilization decisions.

Theoretical Implications

This transcendental phenomenological study exploring the experiences of SWD enrolled in a chiropractic program provides new insight into the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The self-determination theory focuses on an individual's desire for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Participants in this study expressed how their relationships with

faculty and other students impacted their decision-making around accommodations use. These findings align with the literature that demonstrates that positive relationships with faculty increase the likelihood that students will utilize accommodations (Ehlinger & Ropers, 2020; Hong, 2015; Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019; Lyman et al., 2016; Toutain, 2019); however, this literature is from studies primarily focused on undergraduate SWD. The current study offers new insight into the self-determination theory as it focuses on SWD enrolled in a DC program and only two of the ten participants in this study utilized accommodations during their undergraduate program. Most of the participants in this study navigated their undergraduate program without accommodations, but most applied for accommodations for their doctoral program.

While this study extends the knowledge around self-determination theory to a new segment of students, it offers significant new insight into autonomy and competence as components of the self-determination theory. As noted in Chapter Two, various theories have been utilized in considering the experiences of SWD and their accommodations use including Tinto's (1975) theory of student integration and the student involvement theory (Astin, 1999). Studies through these theoretical frameworks delve into the relatedness sphere of the SWD experiences, but the current study adds the perspective of competence and autonomy by exploring the experiences of SWD through the lens of the self-determination theory. Participants related inner conflict between the desire to demonstrate competence and the decision to utilize accommodations that may help them achieve confidence. Every participant indicated some consideration of the level of difficulty of a class or assignment in their decision of whether to use accommodations. They want to demonstrate competence, but they are torn about whether competence using accommodations is good enough or if they need to demonstrate competence without any support. Their consideration of difficulty level is just one factor in their autonomy

considerations. Deci and Ryan (2000) described an autonomous person as someone who has specifically considered their needs relative to their environment and has self-regulated their actions accordingly. Students consider their environment by evaluating the perceived attitudes of faculty, staff, and other students towards their accommodations use and considering the process for securing accommodations. This environmental scan leads to a decision on accommodations use. While the importance of relatedness, particularly relationships with faculty, is well documented throughout the current literature on SWD, this study added the consideration of autonomy and competence to deepen the understanding of the experiences and extended the scope to include SWD in a DC program.

Empirical Implications

The experiences of SWD in a chiropractic program who chose not to utilize accommodations available to them have not been documented in the literature, so the research findings from this study extend the current literature. While the accommodations experiences of many undergraduate SWD (e.g., Abreu et al., 2016; Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019; McGregor et al., 2016), a number of graduate students (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2019; Squires et al., 2018), and even the disability disclosure experiences of some medical students had been considered (Meeks et al., 2021), the experience of chiropractic students adds a new perspective and constructs new knowledge. The DC program is a specialized, professional program, and the students enrolled in this program have an educational experience unlike students in other programs. While the barriers to accommodations highlighted in this study such as ineffective institutional communication (Gin et al., 2020; Hong, 2015; Skeens, 2020) and faculty relationships (Ehlinger & Ropers, 2020; Hong, 2015; Kranke et al., 2017) align with those highlighted in the literature, this study extends the knowledge by considering a set of students

that has not been considered before. Beyond the participants being students enrolled in a DC program, eight of the ten participants did not register for accommodations during their undergraduate programs further distinguishing them from previous study participants.

Although pursuing a doctoral degree requires a significant financial investment, it is estimated that between 40% and 60% of doctoral students do not complete their program (Boone et al., 2020). While the body of literature on doctoral persistence has considered students in nursing programs (Cohen, 2011; Volkert et al., 2018), students in education programs (Hoskins & Goldberg, 2005; Ivankova & Stick, 2007; Jones et al., 2019), students in distance programs (Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2018; Studebaker & Curtis, 2021), and student from backgrounds of poverty (Rockinson-Szaokiw et al., 2014), consideration of students in a DC program added new knowledge to the literature. Some studies have linked accommodation use to higher persistence rates at the undergraduate level (Mamiseishvili & Koch, 2011; Newman et al., 2021), so learning more about the accommodations decision-making process of students in a DC program offers insight that may help improve persistence of students in the program. As the accommodations decision-making process of students in a DC program is not documented in current literature, this study extends the knowledge and application of the self-determination theory by applying it to SWD who are navigating a DC program.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations and delimitations impacted this study and potentially limit its transferability. This study was limited by the need for participants to self-identify as qualifying to participate in the study and complete the screening survey. As students in a DC, the participants are enrolled in an intense, doctoral-level program that operates on a quarter system, so it seems they are always close to either mid-terms or final exams. Asking these students to participate in a study that

involves three different data collection methods limited the study to those who felt comfortable making this time commitment. Eight of the ten participants in this study are females so the findings may be skewed towards a female perspective. The data collection methods utilized in the study may have limited the participants' feedback. Feedback shared in interviews and focus groups may be limited to what a participant is willing to share with other people. On the other hand, journal prompt responses may be biased by including only the participant's perspective of any anecdote or event shared. The data collection methods were carefully selected with the intent of gaining first-person accounts of the participants' experiences and offering the participants an opportunity to thoughtfully share in their own words through journal prompt responses.

Delimitations of this study include recruiting participants from only one chiropractic school. All participants being enrolled in at the same school restricts the study to site-specific experiences. Since the study is a phenomenological study, it is imperative that participants have experienced the phenomenon being studied, so students had to have received a formal diagnosis of a disability that qualified them for accommodations to participate. To ensure the study was not restricted more than necessary, students were not required to be registered with the institution's disability services, and they could have received the diagnosis at any point in their academic career. The decision to limit the scope to one institution was based on convenience as the desire was to conduct the one-on-one interviews in person if the participants were comfortable with that format. Requiring a formal diagnosis was a decision to ensure the students had experienced the phenomenon being studied. I do not believe this decision adversely affected the study as it is imperative that all participants in a phenomenological study have experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994), and I mitigated this delimitation by not requiring the students to be registered with disability services or requiring the diagnosis had been received within a specific time frame.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based upon the limitations of this study, a study that includes a more diverse group of SWD enrolled in a DC program could offer additional insight. Studies at other chiropractic colleges will provide new knowledge as the experiences of students at different institutions will vary. I also recommend a study that includes faculty and staff as participants. Using a validated instrument to assess the knowledge around accommodations and working with SWD as well as attitudes towards accommodations would offer helpful knowledge to institutions seeking to eliminate institutional barriers to accommodations use. Finally, I recommend a study of the experiences of SWD enrolled in a DC program that includes observation as a data collection method. This method will allow the researcher to objectively witness the interactions between students, faculty, and staff and remove the bias inherent in getting the viewpoint of only one participant in an interaction.

Conclusion

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of SWD at a chiropractic college in the United States that led to their decision not to utilize the academic accommodations available to them. This qualitative study was guided by the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and conducted using the transcendental phenomenological approach. The research participants were students enrolled in a DC program who had received a diagnosis that made them eligible for academic accommodations and who had decided, at least in some instances, not to use the academic accommodations available. I conducted semi-structured interviews with participants, followed by focus groups, and the completion of journal prompts to triangulate and validate the data. All ten participants participated in each of the data collection methods. I practiced epoché to see the participants' experiences more clearly and then analyzed

the data with open coding and horizontalization to develop textural and structural descriptions. I grouped the horizons from the data into themes and subthemes delineated in the findings.

The study data produced three themes and numerous subthemes. The themes of the data include personal, institutional, and social barriers to accommodations use by SWD enrolled in a DC program. Each theme is explored more richly through the consideration of multiple subthemes. Analysis of the study findings produced implications for policy and practice. Policy implications include better preparing students to self-advocate for accommodations upon transitioning to higher education and allowing students more flexibility in advance notification requirements for submitting requests to use their accommodations. Practice implications include improving campus communication and training around accommodations and streamlining the qualification process. This study extended the knowledge of SWD experiences and the application of the self-determination theory to include graduate students in a DC program.

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Appendix A**LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

June 17, 2022

Karen Canup
Kristy Motte

Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY21–22-1061 Consideration of Why Some Chiropractic Students With Disabilities Choose Not to Utilize Academic Accommodations: A Transcendental Phenomenological Study

Dear Karen Canup, Kristy Motte,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval is extended to you for one year from the following date: June 17, 2022. If you need to make changes to the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit a modification to the IRB. Modifications can be completed through your Cayuse IRB account.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office

Appendix B

Re: IRB Approval for On-Campus Prospectus Assessment

Browning, Jaime

Fri 4/1/2022 11:39 AM

To: Canup, Karen

Mrs. Canup,

Please find this email a confirmation of your IRB approval for student assessment on the campus of Sherman College of Chiropractic for your prospectus, *Consideration of why some chiropractic students with disabilities choose not to utilize academic accommodations: A transcendental phenomenological study.*

Once you receive IRB approval from the Liberty University IRB department, please forward it to our department. Our affirmation of the approval is automatic, but we will need a copy for our records.

Our approval is good for one year from today. If by chance the study needs additional time, a follow-up email with study time frame will need to be submitted.

Best of luck on your study. Please let us know how we may further assist you in this process.

Jaime Browning, DC, DCCJP Sherman College IRB Chair Sherman College of Chiropractic

Appendix C

Study Participation Survey

1. Name of Participant _____
2. Email address _____
3. Cell phone number _____
4. Preferred contact method
 - Text
 - Email
 - Call
5. Have you, at any time, been formally diagnosed with a disability that made you eligible to receive academic accommodations?
 - Yes
 - No
6. If yes, please indicate your approximate age at the time of your initial diagnosis.
 - 5 years or younger
 - 6 years to 10 years
 - 11 years to 15 years
 - 16 years to 20 years
 - 21 years or older
7. During the Doctor of Chiropractic program, have you ever not used the academic accommodations potentially available to you?
 - Yes
 - No

Appendix D

Consent

Title of the Project: CONSIDERATION OF WHY SOME CHIROPRACTIC STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES CHOOSE NOT TO UTILIZE ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS: A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

Principal Investigator: Karen G. Canup, Ph.D. candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a student currently enrolled in the doctor of chiropractic program who has at any point in their academic career been diagnosed with a disability that qualified them for academic accommodations. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to understand the experiences of students with disabilities at a chiropractic college in the United States that led to their decision not to utilize the academic accommodations available to them. This study aims to understand the experiences of students with disabilities that led to their decision not to utilize accommodations because it may lead to insight into changes higher education institutions can make to improve the experiences of these students.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in an individual interview either in person or via Microsoft Teams. The interview will be audio recorded. If you choose to participate in the interview via Microsoft Teams, the interview will be video recorded unless you choose to turn off your camera. The individual interview is estimated to last 60 to 90 minutes.
2. Participate in a focus group either in person or via Microsoft Teams. The focus group will be audio recorded. If you choose to participate in the focus group via Microsoft Teams, the focus group will be video recorded unless you choose to turn off your camera. The focus group is estimated to last 60 minutes.
3. Respond to three journal prompts with responses of one to two paragraphs per prompt. The estimated time to complete the journal prompts is 45 minutes total.
4. Review the transcripts of your individual interview and focus group for accuracy. The estimated time to complete this review is 30 minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include a better understanding of the experiences of students with disabilities in a doctor of chiropractic program. This better understanding may lead to changes in the services offered to students with disabilities and improved experiences.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews and focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Journal prompt responses will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. Upon a participant's completion of an individual interview, participation in a focus group, and submission of journal prompt responses to the researcher, the researcher will email the participant a \$50 Amazon gift card.

Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?

The researcher serves as an administrator at Sherman College of Chiropractic. The researcher's administrative position has no grading authority. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate or not participate in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Sherman College of Chiropractic. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Karen G. Canup. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at (864) 431-9804 or kcanup@sherman.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Kristy Motte, at kaball@liberty.edu.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Appendix E

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please describe your overall experience at chiropractic college. CRQ
2. How has your disability affected your experience at chiropractic college? CRQ
3. If you have applied for accommodations, can you please describe your experience contacting Student Affairs and requesting accommodations? CRQ, SQ2
 - a. What parts of this process were helpful or efficient? CRQ
 - b. What parts of this process were not beneficial or efficient? CRQ
 - c. If you have not contacted Student Affairs to request accommodations, why not?
CRQ
4. Can you please describe your experiences with faculty members concerning academic accommodations? CRQ, SQ2
5. How have your experiences with other students been concerning academic accommodations? CRQ, SQ2
6. How have your experiences with the Department of Student Affairs staff been concerning academic accommodations? CRQ, SQ2
7. Can you please describe a situation in which you felt like you did not have access to accommodations or services that would have been helpful to you in your education? CRQ
8. As a Doctor of Chiropractic program student, do you feel you are in an environment that is welcoming to accommodations use? CRQ
9. Can you please share with me why you have sometimes not utilized accommodations for which you were approved? CRQ

10. Why do you think other students eligible for accommodations may not apply for accommodations or may not use accommodations? CRQ, SQ1, SQ2, SQ3
11. If you were in charge of student affairs, what would you do differently regarding accommodation services? CRQ
 - a. What would you do the same? CRQ
12. What advice would you offer a student with a similar disability about accommodation services at chiropractic college? CRQ
13. What additional questions should I have asked to understand your experience better?
CRQ
14. Please share with me how this interview has been for you. CRQ

Appendix F

Focus Group Questions

1. Please describe how you believe your overall experience at chiropractic college is different from the experience of students who do not have a disability. CRQ
2. Can you share your recollection of a specific incident that led to you not wanting to utilize accommodations? CRQ
3. What is the most challenging step in the process of utilizing accommodations? CRQ
4. If you could offer only one specific recommendation to the institution to improve the experience of SWD, what would you recommend? CRQ

Appendix G

Journal Prompts

1. In one to two paragraphs, can you please share your experience with being diagnosed and your experience with academic accommodations before entering the doctoral program?
CRQ
2. Can you please share your experience with accommodations in the Doctor of Chiropractic program in one to two paragraphs, and how (if at all) it differs from your experiences with academic accommodations before entering the program? CRQ
3. Please share in one to two paragraphs what, in your experience, is the most significant determining factor for SWD's decision to utilize or not utilize academic accommodations. CRQ

Appendix H

Bracketing Essay

As an administrator at the site chiropractic college, I have been exposed to the processes involved in SWD requesting academic accommodations. My first recollection dates to 2016 when I was tasked with leading a major construction project for the college. The project involved the extensive renovation of the primary academic building on campus and one of the requests from student affairs was a dedicated testing center. I learned through interviews of the student affairs staff that prior to this project, student affairs reserved vacant conference rooms or borrowed faculty offices to test accommodated students who qualified for testing in a reduced distraction environment. Documenting the facilities' needs for accommodations services provided me some insight into the different types of accommodations available to students.

Through later conversations with the VP for Student Affairs I learned that sometimes students are reticent to ask for or utilize their accommodations. The VP shared accounts of students who were academically dismissed and then appealed their dismissal on the grounds that they qualified for accommodations but had never requested them, so should be given another chance in the program. This led to questions of why. If these students were eligible for accommodations, why would they choose not to request them? Why would they wait until they were dismissed to bring up their disability? I wondered if the chiropractic philosophy so prominently discussed on campus impacted their decision-making. Chiropractors believe in the innate intelligence of the body and work to avoid such things as medications and corrective orthopedic devices. Does this talk on campus discourage SWD from requesting and using their accommodations?

Another thought that came to my mind in discussing dismissals was the student loan debt that would follow these students. As the CFO of the institution, student loan debt data and cohort default rates are some of the information I regularly assess. The research is clear the default rates are significantly higher among students who do not complete their program. Without a degree, students do not have the higher earnings capacity a degree offers, so it is not surprising default rates are higher among non-completers. This train of thought led me to the concern that if there is anything within our program or processes holding our students' back from using accommodations that could increase their potential for success we are at fault. I am burdened with an obligation to ensure our students have every opportunity to be successful.

In the obligation to provide students every opportunity for success, I also see potential gains for the institution. The institution is judged by metrics such as attrition and completion rates. Students who leave the program unsuccessfully negatively impact these metrics while successful graduates bolster these metrics. As an administrator of the college, I recognize the significance of these metrics and desire for the college to perform as effectively as possible in educating students. As a small college, it does not take many non-completers to make a noticeable negative impact on our metrics. My concern about student success is not limited to only wanting what is best for the students, but also includes concern for the overall performance and measure of the college.

Finally, I have a personal interest in ensuring SWD have every opportunity for success. I have a niece and nephew who are both on the autism spectrum. While they are still in elementary school and fall under the auspices of IDEA, I hope they eventually pursue postsecondary degrees. I hope that by the time they enter college research will have led to improvements in our processes and offerings to provide them every opportunity for success without feelings of being

less than or worries that they are not good enough. I am not sure yet what those changes need to look like. Universal design seems a nice option, but it will also take significant time and money for widespread implementation. I hope this study provides insight into other changes we can make relatively quickly that will make a noticeable impact.

Appendix I

Coded Transcript of Alicia's Interview

So, thank you again, [Alicia], for being willing to help me. I really appreciate it!

Could you please describe your overall experience at chiropractic college?

Um...from the start, definitely overwhelming. It took a big, a lot of adjusting time for sure. I was very used to excelling through high school and undergrad without having to study a ton. Um, I've always been pretty, natural like student it's always come pretty well. I got to Sherman and that definitely changed. Um, so finding out my methods for studying. I don't feel like I truly learned how to study until I got to Sherman, um, but I think now I'm six quarters in and I'm starting to get into the flow of it, and it's, um, it's a good experience overall.

adjustment
level of
difficulty

Good, yeah. I think my son had a similar experience getting to law school.

Yeah.

He kind of was able to get by pretty easily in high school and undergrad and that was a wake-up call.

'Cause they tell you the same thing when you go into undergrad. You did fine in high school but you're gonna actually have to study here and I got to undergrad it was still not that bad. You get into grad school they tell you the same thing and you think, oh, it's not gonna be that bad. It is that bad!

Yea...I'm sorry.

It's completely fine.

How has your disability affected your experience at chiropractic college?

Um, for me, the first two quarters were the worst. Um, my biggest issue is anxiety, um, and it was pretty severe because I moved away from my family into a state where I didn't know anybody. Um, I am very close with my family and my friends back home so coming here was very hard. Um, my fiance was back home so... and especially those, quarter 2 is where it got really bad. You can tell from my grades that it got really bad in quarter 2. Because I would start to panic during the exams especially and panicking the night before the exams, so I, I wasn't able to study, and I wasn't able to sleep. Um, so... that was another thing I just kind of had to, I talked to some counselors and things like that trying to figure out the best way for me to handle that, specifically, testing anxiety.

anxiety

Panic

anxiety

So, where are you from?

Kentucky.

If you have applied for accommodations, can you please describe your experience contacting student affairs and requesting accommodations?

I have not applied for accommodations.

Okay, you've not. All right. That's okay.

Was I, is that part of the requirements?

It's not. So,

If you've not applied for accommodations, why not?

Um..it wasn't something I really ever thought about doing. I never had them through high school or undergrad, and then when I got here, I don't know if I knew that much about them. Whenever I think of test-taking accommodations, I think of the more standard ones for people with like visual disabilities or hearing disabilities or anything like that that would prevent them from physically taking the exam with the rest of the class. Not things like being away from everyone else or, um, just needing like a quiet room.

lack of knowledge / information

We do have that.

Yes, I am aware now.

Okay.

But at the beginning, I definitely looked at accommodations differently.

Okay.

Can you please describe your experiences with faculty members concerning academic accommodations?

Um, I don't have any for myself. I've seen it with some friends who use those accommodations. Um, and for the most part, all the professors are very well educated on what they need. I know one friend of mine, she's had an issue with a teacher like excusing her in front of the rest of the class and it makes her very uncomfortable. Um, of course, no one likes that. Or a professor taking roll right before an exam and yelling out her name and other people in class being like oh she doesn't take it in here, she's in the testing center, um which isn't the fault of the student.

support of faculty

lack of support / ignorance

Right.

but the professor knowing he shouldn't be calling roll right before this exam with her. So, that's a little frustrating, but that isn't in regards to me.

Right, no, but it's helpful to understand the overall experience so, and that's, that's where we're trying to go, to figure out what we can do to make better changes.

How have your experiences with other students been concerning academic accommodations?

Um, again I don't have too many friends who use them, but for the most part they speak very highly of it. I know there was one, 'cause I've moved down a quarter now, I would, I should have been in 8th, I'm not in 6th. The quarter I started in, it almost seemed like it was a race to see who could get done the quickest, and so I know that that brought a lot of anxiety on specific people, because people would like shuffle their stuff in their backpacks and run out of the room and all of that stuff. Um, so that caused some more anxiety for people and that's why they looked into getting accommodations was to get out of that environment. Um... but for most part it's been, um, most of the tests I take or the people I'm, I'm talking to about accommodation they have good experiences.

anxiety
race / competition

Good, good. And you may not have an answer to this, and that's okay, but if you do have a perception I'd like to hear it...

How have your experiences with the department of student affairs staff been concerning academic accommodations?

Um, I don't, I haven't interacted with them too much in regards to that.

Okay.

Can you please describe a situation in which you felt like you did not have access to accommodations or services that would have been helpful to you in your education?

Um, specifically at Sherman?

Ideally, but if not, another time is great too.

Um...I know a longer time in, during lab practicals would make a very big difference. Um, specific, you, I think we were given maybe 45 seconds to answer each question and you're not allowed to go back, which is really difficult. Um, I don't know what that even is completely answering your question, but that would definitely... impact

So, more time on practicals?

Yes.

And that's potentially an accommodation you could have if you apply for accommodations.

Okay, so then yes, that would be very helpful.

As a doctor of chiropractic program student, do you feel you are in an environment that is welcoming to accommodations use?

Um, for the most part, yes. I um, have heard...I don't think it's ever negative from faculty or staff. I have heard some negative comments from students here and there, nothing, it's definitely not the majority, but I know a student who, he failed, he made, I think a zero on his lab practical the first time he took it because of dyslexia and if you misspelled the word at all, the professor gave you a zero. She didn't count it, and she's not here anymore, but, and he didn't have accommodations, so the second time he took it, he just had to say it and not spell it, and there were other students, and he did great that time of course, 'cause he knew the information, and I know there were some students who were upset. They were like the spelling is the hardest part, why does he get out of that part? Um, it's like well it's a different experience for him. So overall very strong, most people are great with it. There's a couple here and there who are negative, but I guess that's to be expected with it anything. negative perception

Yeah, that's a really good example.

Can you please share with me why you have sometimes not utilized accommodations for which you were approved?

Um, I guess again, I have never asked for them, so I guess getting approved, I don't know if I am.

Right, but maybe in your situation, accommodations for which you're eligible based on your disability.

Um, I kind of...and I don't wanna sound like I'm like making myself a victim or anything like that. I have normally kind of pressed down the difficult parts of the anxiety I deal with where I'm like no I'll just deal Coping

with it. I will just keep going, it's not a big deal. Um, so, I guess it would kind of go back to that me being like well it's not that bad I don't actually need them.

Right.

Just convincing myself, even though I know other people would be completely fine with me having them. *Coping*

So, do you, do you think it's more you won't, you don't feel you're disabled enough to warrant the accommodations, or do you think you're trying to prove you can be successful without them?

I would likely say both. Um...I was, I had issues with anxiety since I was a toddler. Starting with like stomach aches and things like that and going up through middle school where I would come and tell my mom like I think something really bad is going to happen and I don't know what it is. Um, and all the way up and I didn't get like, and all while the doctor was saying she probably has issues with anxiety and depression and me going, "That's impossible. That is not true." *denial*

Yeah.

And then finally getting up into college where I accepted that, so I think it, it could be both me trying to be, still be like, I absolutely do not deal with that because I wasn't even gonna sign up for this because I was like I don't really have a disability that needs accommodations, and Courtney was like you absolutely do, you should probably sign up.

Yeah.

Um, so I would say both. Me trying to prove to myself and... that I can't be successful without them, and also being like well, I don't have issues the way they like other people who really need them do but I don't know if that's the right answer. *competence coping*

That makes, there's no right or wrong answer, but that makes perfect sense. Um...

Why do you think other students eligible for accommodations may not apply for accommodations or may not use accommodations?

Um, I think a lot of it would be kind of the same thing. I, this is a program that is very much, um, it's very full of people who are very driven and full of people who are trying to prove something, I think, whether to themselves or those around them. Because it's not an easy program, and a lot of people see it as a competition. Even though it's, it's definitely not. So they think, um taking accommodations would be losing the competition, in my opinion. *Competition*

Okay.

I don't know, I don't know if they would even admit that. That's how I view it, how I view them. I don't see myself as that way. I see nothing wrong with taking them, but I do think there are people who are like, no, I wouldn't wanna take the easy route, even though it's not. So, I think there's a general, I don't wanna say negative, just like people view them differently here than they would in like undergrad. *negative perception*

Right, okay, makes sense. So...

If you were in charge of student affairs, what would you do differently regarding accommodation services?

Um, maybe make it more... not like available, because it's very readily available, just letting people know like what issues... it doesn't have to be a physical disability, I guess. And maybe that is very well aware, and I was the only person who was missing it... lack of information

So maybe putting out there what services are available even?

Yeah, and making, like letting people know, and again this is mentioned a million times through, um, whenever we come in for orientation, that grad school is very different from undergrad. Um, and people ignore it like I did, and they're like no, it's the same. But I guess just reminding them as they get farther in, and not just that one time at orientation, just continuing to remind them that if this is something that you're interested in it's still available for you in all of these different types of courses.

What would you do the same?

Um, I think the system works very well, um, for the test-taking. Um, for those I know that have used it, the space that they have, um, how quiet it is, things like that, especially for my friend who had the dyslexia with the lab, I know he did fantastic that second time, because of the accommodation, so I think they're very helpful. impact

What advice would you offer student with a similar disability about accommodation services at chiropractic college?

Um, I would say start getting with them very early. Because now I think I'm accustomed to it, and it's not an issue for me as much as it was, but I would say first, second, and third quarter were very hard, and um, I absolutely could have done better if I had accommodations I think. There's no way to know, maybe I still would have had issues, but I do think it could help. impact

Yeah.

What additional questions should I have asked you to better understand your experience?

I think you, I think you did a wonderful job. I think everything was covered, um, I hope I gave answers that helped you understand where I was coming from and didn't just ramble.

No, absolutely.

Can you please share with me how this interview has been for you?

Oh, it's been lovely. Um, I did a lot of like interview type things in undergrad. I tried to help out with other things like this and I did some interviews in undergrad so it's not like a new experience for me.

Thank you. Thank you for coming in. I would say even now if you think moving forward accommodations may help,

Okay

I would encourage you to speak to student affairs. They try to be you know, I don't, I don't know what all you have right now as far as documentation of your diagnosis, but they try to be really flexible with that, so I would encourage you to go by and, you know I'm not gonna give them your name or anything, I don't do anything like that, but if you think it could be helpful, um, you know I would encourage you to go by and speak to them. Do you have a success coach that you meet with regularly?

I do not. Um, I had my advisor, who I met with once a quarter for my MAP meeting, um, and then she's no longer here, so I don't even have an advisor right now. I'm supposed to be emailing somebody about that and I keep forgetting. So, no I do not.

Okay, well, we need to get you connected with an advisor or success coach. So, I am going to stop this.

Appendix J

Excerpt From Horizons Spreadsheet

48 hr rule	
Most challenging step in utilizing accommodations - Candace FG1	Isabelle - interview
<i>The remembering to submit an accommodation request 48 hours in advance, especially if it's like one that's on like Monday, so then you have to submit it like, like, I don't even know, Thursday I guess, so I'm like I'll get to like Friday and be like,</i>	<i>she made an exception for me and the other classmates that also forgot because it was just like a crazy mid-terms week and at least, at least that we had that opportunity, but she made it clear that it was only gonna be one time that she was gonna make that action.</i>
Even if I submit my 48-hour submission for like a quiz or a test late, they'll even try to work with me.	Tonya interview
Elizabeth - FG 2 - have to request everytime and if fall within 48 hours you don't get anything	
"The 48 hour rule that really gets people a lot!" Elizabeth FG 2	Elizabeth JP - sometimes do not use b/c fail to request 48 hr in advance
Tonya FG 3	Elizabeth interview - sometimes test dates change and feel the need to put in accommodations request in the moment rather than focus on class or risk forgetting
<i>because we have to turn in our dates of our tests within 48 hours. So, say if our test is on Monday, we have to let them know by Thursday and it's kind of hard if they keep changing the test.</i>	
Lila FG 3	
<i>what I do now, no matter what, immediately when I am told there is a quiz or exam, I send my accommodations in. However, I've had to change them around multiple times this quarter as long as we get it in then it's honored, but it still causes anxiety and confusion. It just</i>	
Philip FG 3 - when realize forgot to submit and it's too late, pop more Adderall in and do my best	
Isabelle JP - one thing better about undergrad accommodations was did not have to request 48 hrs in advance; 48 hr rule "incredibly stressful"	
Candace interview	
<i>we have to submit a request within 48 hours, and there's been a few times where I'm like, Oh no, it's like less than that, and I'll reach out, and if they're able to accommodate me they still will just do anything they can to help.</i>	
Philip - interview	
<i>I wish, for if anything to change is the 48-hour rule. I mean I have ADHD and you have ten classes to deal with like and when one thing, like one little thing can just slip like I even forget to eat so it's just...</i>	
Lila interview	
<i>If you forget to file for an exam or accommodation, you don't get shit. You literally get nothing. Do I feel like there should be a gray area where like, you know, people make mistakes, we make mistakes, we take a lot of classes at once, and some of us have, you know, kids, right. So it's like a little bit more forgiveness would be appreciated. ...I had filled out an exam the Friday before and it was for Monday. Now because it was a weekend, it wasn't honored, right. So it's not that I didn't fill it out, it's that I didn't fill it out Thursday, even though there's literally three days between Friday and Monday. Or, or, you know, three days in total. So, she denied my request, I freaked out, you know, and then I had to, I was thinking, I wasn't told, she didn't e-mail me, it was like I found out day of, then I had to go take the exam in a classroom.</i>	

Appendix K

Focus Group 3 Transcript

Please describe how you believe your overall experience at chiropractic college is different from the experience of students who do not have a disability.

[Samantha]: *Did you ask [Samantha] specifically, me?*

I didn't ask anyone specifically. I want everyone to have an opportunity to respond, um, but, [Samantha], if you would like to get us started that's great, but I, I want everyone to have an opportunity.

[Samantha]: *Of course, yes, it was just something's happening with your mic where it's like very, very loud and then very, very quiet and I was just having a hard time hearing the first part of that question.*

Okay, let me try again. Please describe how you believe your overall experience at chiropractic college is different from the experience of students who do not have a disability.

[Samantha]: *Well, this is [Samantha] speaking. Um, for me in particular, I feel like I have to be more organized and plan ahead. I can't wing it. I have to make sure that I am using every tool available to me to be successful at all times.*

[Lila]: *I agree. Um, I've ... this is [Lila] speaking, I've lived a lot of my life knowing I'm intelligent but feeling really dumb, um, due to my inability to read right and having my brain move so fast, so I feel like there is, on top of the amount of anxiety a program like this can cause an individual, it definitely seems to be a little bit more paralyzing when you are not same or the standard that is the average student.*

[Tonya]: *Um, for me, I also feel like, I'm sorry this is [Tonya], I also feel like I have to be more organized, um, like going to accommodations. You know, some teachers aren't really organized on like when their test dates are, so it's like you have to constantly ask them over and over again, you know, when is our test so I can plan this, this, and this. And it's kind of hard sometimes because some teachers can get off topic a lot, but that's the only difference that I can tell from the other students.*

[Isabelle]: *Yeah, I have to agree with all the others. I just have to, I feel like I needed to study more throughout the program and the same thing happened with like dates of exams. Um, sometimes I remember like a professor would change a test last minute and like don't really say it to everyone, but yeah, overall same thing.*

Okay.

[Lila]: *Real quick. I agree heavily with what [Tonya] said. Um, we are experiencing that with one professor this quarter and it just ultimately it feels like people like us are being forgotten and disrespected due to the lack of organization from the professor.*

And so to be clear it's a lack of, it feels like a lack of organization and the timing of testing and the scheduling is changing with relatively short notice is what I'm understanding?

[Lila] & [Tonya]: *Correct there is ... Because we have*

[Lila]: *Go ahead, [Tonya].*

[Tonya]: *Oh, I'm sorry. I was just gonna say, yes, because we have to turn in our dates of our tests within 48 hours. So, say if our test is on Monday, we have to let them know by Thursday and it's kind of hard if they keep changing the test.*

[Lila]: *So, can I also share? So, what I do now, no matter what, immediately when I am told there is a quiz or exam, I send my accommodations in. However, I've had to change them around multiple times this quarter as long as we get it in then it's honored, but it still causes anxiety and confusion. It just makes it even more challenging to be on top of my own schedule, you know what I mean?*

Right. That, that makes a lot of sense. I've heard a lot about the 48-hour rule, um, throughout this, this study, and then if you, it seems it's, that's even being further complicated by changing the timing of tests. Obviously, it makes it more difficult if you're getting a test date change at the last minute to request accommodations 48 hours in advance. So, I can see where that would prove very difficult. [Samantha], did you have something else to add?

[Samantha]: *No, I didn't.*

Okay. I'm sorry, your, it's like your initials light up when there's noise towards your microphone, so I'm just making sure. I don't wanna miss anyone's input

[Samantha]: *Of course. Thank you.*

Sure.

Can you share your recollection of a specific incident that led you to not wanting to utilize accommodations?

[Lila]: *Um, I, this is [Lila] speaking, I'll go first. So, this is something that came up in our own, my own interview. I feel like with practicals for our palpation classes, it's unclear whether we can even take our accommodations for those classes. I've never done it. I don't know how to do it. The only way I've experienced that is through lab practicals, not through any palpation practicals. So, I don't take it for those because it's not clear that I can.*

I would, would say, [Lila], just as an FYI, I've interviewed some others. So, what I'm getting through the interviews is some people saying that, you know, they've never used

accommodations with practicals, because they don't know how it would look. I've also had people say that when they requested accommodations for practicals, um, like palpation, that they just had to wait and go last to be able to get the extra time and that sometimes they, sometimes they can get uncomfortable if they feel like they're having to ask someone a favor and asking their partner to wait until last, but that an option that can potentially work is going last to do those palpation practicals with your extra time.

[Lila]: *Makes sense.*

Does anyone else have a specific incident that you could share that made you not want to utilize your accommodations?

[Samantha]: *This is [Samantha]. I don't have a specific incident at [XYZ Chiropractic College] because I myself, um, have been discouraged in the past from using accommodations and therefore didn't seek it out once I came to [XYZ Chiropractic College]. Um, but the lack of support from teachers is definitely a big one for me personally. When you feel like you're asking for a favor and rather than feeling supported and that they're more than willing to help you achieve that, um, you like, like it was mentioned before, it's more like a favor or pleading for it to happen versus being encouraged to do it.*

[Isabelle]: *Well, in my experience, the only reason that I wouldn't take accommodations sometimes would be if I know that the professor would answer questions during the test that, um, they won't give me that information in the accommodation room and that would make me not want to take them again.*

[Lila]: *If I may, to build off that, um, I've always thought about this and I've had to sacrifice being able to ask a question during an exam because, uh, the professor wasn't able to respond since they were proctoring their own class. So, I think something around that should be maybe suggested or handled 'cause it's like it's not fair that she, you know, has to think about that. It's like, is it worth having extra time and a better situation for myself to perform or is it better to be asked a clarifying question if that individual struggles with comprehension, you know?*

[Isabelle]: *Um, in my experience, but I, it's been a long time since I haven't taken a test with accommodations, you can always ask a question and they would go, most of the time they would go, get the professor, um, or just like bring the question to them and they will answer you in a paper and bring it back to you, but, um, for, for my experience it was more like if they actually answered a question out loud for everyone and they just didn't think to bring it back to me.*

[Lila]: *Makes sense. I've actually, I've, I've asked questions during exams and just didn't get the answer before I finished it so, you know, that was my example.*

[Isabelle]: *Yeah, very, very unfair. I think it happened to me once, yeah.*

[Tonya]: *Yeah, that happened to me last quarter. No, it was actually this quarter. Um, there was an error on one of the questions, and we weren't sure what to do about it, but in the class the*

teacher stated, "Okay for question 23, is referring to question 24," so it was just we didn't know about it until after we finished the test.

In that situation, [Tonya], when it was graded, was there any consideration given to that?

[Tonya]: *Um, I believe he took that question out.*

Okay. I'm just curious.

[Lila]: *I wasn't even aware of this and we're in the same classes, so that's good to know.*

[Tonya]: *Yeah. Yeah, I went back and asked, and I think he tossed that question out.*

Any other examples that you would like to share?

[Lila]: *I'm good.*

Okay. Alright...

What is the most challenging step in the process of utilizing accommodations?

[Lila]: *I guess I'll go first. Um, I mean, if we're speaking big picture, then utilizing them, um, would be initiating the process with student affairs to get the accommodations. I feel like that is the most, in my opinion, is the most challenging part. Um, there's a lot of red tape, there's a lot of back and forth, there's a lot of waiting involved. Typically, most of us aren't ready by the time we get here, or we're waiting on documents, or the documents can't be reached, um, and then you have to get, you know, you have to go through a psychological eval to prove that you need this help. Um, so, big picture, the initiation I believe is the hardest. However, day-to-day level, I would still, you know, loop back to saying unorganized professors, not clear exam or quiz dates, that provides a space for us to, you know, fumble over our own scheduling and to have more anxiety about whether we did the right thing or whether our dates are right, but I feel like that's you know the most challenging aspect.*

[Samantha]: *I missed the name of whoever was speaking, but wholeheartedly agree with all of that.*

Okay.

[Isabelle]: *Yeah, I agree with that, and that being said, I think that the hardest part for me was actually submitting the requests, as I feel that we shouldn't request every time. They should think that we are going to use them every time.*

[Tonya]: *Yes, I agree with that as well.*

[Lila]: *That's actually a good point. Um, the process would be easier if the standard was it is obvious we're going to use our accommodations. Like once we do the initial one for the quarter,*

then, you know, we're always going to use them. You know, I don't know, I feel like maybe it would make more sense to ask what you're not using, if there's any classes you don't wanna use accommodations for. You know, like it I'm surprised an expensive college that charges us so much per quarter doesn't have a more streamlined system to make it easier for the students and professors to be all on the same page.

[Lila]: *And then there was 5. ([Philip] joined the Teams meeting).*

So, we've got our fifth participant. Um, right now, we're talking about the most challenging step in the process of utilizing accommodations, and uh, so far we've talked a little bit about

[Philip]: *Sorry I'm late.*

No, no, you're great. I really appreciate you joining! And what we'll do at the end is I'll circle back briefly to the first two questions we talked about just to see what you may have to share on those. Um, but again, right now, we're talking through the most challenging step in the process of utilizing accommodations, and we've had some input so far as far as, you know, big picture, the documentation hurdle, and then more on a day-to-day the organization. Sometimes there's some lack of clarity on test scheduling that leads to issues with the 48-hour rule, so I don't know if your experience lines up with any of those comments or if you have something different to add.

[Philip]: *Uh, it just depends, because some, like, uh, they just say, they can have it set for Wednesday, and then there'll be some people that have like 3 tests that day as well, so they'll ask to change it to either Thursday or Friday. It's not really a difficulty there, it's just like the day before they'll change, they'll change it. Which in a sense if you haven't set up to ... I haven't really experienced it, to be honest, but for me it's just like if there's a test on Monday and you submit it on, on Friday like for accommodations, and they won't, they won't take it as 48 hours. So that's the only thing I have an issue with.*

[Lila]: *I second that. I honestly think that rule's bs. It's still there. It's still sitting in the computer for three days, you know what I mean?*

[Philip]: *Yeah. And I don't know how, like what's, like I wanna see what they have to do. Like is it just submitting a request to the teacher from them to accept? 'Cause if not, if that's the case then that could be done within 10 minutes. It's not, it's not like a hard process. I just don't know why it takes, they need 48 hours. That's what I'm confused on. If it's all just submitting or like asking them to accept or not accept, or asking teachers to accept or not accept.*

Alright. Does anyone have anything else they'd like to share around the challenges related to utilizing accommodations?

If you could offer only one specific recommendation to the institution to improve the experiences of students with disabilities what would you recommend?

[Lila]: *Only one, Karen?*

You can share more than one, but I guess the point of the question is to try to get to the one that you feel like is the most important. But, um, I definitely want to hear if you have more than one, but maybe if you wanna give more than one if you can tell me what you think your top priority is?

[Lila]: *So, uh, I will happily go first, 'cause God knows I got a lot of grievances. However, um, this was also talked about in our one-on-one interview. I think one of the biggest changes that would influence, especially older students coming in who haven't been in college for a minute, send out an e-mail with or have our advisor who's our, who's our, you know, staying in touch with us before we're here. Just have them say, "Hey, if anyone has accommodations make sure you have X documentation immediately, or else you will face, you know, delays in getting what we need to be successful." They don't need to say, "Hey, do you need accommodations?" They don't need to make it personal. They can just make a blanket e-mail to send out to incoming students to help them prepare for this program. That's number one. Number two, oh crap, I just lost it. I'm gonna pause myself, hold on.*

Okay.

[Lila]: *Someone else go.*

[Philip]: *Uh ... I'm sorry. I would say, uh, this is more on the teacher side, to at least have an idea what like ... so they have like the syllabus, but in each week they have like if they could at least say if, if they could at least just give an idea of when a test or a quiz may be during those weeks, or on the syllabus, so we can at least like prep and if things does change to a later date then we have more time to submit an application or, for accommodations, but the other one that's falling close behind is the Friday one, Friday rule, 48 hour. I'd definitely think that's, that's stupid, in my opinion.*

[Lila]: *It came back. I have it. So right now, um, I'm a like mixed third- fourth quarter and the higher-ups are deciding that it is, it is a brilliant idea to take slides away from students in a doctoral program, and for people who have issues with organization, issues with comprehension issues, with transitioning in tasks, this program is hard enough, but the fact that this flippin school thinks it's a brilliant idea, that it's gonna help our board scores, to take away information from us, and then to make us work harder to even be able to study is asinine. And it affects students with disabilities more, but it also affects the entire student population.*

So is this in specific classes? Slides that you've been getting in the past are now no longer available?

[Lila]: *Correct. So, for example, in back and extremities, our professor gave us blank slides that we had to fill out as he talks, and he is a disorganized lecturer who does not stay on task. Luckily, I have upper quarter friends. I was able to get the slides from someone else, um, but it ultimately is causing more stress, more time compiling information, when like, it's just not necessary. The fact that DCs who are teaching us don't realize that their curriculum and course load was significantly less 20 years ago, and the NBCE drives us to take all of these classes that aren't really necessary for our profession, they're just necessary for boards, you know. It like, there seems to be a disconnect. And, I find it highly disrespectful. The data and research and*

learning and studying does not reflect this being, having positive outcomes. I've, I've read the research. I know Dr. [Jones] knows the research. It does not make sense.

So just to make sure I'm understanding and I'm clear. Basically it, it sounds like in the past a class may have been given a slide where the diagram or picture or whatever is on the slide was fully labeled and all the information was there, and now instead of that, you're getting a slide that the information is redacted, or is not there, and you're to fill it in yourself based upon the lecture.

[Lila]: *Correct. The lecture and then they're expecting us to use the PDF to find the information to then put on this slide. It is just, it's, it's ridiculous.*

Okay. I just wanna make sure I'm understanding, because when I go back with recommendations, I wanna make sure I fully understood what you're explaining to me.

[Lila]: *Yeah, you got it. Essentially, we're getting bits and pieces of what other students in front of us have gotten the whole picture of, and I find it highly disrespectful because we're paying more in tuition than they did for these classes.*

No, I understand. That's, that, I can see where that's frustrating.

[Tonya]: *Um, one thing that I would probably change is instead of 48 hours I can see 24. Um, if they have to have a rule for us to turn in all our accommodation requests. Um, and following back off of [Lila], they want us to use the textbook more than the PowerPoint, and it's just, we have so many classes, we can't keep up if we're looking in a book. And it's just, the PowerPoints were like easy enough to, you know, to like make our own study guides and know the information that they want for the test. So, I just feel like for them to make us buy books now and search for the information is, is crazy.*

[Isabelle]: *Okay. I think the, um, as I mentioned before, um, that we shouldn't be requesting, not even like 24 hours, they should assume that we are going to always use the accommodations and then if we have to request it would be like that I'm not gonna use it for a specific test or class.*

Okay.

[Lila]: *I agree with that, and why, I just realized, why did we have to resubmit our accommodations for finals? If we submitted them all quarter, like that just seems redundant. It's like, obviously I'm gonna do this.*

[Philip]: *True. I agree with you [Lila] on that one.*

[Samantha]: *I am having a hard time narrowing down what I would have to say, but the theme sticks with both of the suggestions that I am in between. And the first one, because I think the hardest step is actually setting up the accommodations, that should be streamlined. I would like the suggestion of sending out a blanket e-mail. I do think we get so many emails at the beginning, and that all of that is so overwhelming, and I just, I have a high level of expectations for a service that I am paying a lot of money for. So, you know, this isn't like a discount college where*

like you have to do everything yourself and work really hard. This is something that you are paying a lot of money for very good service, and they should be helping you through every step of the process making it as seamless as possible and your only job is to learn. Um, it would be a different story if I wasn't gonna be paying for this for the next decade and a half of my life most likely.

[Lila]: Amen.

[Philip]: Totally agree.

[Samantha]: *Um, so that's number one. But, same with the professors, um, the same level of helpfulness and organization needs to be in the classroom. This is a condensed, um, program that is happening extremely fast. If we do not have the information in front of us in an organized and easy to comprehend, um, understandable manner, then they're not teaching us at the same level that they're expecting us to learn. If they're expecting us to do busy work and go through a bunch of things to try and find the information and then learn it, it, it doesn't reflect what the program is. This program is not busy work. This program is learn as much as you can, as quickly as you can, and every minute should count.*

[Philip]: *Well said.*

[Lila]: *I have a question for everyone here. Um, I found student affairs really unhelpful when I was seeking how to get accommodations and the on-campus counselor was the one who actually gave me contact information to a psychologist that was local in Greenville. Did any of you guys also have to get retested and how did that go for you?*

[Samantha]: *I would like to, um, touch on that because the reason that I do not have the accommodations, even though I qualify for it, is because I never even got to that step. Um, just finding a counselor, figuring out how to pay for it, doing all of that, it really prevented me from even exploring what options were available to me.*

[Lila]: *Yeah, it cost me \$3 (I think you meant \$300?) for a four-hour exam, wasn't happy about the price.*

[Samantha]: Yes.

[Philip]: *Same. Same, I agree. I mean for me it took like, like I had used some my old stuff from, from undergrad that helped the process get me in within three days, but then they wanted a little more because I didn't have my paperwork from like 6th grade or middle school. So, I had to spend like \$300 to get reevaluated for like four or five hours, but they did give me the name which was, which was, uh yeah, which was helpful, but I was set three days into it and then then they asked me, they needed a little more information so ...*

[Lila]: *Karen, another suggestion to make this better would to, if we can get refunded from our loan for buying a laptop, why can't we get refunded for proving something that is helping our*

academic performance in the college? For students with accommodations, why can't they use loan money and then have that refunded?

As far um the loans, the federal loans, I, I would think, you know, that would be a question for financial aid, but I would think it would at least partially qualify for additional loan money, but what, what I would suggest, and it's because we want as many people as possible to get the assistance, we limit the grants from the student emergency fund to \$500. But, we do approve, you know, medical related expenses from that student emergency fund, because I'm on that committee. So I don't see why if you submitted, you know, documentation to the committee and you fill out that application through financial aid, [Mr. Jones] is the person to get that application from, but if you are incurring testing expense or medical related expense for your disabilities you could submit a Student Emergency Relief Fund grant application, it's a really brief application, there's not much to it, and you could be awarded \$500 and that's not a loan, that's a grant, so it's not something you would ever have to pay back.

[Lila]: *So [Samantha], were you ever told this information? Since you're essentially almost done with the program, and you don't have accommodations because of this process.*

[Samantha]: *I would mention, um, just to clarify, I'm in my second quarter. I'm not almost done with the program. I have not heard this particular piece of information.*

[Lila]: *Whose almost done with the program? Am I making things up? I'm sorry.*

[Philip]: *Oh, one more thing I would like to add is maybe get a counselor that's like specialized in like I guess education disabilities, educational disabilities, instead of just getting a counselor for emotional well, well you can have that but have one for people that ... only disabilities, people with accommodations can do. Like someone is focused on ADHD.*

[Samantha]: *I think that is actually a really good suggestion.*

[Lila]: *I support that, too. That's great! And [Samantha], I want to mention, if this is something possible that you can do, I'm actually going through a life crisis and I had to, I'm living in my car right now, so I just filled out that form to get awarded that \$500 and I was approved. So, I would definitely recommend exhausting that, to see if they can help you, so you can get the accommodations that you need.*

[Samantha]: *I appreciate the encouragement. I really haven't even considered that path for a while, so I don't even like know where I would be starting. Like I'd have to do some research before even figuring that out like where I would even be starting. Like you've mentioned, it's such a process.*

[Lila]: *I can give you the person I used. He's only in Greenville. It was \$300 and then it, I think, I believe, correct me if I'm wrong, but accommodations will last for four years. So you won't have to retest for the rest of this program.*

Yeah, to my knowledge, once you're qualified, you don't have to do any retesting, and I feel confident that there would not be an issue with you getting approved for that expense.

[Samantha]: *Well, I appreciate the input guys. Thanks for watching out.*

Yeah.

[Lila]: *Gotcha girl. And I just wanna say one more thing, and we can move on to the next thing, Karen. [Samantha], it made a massive difference for me once I got these, and I got my accommodations in my second quarter, and if I would have gotten them sooner, I would not have had to retake biochem. So, I highly recommend doing the work. You have support now, you know some other people, you know, it will increase your mental health in such a wonderful way. You have no idea. This is not undergrad. This is, this is crazy. Like what we're all doing and choosing to do is insane. So, you know, you're supported.*

[Samantha]: *Thank you.*

Alright. Does anyone else have another recommendation they would like to offer? Alright, um, [Philip], since you were a little bit delayed in joining us, I just wanna circle back and let you know what our first two questions were and see if you have anything to add to those. So our first question was, "Please describe how you believe your overall experience at chiropractic college is different from the experience of students who do not have a disability."

[Philip]: *Well ... what do I wanna say? Um ... I think for me, I can only speak for myself, like I've had a hard time just because it's a lot of classes and I'm not used to that so I just had to like fail classes to understand where, um, my max amount of classes I can take. And I haven't really seen any, I mean I've seen improvement by taking accommodations, but it's nothing like insane where I'm like, "Wow! This really helps!" So to me, I still know I can use accommodations or not use accommodations just depends on what the classes are but overall think it's been alright, it's not been worse or bad just been okay for me.*

Okay. Can you share your recollection of a specific incident that led you to not wanting to utilize accommodations?

[Philip]: *Uh not, well it is purely being forgetfulness, having too much on my plate, and then knowing that they have the 48-hour rule and then I'm just like within ,then I have a day left, and then I'm like well I'm not just, I'm not gonna sign. I know they're gonna say no, so just, I'm not gonna even try. But yeah, that's, that's like those times are like if I forget and within the 48-hour rule, then I don't even try. I just like I'm gonna suck it up and pop more Adderall in and do my best. So that's about it.*

Well, thank you. Does anyone have anything else they wanna add? Anything that you think I, I should know?

[Samantha]: *I think, I think that an overall theme is we're already struggling with a number of factors and we have to pick our battles and this is, at least for me, it's been a battle that I have not picked, and it shouldn't have even been a battle in the first place.*

No, I hear that. I hear that. That speaks to a lot of why I chose this topic and I want to be an advocate for you all, so ... I can't thank you all enough for your time, um, this means the world to me that you are willing to participate. I hope to be able to effect some positive change on your behalf from your participation in this group. So, I really sincerely thank you. It means a lot to me personally. Obviously, this is the next step in me completing my dissertation, but it's also your, your participation has the capacity to affect positive change for your peers and future students of the college, so it's important. It's significant work, and I sincerely appreciate you taking the time out of your busy schedule to participate. As soon as we get off...

[Lila]: *As far as....*

I'm sorry go ahead.

[Lila]: *You're fine. That was, that was an accident.*

Okay. Alright, so I'm going to stop the recording if no one has anything else to add.

Appendix L

Hannah's Journal Prompt Responses

Journal Prompts

1. In one to two paragraphs, can you please share your experience with being diagnosed and your experience with academic accommodations before entering the doctoral program?

I was diagnosed while in my first year of chiropractic school. I was unaware that I had a diagnosis until I began falling behind in the chiropractic program. I ended up getting diagnosed by a psychologist after someone within Sherman recognized there may be an issue with how I learned and took tests.

2. Can you please share your experience with accommodations in the Doctor of Chiropractic program in one to two paragraphs, and how (if at all) it differs from your experiences with academic accommodations before entering the program?

My experience with accommodations in the Doctor of Chiropractic program has been one of the most difficult experiences I have ever gone through. When I was diagnosed, I was already in the program, and I was struggling. When I figured out what was going on I felt hopeful that things would get easier. When I began receiving accommodations, I was told that if I needed to make any changes just to let student affairs know and they will make any changes that they can. But when it came to requesting changes to my accommodations, I felt I had to fight daily just to feel like I was heard. With the number of classes I was taking and then in my free time having to fight for the accommodations I needed, I was exhausted, and many times questioned if I would make it through this program.

I ended up getting dismissed because I couldn't perform well on tests and was frustrated because I knew I needed different accommodations than what was being offered to me. Once I finally got the accommodations I needed, I stopped failing classes and started to see a bright future ahead. But due to the circumstances leading up to this point I had a lot of extra anxiety going into tests because I never knew if my accommodations would be accurate or if I would have the support necessary to help when there was an issue. There were many tests I walked into where I didn't have the correct time for my test or I was taken back late for a test that I arrived 5 minutes early for and those are just a couple examples. Overall, I wish there would have been more steps in place to protect the students and a better understanding of all the diagnoses/ accommodations provided by the student affairs staff.

3. Please share in one to two paragraphs what, in your experience, is the most significant determining factor for SWD's decision to utilize or not utilize academic accommodations. CRQ

In my experience the most significant factor was a lack of understanding of the accommodations and what they provide to students. There have been many occasions that I have experienced my instructors saying openly that accommodations are a pain to deal with and on the flip side hearing student affairs not understanding how messing up an

accommodation during a test can truly affect a student. I never felt like I had the support I needed from student affairs due to a lack of understanding. There have been many times that I have questioned using my accommodations out of fear that they wouldn't be taken seriously. Using accommodations to begin with can be difficult out of fear of judgement or ridicule but then not having support from student affairs makes it very difficult for accommodation students to navigate through this program.

Appendix M

Research Audit Trail

Date	Event
6/17/22	IRB Approval to begin research
6/27/22	Sent recruitment email to students utilizing bcc feature of Outlook
6/27/22	Received inquiry from [Carly] requesting rights to video
6/27/22	Responded to [Carly] that I knew I could not provide rights to focus group video due to other participants but would inquire about individual interview.
6/27/22	Emailed Dr. Motte to ask about video for [Carly] Received two screening survey responses [Candace and
6/27/22	Carly]
6/28/22	Dr. Motte advised to check with IRB.
6/28/22	Emailed IRB to ask about video.
6/28/22	IRB (Dr. James Woods) replied that providing participant access to her video would not pose any ethical concerns and I could work this out with my participant.
6/28/22	Shared with [Carly] that she could have access to her individual interview recording. [Carly] did not proceed with scheduling an interview so did not participate.
6/28/22	Received one screening survey response [Elizabeth] via email to schedule interview
6/28/22	Reached out to three survey respondents via their preferred contact method to schedule interviews [Carly, Candace, and Elizabeth] Received one screening survey response
6/29/22	[Lila]
6/30/22	Received one screening survey response [Philip]
6/30/22	Reached out to two survey respondents via text to schedule interviews [Lila and Philip]
6/30/22	Received consent from [Elizabeth]
7/1/22	Interviewed first participant [Elizabeth] via Teams. "scared and confused" when received diagnosis, chiro program is difficult because she compares herself to others, quarter system is stressful, used to semesters fear I am not retaining as much as I need to due to intensity of quarter system did not use accommodations in undergrad because did not want to be separate chiro school is overwhelming; disability is a mental weight others wish they had accommodations but she wishes she didn't need them
7/3/22	Provided transcript to [Elizabeth] for review. Received consent from
7/4/22	[Philip] Interviewed [Philip] in
7/6/22	person avid athlete, 19 years of soccer. ,he need to always be moving makes 9 classes within a quarter system "constant hard" struggles with constant doubting did not take accommodations in undergrad because competitive and did not want to acknowledge his issues, even in chiro school he determines if he will use accommodations by the weight of the class and if it is necessary for board exams per interview did not use accommodations in masters program
7/8/22	Received consent from [Lila]
7/8/22	Interviewed [Lila] via Teams "I have lived most of my academic life knowing I was intelligent but feeling really dumb."

- I had a 4-hour test, I was mentally exhausted, and it was super validating because when I was younger, I never actually tested like that. Testing was \$300 but worth it as accommodations have improved grades drastically.
- 7/9/22 Emailed transcript to [Philip]
- 7/12/22 Emailed transcript to [Lila]
- 7/13/22 Received one screening survey response [Taylor]
Reached out to [Tonya] to schedule interview.
- 7/13/22 Received consent from [Tonya].
- 7/14/22 Received consent from [Candace]
- 7/14/22 Interviewed [Candace] in person
Diagnosed with ADHD and anxiety as a child, but did not receive accommodations in school for this.
After a few quarters struggling in chiro school advisor mentioned accommodations and [Candace] reached out to testing center.
XYZ Chiropractic College staff guided through getting new, current diagnosis - she was unaware of accommodations options in undergrad program
Initial set up and standard accommodation requests relative simple, but not always simple to use accommodations for practical exams so she usually does not.
- 7/14/22 Emailed transcript to [Candace]
- 7/15/22 Interviewed [Tonya] in person.
" I have really bad anxiety." Using accommodations has helped her calm down.
Experience with being diagnosed with anxiety "huge adjustment."
Extra time permits her to think through test questions.
- 7/17/22 Received email from [Tonya] that she had reviewed the transcript and it looked good.
- 7/17/22 Emailed transcript to [Tonya]
- 7/17/22 [Tonya] responded that she had reviewed transcript and it looked good.
- 7/18/22 Sent recruitment email to students utilizing bcc feature of Outlook
- 7/19/22 Received one screening survey response [Kevin]
- 7/19/22 Reached out to [Kevin] via email to schedule interview.
- 7/19/22 Received consent from [Kevin].
- 7/19/22 [Isabelle] responded to recruiting email with completed consent. I requested she complete screening survey and we set an interview time.
- 7/19/22 Student on leave of absence emailed to inquire if she was eligible to participate.
I responded and let her know that I would confer with my dissertation chair.
I emailed Dr. Motte about leave of absence eligibility question.
- 7/19/22 Received two screening survey responses [Samantha and Isabelle]
- 7/20/22 Interviewed [Kevin] in person.
ADHD really good at self-discipline does not use accommodations
struggles within imposter syndrome despite his 3.9 GPA
anxiety and panic set in with math courses, not enough math in the program to use accommodations
he felt supported when he reached out about accommodations and felt the process to document qualifying was simple so uncertain why those that need accommodations would not use them
- 7/20/22 Dr. Motte confirmed student is eligible as long as she returns to school in fall.
- 7/20/22 I emailed student on leave of absence to let her know I would love to speak with her but that if she did not return in fall I could not include her feedback in final write up. Student never responded.
- 7/21/22 Interviewed [Isabelle] via Teams
ADD and anxiety, frustrated with having to request accommodations

- for each test or quiz - they should assume we will always use them
 sometimes passes on accommodations for fear of information professor may share with class
 during exam - sometimes the information shared may be more valuable than extra time/separate space
 Emailed transcript to
- 7/23/22 [Kevin].
 Emailed transcript to
- 7/23/22 [Isabelle]
 Kevin responded with three minor edits to transcript. I made edits to
- 7/24/22 transcript.
- 7/25/22 Received email from [Philip] that he had reviewed the interview transcript and it looked good.
 [Isabelle] responded that she had reviewed transcript, that it looked good, and she had no
- 7/25/22 edits.
- 7/25/22 Sent recruitment email to students utilizing bcc feature of Outlook
- 7/26/22 Received one screening survey response [Hannah]
- 7/26/22 Emailed [Hannah] to schedule interview
- 7/27/22 Received one screening survey response [Alicia]
- 7/27/22 Texted [Alicia] to schedule interview
- 7/28/22 [Hannah] consented to participate
- 7/29/22 Interviewed [Hannah] via Teams
 diagnosed during first year of chiro school - very frustrated by process to change
 initial accommodations. Took a while to figure out which accommodations would be helpful.
 To the point of academic dismissal before appropriate accommodations granted. Once received the
 right accommodations, she stopped failing classes and had hope for completing program.
 Emailed transcript to
- 7/31/22 [Hannah]
 Received consent from
- 8/3/22 [Alicia]
 Interviewed [Alicia] in
- 8/3/22 person
 Initially diagnosed as a child, but chose to not receive any form of help in the form
 of therapy or medication until second year of undergraduate program.
 Not aware my diagnoses made me available to receive any form of academic
 accommodations until very recently.
 Diagnosis is anxiety - has not applied for accommodations even though noted
 during interview, "I know a longer time during lab practicals would make a very big difference."
- 8/3/22 Emailed participants utilizing bcc feature of Outlook to get feedback of best days/times for focus groups
- 8/4/22 Email from [Candace] confirming interview transcript looked good
- 8/4/22 [Tonya], [Kevin], [Samantha], [Philip], [Alicia], [Isabelle] and [Candace] responded with feedback
 about focus group scheduling
- 8/7/22 Emailed transcript to [Alicia]
- 8/8/22 Emailed Sign-up Genius Link to all participants to sign up for focus group time.
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60b0c48aca92fa0fe3-canup>
- 8/8/22 [Alicia], [Isabelle], [Samantha],[Lila], [Tonya], and [Candace] signed up for a focus group time
 through Sign-up Genius.
- 8/9/22 [Hannah] and [Kevin] signed up for a focus group time through SignUp Genius.
- 8/10/22 [Philip] and [Elizabeth] signed up for a focus group time through SignUp Genius.
- 8/12/22 Conducted Focus Group 1 with [Candace], [Hannah], and [Alicia]
- 8/12/22 [Hannah] responded that transcript looked good,
 Received journal prompts from [Hannah] and emailed her \$50 Amazon gift
- 8/12/22 card

- 8/14/22 Received journal prompts from [Candace} and confirmation focus group transcript looked good. I emailed her \$50 Amazon gift card.
- 8/22/22 Received journal prompts from [Alicia] and emailed her \$50 Amazon gift card.
- 8/25/22 Conducted Focus Group 2 with [Elizabeth] and [Kevin]
- 8/26/22 Conducted Focus Group 3 with [Lila], [Philip], [Samantha], [Isabelle], and [Tonya]
- 8/27/22 Received journal prompts from [Lila] and I emailed her \$50 Amazon gift card
- 8/29/22 Emailed Focus Group 3 transcript to participants
- 8/30/22 Received journal prompts from [Philip] and I emailed him \$50 Amazon gift card.
- 9/1/22 Received journal prompts from [Tonya] and I emailed her \$50 Amazon gift card.
- 9/1/22 Sent [Samantha], [Isabelle], and [Kevin] email reminders about journal prompts.
- 9/1/22 Received journal prompts from [Elizabeth] and emailed her \$50 Amazon gift card
- 9/2/22 Received journal prompts from [Isabelle] and emailed her \$50 Amazon gift card
- 9/3/22 Printed all transcripts highlighting key quotes, applying open coding and comparing to initial memoing notes
- 9/8/22 Chapter 4 meeting with Dr. Motte
- 9/9/22 Sent final reminder email to [Samantha] and [Kevin] about journal prompts.
- 9/10/22 Received journal prompts from [Kevin] and emailed him \$50 Amazon gift card.
- 9/10/22 Received journal prompts from [Samantha] and emailed her \$50 Amazon gift card.
- 9/10/22 Accumulated key quotes, including recent journal prompt responses into Excel spreadsheet by code. Looking for horizons.
- 9/11–9/18/22 From memos, notes, and horizons spreadsheet developed themes/subthemes sketched structural and textural descriptions and drafted chapter 4
- 9/18/22 Submitted Chapter Four to Dr. Motte for review
- 9/21/22 Chapter 5 meeting with Dr. Motte
- 9/21/22 Feedback on Chapter Four received from Dr. Motte
- 9/22–10/3/22 Worked through manuscript feedback, considered interpretations and implications and drafted Chapter 5.