

Lived Experiences of Undergraduate and Graduate Students Utilizing
Accommodations

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Dedication Page

I would like to dedicate this to my father who passed away in 2008. However, he did not get to see me graduate with my masters or start my doctorate. I know he is watching over me and giving me a shove when I need it. He was always proud that I went back to school and helped me tremendously during my educational process. He may not be here physically to see my graduation day but I know he is watching over me. Thank you dad. I love you and miss you every day!

Acknowledgement Page

I would like to thank my family for helping me so much during this process. My daughter Clarissa has watched me go to school since she was 3 years old through my BSN, MSN, and now my doctorate. She has watched me do homework and work on many assignments over the years. Her support means more than she will know.

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ABSTRACT

An increasing number of students who are in need of various types of reasonable accommodations have been entering higher education. Additionally, the number of graduate students who need accommodations has increased. Regulations regarding accommodations have changed over the last 40 years, which required institutions of higher education to make changes on how accommodations are provided. This study was conducted to identify the experiences of undergraduate and graduate students who have utilized accommodations.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of college students who utilized accommodations at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education. This study explored any variations of experiences or perceptions about accommodations among students who were labeled as traditional undergraduate students, nontraditional undergraduate students, or graduate students who attended college at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education in this study.

An online survey was developed using Survey Monkey. The online survey was then sent via email to the students who utilized accommodations by the accommodations coordinator at each institution. The email contained a link to the survey. The survey had various methods of questioning such as questions on demographics, survey questions, sentence completion, and storytelling.

During data analysis, several themes and subthemes were identified. The major themes were A3 Model, testing accommodation, positive tone, and negative tone. Under each major theme, several subthemes were identified. Under A3 Model, the subthemes included advocacy, access, and accommodation. Testing accommodation had three subthemes that included reason for testing accommodation, type of testing accommodation, and impact of testing

accommodation. Under the major theme positive tone, the subthemes included success and requested sooner. Under negative tone, the subthemes included frustration, scared/ nervous, and guilt.

Key Terms: accommodation, higher education, access, advocacy, learning disability, disability.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

An increasing number of students who need many different types of reasonable accommodations for various disabilities have been matriculating in college settings (Hadley, 2007). According to the American Disability Act Amendment Act (ADAAA) of 2008, 43 million Americans possess some type of disability. Recent data show that approximately 11% of undergraduate students have a self-reported disability (Martin, 2012). Moreover, according to data from the most recent National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), about eight percent of master's students and seven percent of doctoral students in academic year 2007-2008 had some type of disability.

The recommendations for the American Disabilities Act (ADA) regarding the provision of accommodations recently changed and institutions have been working to change policies to meet the changes (Association on Higher Education and Disability [AHEAD], 2012). Because of the changes in policies, providing students with the proper accommodations that are effective has been a challenge for many colleges (Orr & Goodman, 2010).

This chapter was written to present an overview of the study. This chapter included the background and rationale, problem statement, purpose, research question, conceptual framework, assumptions, limitations and delimitations as well as the significance of the study.

Background and Rationale

A review of the evolution of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to the most current changes in 2008 were included in the first part of this section in order to provide a viewpoint of the various revisions that have occurred in accommodations for students over the years. Reviews of the various legal settlements that have affected accommodations that must be provided were also summarized in this section.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which was conceived to protect persons who have disabilities (29 U.S.C. § 701) specifically stated,

no qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall be excluded from, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program that receives Federal financial assistance. Students with disabilities must be provided with appropriate educational services such as education in regular classrooms, education in regular classes with supplemental services and/or related services (para. 1).

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Subpart E included regulations for postsecondary education that was entered into law to eliminate discrimination based on disability to any person attending any program that receives federal financial funding (Section 504, Subpart E, 104). This part of the act ensured that any person with disabilities should not be denied opportunities in higher education based on his or her disability. The law mandated that persons should not be denied admission based on disability, and that modifications should be made that would allow persons with disabilities an equal opportunity in the educational program such as longer time to complete degree requirements, substitution of courses, use of auxiliary aids, and alterations in course assessments, (Section 504, Subpart E, 104).

Then, in 1990, revisions were made to the ADA to:

- 1) Provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities
- 2) provide clear, strong, consistent, enforceable standards addressing discrimination against individuals with disabilities
- 3) ensure that the Federal Government plays a central role in enforcing the standard established in this action on behalf of individuals with disabilities; and
- 4) invoke the sweep of congressional authority, including the power to enforce the Fourteenth

Amendment and to regulate commerce, in order to address the major areas of discrimination faced day-to-day by people with disabilities (SEC. 12101. [Section 2]).

Subsequently, the 2008 American Disability Act Amendment Act (ADAAA), 42 U.S.C 12201(a) was enacted to “provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities and provide broad coverage” (p.1). The 2008 amendment was passed to bring the definition of ADA and regulations back to where it began in 1990 prior to court decisions changing the meaning of the definition (AHEAD, 2012).

The ADAAA of 2008 modified the working definition of disability “to more broadly encompass impairments that substantially limit a major life activity (ADA, 2008, para. 1). In April of 2012, the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) presented its position on the 2008 ADAAA. The primary purpose of the amendment was to “make it easier for people with disabilities to obtain protection under the ADA” (AHEAD, 2012, para. 2).

Due to these changes over the past 40 years, governmental regulations and policies have enabled a greater number of students with disabilities into post-secondary institutions (Francis, Salzman, Polomsky, & Huffman, 2007). In general, no specific third party testing or diagnosis of a disability is required however; the college does have the right to ask for documentation of the disability. The focus of disability testing is based on each student’s history of a disability. In order for the student to obtain appropriate accommodation, each student must describe how a condition affects the student and how reasonable accommodations would assist the student. In addition, the accommodations coordinator and student should confer about how the requested accommodations will benefit the student in removing any barriers to learning. These

amendments must be adhered to by all schools, testing centers, and licensing bodies (AHEAD, 2012).

In general, the purpose of the 2008 amendment to the governmental regulations and policies regarding accommodations was to “reject the requirements enunciated by the Supreme Court” (ADAA, 2008, p. 2). The interpretation of specific court cases including *Sutton v. United Air Lines, Inc.* and *Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Kentucky, Inc. v. Williams* were rejected. These court cases had narrowed the intended broad scope of the ADA (ADAA, 2008).

In the case of *Sutton v. United Air Lines, Inc.* (1999) a set of twin sisters with severe uncorrected visual impairment were not given a job as pilots at United Air Lines, Inc. stating the twins did not meet the visual requirements for the job. The sisters sued the airline for discrimination of their disability. The courts found that the sisters did not have a disability as their visual impairment could be corrected with glasses and they did not have a condition that substantially limited a major life activity.

In the case of *Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Kentucky, Inc. v. Williams* (2002), a worker sued Toyota Motor Manufacturing stating that the company did not comply with providing appropriate accommodations for the worker’s diagnosis of Carpel Tunnel Syndrome. The court ruled that the worker did not have a disability that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Therefore, the worker was not entitled to receive accommodations for a disability.

These court decisions changed the meaning of how an identified problem may or may not substantially limit a major life activity. This change in definition could affect how a student’s disability may or may not be perceived as limiting a major life activity that reduced the student’s opportunity to obtain protection under the ADA and reasonable accommodations (AHEAD, 2012).

A case specifically related to education that had influence on ADA was *Guckenberger v. Boston University (BU)*. In this case as described by Wolinsky and Whelan (1999), Boston University's population of learning disabled students rose dramatically due to a marketing campaign promoting BU's Learning Disability Support Services (LDSS). As a result, BU was well respected for its efforts. However, in academic year 1995-1996, BU implemented a new learning disability (LD) policy where students were required to obtain documentation from either a family physician or a psychologist regarding a diagnosed LD. The LDSS evaluated the documentation and wrote a recommendation, which then went to the president's office. The president would make the final decision on the provision of accommodations and notify the student of the decision. In this new policy, there was no means for the student to appeal the decision. Several students who previously received accommodations were denied accommodations under this new policy (Wolinsky & Whelan, 1999).

A lawsuit was filed by the students against BU challenging the new policy. The court ruled in favor of the students and held that the president at BU made decisions improperly based on a stereotype of persons with LD. The students were awarded damages and the judge ordered the school to review its policy on accommodations (Wolinsky & Whelan, 1999).

Problem Statement

The type of students that attend institutions of higher education has changed to include traditional as well as nontraditional. The number of overall students in higher education with disabilities increased from six percent in 1995-1996 (NCES, 2000) to 11.3% in 2003-2004 (NCES, 2008). In addition, over the past 10 years, the number of students who were labeled as nontraditional students have increased by 34% and the numbers are expected to continue to increase (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

In like manner, more students with disabilities have been entering graduate programs than ever before (Bernal & Zera, 2012). In the 2007-2008 school years, there were eight percent of graduate students with identified disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Given the rising numbers, further research concerning graduate students with disabilities needed to be conducted (Rose, 2010). According to Orr and Goodman (2010), appropriate accommodations have been critical for students with specific disabilities and have been necessary to ensure greater access to higher education and more opportunity to succeed in the workforce.

Additionally, there have been many amendments made in the laws protecting individuals with disabilities along with changes in the way institutions award accommodations. These changes paired with the increased numbers of students with disabilities, created the need to explore the lived experiences of students with disabilities who utilize accommodations in higher education.

Purpose of the Study

“Since the early 1990s an expanding stream of qualitative research has invited the voice of those labeled with LD to illuminate the barriers facing them in higher education” (Denhart, 2008, p. 483). The results from two phenomenological studies reported student concerns regarding accommodations.

Using 10 participants Hadley (2006) “examined how traditional-aged, first year students with specific learning disabilities make the transition to collegiate environment” (p. 11). Based on written papers, conducted focus groups, and interviews, Hadley (2006) reported the participants felt it was necessary to use academic services to aid in the transition from high school to college. The participants reported that they felt challenged and expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that the tutors were students who previously took the class and test

proctors were not knowledgeable of the course content. In regards to disabilities, the participants expressed the need for accommodations such as extra time on tests, writing assistance, and peers to take notes as these accommodations helped the student access learning opportunities (Hadley, 2006). In addition, these participants reported feeling anxious when they met with professors as they felt the professors were uninformed regarding the students' disabilities (Hadley, 2006).

Denhart (2008) summarized the details of a doctoral dissertation conducted by Black (2005). The study reported that students with LD identified "barriers they face and how best to overcome them in order to move effectively through higher education" (p. 484). According to Denhart (2008), based on the data the participants reported barriers included "being misunderstood by the faculty, being reluctant to request accommodations for fear of invoking stigma and having to work harder than nonlabeled peers" (p. 483). The participants also reported "having the workload unrecognized, generating products incommensurate with the workload, viewing the college LD specialist as crucial to success, and experiencing rapport with others labeled with LD" (Denhart, 2008, p. 483).

The purpose of the current phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of college students who utilized accommodations at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education. This study explored any variations of experiences or perceptions about accommodations among students who were labeled as traditional undergraduate students, nontraditional undergraduate students, as well as graduate students who attended college at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education.

Research Questions

The research question utilized in this study was: What are the lived experiences of students who are utilizing accommodations at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education?

- What are the lived experiences of students utilizing accommodations who are labeled as traditional undergraduate students at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education?
- What are the lived experiences of students utilizing accommodations who are labeled as nontraditional undergraduate students at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education?
- What are the lived experiences of students utilizing accommodations who are in a graduate degree program at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education?

Operational Definitions

Disability. “Any person who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, has record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such impairment” (ADAAA, 2008, p. 6).

Reasonable Accommodations. “Modifications made to the learning policies and practice environment that creates equal educational opportunity for students with disabilities” (Horn & Cheney, nd., p.3).

Students. The students of this study are students who attend two Midwestern private institutions of higher education, who are 19 years of age or older, and currently receive accommodations.

Higher Education. Education at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education.

Traditional Students. Students who are age 19-24.

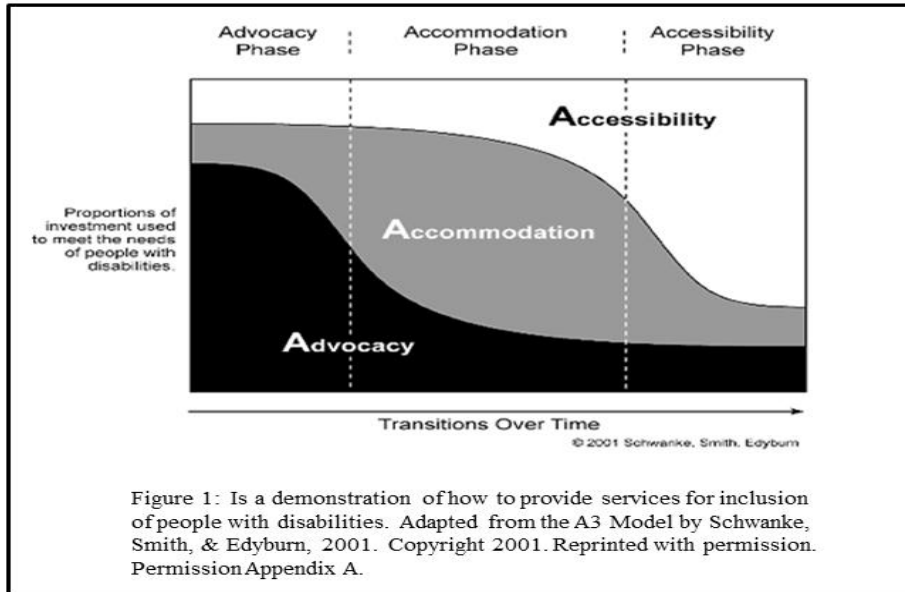
Nontraditional Students. Students who are 24 years of age or older.

Undergraduate Students. Any student in post-secondary education in the process of an undergraduate degree who attends an institution of higher education in this study.

Graduate Student. Any student in the process of earning a masters or doctoral degree who attends an institution of higher education in this study.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was the A3 Model (Figure 1). This model describes the effort to provide persons, who have disabilities, access to facilities, programs, and information (Edyburn, 2005). Early work by Schwanke, Smith, and Edyburn emphasized the A3 model intent was to promote advocacy, accommodation, and access (2001). The authors later indicated that this model could affect the entire population when providing access for all students (Edyburn, 2005). The model was based on a continuum of advocacy, accommodation, and accessibility (Schwanke, Smith, & Edyburn, 2001). The purpose of ACCESS-ed was to ensure higher education for all students with disabilities using the A3 model (ACCESS-ed, 2011). In this current study the model was utilized in its original intent of providing individuals with disabilities access.



The model was described as a continuum of advocacy, accommodation, and accessibility that changed over time. The x-axis of the model describes that the amount of time required to meet the needs of the individual with disabilities will change over time. The overall goal was to provide each student with access. The y-axis of the model is labeled, “portions of investment used to meet the needs of people with disabilities” (Schwanke, et al., 2001, para. 2). This section depicted how a varying amount of investment the institution and the individual used to meet the needs of each individual. Each section may continuously change based on the needs of the individuals with disabilities (Schwanke, et al., 2001).

The first phase of the conceptual framework was advocacy. Edyburn (2010) stated that advocacy is defined as it “raises awareness of inequity and highlights the need for system change to respond to the needs of individuals with disabilities” (pp. 34-35). Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, laws were created to ensure that services were provided to students with disabilities. The law required students in higher education to self-advocate (Edyburn, 2010). In this phase advocacy was much larger than the other parts showing that in the

beginning of the relationship with an individual, advocacy was most time consuming and most necessary (Schwanke, et al., 2001).

In order for the student to self-advocate the student had to initiate the process to obtain services; the student must self-identify his or her disability, must be able to communicate the effects the disability has on his or her learning, and request appropriate reasonable accommodations (Foley, 2006). The student's success depends on the ability to self-advocate. At the college level, students found less academic support and that disability services are not the same in college as they were in high school (McCarthy, 2007). Many students have been ill prepared to self-advocate. It is important for students to be educated on the differences of the standards related to high school and higher education (McCarthy, 2007). A response to self-advocacy is accommodation.

Accommodation was defined by Edyburn (2005) as revision of "inaccessible environments and materials are modified and made available" (p. 18). At the college level, students have greater independence and students with disabilities identified less academic support. Often this combination resulted in greater student frustrations and a large number of student failures (Foley, 2006). This phase was largest in the second part of the framework as students are awarded with accommodations and the focus is placed on providing the students with accommodations that help most (Schwanke, et al., 2001).

The final phase in the framework was access. In the framework, this was shown as the third and largest in this section. This was because the main goal is to provide access to all students (Schwanke, et al., 2001). Access allows students with accommodations equal opportunity to learning. Accessibility was defined as "an environment where access is provided to everyone at the same time" (Edyburn, 2005, p. 19). Under the ADAAA of 2008, students were

“guaranteed equal accesses to education... but students with disabilities are not guaranteed admission to college, the students must still meet admission requirements” (Shaw, 2009, p. 4).

Students with disabilities, who wish to go to college, were counseled and encouraged to set goals that help to improve the possibility of attending college (Shaw, 2009).

Universal Design

A3 Model by Schwanke, et al., (2001) is based on the theory of providing universal design for all students. Universal design (UD) gives access to all students by removing barriers. The students who have accommodations for a disability were the only students that benefit from the accommodation where universal design allows all students the benefit of instructional design changes which provides support to all students and helps to reduce challenges that all students face in education (Edyburn, 2010). This concept “designs and delivers products and services that are useable by people with the widest range of functional capabilities” (Edyburn, 2010, p. 34). UD improved efficiency and effectiveness of educational approaches that helped students with and without disabilities.

Assumptions

This study and its conclusions were subject to the following assumption:

1. Students shared their lived experiences of utilizing accommodations accurately through online interviews, sentence completion, and storytelling.

Delimitations

This study was conducted under the following researcher-selected constraints:

1. This study utilized criterion sampling of students who attended certain institutions of higher education in a particular Midwestern city who have a specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2007).

2. The total male population at both institutions is approximately 12%. These factors may cause a demographic delimitation.

Limitations

This study was conducted under the following limitations:

1. A limited number of students who utilized accommodations within the identified institutions of higher learning did result in a low number of participants in the study.
2. The researcher in qualitative research is the primary data collector (Merriam, 2009, p. 160). In an online platform, the researcher is not the primary data collector and the meaning can be lost in translation.
3. Additionally, the use of an online survey may prove to be a limitation of this study as the students may not understand the question and the researcher is not present to provide meaning.
4. The online format of the survey could pose a limitation for individuals with disabilities who may have limited ability with the use of technology.

Significance

Conducting research on this topic helped to identify students' perceptions of receiving accommodations, how a student's learning is influenced by accommodations, and the experiences of students with disabilities in higher education. This study will add to the body of knowledge regarding students with disabilities, accommodations, and challenges experienced by students who require accommodations for disabilities. Further research in this area may assist four-year institutions of higher education to make important funding requests and policy decisions concerning institutional support and faculty professional development.

Summary

Many more students with disabilities are entering college (Johnson, Zacavage, & Gerber, 2008). The laws and regulations have made significant changes over the last 30 years. The academic institutions have been required to make changes to accommodate students with disabilities. In this chapter, the research questions were highlighted, the purpose statement was identified, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and significance. The conceptual framework of the A3 Model was described. This study helped to identify the experiences of students who utilize accommodations since the changes in the 2008 amendment and the AHEAD recommendations of 2012. This study adds to the body of knowledge about interventions that augment or lead to the academic success of students who self-identify having disabilities.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Overview

The economic downturn of 2008-2009 in the U.S. has reinforced the viewpoint that post-secondary education was a means to financial achievement and independence, especially for those with disabilities (Shaw, 2009). In a report from The White House Website, White (2010) stated that “President Obama believes that regardless the educational path after high school, all Americans should be prepared to enroll in at least one year of higher education or job training to better prepare our workforce for a 21st century economy” (p. 1). Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Levine, and Marder (2007) found that college students who earned a bachelor’s degree earned twice as much as the person with a high school education only. Wagner et al. point out that the Commission on the Future of Higher Education in 2006 estimated that 90% of the most prevalent jobs that will be available in the future require a post-secondary education. The findings demonstrated a majority of students with disabilities are on target for high school graduation and expect to pursue a degree in higher education; therefore, Wagner et al. suggest colleges should provide needed accommodations to make these expectations a reality.

Characteristics of Disabilities

By definition, a “disability” is something that substantially limits a major life activity. That life activity may include sitting, standing, lifting, thinking, reading, concentrating, communicating with others, sleeping, and major bodily functions” (Simon, 2011, p. 97). An individual does not have to be severely impaired to be protected under the ADA (Simon, 2011). A disability differs for each person in addition to the fact that every reasonable accommodation must differ from person to person and may be different in each class (Cory, 2011).

There are other published definitions of disabilities and legislation regarding the issue. According to the National Joint Commission on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) (1990), a learning disability refers to:

A heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and may occur across the life span. Problems in self-regulatory behaviors, social perceptions, and social interactions may exist with learning disabilities but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability. (p. 1)

The NJCLD (2011) has identified that “a Learning Disability (LD) is neurobiologically-based, involves cognitive processes, and affects learning” (p. 4). According to Pannucci and Walmsley (2007), learning disabilities have been determined in many ways and have been related to different causes such as neurological, psychological, and educational. Disabilities have led to underachievement in course work by students and have led to the need for the provision of accommodations to aid in academic success.

Pannucci and Walmsley (2007) presented the findings of a study of 23 adults with learning disabilities. They suggest teaching strategies based on research and professional literature as well as strategies used by adults with learning disabilities who are now successful. They found several characteristics of learning disabilities. These included lack of organizational ability, information overload, writing difficulties, and problems processing auditory material and literal and inferred meanings. They also found in some of the participants a low tolerance for new learning situations, memory lapses, no difference in vocabulary cues, strong visual memory, strong kinesthetic awareness, and modality overload.

Advocacy

Advocacy is a very important part concerning providing access to students who have a disability. Institutions of higher education have become partially responsible to determine a disability. The student must self-identify the disability to the institution, request a reasonable accommodation, and provide evidence to support why the accommodation would be necessary. Some students come to college with knowledge of a disability that was documented in secondary school. Some students are not identified as having a disability until college (Heyward, 2011).

The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) (2007) reported that there is a “disconnect between the nature and extent of disability documentation generated during a student’s public school career and the documentation required to access services at the post-secondary level” (p. 1). Students with disabilities may come from an environment in high school where they have been guided and supported closely. Students then move into an institution of higher education where they are expected to self-disclose disabilities and are self-directed in seeking accommodations (NJCLD, 2007).

The lack of transition from high school to college can lead to students that are not successful in the first year (Connor, 2009). Barnard-Bark, Davis, Tate, and Sulak (2009) conducted a study that identified variables that predicted if a student would self-identify the need for accommodations and seek assistance. An online survey was conducted of 156 students who were registered with the disabilities office. The author used a survey that was 35 items on a Likert scale identified as the “Attitudes Towards Requesting Accommodations (ATRA) scale” (Barnard-Bark et al., 2009, p. 192). The findings identified two variables that have the ability to predict the student’s likelihood to seek accommodations. The two variables identified were characteristics of the college, for example the size of the college, and the student’s attitude. The

students with positive attitudes were more likely to request assistance from the accommodations office (Barnard-Bark et al., 2009).

A Delphi study was conducted by Milson and Dietz (2009). The purpose of the study was to identify a list of important college readiness factors related to students with disabilities. The first round of the study had 29 participants, the second 19 participants, and the final round contained 17 participants. Round one was a web-based survey where the participants were asked critical knowledge areas related to college readiness. In the second round, students were asked to rate factors from round one. Finally, round three students were again asked to rate factors from round one. The college readiness factors identified as important to students with disabilities included personal characteristics, academic skill, support, and knowledge of self and the college (Milsom & Dietz, 2009).

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy was another important characteristic to explore with students receiving accommodations in college. Efficacy was described as a “generative capability in which cognitive or social, emotional, and behavioral sub skills must be organized and effectively orchestrated to serve innumerable purposes” (Bandura, 1998, p. 31). According to Bandura, self-efficacy is not related to skills a person possesses but how the person believes they can do. Bandura believes that the level of self-efficacy is directly related to how well a person will perform (Bandura, 1998). Bandura believed that those with strong self-efficacy believed that a challenging task or situation was one to be mastered where those with low self-efficacy saw the challenging situation and would shy away believing that it was too difficult. Bandura also goes on to share that people’s belief in his or her abilities has a direct effect on stress level, depression, as well as motivation (Bandura, 1994).

Self-efficacy drives the action that one takes to meet a desired outcome. Students choose an action based on an area of comfort to the student. In addition, if the student believes in his or her own ability then the student will work harder to succeed. Self-efficacy has been shown as a predictor of behaviors (Amtmann et al., 2012). A student's strong sense of self-efficacy was related to the probability of successful self-advocacy for accommodation and is directly related to the conceptual framework for this study.

In a quantitative study conducted by Brady-Amoon and Fuertes (2011), the researchers examined "the association between self-efficacy and self-rated abilities in conjunction with adjustment and academic performance" (p. 431). There were 271 fulltime undergraduate students in this study. The College Self-Efficacy Inventory (CSEI) was utilized for this study. The results showed that there was a significant positive correlation between self-efficacy and self-rated abilities, evidence that self-efficacy contributes to a student's ability to make adjustments in a college setting, and finally self-efficacy was associated with improved academic performance (Brady-Amoon & Fuertes, 2011).

In an earlier study by Blake and Rust (2002) the researchers "investigated the relationship between self-esteem and self-efficacy among college students with physical and learning disabilities" (p. 214). This study included 45 undergraduate and four graduate students who were identified with a disability. The researchers utilized the CSEI and a self-efficacy scale for the study. The results showed that students with disabilities had high rates of self-efficacy and self-esteem. However, this varied with age of onset of disabilities. The researchers correlated high rates of self-efficacy with the possibility that the student with disabilities had to overcome many challenges due to the disability, which has improved, over time, the student's self-efficacy and self-esteem. The older student who was identified with a disability later showed lower self-

efficacy (Blake & Rust, 2002). Research is lacking concerning students who have disabilities and their level of self-efficacy. This gap suggests a need for further research in this area.

Accommodation

The law requires that institutions provide access to accommodations though they are not required to give every student what they request. The institution must decide if the individual does not meet the criteria established for a disability (Heyward, 2011). Institutions do not need to provide accommodations that would alter the education program or eliminate requirements that are essential to the program (Simon, 2011).

Institutions are required to provide reasonable accommodations but do not need to provide an accommodation that would fundamentally alter the nature of the program or activity. Duffy (2004) clarified if a student misses several weeks of classes due to his or her disability, permission to work from home and not attend classes may be granted. Though this example may be reasonable, the request can be denied if the instructor or educational institution believes attending class is essential, specifically in classes such as foreign languages, but not necessarily in classes like mathematics.

Providing students with disabilities the support necessary to help improve their success in higher education is important. Skinner (2007) noted that the number of students with documented disabilities enrolled in post-secondary institutions has increased steadily over the past 20 years. Providing reasonable accommodations increases the chance of success for students with disabilities. Institutions of higher education do not need to introduce program changes; however, they must provide accessibility and may not discriminate against students with disabilities. Once a student has self-identified a disability, it is the responsibility of the institution to provide auxiliary aides and academic support. Some examples of accommodations

include books-on-tape, note-takers, readers, extended time for examinations, use of word processors during examinations, and permission to take an examination at an alternative location (Skinner, 2007).

According to the NJCLD (2007), students requiring accommodations were to be evaluated and accommodations must be provided on a case-by-case basis. The practice by which accommodations were awarded varies by institution so it is necessary that an institution make decisions based on empirical evidence (Lindstrom, 2007). Students who have a disability should be evaluated periodically as the student's need for accommodations may change as the student may have various factors affecting the need for accommodation such as the student's adaptation to the educational setting and different instructional factors (NJCLD, 2007).

Murray, Wren, Stevens, and Keys (2009) cited a growing number of innovative approaches for students with disabilities in many four-year colleges and universities. The authors suggested that such approaches should begin with ensuring that the four-year educational institutions are accessible and have supportive learning facilities. Not all accommodations that are requested by a student will be granted; instead, the accommodations provided will be ones that are believed to be effective based on the students' needs (Willits et al., 2005).

In a study by Tagayuna, Stodden, Chang, Zeleznik, and Whelley (2005), 1500 disability-support coordinators completed surveys on two separate occasions. The first was in 1999 the second in 2001. The researchers explored the nature and range of support provided to students with disabilities and the frequency of the use by the second year. Supports utilized included generic supports, instructional support, career assessment, assistive technology (AT), administrative support, physical adaptations, and financial support. The most frequently awarded accommodation was testing accommodations. The study showed a significant increase in the

awareness and support provided to students by the second survey conducted two years later (Tagayuna et al., 2005).

In a follow-up study utilizing data from a previous study by Tagayuna et al. (2005), the researchers wanted to look at the use of AT. In this study, the researchers asked, “what is the institution’s capacity to offer AT supports, accommodations, and services as needed by students with disabilities” (Stodden, Roberts, Picklesimer, Jackson, & Chang, 2006, p. 113). The findings indicated that AT is an accommodation that was the least available during the first survey and most available in second survey. The findings also showed that AT is more frequently utilized in public institutions and more available in urban institutions (Stodden et al., 2006).

In a study by Heiman and Olenik-Shemesh (2012) the authors wanted to identify how the usage of AT contributed to the achievement of goals identified by students with LD. In this study, 964 students were given a questionnaire. Of these students, 363 had a disability and 601 were without a disability. The findings showed that students with LD were comfortable when using websites but that it is not an important factor in success. The authors specified that students benefited from the use of AT (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2012).

Access

Duffy (2004) explained that the ADA is a civil rights law intended to provide equal access and opportunity for people with disabilities and the intent is not to provide special privileges, but rather eliminate discrimination. The author claimed that determining impairments of major life activities is straightforward; however, measuring what is considered a “substantial limitation” was the challenging aspect of determining what is considered a disability. Duffy (2004) elaborated by saying that not everyone with impairment is disabled: only those individuals whose impairments rise to a level of *substantial limitation* is qualified as disabled.

The American Disability Act Amendment Act, 42 U.S.C 12201(f), (2008) clearly stated that “determining one is protected should not require extensive analysis.” Students should not be held to strict and demanding standards to prove a disability. In addition, documentation that was previously acquired should prove as adequate, eliminating reevaluations every 3 years (Simon, 2011). “Any request for documentation, if such documentation is required, is reasonable and limited to the need for the modification, accommodation, auxiliary aid, or service requested” (Holder, 2010, p. 1). Additionally, Congress added that episodic conditions were protected. Students that are highly functional or have adapted to overcome disability are still covered under the ADA protections (Simon, 2011). Academic institutions must still make adjustments to ensure that all students have equal access to academic programs.

In education, a student must still meet the academic standards for admission. If the admissions department or faculty determines a student is not qualified, there must be appropriate documentation to prove the student does not qualify. For example if a student applies to a particular program and the admission requirements state that a GPA of 2.5 is required upon admission and the student with a disability has only a GPA of 2.0 then the admission criteria is not met and the student can be denied admission.

Universal Design

Universal design (UD) “allows access to a facility or element and facilitates user empowerment” (Salmen, 2011, p. 13). The concept started with architecture to develop spaces that were accessible by individuals with disabilities and it has spread to many different areas including web design and academia. The use of UD in academia is not only limited to persons with disabilities but to all students (Salmen, 2011).

The use of academic accommodations is very beneficial for the student who is receiving them. However, the problem is that the accommodation only helps those who are awarded them. In UD, all students were able to benefit from course design and learning environment (Shaw, 2011). Students come from diverse backgrounds, have diverse learning styles, and may have varying levels of baseline knowledge of a topic. UD allows educators to level the playing field for all students (Shaw, 2011). There are seven principals of UD which are based on architecture but still apply to education including “equitable use, flexibility in use, simple and intuitive, perceptible information, tolerance in error, low physical effort, and size and space for approach and use (Shaw, 2011, p. 22). UD helps students by creating alternate learning environments such as simulation, podcasts, skits, and models. Additionally, UD helps faculty take a deep look at lessons and decreases the need for providing individual accommodations (Shaw, 2011).

Student Perceptions

Misconceptions about learning disabilities have resulted in inappropriate or deficient accommodations. The NJCLD (2009) reported misconceptions as students with disabilities are lazy or need greater motivation. Some other obstacles included students not reporting disabilities, faculty perceptions of disabilities, and the lack of effective transition to higher education from high school.

Mott (2004) conducted live qualitative interviews with four undergraduate students and t e-mail interviews with four additional students. Two of the eight students were diagnosed with LD in college, while the others were diagnosed prior to high school. Students interviewed included an astronomy major near graduation, anticipating enrollment in a PhD program, art program graduates, a graduate applying for law school, and engineering program students. Mott (2004) shared:

I did not anticipate the level of fear and anger that came to the surface in these interviews. A feeling of inadequacy seems to pervade their entire experience. But the underlying fear of being found out, of someone seeing the label, LD, impacts the student's ability to be comfortable socially and thereby continues the segregation experiences of the students early...(pp.8-9). . . . I underestimated or misinterpreted the significance of parental involvement in a successful transition. I have barely scratched the surface in determining the various factors influencing transitions and which are more significant to student success. I do realize that it is important to have a full understanding of the various supports in secondary school and how we can make that continue as needed on campus (pp.11-12).

A study conducted by Lyser, Vogel, Wyland, and Brulle (1998) examined experience, knowledge, and attitudes toward accommodations for students with disabilities. Leyser et al. (1998) suggested that students who had not previously aspired to higher education found that colleges and universities were more responsive to their needs because of the passage of section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The researchers contend that when the barriers were removed the students with orthopedic, visual and hearing impairments, and those with hidden disabilities (i.e. learning disabilities, chronic illness) benefited.

In a qualitative study conducted by Orr and Goodman (2010), 14 students in graduate and undergraduate programs participated in semi structured interviews that evaluated how well the student transitioned to an institution of higher learning. The interviews also included questions regarding faculty influences on student success while also evaluating the strengths or weaknesses of students with LD. Five common themes were identified: "1) emotional legacy of learning differently 2) importance of interpersonal relationships and social connectivity 3) student owned

characteristics and strategies for success 4) barriers to succeed 5) issues of diagnosis, disclosure, and identity” (Orr & Goodman, 2010, p. 3).

The majority of the students reported feeling “stupid, embarrassed, and ashamed” (Orr & Goodman, 2010, p. 3). The students reported needing to work harder than the average student to get decent grades. Some students reported, “the biggest impact it has hands down is self-esteem” (Orr & Goodman, 2010, p. 3). Students also reported the need for good friend and family support. This support helped the students have lower anxiety levels. To be involved in school activities has helped the students be more normal (Orr & Goodman, 2010).

In a study by Cawthon and Cole (2010), 110 students were recruited from an undergraduate program at a large institution to “explore the students- with-learning-disabilities’ perspectives on level of access to accommodations and resources at a highly competitive, four-year post-secondary institution” (p. 112). This study was a mixed-methods study with online surveys that contained questions with Likert scale, multiple-choice questions, and open-ended questions. The results showed that the accommodations used by students in high school made the transition to college. Some accommodations did decrease in the availability that included Assistive Technology (AT), tutoring, and alternate test format. In the university setting, some accommodations had been offered more frequently including a classroom assistant, separate setting for tests reduced course load, priority registration, and individual counseling (Cawthon & Cole, 2010). The findings also suggested that students in the university setting have more contact with the disability coordinator but less interaction with faculty regarding the disability. Students did report that faculty would not always give accommodations requested (Cawthon & Cole, 2010).

Faculty Perception

Several factors influence faculty attitudes toward disabilities. The success of individuals with disabilities and higher education is influenced by faculty perception and the drive to provide accommodations for students with disabilities. Several investigational results showed that faculty in large private four-year colleges had an overall positive attitude toward teaching and providing accommodations for students with disabilities (Burgstahler, 2005; Leyser, Vogel, Wyland, & Brulle, 1998; Leyser et al., 2003; Leyser & Greenberger, 2008; Murray, Wren, & Keys, 2008; Vogel, Lyser, Burgstahler, Sligar, & Zecker, 2006).

In earlier works, Minner and Prater (1984) found that faculty in four-year colleges often apply stereotypes, which may impede students' success. Minner and Prater (1984) results were in contrast to the predominantly positive attitudes expressed in most research done with mailed questionnaires. Nelson, Dodd and Smith (1990) found that faculty in education programs were more willing to make accommodations than those teaching in business or arts and sciences. There was a direct correlation between the faculty attitudes regarding disabilities and students being provided with accommodations.

Some studies have determined that faculty, staff, and administration lacked information regarding disability issues and were not compliant with particular accommodation requests. Hartman-Paul and Haaga (2002) examined student reactions to hypothetical situations in which faculty reacted positively or negatively to a request for accommodations. The authors found that the desire to demand future assistance was related to the attitude of the faculty to past requests for accommodations, where positive attitudes led to a greater number of requests. Attitudes of faculty concerning learning disabilities appeared to play a major role in determining students'

desire to request support for their learning disabilities and quite possibly may influence the students' success or ultimate failure.

Using 206 subjects who were faculty members from 9 separate institutions, Zhang, et al. (2009) conducted a correlational study to determine the interrelationships between “faculty knowledge, institutional support, personal beliefs, level of comfort interacting with students, faculty demographics, and their collective influence on the provision of reasonable accommodations” (p. 279). Findings showed that faculty was more likely to provide accommodations if the institution provided the faculty with support. Faculty felt they needed more knowledge on a student's potential. It was also reported that faculty were unsure about the legal requirements of providing accommodations.

Summary

The amount of literature pertaining to students perceptions of disabilities is limited specifically to certain types of disabilities. Providing students with accommodations that will help the student is important. The research showed that support services help students to be successful. With that, it is necessary to identify the students' feelings about the accommodations provided and the ease of getting support for a disability. It is important for teaching institutions to be proactive rather than reactive (Murray et al., 2009). In some recent studies, the students reported fear and anger regarding their disability. The fear was mainly related to the fear of being identified by their peers as having disabilities (Mott, 2004). Self-efficacy contributes to students' success. Students who have dealt with disabilities for some time have strong self-efficacy and self-esteem. The authors believe this is related to the need to overcome many obstacles to succeed (Blake & Rust, 2002). Further research in this area will assist four-year program faculty and administrators to make important funding requests and policy decisions

concerning institutional support and faculty professional development. Research would be an important step toward promoting equality and having a climate that ensures instruction accessibility for all types of learners (Lombardi, 2008).

CHAPTER III: METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This chapter gives an overview of the methods and the procedures in this research study. The sample size, population, ethical considerations, and demographics have been identified. The procedures that were followed in this study in regards to data collection and data analysis have been outlined. Finally, an overview of the quality check is defined.

Research Design

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore lived experiences of college students who utilized accommodations. This study explored any variations between students who are labeled as traditional undergraduate students, nontraditional undergraduate students, and graduate students that attended college at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education.

The researcher used a transcendental phenomenological design that allowed the participants to describe the experiences of the particular concept addressed in this study. Transcendental phenomenology has less focus on the researcher and more focus on the experiences of the participants and allows the researcher to collect data that replicates the human experience (Creswell, 2007). This study also included a short descriptive survey component to focus the content prior to the participants sharing their personal experiences with accommodations. A descriptive study is one that can describe the behaviors, attitudes, or characteristics of a particular group (Creswell, 2009).

Description of Sample

The sample included participants who utilized accommodations provided in higher education for a disability or barrier to learning. Merriam (2009) indicates, “sample size is dependent upon questions being asked, the data being gathered, the analysis in progress, and the

resources you have to support the study” (p. 80). Merriam goes on to recommend that knowing a minimum sample size is sufficient. Other studies on this topic identified a sample of six to 10 participants to obtain data saturation defined by when the information becomes redundant or no new information added (Merriam, 2009).

Criterion sampling was utilized for this study. Criterion sampling is “when all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007 p. 128). The criteria for this study included students who were:

- attending one of two institutions of higher education.
- utilizing accommodations while matriculating at one of the two institutions of higher education.
- 19 years or older.
- able to read and understand English.

Demographics

The demographics for this study included students who utilized accommodations at two private Midwestern institutions of higher education. All students who utilized accommodations during the time of data collection were invited to participate in the study. The students must be at least 19 years of age to participate. In this study, there were six participants. Of those six participants three were nontraditional undergraduate students, two were traditional undergraduate students, and one was a graduate student.

Description of Setting

The settings of the study were two private Midwestern institutions of higher education in an urban area. The total population of these combined institutions was approximately 2200 students. The male population accounts for about 12% of the student body. One college was

primarily a health professions college with the majority of students in the nursing program. The other college in this study was a private women's Catholic university with degrees in various areas from undergraduate to doctoral programs.

Data Gathering Tools

This qualitative phenomenological study utilized an online survey, which included descriptive survey questions, open-ended questions, sentence completion, and storytelling (Appendix B). The interviews were conducted online to protect the identity of the participants. The accommodations coordinator at each institution required the survey to be conducted online due to the sensitive nature of the topic and stating the population is considered vulnerable. The online survey was developed using Survey Monkey with the assistance of the Institutional Effectiveness & Quality Assurance Coordinator at one of the institutions. The online survey was then sent via email to the students who utilized accommodations by the accommodations coordinator at each institution. The email contained a link to the survey. Email allows the researcher to conduct an interview and allowed for complete anonymity of the participants (Merriam, 2009). "Online data collection is an electronic extension of familiar research techniques, widening the scope of data available to the researcher" (Merriam, 2009, p.157). The survey contained various methods of questioning such as questions on demographics, survey questions, sentence completion, and storytelling.

The first section of the survey requested information regarding the participants age, the participant's program either graduate or undergraduate, if the participant used accommodations at the time of the study and a short descriptive survey component. The survey was designed to elicit information related to the conceptual framework of the A3 Model. Questions 4, 5, 6, 14, 15, and 20 were designed to elicit information regarding accommodation. Questions 7, 8, and 9

were designed to elicit information regarding access. Questions 10 and 11 were designed to elicit information regarding advocacy. Questions 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, and 19 were designed to elicit information regarding efficacy. The final question was a narrative question designed to elicit information regarding a typical day living with a disability or an experience related to having a disability.

The survey questions were structured, open-ended questions that were presented to the participant in an online format. These questions were intended to “elicit views and opinions from the participants” (Creswell, 2009, p. 181). Sentence completion is a projective method used for the study of personality, first identified in 1939. Projective tests have less direction that could guide the participant toward a certain answer (Lindzey, 1961). These tests are highly multidimensional and allow for variation in responses. Sentence completion includes “completion techniques that present the participant with incomplete sentences and the participant is asked to complete or fill in the missing piece” (Lindzey, 1961, p. 224).

Storytelling is the final section of the tool. Storytelling allowed the participant to tell a story of the lived experiences of a situation. This technique “allows the researcher to describe the meaning of a concept or phenomenon that several individuals share” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 148).

Data Gathering Procedures

Once the researcher received IRB approval from both institutions, the researcher sent an email to both institutions’ accommodations coordinators with a link to the survey (Appendix B). The email (Appendix C) contained full directions on how to distribute the survey.

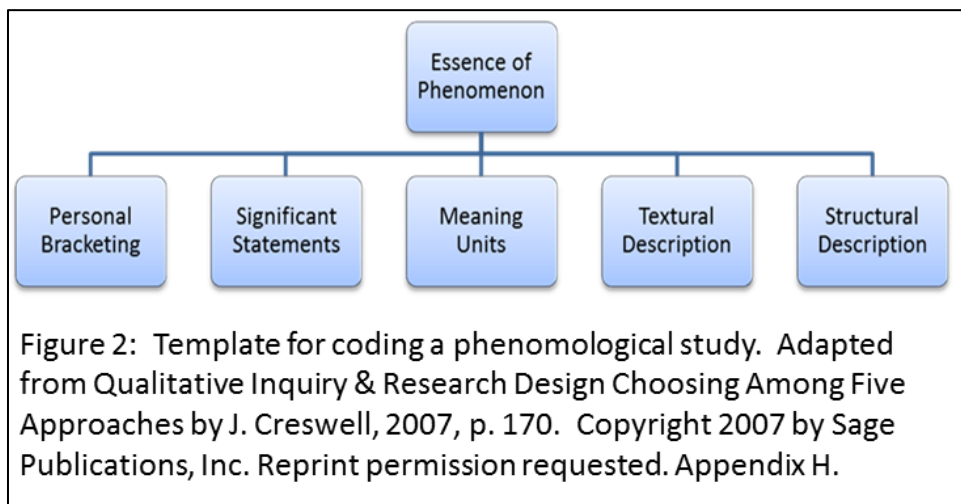
The students were recruited via an email sent from each college accommodations coordinator (Appendix D). The email explained the topic and focus of the research study. In the

email, the participants were provided a link to the qualitative survey using Survey Monkey. Attached to the email the student found full directions including the link to the study and the consent, which states the participant consented to participate in the study by responding to the survey (Appendix E) and Participant Rights (Appendix F). The participants were given two weeks to complete the survey. An adequate sample was not met, so a second reminder email was sent by the accommodations coordinator to all potential participants. The participants were given another two weeks to respond. Still a minimum sample of six participants was not met. A change in IRB was submitted to both institutions for the email to be sent a third and fourth time. Permission was received from both institutions (Appendix M and N). A third and fourth email reminder were sent. After the last reminder was sent a minimum of six participants had agreed to participate in the study.

Planned Data Analysis

Data was downloaded from Survey Monkey by the Institutional Effectiveness & Quality Assurance Coordinator, at one institution that participated in this study, and raw data was sent to the researcher. Data was reviewed by the researcher to gather the overall sense or meaning of the data. Transcripts were then organized and entered into NVivo 10 software. The researcher coded the data to determine themes using NVivo 10. Coding is “the process of segmenting and labeling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data” (Creswell, 2008, p. 251). The data was coded following a process as described by Creswell (2007). The process of coding begins with the researcher describing personal experiences regarding the phenomenon. This information is a description developed from the bracketing materials the researcher collected to reduce the amount of researcher opinion in the study. The researcher identified a list of statements, from the participants, that were recognized as being significant to the study. The

researcher then grouped these statements into larger groups of similar statements, which are identified by Creswell as being the meaning units. The researcher identified the “textural units” which are the description by the participants that describe what happened. The “structural description” was identified, which is how the experiences happened to the participant. Finally, the researcher described the direct quotes identified from the participants comprising the “essence” of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007 p. 159). The researcher finally conducted manual coding of the information. Figure 2 is a visual depiction of how the information was coded.



Demographic data was gathered and analyzed including age, gender, level in college, and prior utilization of accommodations. The data was coded to answer the question: What are the lived experiences of students who utilized accommodations at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education?

- What are the lived experiences of students utilizing accommodations who are labeled as traditional undergraduate students at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education?

- What are the lived experiences of students utilizing accommodations who are labeled as nontraditional undergraduate students at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education?
- What are the lived experiences of students utilizing accommodations who are in a graduate degree program at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education?

Data Quality Measures

An external audit was utilized to maintain data quality. An external audit was completed by “someone outside the study who reviews different aspects of the study and then provides an evaluation of the study” (Creswell, 2008, p. 267). This audit was conducted by the Dissertation Committee Chair.

This type of qualitative design utilized bracketing as way for the researcher to identify personal experiences or ideas in an effort to decrease researcher bias (Creswell, 2007). Bracketing was defined as “an investigator’s identification of vested interest, personal experiences, cultural factors, assumptions, and hunches that could influence how he or she views the study’s data” (Fischer, 2009, p. 583). The intended purpose was to allow the researcher to consider bias and emotion before conducting qualitative interviews (Creswell, 2007). The researcher entered thoughts and ideas regarding accommodations into a document kept in a password protected file. This was done prior to data analysis to eliminate bias.

An additional data quality measure that was used in this study was triangulation. Triangulation is defined as “the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research” (Creswell, 2008). The triangulation methods utilized in this study included different types of survey items such as survey questions, sentence completion, and storytelling.

Ethical Considerations

Permission to conduct research was received from both institutions (Appendix K and L) Permission to conduct the study was obtained by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and from administration at both institutions where the study was conducted (Appendix I and J). There was also a change to IRB with approval found in (Appendix M and N). All data collected was kept confidential, and will be kept in a password-protected computer file folder. The benefit of being included in this research study was to add to the body of knowledge about accommodations for college students with disabilities or barriers to learning.

Both colleges that participated in this study were in Nebraska. The age of majority in Nebraska is 19 years of age, therefore students younger than 19 were not asked to participate in this study. Consent was implied when the participant completed and submitted the online survey (College of Saint Mary, 2011, p.28).

Summary

This study looked at the perceptions of students with disabilities who received academic accommodations. After IRB approval, a qualitative study was completed to identify, the lived experiences of students that utilized accommodations. Data collection methods included an online survey with survey questions, sentence completion, and storytelling. The data collected was coded following a template on coding a phenomenological research study. Any ethical considerations were evaluated and measures were taken to ensure complete confidentiality of the participants and protection of the data.

Chapter IV: Results

This chapter contains the results identified in this study. This chapter contains participant demographics, how the data was analyzed, and finally all the themes and subthemes identified. In this chapter, the participant demographics have been displayed. Additionally, comments related to each theme and subtheme is displayed.

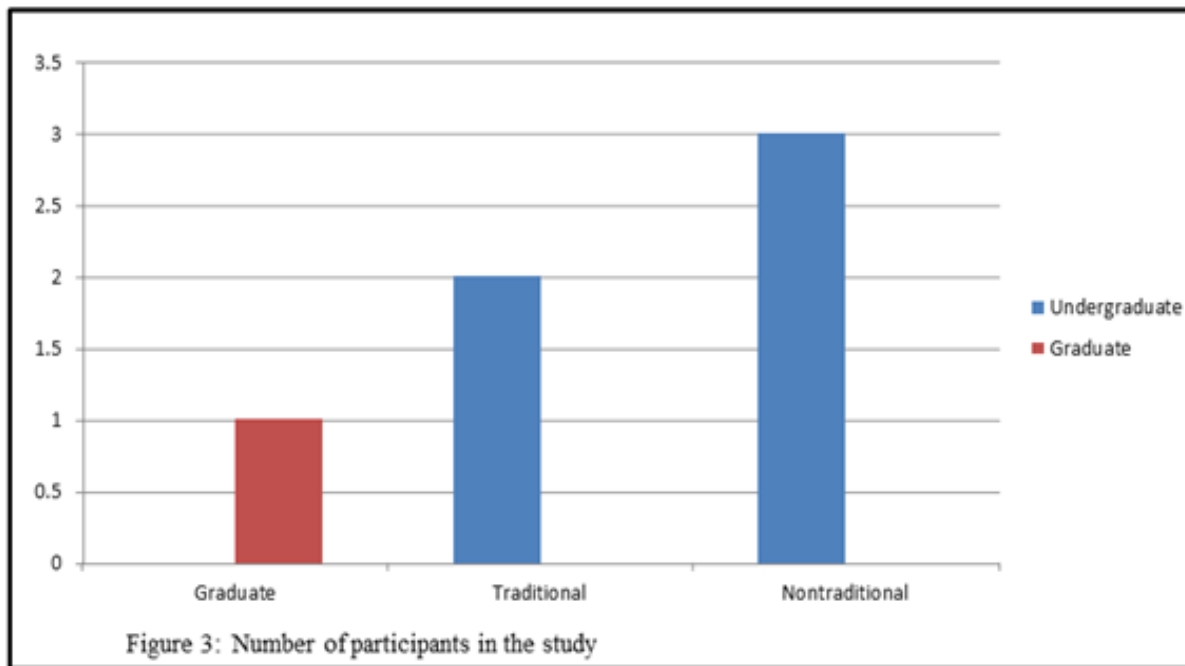
The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of college students who utilized accommodations at one of two Midwestern private institutions of higher education. This study explored any variations of experiences or perceptions of utilizing accommodations among students who are labeled as traditional undergraduate students, nontraditional undergraduate students, as well as graduate students that attended college at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education. The research question included:

What are the lived experiences of students who are utilizing accommodations at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education?

- What are the lived experiences of students utilizing accommodations who are labeled as traditional undergraduate students at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education?
- What are the lived experiences of students utilizing accommodations who are labeled as nontraditional undergraduate students at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education?
- What are the lived experiences of students utilizing accommodations who are in a graduate degree program at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education?

Demographics

In this study, six participants completed the survey. Of those six participants three were nontraditional undergraduate students, two were traditional undergraduate students, and one was a graduate student. Figure 3 indicated the breakdown of the participants in the study.



Of the six participants, 50% reported having an individualized learning plan (IEP) in high school and 50% did not. Also 100% of participants reported currently utilizing accommodations in higher education.

Data Analysis

The survey results were returned to the researcher in a spreadsheet. The data was cleaned prior to analysis. The survey results were then entered into NVivo 10© software for data analysis. Once the data was entered into NVivo 10© the researcher reviewed the data for significant statements. Additionally, the data was coded manually.

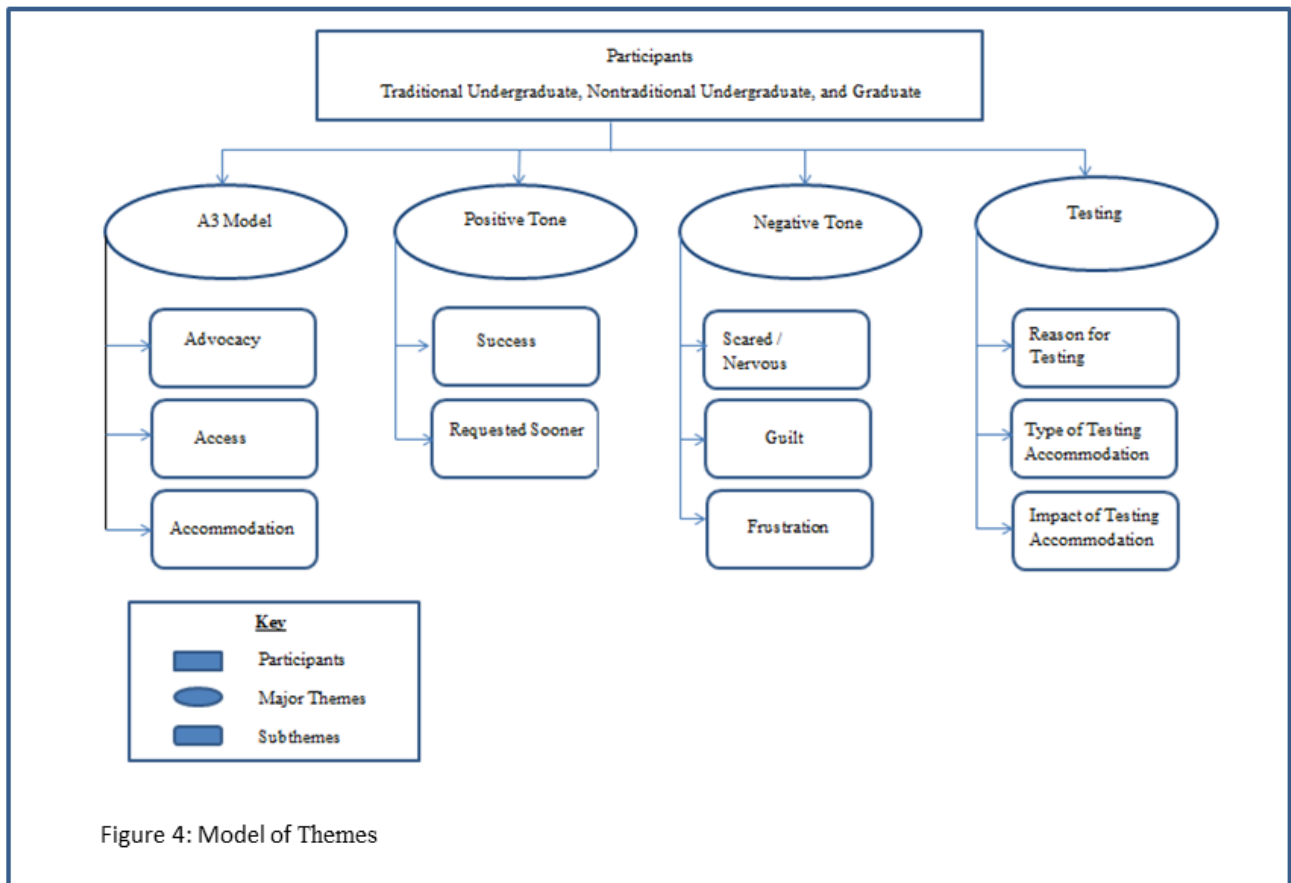
Significant statements are sentences or quotes that provide an ‘understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon’ (Creswell, 2013, p. 193). These significant statements were then organized into a larger group of information called “meaning units” or themes. The themes were identified by “aggregating information into large clusters of ideas and providing details that support the theme” (Creswell, 2007, p. 244). Within the NVivo 10© software these themes were organized into “nodes.” A node is a collection of specific information related to the topic being researched. The nodes contained the textural units. The textural units helped to identify “what the participants in the study experienced” (Creswell, 2013, p. 193). Additionally, the structural description was identified in the themes as being “how the experience happened” (Creswell, 2013, p. 194). Finally, the essence was reviewed. The essence is “what the participants experienced with the phenomenon and how they experienced it” (p. 194).

Themes

During data analysis, several themes and subthemes were identified. The major themes were A3 Model, testing accommodation, positive tone, and negative tone. Under each major theme, several subthemes were identified. Under A3 Model, the subthemes included advocacy, access, and accommodation. Testing accommodation had several subthemes that included reason for testing accommodation, type of testing accommodation, and impact of testing accommodation. Under the major theme positive tone, the subthemes included success and requested sooner. Under negative tone, the subthemes included frustration, scared/ nervous, and guilt.

Figure 4 represents the themes identified in the study and illustrated how the themes connect. The participants were revealed first which include traditional undergraduate,

nontraditional undergraduate, and finally graduate. These were all connected to the major themes of A3 Model, Positive Tone, Negative Tone, and Testing. Finally, all the subthemes, such as advocacy, access, accommodation, success, requested sooner, scared/ nervous, guilt, frustration, reason for testing, type of testing accommodation, and impact of testing accommodation.



A3 Model

The A3 Model was described as a continuum of advocacy, accommodation, and accessibility that change over time (Schwanke, et al., 2001). Under this major theme, three subthemes were identified in the data. These themes include advocacy, accommodation, and accessibility.

Advocacy

According to Edyburn (2010), “advocacy raises awareness of inequity and highlights the need for system change to respond to the needs of individuals with disabilities” (pp. 34-35). Of the six participants in this study, 50% were referred to the accommodations office. The remainder self-advocated for accommodations.

“I just requested them (accommodations) hoping I would get them.”

“I have always been able to get accurate accommodations.”

Two participants reported that a teacher had referred them to the accommodations office, while one other reported that the admissions staff referred them to the accommodations office. Those participants stated:

“My instructors noticed me struggling and helped me seek accommodations after my concussion.”

“I actually had a teacher recommend other accommodations.”

“During registration I was referred to the accommodations office for my accommodation request.”

Access

Accessibility is “an environment where access is provided to everyone at the same time” (Edyburn, 2005, p. 19). Of the six participants, 33% or two participants reported the institution provided clear instruction on how to get accommodations where 66% or four participants stated that it was a challenge to see how to obtain accommodations and what was offered to students with disabilities at the institution.

When the participants were asked if the institution provided clear instructions on how to get accommodations the participants reported:

“You have to seek them out, it is not common knowledge what the program offers.”

“The website was difficult to find my current institution accommodation instructions.”

When asked questions about access the participants responded:

“All the different outlets I was provided it helped me to adapt to my new learning style.”

“I was just so happy that there was something my school was willing to do to help me through such a hard time in my life.”

“Most professors were able to be accommodating without documentation.”

“I have been always able to get accurate accommodations.”

“One professor that did not accept accommodations without proof was difficult for me.”

Accommodations

Accommodation, as defined by Edyburn (2005), is a revision of “inaccessible environments and materials are modified and made available” (p. 18). The participants reported different types of accommodations that had been awarded. One participant, reported being hearing impaired, indicated that some accommodations provided were adaptive tools, tape recorder, closed captioning and transcripts for videos, and hearing aids. The other five participants indicated that testing accommodations were awarded.

Testing Accommodations

Five out of six participants indicated issues with testing. Subthemes identified were reasons for testing accommodations, types of testing accommodation, and impact of accommodations. One participant reported:

“I started noticing things were different for me after my traumatic brain injury (TBI), I couldn’t focus and had a hard time with reading comprehension. I was not doing very on

tests and my professor, who knew my background, referred me to the testing center to try a less stimulating environment.”

Reasons of Testing Accommodations

During the survey, students were asked why they sought testing accommodations. Most students reported failing or not doing well on tests. Many reported some form of test anxiety.

The participants reported:

“I was doing ok in classes, but had hit a wall taking tests in one of my semesters that could not figure out why I was performing so poorly on tests.”

“Noise during tests, test anxiety.”

“I had a TBI that changed my attention, reading comprehension, and left me with migraines”

“Testing was a struggle, class time was ok.”

Type of Testing Accommodation

The students were asked what types of testing accommodations were utilized. Types of testing accommodations reported by the participants were extended time on tests and a low distraction environment for exams. The participants reported:

“I am given a private room and extended time. I then have a reader who reads the entire test to me and I answer it. Sometimes I have to stop to take breaks if my head is bothering me or if I am having trouble focusing. They sometimes have to reread questions to me.”

“On a testing day, I am relaxed. I go to the achievement center and the Accommodations Coordinator always greets me positively when she sets me up for the testing. I relax and take the test and feel much more at ease than I did when testing with the class.”

“When exam day comes, I get there five minutes early to make sure the exam is available. Go into the extended test time room and remove the annoying ticking clock from the wall and start the exam until I am finished.”

Impact of Testing Accommodations

Participants also reported on the impact that testing accommodations has had on academic achievements. The participants indicated academic experiences are much improved after accommodations were awarded.

“I feel much more confident when I am taking tests.”

“Great, comfortable that I could take my test in here without pressure.”

“Having a reader for my tests greatly helped my outcome.”

“My academic experience is so much better now that I can properly comprehend questions read to me on tests.”

“I feel much more at ease than I did when testing with the class.”

Positive Tone

Some of the comments made by the participants were more of a positive tone. The identified subthemes include success and requested sooner. This section will give examples of each item.

Success

All of the participants reported some form of success after receiving accommodations. Participants reported better grades and overall improved outcomes.

Better Grades

“Once I started using the hearing aids and the interpreters my grades started going up, that made me feel good that I was getting effective communication.”

“I received a variation of an A.”

Improved Outcomes

“My academic experience is much better now.”

“Having a reader greatly helped my outcome.”

“All the different outlets I was provided helped me to adapt to my new learning style.”

“They help me meet my goals.”

Requested Sooner

Of the six participants, three stated that if the benefits of accommodations were known that the participants would have sought accommodations sooner. The participants report:

“I would have utilized it sooner, and now will recommend it if I see other students struggling.”

“Have gone there sooner.”

“Had asked for it sooner.”

Negative Tone

Additionally, there were themes identified that were more of a negative tone. Those items include scared/nervous, guilt, and frustration. These subthemes were presented here.

Scared/ Nervous

Scared and nervous were used interchangeably and were used by many participants when talking about accommodations. The participants all seemed to have different areas that caused them to be scared or nervous. The participants reported:

“I was nervous because I always had my mother to help me receive the accommodations throughout school and I felt as though I was just along for the ride.”

“Nervous that it would not help.”

“Nervous of their response.”

“Scared that they would not believe me.”

“I was scared that my TBI was going to hold me back.”

Guilt

Only one student reported feelings of being ashamed and two reported feelings of guilt, which were directly related. The guilt related to the fact that the participants had access to items that the rest of the students did not. The participants report:

“I know I added guilt to the other feelings I had on the first day of asking for accommodations. I felt it wasn’t fair for me to have accommodations if the normal population couldn’t have accommodations too.”

“I didn’t like knowing that I have access to things they do not such as power points that some teachers allow me to see so that I do not have to write as much so that I can pay attention.”

“Other students would think I had an advantage.”

“I felt it wasn’t fair for me to have accommodations if the normal population couldn’t have accommodations too.”

Frustration

Three of the participants reported feelings of frustration. Some of the frustrations identified were with seeking accommodations, faculty response, frustrations of not having academic success, and frustration with accommodations provided or removed. The participants stated:

“I felt frustrated when I went to the office.”

“The website was difficult to find my current institution accommodation instructions. The accommodation coordinator was only available twice a week for a few hours a day. The website was not updated to reflect the new policy of documentation proof on accommodations. I could

have saved hundreds of dollars if the accommodations coordinator and website would have told me before updating my disability proof documentation to acquire college accommodations.”

“They felt I was at the same level as everyone else which I disagree.”

“I was happy once I got them, now that some have been taken away not as happy.”

“The faculty seems to ignore any conversation about it.”

Research Questions

What are the lived experiences of students who are utilizing accommodations at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education?

- What are the lived experiences of students utilizing accommodations who are labeled as traditional undergraduate students at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education?
- What are the lived experiences of students utilizing accommodations who are labeled as nontraditional undergraduate students at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education?

In order to answer the first two sub-questions of this study the results have been displayed in Table 1, 2, 3, and 4. Table 1 shows the comparison of the traditional undergraduate participant and the nontraditional undergraduate participant responses related to the first major theme A3 Model.

Table 1:
Comparison of Traditional Undergraduate Participants to Nontraditional Undergraduate Participants related to the major themes of A3 Model of Universal Design in Education

Theme	Traditional Undergraduate	Nontraditional Undergraduate
Advocacy	“My instructors noticed me struggling and helped me seek accommodations after my concussion”	“I actually had a teacher recommend other accommodations” “During registration I was referred to the accommodations office for my accommodation request.”
Access	“All the different outlets I was provided it helped me to adapt to my new learning style” “I was just so happy that there was something my school was willing to do to help me through such a hard time in my life”	“You have to seek them out, it is not common knowledge what the program offers” “I have been always able to get accurate accommodations”
Accommodation	“extended time on tests” “low distraction environment for exams”	“closed captioning and transcripts for videos” “extended time on tests” “low distraction environment for exams”

Table 2 shows a comparison of the traditional undergraduate participant and the nontraditional undergraduate participant responses related to the second major theme testing accommodation. Of the five participants depicted here, only one student did not indicate having testing accommodations. Both groups stated that having testing accommodations has improved academic success.

Table 2:

Comparison of Traditional Undergraduate Participants to Nontraditional Undergraduate Participants related to the major theme Testing Accommodations

Theme	Traditional Undergraduate	Nontraditional Undergraduate
Testing Accommodation	“extended time on tests” “low distraction environment for exams”	“extended time on tests” “low distraction environment for exams”
Reason for Testing Accommodation	“I had a TBI that changed my attention, reading comprehension, and left me with migraines” “failing tests”	“Noise during tests, test anxiety” “I was doing ok in classes, but hit a wall taking tests in one of my semesters and could not figure out why I was performing so poorly on tests”
Impact of Testing Accommodation	“I feel great comfortable that I could take my test in here without pressure” “My academic experience is so much better now that I can properly comprehend questions read to me on tests” “Having a reader for my tests greatly helped my outcome”	“I feel more confident when I am taking a test” “I relax and take the test and feel much more at ease than I did when testing with the class”

Table 3, shows a comparison of the traditional undergraduate participant and the nontraditional undergraduate participant responses related to the third major theme positive tone. Both groups indicated success after getting accommodations and the participants would have requested accommodations sooner knowing what they know now about accommodations.

Table 3:
Comparison of Traditional Undergraduate Participants to Nontraditional Undergraduate
Participants related to the major theme Positive Tone

Theme	Traditional Undergraduate	Nontraditional Undergraduate
Success	"I feel great now that I can take my tests" "I am doing well in school" The school "provided me with other outlets of learning which helped me be successful in my learning"	"Once I started using the hearing aids my grades started going up, that made me feel good that I was getting effective communication" Academic experience is "a lot easier- I feel I can accomplish tasks at hand"
Requested Sooner	Asking the question knowing what I know now about the accommodation process I would: "Have gone sooner"	Asking the question knowing what I know now about the accommodation process I would: "Have asked for it sooner" "I would have utilized it sooner"

Table 4, shows a comparison of the traditional undergraduate participant and the nontraditional undergraduate participant responses related to the final major theme negative tone. The participants indicated feelings of being scared/ nervous, guilt, and frustration.

Table 4:
Comparison of Traditional Undergraduate Participants to Nontraditional Undergraduate Participants related to the major theme Negative Tone

Theme	Traditional Undergraduate	Nontraditional Undergraduate
Scared	<p>“scared they wouldn’t believe me”</p> <p>“I was scared my TBI was going to hold me back”</p> <p>“Nervous that it wouldn’t help”</p> <p>“I was scared and nervous initially”</p>	<p>“Scared”</p> <p>When asked about feelings of seeking accommodations: “I was nervous of their response”</p>
Guilt	<p>“Nervous... that other students would think I had the advantage”</p>	<p>“I didn’t like knowing that I have access to things they do not such as power points that some teacher allow me to see so that I do not have to write as much so that I can pay attention.”</p>
Frustration		<p>“I felt frustrated when I went to the office”</p> <p>“The faculty seems to ignore any conversations about it”</p> <p>“Now that some accommodations have been taken away not as happy”</p> <p>“They felt I was at the same level as everyone else which I disagree”</p>

The final research question was:

- What are the lived experiences of students utilizing accommodations who are in a graduate degree program at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education?

There was only one graduate participant in this study. Due to only having one graduate participant data analysis was limited, as themes could not be identified. Some of the themes identified for the undergraduate group did overlap with the graduate participant. Some of these included access, type of accommodation, frustration, nervous, and guilt. Some comments from the graduate participant included:

Access

“Most professors were able to be accommodating without documentation of a disability.”

“I have had a known learning disability since I was in preschool. I process what I’m reading slowly which can cause a longer exam time for me if there are many questions on the exam.”

Type of Testing Accommodation

“I knew I needed extended test time.”

Frustration

“The website was difficult to find my current institution accommodations instructions. The accommodations coordinator was only available twice a week for a few hours a day. The website was not updated to reflect the new policy of documentation proof on accommodations. I could have saved hundreds of dollars if the accommodations coordinator and website would have told me before updating my disability proof documentation to acquire college accommodations.”

Nervous

“I was nervous because I always had my mother to help me receive the accommodations throughout school and I felt as though I was just along for the ride.”

Guilt

“I felt it wasn’t fair for me to have accommodations if the normal population couldn’t have accommodations too.”

Results Summary

Data analysis was conducted to identify the lived experiences of students who utilized accommodations at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education. During data analysis, several themes and subthemes were revealed. The major themes are A3 Model, testing accommodation, positive tone, and negative tone. The subthemes identified advocacy, access,

accommodation, reason for testing accommodation, type of testing accommodation, impact of testing accommodation, success, requested sooner frustration, scared/ nervous, guilt, and frustration.

Triangulation was utilized in the study to enhance creditability of the data. Triangulation that was utilized in this study was different types of survey items such as survey questions, sentence completion, and storytelling. In the next chapter, the data obtained in this study will be correlated with current research to help develop and enhance the findings.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

This chapter will discuss the purpose of this study, research design, and interpretation of results, correlation to the literature and to the theoretical context. Limitations of the study have been identified. Additionally, implications for education and future research have been discussed.

This study was completed due to the increasing number of students, who are in need of many different types of reasonable accommodations for various disabilities, which are currently matriculating in college settings (Hadley, 2007). There have been numerous laws and amendments over the last 40 years approved and enacted to ensure that people with disabilities are not discriminated against. Due to these changes, a greater number of students with disabilities have entered post-secondary institutions (Francis, et al. 2007).

Research Questions and Interpretation

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of college students who utilized accommodations at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education. This study explored any variations of experiences or perceptions of the utilization of accommodations among students who are labeled as traditional undergraduate students, nontraditional undergraduate students, as well as graduate students attending college at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education. The research question asked:

What are the lived experiences of students who are utilizing accommodations at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education?

- What are the lived experiences of students utilizing accommodations who are labeled as traditional undergraduate students at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education?

- What are the lived experiences of students utilizing accommodations who are labeled as nontraditional undergraduate students at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education?
- What are the lived experiences of students utilizing accommodations who are in a graduate degree program at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education?

Correlation to the Literature and Theoretical Framework

Students with disabilities are protected against discrimination and must be provided a reasonable accommodation under the law. In order to understand the breadth of the problem a review of the evolution of the law is necessary. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was developed to protect persons who have disabilities. Specifically with regards to students with disabilities this act stated “Students with disabilities must be provided with appropriate educational services such as education in regular classrooms, education in regular classes with supplemental services and or related service” (29 U.S.C. § 701, para.1). According to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Subpart E “modifications should be made that would allow persons with disability an equal opportunity in the educational program” (Section 504, Subpart E, 104). The 2008 ADA, 42 U.S.C. 12201 (a) was enacted to “provide a clear and comprehensive mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities and provide broad coverage” (p.1).

The Theoretical Framework utilized in the study was the A3 Model. The model was based on a continuum of advocacy, accommodation, and accessibility (Schwanke, Smith, & Edyburn, 2001). The first phase of the conceptual framework was advocacy. According to Edyburn (2010) advocacy “raises awareness of inequity and highlights the need for system change to respond to the needs of individuals with disabilities” (pp. 34-35). Institutions of higher education have become partially responsible to determine a disability. The student must

self-identify the disability to the institution, request a reasonable accommodation, and provide evidence to support why the accommodation would be necessary (Heyward, 2011).

Of the six participants in this study, only two students came to college having previous experience with accommodations in high school both having IEPs. The other four realized there was a need for accommodations while in college. There were varying reports of who helped the participant with obtaining accommodations. One student reported a referral to the accommodations office was obtained when the student registered for classes. Two other students reported that a faculty member referred the students to the accommodations office and one participant identified a friend that recommended accommodations.

The next phase of the framework is access. Accessibility was “an environment where access is provided to everyone at the same time” (Edyburn, 2005, p. 19). Under the ADAAA of 2008, students are “guaranteed equal accesses to education” (Shaw, 2009). Access allows for students with disability an equal opportunity to learn (Edyburn, 2005). Participants in this study reported positive feelings regarding access. One participant reported that there was always access, another participant was glad that there were other outlets for learning provided, and glad the school was willing to help. Two of the participants reported trouble with access. One participant stated that access to accommodations had to be sought out that the information was not readily available. The other participant stated that the website and information were difficult to find.

The final part to the framework was accommodation. Accommodation is defined by Edyburn (2005) as revision of “inaccessible environments and materials are modified and made available” (p. 18). Students with disabilities must be provided the support necessary to help improve success in higher education. Skinner (2007) noted that the number of students with

documented disabilities enrolled in post-secondary institutions has increased steadily over the past 20 years. Some examples of accommodations include books-on-tape, note-takers, readers, extended time for examinations, use of word processors during examinations, and permission to take an examination at an alternative location.

Of the six participants, five identified the need for test accommodations. This included extended time on test, a reader for the exam, and the allowance to take the exam in a low distraction environment. The other participant, who was deaf, reported such accommodations as an interpreter, hearing aids, closed captioning, and transcripts for videos.

In this study, a major theme identified was testing accommodation. Under this major theme there were three subthemes including reason for accommodation, type of testing accommodation, and impact of testing accommodation. According to Tagayuna et al. (2005) the most frequently awarded accommodation was testing accommodations. Which was also the most frequently reported accommodation in this study. The most frequently reported types of testing accommodation were extended time on the test and a low distraction environment. The reasons for the testing accommodations included test anxiety and failing tests. All of the participants that reported testing accommodations stated that the scores improved after the participants received and utilized testing accommodation.

A major theme identified in this study was negative tone. This included the subthemes of feeling scared, guilt, and frustration. According to a study conducted by Orr and Goodman (2010), the results stated a few of the participants reported feeling frustrated with how hard the participant must work.

The participants in this study did report feelings of frustration; however, the frustrations reported were not the same as reported in the literature. There were internal and external factors

that were identified as being the cause of this feeling of frustration. External factors include accommodations taken away, with the website, availability of the accommodations coordinator, and faculty that ignore conversations about accommodations. An internal factor was that the participant felt frustrated with his or her performance before accommodations,

According to Orr and Goodman (2010) the participants reported feeling scared to talk about the disability and afraid of being found out. Another study conducted by Mott (2004) found that the students reported a fear of being found out, having to live with a label as a student with a LD, and fear of not being able to overcome their situation.

Again, the participants in this study reported feelings nervous or scared but the reports did not correlate with the literature. These all were identified external factors that were the cause of this feeling of scared or nervous. External factors include scared the accommodations coordinator not believing the participants need for accommodations, scared the accommodations would not help, nervous because the participant always had someone to help when in high school, and scared the participant's injury would hold them back.

There is a gap in the literature when it comes to reporting on positive outcomes of students with accommodations. Much of the literature reports on negative feelings including frustration and fear however no sources identified have included positive feelings from students. In this study, the participants reported positive feelings of success and requested sooner. Under the theme of success, the participants reported having improved grades and better outcomes. The participants reported grades started going up and reported having a variation of an "A." The participants also reported that the academic was much better now, the participant was able to meet goals, and that the participant was able to adapt to a new learning style. Positive outcomes are an area that could be explored further in future research.

Implications/Recommendations for Education

Clear Pathway for Students

Access and accommodation are two very important items related to working with students' with disabilities. Accommodations are modifications made to learning environments and inaccessible items are made available to students with disabilities. Access to accommodation allows students an equal opportunity to learn.

Students with disabilities may come from an environment in high school, having been guided and supported closely. Other students do not identify the need for accommodations until the need arises in college. Students in higher education are expected to self-disclose disabilities and need to be self-directed in seeking accommodations (NJCLD, 2007). One recommendation identified during this study was to provide students with a clear path to obtain accommodations and provide access to accommodations in the college setting. This includes a clear pathway for students with disabilities to seek help and education regarding disabilities and accommodations that could be provided.

Each institution has different requirements regarding accommodations. The pathway outlined here was modeled after some benchmark institutions where the path to accommodations was detailed in a clear manner. One item important to have includes verbiage in each course syllabi. This information states that if accommodations are needed to contact accommodations office and then the contact information for the accommodations office at the institution.

Each institutions website should have a clear access to the accommodations site. This site should include some education on disabilities including the laws and regulations regarding disabilities, describe documentation requirements, contact information, and potential accommodations provided which includes a description of the accommodation and how this

could help a student. On the website for University of Nebraska Lincoln (UNL), there is a very clear path to accommodations. Under the accommodations page there is information for prospective students, current students, forms, and resources staff. Under the home page of the accommodations site is a resource on laws and rights along with history of accommodations. The prospective student site has resources related to transition to college, documentation requirements, instructions on registering with the accommodations office, confidentiality, service animals, and admissions appeal process. Under the current students, many items are the same with the addition of information regarding types of accommodations with detailed information about each accommodation, housing, study skill classes, accommodation resource center which includes resources, training, and technology assistance to the student with disability, temporary services and the grievance policy. Additionally there is a forms page, interpreter services page, and finally resources for faculty page (UNL, nd.). This information is very clear and easy to follow which is extremely important when providing access and accommodation to students with disabilities.

Another site with a clear pathway to obtaining accommodations is Johns Hopkins University that contains much of the same information presented previously on the UNL site. This site also includes further information for faculty to accommodate students including a tab on how to teach students with accommodations. There is also a clear tab for disability law on the site (Johns Hopkins University, nd.).

Faculty and Staff Development

Advocacy and access are two very important factors relate to success of students with disability. Advocacy is when a need is identified and changes are made to accommodate a student's needs. Access to accommodation, as stated before, allows students an equal

opportunity to learn. Faculty and staff have a major role in advocacy and access for students with disabilities.

Faculty has an essential role when providing students with access. Faculty attitudes regarding disabilities have been shown as directly related the faculty motivation to provide accommodations to students with disabilities. According to Katsiyannis, Zhang, Landmark and Reber (2009) faculty believe it is unfair to provide students with disabilities reasonable accommodations and not provide accommodation to the other students and that the students receiving accommodations are at an advantage over the other students. The faculty report concerns about providing accommodations, and identify myths regarding students with disabilities, and a lack of knowledge regarding disabilities. This lack of knowledge allows the faculty to justify reasons for not providing reasonable accommodations by stating that it decreases the quality of the program and does not prepare the student for real world situations. The second recommendation identified in the current study is education of faculty and staff on common concerns and myths regarding students with disabilities, the requirements for accommodations, disabilities law, and opportunities available to students with disabilities.

Faculty have reported, in the literature, the desire to have increased knowledge of the regulations, disability laws, federal mandates, and increased institutional support when providing accommodations or making content accessible. With the increased knowledge and faculty support, the faculty was more likely to provide accommodations to students with disabilities (Zhang et al., 2009). Faculty need to be educated on various areas related to accommodations.

Faculty and staff development that needs to take place includes adequate knowledge of disability laws, federal mandates, court rulings, and amendments made to the laws. The faculty and staff need education regarding accommodations that are available, how the accommodations

can help a student with disabilities, and how accommodations are awarded. Additionally the faculty should be educated regarding universal design that allows access to all students at the same time. This should include teachings regarding teaching strategies and research (Katsiyannis, et al., 2009).

Faculty and staff development should take shape in a variety of ways. There should be large group introduction of accommodations, general awareness, and some education based on providing students with accommodations. Second there should be smaller workshops where more in-depth education on the laws, regulations, requirements, ideas on how to support students with disabilities, and time to ask individual questions regarding the provision of accommodations. Finally, individual follow up should be provided on a student case by case basis. Education regarding accommodations will change over time based on increased knowledge of accommodation requirements and increased appreciation of the accommodation services provided at the institution (Shaw & Scott, 2003). The presentation style should vary including printed publications, online resources, short presentations, online presentations, and panel discussions with accommodations experts (University of Washington, 2015).

Limitations of this Study

There are some limitations identified with this study. One limitation included the low number of participants. There were six participants in this study. Although the minimum number of participants was met it is likely that true representation of the population is not met. The study was designed to include graduate students, traditional undergraduate students, and nontraditional undergraduate students. Of the six participants in this study, there was only one graduate student; because of this, the graduate population was not completely represented.

Another limitation of the study related to the institutions that participated in the study.

Although two separate Midwestern, private institutions were used in this study the institutions were very similar in demographics and location. This similarity can limit the generalizability of the findings to the rest of the institutions in the country.

The study was conducted using an online survey with open-ended questions to ensure the identity of the participants as anonymous. According to Merriam (2009), the researcher in a qualitative study is the primary instrument for data collection. Because this study was online, the translation of the data could have been lost. In addition, the persons with disabilities may have a limited use of technology.

Future Research

Based on the findings of this study there are some areas identified for future research. The study could be used in the future to help educate incoming college students and faculty on the experiences of students who have been awarded accommodations in order to make improvements in the process. Based on the data the following recommendations for future research were developed:

1. Repeat the study using a larger sample size,
2. Conduct a study using different program types to evaluate the differences such as community colleges, public and private colleges and universities, and career focused institutions, and
3. Conduct a study which looks directly at the outcomes of accommodations awarded.
4. Another area to be researched is the correlation between self-efficacy and student with disabilities' academic performance.

Summary

Awarding appropriate reasonable accommodations to students in the college setting is crucial to the students' academic success. Once the student gets to postsecondary education the rules and regulations change a bit from what the student may be accustomed. Now the students are required to advocate for themselves, request reasonable accommodations, and explain why those accommodations would be necessary. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of college students who currently utilize accommodations at two Midwestern private institutions of higher education. Three research questions were addressed and ten major themes were identified in the data along with nine subthemes.

According to the A3 Model utilized as the framework for this study three areas are important to providing students with accommodations. The three sections include advocacy, access, and accommodation. This framework is based on a continuum, which was described that the amount of time commitment will change over time and that the amount of investment will change as needed for each individual student (Schwanke, et al., 2001). This was evident in this study, as there were students who came to college with IEPs from high school where others identified the need for accommodations while in college.

The most awarded accommodation was testing accommodation (Tagayuna et al., 2005). This was also proven here with five out of six participants reported testing accommodations. This knowledge will help educate faculty about the most widely utilized accommodation and help to develop educational opportunities for faculty and students about this type of accommodation and any other type of accommodation utilized.

Additional themes were identified related to a positive tone and a negative tone. A gap in the literature was identified related to the positive tone and further research is needed to explore

the success and positive outcomes related to accommodations. The theme of negative tone was identified in the literature however, the themes identified in this study varied from the literature.

This study will help to advance the knowledge of the student's perceptions and experiences related to having accommodations in the college setting. This information can be utilized when educating faculty, staff, and students regarding accommodations. Further research is needed utilizing a larger sample size and varying college and university settings. Due to the increasing number of students with disabilities entering postsecondary education, relatively recent changes in the law, the requirement to provide students with disabilities reasonable accommodations, and the fact that students with disabilities must self-identify, it is necessary to understand students' experiences with the process.

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doi:10.1177/0741932509338348.

Appendix A

Permission was obtained from Dave Edyburn, Ph.D. in the following email.

Renee:

Likewise, thanks for the quick response.

That model is known as The A3 Model.

Please accept this email as written permission for you to reproduce the image of The A3 Model in your dissertation and subsequent publications based upon your dissertation research.

Please use the following acknowledgement:

Source: Schwanke, T.D., Smith, R.O., & Edyburn, D.L. (2001). A3 model diagram developed as accessibility and universal design instructional tool. RESNA 2001 Annual Conference Proceedings, 21, pp. 205-207, RESNA Press. Reproduced with permission from the r2d2 Center, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Best wishes!

Dave

Dave Edyburn, Ph.D.
Professor
Dept of Exceptional Education
Co-Director, r2d2 Center

----- Original Message -----

From: Renee Ruhkamp <RuhkampRenee@clarksoncollege.edu>

To: Dave Edyburn <edyburn@uwm.edu>

Sent: Mon, 29 Oct 2012 08:45:29 -0500 (CDT)

Subject: RE: Permission Inquiry

Hi, Thank you for the quick response. The image I am looking to use is attached. Thank you for the consideration to use the framework for my dissertation.

Renee Ruhkamp MSN, RN
Assistant Professor
Clarkson College

Office 552-6546 Pager 888-1480
ruhkamprenee@clarksoncollege.edu

Dave Edyburn [edyburn@uwm.edu]

To:
M
Ruhkamp, Renee
Monday, October 29, 2012 8:36 AM

You replied on 10/29/2012 8:45 AM.
Renee:

Thanks for this note.

Can you send me a copy of the document or image you are requesting permission to use? I don't see any problem granting permission but your description does not match up with anything I can put my hands on.

Dave

----- Original Message -----

From: Renee Ruhkamp <ruhkamprenee@clarksoncollege.edu>
To: edyburn@uwm.edu
Sent: Sat, 27 Oct 2012 18:57:42 -0500 (CDT)
Subject: Contact Form (Renee Ruhkamp)

Name: Renee Ruhkamp

Email Address: ruhkamprenee@clarksoncollege.edu

Select one of the following to describe the nature of your inquiry. Other

Enter your message in the space provided. Hi, I am a student in a doctorate program at College of Saint Mary in Omaha NE. My topic is student perceptions of the accommodation process. I am wanting to use the Conceptual Framework of ACCESS-ed (2001). I am asking for permission to utilize this framework in my dissertation. If that would be ok would you please let me know.
Thank you
Renee Ruhkamp EdD(c), MSN, RN

Lived Experiences of Undergraduate and Graduate Students Utilizing Accommodations

The purpose of this survey is to document the lived experiences of students who utilize accommodations while in college. The inclusion criteria of this study are college students who are 19 years of age or older and using accommodations for a disability this semester. The estimated time to complete the survey is 30 to 60 minutes.

1. Your current age is?
 - a. 18 and younger. If you check this box this will conclude your survey. Thank you for your time.
 - b. 19-23
 - c. 24 or older

2. Which of the following best describes your level in college?
 - a. undergraduate
 - b. graduate

3. Accommodations are modifications made to create an equal opportunity learning environment. Are you using accommodations in college this semester?
 - a. yes If yes, please proceed to the survey.
 - b. no If no to this question. Thank you for your time. This is the end of the survey.

4. What type of accommodations do you currently use? Please select all that apply.
 - a. Faculty notes
 - b. Textbook in an alternate format
 - c. Low distraction environment for exams
 - d. Interpreters
 - e. Course substitutions
 - f. Adaptive furniture
 - g. Adaptive tools
 - h. Tape recorder
 - i. Note takers
 - j. Podcasts
 - k. Extended time on tests
 - l. Others please specify _____

5. When you were in high school, did you have an individual education plan (IEP)?
 - a. yes
 - b. no

c. If yes, what types of accommodations did you use in high school?

6. What condition(s) or limitation(s) made you seek accommodations in college?

7. Please explain how you felt when you asked about accommodations for the first time in college.

8. The day I went to the accommodations office for help I felt: Select all that apply.

- Angry
- Annoyed
- Anxious
- Confused
- Defeated
- Exhausted
- Fatigued
- Fearful
- Flustered
- Frustrated
- Isolated
- Nervous
- Scared
- Capable
- Confident
- Determined
- Excited
- Fulfilled
- Happy
- Important
- Inspired
- Proud
- Relaxed

Relieved

Rewarded

Satisfied

- a. Please identify any other feelings you may have experienced that are not listed above.

- b. Please describe any feelings you indicated above

- 9. Does your institution provide you with clear instructions on how to get accommodations?

- a. yes

- b. no

- c. Other please explain

- 10. Did anyone refer you to the accommodations office?

- a. yes

- b. no

- c. If yes, please describe the role or relationship of the person who referred you for accommodations

- 11. Did you approach your college accommodations office on your own?

- a. yes

- b. no

- c. If yes, please describe what you were experiencing in college that made you seek accommodations.

12. What was your college academic experience like prior to receiving accommodations?

13. Describe your college academic experiences now that you are utilize accommodations?

14. Are your current accommodations meeting your needs?

- a. yes
- b. no
- c. Please explain

15. Do you feel that you are treated differently than other college students not using accommodations?

- a. yes
- b. no
- c. If yes, who is treating you differently and how?

16. When you experience a difficult learning situation what is your level of confidence in your ability to solve this difficult situation?

- a. 1. Complete Confidence 2. Some Confidence 3. Neutral 4. Low Confidence 5. No Confidence
- b. How do you overcome difficult learning situations in your education?

17. When I spoke with the faculty regarding my accommodation I felt:

18. When people ask me about my academic success I feel:

19. Knowing what I know now about the accommodations process, I would:

20. Please tell a story of a specific experience you have had since you started using accommodations during college or tell about a typical day using accommodations.

Thank you for your time in completing this survey!

Dear Coordinator,

My name is Renee Ruhkamp and I am a doctoral student at College of Saint Mary. I am conducting a research study on The Lived Experiences of Students Education Utilizing Accommodations in Higher Education. The students are being asked to complete an online survey.

I would appreciate it if you would send the attached email to all students who are currently using accommodations. The email contains two attachments from the IRB committee explaining the participant's rights and an explanation of the study. Both institutions have given permission to conduct the research in this study. Within the email, there is a link to the study. There are no identifiers on the survey and the participant's identity is anonymous. If there are not sufficient responses a follow up email in two weeks asking you to send out a second email to the same group of students requesting participation in the study.

I appreciate your time.

Sincerely,

Renee Ruhkamp EdD(c), MSN, RN

Email: rrehkamp79@csm.edu

Phone: 402-278-2413

Dear Student,

My name is Renee Ruhkamp and I am a doctoral student at College of Saint Mary. I am conducting a qualitative research project to identify The Lived Experiences of Students Utilizing Accommodations in Higher Education. I am asking if you would take a few minutes to complete the attached survey.

The criteria for inclusion is that you are at least 19 years of age or older, enrolled in a four year institution of higher education, and currently receive accommodations at the current college where you attend. There are open-ended questions regarding your experiences while receiving accommodations with some sentence completion and a narrative. This survey will take approximately 30 to 60 minutes to complete. All information will be kept confidential and the survey contains no identifying information, which will ensure that your identity is anonymous.

By clicking on the link below, you will be directed to the survey. By completing the survey, you give implied consent to be included in this study. Please complete the survey within two weeks of receiving this email.

This email was distributed to you by the accommodations coordinator at your institution in order to protect your identity. The researcher was not provided any personal information. This study is completely anonymous.

Link to survey:

Thank you for your time to complete this survey.

Sincerely,

Renee Ruhkamp EdD(c), MSN, RN



Date:

LIVED EXPERIENCES OF UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE STUDENTS
UTILIZING ACCOMMODATIONS
IRB # (CSM 1402)

Dear Students,

You are invited to take part in a research study because you are a student who is attending an institution of higher education. You are utilizing accommodations while in the institution of higher education and you are 19 years of age or older. The purpose of this study is to identify the lived experiences of college students utilizing accommodations for disabilities or identified barriers to learning while attending an institution of higher learning. This research study is being conducted as part of the requirements of my Doctorate of Education program at College of Saint Mary.

You may receive no direct benefit from participating in this study, but the information gained will be helpful to add to the body of knowledge regarding the experiences of students who receive accommodations. The information from this study will help enhance practices surrounding accommodations for students and faculty.

Should you decide to participate you are being asked to complete the following on-line survey, which should take approximately (30 minutes to 1 hour) to complete. Your participation is strictly voluntary. Furthermore, your response or decision not to respond will not affect your relationship with College of Saint Mary or any other entity. Please note that your responses will be used for research purposes only and will be strictly confidential. No one at College of Saint Mary will ever associate your individual responses with your name or email address. The information from this study may be published in journals and presented at professional meetings.

Your completion and submission of the questionnaire indicate your consent to participate in the study. You may withdraw at any time by exiting the survey. This study does not cost you in any way, except the time spent completing the survey. There is no compensation or known risk associated with participation.

There is no known risk to you from being in this research study. However, talking about this topic may make you feel upset or uncomfortable. If you feel this way, notify the researcher so they can provide you with support resources.

Please read *The Rights of Research Participants*. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the College of Saint Mary Institutional Review Board, 7000 Mercy Road, Omaha, NE 68144 (402-399-2400).

Thank you sincerely for participating in this important research study. If you have comments, problems or questions about the survey, please contact the researcher(s).

If you are 19 years of age or older and agree to the above please proceed to (put in link to survey) and begin the survey.

Sincerely,

Renee Ruhkamp EdD(c), MSN, RN
Phone: 402-552-6546
Email: rruhkamp79@csm.edu

Appendix F

**THE RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS*****AS A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT AT COLLEGE OF SAINT MARY
YOU HAVE THE RIGHT:**

1. TO BE TOLD EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE RESEARCH BEFORE YOU ARE ASKED TO DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT TO TAKE PART IN THE RESEARCH STUDY. The research will be explained to you in a way that assures you understand enough to decide whether or not to take part.
2. TO FREELY DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT TO TAKE PART IN THE RESEARCH.
3. TO DECIDE NOT TO BE IN THE RESEARCH, OR TO STOP PARTICIPATING IN THE RESEARCH AT ANY TIME. This will not affect your relationship with the investigator or College of Saint Mary.
4. TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RESEARCH AT ANY TIME. The investigator will answer your questions honestly and completely.
5. TO KNOW THAT YOUR SAFETY AND WELFARE WILL ALWAYS COME FIRST. The investigator will display the highest possible degree of skill and care throughout this research. Any risks or discomforts will be minimized as much as possible.
6. TO PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY. The investigator will treat information about you carefully and will respect your privacy.

7. TO KEEP ALL THE LEGAL RIGHTS THAT YOU HAVE NOW. You are not giving up any of your legal rights by taking part in this research study.

8. TO BE TREATED WITH DIGNITY AND RESPECT AT ALL TIMES.

THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ASSURING THAT YOUR RIGHTS AND WELFARE ARE PROTECTED. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS, CONTACT THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD CHAIR AT (402) 399-2400. *ADAPTED FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA MEDICAL CENTER, IRB WITH PERMISSION.

Appendix G

To Renee Ruhkamp
Wednesday, July 17, 2013 2:49 PM

Renee, you have my permission, but SAGE Publications holds the copyright to my material and you need to seek their permission as well. Contact them at Sagepub.com and go to the "permissions" page. Thanks and good luck with your project. John

To:jcreswell1@unl.edu
Wednesday, July 17, 2013 10:31 AM

Hello Professor Creswell,

My name is Renee Ruhkamp M.S.N., R.N. and I am in the Ed.D. program at College of Saint Mary in Omaha NE. I am completing my dissertation which is a qualitative study researching "The Lived Experiences of Students Utilizing Accommodations". I was wondering if I could have your permission to utilize figure 8.4 found on p. 170 in your book *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design Choosing Among Five Approaches* (2007). I would like to utilize the figure in my dissertation along with the description of the model.

Thank you for your consideration.
Sincerely,

Renee Ruhkamp Ed.D.(c), M.S.N., R.N.

Appendix H

Copyright Clearance Center Page 1 of 1


GET PERMISSION
PRODUCTS & SOLUTIONS
EDUCATION
ABOUT US

1 PAYMENT
2 REVIEW
3 CONFIRMATION

Step 3: Order Confirmation

Thank you for your order! A confirmation for your order will be sent to your account e mail address. If you have questions about your order, you can call us at +1.855.239.3415 Toll Free, M-F between 3:00 AM and 6:00 PM (Eastern), or write to us at info@copyright.com. This is not an invoice.

Confirmation Number: 11241424
Order Date: 07/11/2014

Payment Information

Renee Ruhkamp
 rruhkamp79@csu.edu
 +1 (402)4268064
 Payment Method: n/a

If you paid by credit card, your order will be finalized and your card will be charged within 24 hours. If you choose to be invoiced, you can change or cancel your order until the invoice is generated.

Order Details

Qualitative inquiry & research design : choosing among five approaches

<p>Order detail ID: 65518809 Order License Id: 3426080102400 ISBN: 978-1-4129-1607-3 Publication Type: Book Publisher: SAGE PUBLICATIONS INC Author/Editor: CRESWELL</p>	<p>Permission Status: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Granted Permission type: Republish or display content Type of use: Republish in a thesis/dissertation View details</p>
---	---

Note: This item will be invoiced or charged separately through CCC's **RightsLink** service. [More info](#) **\$ 0.00**

Total order items: 1

This is not an invoice.

Order Total: 0.00 USD

Appendix I



February 17, 2014

Dear Ms. Ruhkamp,

Congratulations! The Institutional Review Board at College of Saint Mary has granted approval of your study titled *Lived Experiences of Undergraduate and Graduate Students Utilizing Accommodations*.

Your CSM research approval number is **CSM 1402**. It is important that you include this research number on all correspondence regarding your study. Your study is in effective through March 1, 2015. If your research extends beyond that date, please submit a "Change of Protocol/Extension" form which can be found in Appendix B at the end of the College of Saint Mary Application Guidelines posted on the IRB Community site.

Please submit a closing the study form (Appendix C of the IRB Guidebook) when you have completed your study.

Good luck with your research! If you have any questions or I can assist in any way, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,
Vicky Morgan

Dr. Vicky Morgan
Director of Teaching and Learning Center
Chair, Institutional Review Board * irb@csm.edu

Appendix J

101 South 42 St. Omaha, NE 68131-2739 PH 402 552 3100 TF 800 647 5500



March 14, 2014

Primary Investigator: Ms. Renee Ruhkamp
Clarkson College

Dear Ms. Ruhkamp:

Clarkson College's Institutional Review Board has received your application for your proposed study: "Lived Experiences of Undergraduate and Graduate Students Utilizing Accommodations." The Clarkson College IRB #2014.03.05 was assigned to the approved application.

Please add the words "This research has been approved by the Clarkson College Institutional Review Board, IRB #2014.03.05" to your consent form, as applicable.

Best wishes on the successful completion of your project. If for some unforeseen reason this project extends beyond one year, you will need to complete additional paperwork to the IRB. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions regarding the process or need any other assistance from Clarkson College's IRB in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patricia Brennan".

Patricia Brennan, PhD
IRB Co-Chairperson
Clarkson College

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrea Nebel".

Andrea Nebel, PT, DPT
IRB Co-Chairperson
Clarkson College

Appendix K

Hi Renee,

We will be available to help you with your request and approval. Mary will be able to assist you since Vanessa's hours are so limited. Good luck on your research and let me know if there is anything else you need from our department.

Angela Fernandez

Angela Fernandez
Director of the Achievement Center
Retention Specialist
College of Saint Mary
7000 Mercy Road
Omaha, NE 68106
afernandez@csm.edu
402-399-2366

Appendix L

101 South 42 St. Omaha, NE 68131-2739 PH 402 552 3100 TF 800 647 5500



February 13, 2013

College of St. Mary IRB Committee

Dear Committee,

Clarkson College will participate in the data collection phase of Renee Ruhkamp' s dissertation:

Lived Experiences of Students in Higher Education Utilizing Accommodations

The following represents an agreement between the Clarkson College and the collection of data in relation to requirements involving the research conducted by Ms. Ruhkamp as degree requirements for College of St. Mary.

- Clarkson will agree to cooperate with Ms. Ruhkamp to conduct the research.
- Ms. Ruhkamp must comply with the IRB guidelines and processes including
 - Original intent of the study submitted to IRB
 - Methodology and data collection completely outlined and approved by the College of St. Mary's IRB committee.
- Ms. Ruhkamp will conduct the study and provide a statement to the survey participants describing confidentiality safeguards for any identification of data in the survey, and proper disposal of data after the study.

This letter of approval will only be valid upon acceptance by the College of St. Mary's IRB committee for the research conducted by Renee Ruhkamp.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dr. Jody Woodworth".

Dr. Jody Woodworth, VPAA
Clarkson College
131 S. 42nd St.
Omaha, NE 68131
(402)552-3373
woodworth@clarksoncollege.edu

ClarksonCollege.edu

Appendix M



April 23, 2014

Dear Ms. Ruhkamp,

The Institutional Review Board reviewed your request for a change of protocol for your study *Lived Experiences of Undergraduate and Graduate Students Utilizing Accommodations* (IRB number CSM 1402).

While your request is to send your survey additional times until at least the minimum number of participants are obtained, the IRB will give you permission to send it out two more times only. In the event your minimum number is still not obtained, you will then need to request permission for an additional change of protocol that would expand the number of institutions utilized.

If you do not anticipate obtaining your minimum number of participants even with the additional two email administrations, you may want to consider submitting a new request for change of protocol which would include more institutions now. It is your decision. If I do not hear back from you by April 28, 2014, I will assume you are sending your original emails twice more.

Continued good luck with your research! If you have any questions or I can assist in any way, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Vicky Morgan

Dr. Vicky Morgan

Director of Teaching and Learning Center

Chair, Institutional Review Board * irb@csm.edu

Appendix N

Hi Renee,
You can send it.
Thanks,
Andreia

You replied on 4/25/2014 9:21 AM.

Hi Renee
Thank you
Andreia and Pat

-----Original Message-----

From: Ruhkamp, Renee
Sent: Thursday, April 24, 2014 12:37 PM
To: Clarkson College IRB
Subject: IRB change

Hi I am requesting an extension of my IRB. I currently have 4 completed surveys and need six. So I would like permission to send out 2 additional times. The change form is attached. I have received approval from CSM and that letter is attached as well.

Renee Ruhkamp EdD(c), MSN,RN