

ACCOMMODATION ACCESS BY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY
COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES

BY



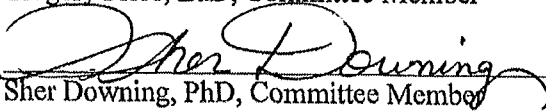
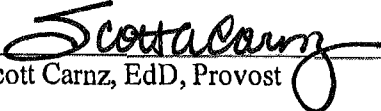
Denise Hoogendoorn

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

CITY UNIVERSITY OF SEATTLE

2019

Approval Signatures:

 Benjamin Gaines, EdD, Committee Chair	<u>12/9/19</u> Date
 Gregory Price, EdD, Committee Member	<u>12/16/19</u> Date
 Sher Downing, PhD, Committee Member	<u>12-12-19</u> Date
 Scott Carnz, EdD, Provost	<u>12.16.19</u> Date

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ABSTRACT

Despite the increase of students with disabilities (SWD) attending college, students who self-identify with specific learning disabilities (SLD) are not accessing the accommodations needed to assist them with their academic success (Travis, 2014). Postsecondary institutions need to identify the barriers hindering SWD access to accommodations that assist them in achieving their academic goals. The researcher used a qualitative methodology with a descriptive, phenomenological approach to explore the experiences of accessing accommodations for a convenience sample of students who self-identified with SLD and were attending Southern California community colleges. Results from data analysis of the transcriptions of semistructured interviews based on self-advocacy and self-determination theories provided insight into the importance of accessing accommodations for the participants. Using Vagle's (2014) whole-part-whole coding method in analyzing the data, the researcher found nine categories that resulted in three practical themes—assigned advocates, meeting with instructors, and positive school experiences—that support recommendations for postsecondary staff and students with SLD to assist in accommodation access and help overcome barriers when accessing accommodations. Understanding the experiences of SWD in obtaining their accommodations on campuses is valuable for college and university staff and administrators, policymakers, and the students themselves. With the findings from this study, educators can improve, enhance, and change policies, procedures, and practices regarding the accessibility of accommodations that assist SWD in reaching their academic goals. Recommended future research includes exploring accommodation access to other disability groups and other types of postsecondary institutions. Student access to

accommodations, accommodation deliveries, or additional barriers encountered on other campuses would provide valuable information for practitioners working with other disability groups at other postsecondary institutions and in fighting social injustice at postsecondary institutions.

Keywords: Specific learning disability, students with disabilities, postsecondary, college, accommodations, transition, self-advocacy, and self-determination

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to extend acknowledgment to all of the students with whom I have had the opportunity to work with over the past 30 years. I would also like to acknowledge the vast array of experiences I have been awarded over the years in the work to which I have committed myself with young people in the mental health and educational fields. My years of experience working in education in many different capacities have provided me with the desire for this study and have driven it to its fruition today. My past educational experiences have made it possible to make the significant decision to go forward in pursuing my doctoral degree and to conduct this study. It has been a lifelong goal and dream to complete this degree because messages in my early educational life were not favorable, including not being “smart enough.” Those messages have provided the internal push for this degree, as I knew I could do it. The most challenging part of this process has been in the actual production of this document, as the message of not being “good enough” is still being heard today, as educators who assisted with this study did not encourage but belittled me because of some hidden writing disabilities. The research has been what drives me. The questions have pushed me. The thirst for answers sustained me in completing this project.

Those who have encouraged me as I persisted are acknowledged here.

The editors at Heartful Editor, Dr. Benjamin Gaines, and Dr. Gregory Price, thank you, even when the guidance came later in the process.

John Muir Charter School is not to be missed in acknowledgment, as their dedication and encouragement given to students is seen daily and through the participants in this study.

Most of all, thank you to my family members. Without the encouragement of my family, who pushed me along, completing this project would not have been possible.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the students of this study, as their struggles have been real and have not gone unnoticed. If it were not for the students, this study would not have been possible.

This study also is dedicated especially to my son, Joshua John, who passed away tragically and unexpectedly 12 years ago, shortly after finishing his postsecondary degree as a student with a SLD and working successfully in the field he studied. Advocating for my son in accessing his accommodations was firsthand and the initial experience I had in advocating for the social justice of SWD in postsecondary education.

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CHAPTER 1: ACCOMMODATIONS FOR SUCCESS ON COMMUNITY COLLEGE CAMPUSES

The number of students with disabilities (SWD) seeking advanced education through higher education avenues has increased over the past decades. Williams-Hall (2018) conducted a qualitative study on the number of students who identified as having a disability in postsecondary institutions and found 30% identified as SWD in 1990, which increased to 48% in 2005. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES; 2016) reported college enrollment for SWD increased from 10.9% in 2007-2008 to 11.1% in 2011-2012, compared to the enrollment of students without disabilities falling from 89.1% in 2007-2008 to 88.9% in 2011-2012. For community colleges specifically, the NCES estimated 12% of the U.S. community college population identified as disabled, and, across the nation, community colleges enrolled one half of all SWD, more than 1.3 million students (American Association of Community Colleges, 2014).

Leaders of colleges need to address the growing numbers of SWD in higher education and their specific needs. Agarwal, Calvo, and Kumar (2014) studied SWD on college campuses and found enrollment of SWD had increased dramatically in the United States during the 21st century due to changing legislative mandates. The ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 have provided postsecondary institutions opportunities to meet the differentiated needs of SWD (Agarwal et al., 2014). However, SWD are still underrepresented due to the failure of postsecondary institutions to meet their needs (Agarwal et al., 2014).

Herbert et al. (2014) found graduation rates of SWD were significantly lower when compared to those of their nondisabled peers. Newman, Wagner, Cameto, and

Knokey (2009) of the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2) provided statistics for SWD and postsecondary education. They found 29% of SWD graduated or completed their postsecondary studies, while 89% of students without disabilities completed their studies. Newman et al. (2011) found the rate of completion for SWD attending 4-year colleges and universities was 34%, compared to 52% of students without disabilities.

Few SWD access accommodations to assist them in higher education. While investigating disability and transitional services on campuses, Williams-Hall (2018) conducted a qualitative study of 59 postsecondary institutions in Illinois with a population of 500 or more students. Williams-Hall found adequate resources were not available for SWD, and many SWD did not use the office of disability services (ODS), which offered access to accommodations and supported SWD transitions to college. The researcher identified themes for SWD accessibility of and the barriers hindering access to accommodations made available to them. These barriers to accessing accommodations impeded SWD retention, completion, and success in higher education.

Travis (2014) found SWD were experiencing barriers when trying to access accommodations, which presented problems for decision makers on college campuses who were trying to determine how best to assist SWD. The barriers SWD face include not knowing how to ask for services, not knowing where to go for services, not knowing their rights, and not being understood by their instructors. Travis also found when SWD were supported and assisted in accessing their accommodations, the accommodations and assistance supported SWD academic progress, and students were more successful in completing their goals. The National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD, 2014)

found approximately 17% of students with SLD received accommodations and support in college, compared to 94% of students with SLD who received assistance in high school. Even though the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 have granted SWD the legal right to equal access to postsecondary education, many SLD do not appear to access postsecondary services (Agarwal et al., 2014). Students with disabilities also encounter problems in accessing accommodations on community college campuses.

Students with disabilities need specific skills, such as self-advocacy and self-determination skills, to navigate their educational needs on postsecondary campuses. Daly-Cano, Vaccaro, and Newman (2015) found SWD must self-advocate for their services in college as compared to SWD in high school, where they are not in charge of their services. As SWD make the shift from the structured and guided educational processes of high school to the self-directed path of college, self-advocacy becomes important (Daly-Cano et al., 2015). Daly-Cano et al. (2015) reported the shift of responsibility from the school to the student requires SWD to use self-advocacy skills, and many SWD do not know how to engage in self-advocacy skills, such as disclosure, requesting accommodations, or seeking special services.

The problems SWD face in accessing their accommodations in postsecondary education settings create issues of social injustice for the disabled population. Johnson and Parry (2015) believed social justice as inquiry is one approach to a problem that may be capable of change coming from many different educational directions. Researching injustices in society is shared among researchers who commit to social justice paradigms (Johnson & Parry, 2015). The researcher of the current study used social justice inquiry,

and this paradigm allowed the researcher to highlight the disabled college population and their problems accessing accommodations and how not accessing accommodation presents barriers to their academic progress.

In the current study, the researcher used a social justice lens to explore the phenomenon of the barriers that SWD have experienced in accessing their accommodations on postsecondary campuses and used a phenomenological lens based on recommendations in studies by O'Shea and Meyer (2016) and Newman, Madaus, and Javitz (2016). O'Shea and Meyer interviewed 11 SWD at a public university about their experiences of being disabled in college. In the conclusion of their research, O'Shea and Myer suggested a similar study should be completed in a smaller setting, such as a community college—the setting for this study. Newman et al. studied high school transition planning and the receipt of services at postsecondary institutions. Following suggestions made by Newman et al., in the current study, the researcher studied a specific disability group. By exploring the specific experiences of college SWD, the researcher of the current study researched students' accessing of accommodations provided for their SLD at the community colleges they attend.

As a dedicated professional working in the field of special education for over 30 years, the researcher of this study has observed firsthand how the assistance accommodations provided to SWD in educational setting opportunities allow them to succeed. The researcher of this study has assisted SWD in accessing their accommodations and rejoiced in the educational successes of SWD. Moreover, the researcher has observed the struggles SWD have in educational settings while not

accessing their accommodations made accessible to them for increased chances of success.

Background and Foundation

Specific learning disabilities are a group of disorders that manifest in difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or performing mathematical calculations. Sometimes referred to as *invisible disabilities*, SLDs have no visible indications (NCLD, 2014). They are at times challenging to identify and sometimes go unnoticed (NCLD, 2014). Specific learning disabilities consist of processing disorders that can be auditory, visual, sensory, or motor. They can involve phonological processing, may relate to attention, and can affect areas of learning. Specific learning disabilities do not include low cognitive disabilities but can affect cognitive abilities in association, conceptualization, and expression.

Legislation has been put in place to protect SWD in educational environments and required adjustments have been made to assist SWD in higher education. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is civil rights legislation that prohibits discrimination toward SWD (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (IDEA; 2004) is a law that makes available a free, appropriate, public education to all eligible SWD and ensures special education and related services to SWD. The IDEA was later incorporated into the ADA and applied to any U.S. citizen with a disability (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). While this legislation was not written specifically for students, Section 504 is now commonly applied to the student population to provide equal access in general education settings (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Section 504 has broader qualifications and allows for eligibility under

504 plans—plans providing specific accommodations in classrooms for student academic success. Legislative acts, such as Section 504, the IDEA, and the ADA, protect SWD during postsecondary enrollment (Hadley, 2007). These acts have provided initiatives and procedures for institutions so that SWD can be more successful in colleges and universities (Hadley, 2007).

Postsecondary institutions must be prepared to assist students with accessing their accommodations, starting with self-identification at the ODS. At the postsecondary level, many of the responsibilities in providing accommodations for students in the classroom and complying with the mandates of disability legislation are carried out through administrative offices, such as the ODS. These offices handle specialized services, though titles, policies, and procedures can vary by institution. Policies and procedures usually consist of SWD seeking out the ODS, self-identifying as a disabled student through the documentation of a 504 plan, requesting services from the ODS, and accepting the services offered by the institution (Hadley, 2007). These policies and procedures are sometimes difficult for SWD if they are unaware of the process or have a lack of self-advocacy or self-determination skills.

Requesting services for accommodations at the college level requires skills SWD may not be used to practicing. Hengen (2018) studied the need for self-advocacy skills for SWD in a sample of 150 SWD enrolled at a university's ODS through a self-reporting survey. Hengen found SWD lacked self-advocacy skills and also knowledge about disabilities, available accommodations, and the processes required to obtain services. The lack of self-advocacy skills and knowledge contributed to not receiving services to assist in academic success. Hengen explained self-advocacy as an essential skill necessary for

individuals to effectively communicate, negotiate, and assert their interests, desires, needs, and rights for everyday functioning. Self-advocacy skills are necessary for students to have accurate understandings of their abilities, their legal rights, and how to speak up appropriately when they need assistance or when their rights are violated (Hengen, 2018).

Despite the increases in the number of students who self-identify with SLD at postsecondary institutions, many students with SLD lack the self-advocacy skills needed to access the necessary accommodations for their disabilities, presenting problems for their success (Daly-Cano et al., 2015). Postsecondary institutions are responsible for providing SWD with their accommodations and providing students with information about barriers to accommodations that may assist in student success.

Problem Statement

Many SWD in postsecondary education are experiencing barriers that hinder their accessing of accommodations that could assist in their academic success. Enrollment rates of SWD continue to rise for postsecondary education institutions, as changes in legislation mandate postsecondary institutions accommodate SWD through 504 plans (NCES, 2016). Despite increases in college enrollment, graduation rates for SWD are lower when compared to graduation rates of students without disabilities (Agarwal et al., 2014). Educational legislation, such as the ADA and the IDEA, has mandated postsecondary institutions accommodate SWD through documented 504 plans and provide information about disability accommodations (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Leyser, Vogel, Wyland, and Brulle (1998) provided a review of the changes in attitudes and procedures with SWD since the implementations of 504 plans. Leyser et al.

(1998) studied 1,050 faculty members' implementations of 504 accommodations and found SWD considered instructors to be more responsive to their needs when instructors became familiar with the 504 plans and assisted with the removal of barriers. The plans allowed SWD to access their accommodations as documented through the 504 plans.

Students with disabilities are not accessing accommodations for a variety of reasons even though the accommodations can assist in their academic achievement. In a study of community college SWD and their accommodations, Travis (2014) wanted to gain an understanding of how to best serve SWD on campus by conducting face-to-face interviews with students, instructors, counselors in ODS, and high school guidance counselors. Travis found when SWD accessed their accommodations on college campuses, the accommodations assisted in their academic progress, but students' lack of knowledge about their disabilities prevented access to needed and desired accommodations on college campuses.

Many barriers have been identified by SWD in regard to trying to access their accommodations. One barrier hindering SWD services on college campuses has been that students with SLD need to self-disclose (Daly-Cano et al., 2015). When SWD start the self-identification process, they do so by contacting the ODS through first self-disclosing their disabilities and then acknowledging the accommodations needed in the classroom or on campus for the documented disabilities. When SWD self-disclose, they use self-advocacy skills. Identifying the absence of self-advocacy skills as a barrier for SWD, Hengen (2018) pointed out self-advocacy is a skill necessary for SWD to effectively communicate, negotiate, and assert their interests, desires, needs, and rights for everyday functioning.

Hamblet (2014) explained when knowledgeable about their disabilities, self-identification processes, and the accommodations that best help them, SWD are more successful. Students with disabilities must understand their abilities and their rights, speak up appropriately when they need assistance, and access their accommodations. Self-knowledge is an essential skill for SWD and a contributing factor to postsecondary academic performance (Herbert et al., 2014). When students know about their disabilities, their strengths, their learning styles, and what to ask for, seeking out accommodations on campus becomes more natural (Herbert et al., 2014). When students are knowledgeable about their strengths and how they learn best, they do not identify with their disabilities but rather with their abilities (Herbert et al., 2014).

Students' knowledge about their disabilities assists in their use of self-determination skills, which contribute to accommodation access. When SWD are knowledgeable about their disabilities and accommodations, they build their competence, relatedness, and autonomy, thus assisting with the self-determination skills needed to access accommodations on postsecondary campuses where the advocacy shifts from the school to the student (Hamblet, 2014). When SWD become strong in their self-determination skills, they are able to meet their needs of (a) competence: knowing their limitations, (b) relatedness: how the accommodations they use relate to their situations, and (c) autonomy: each student's individual disability and how their disability affects them as an individual (O'Shea & Meyer, 2016). O'Shea and Meyer (2016) pointed out SWD competence, relatedness, and autonomy determine the likelihood of students disclosing their disabilities and actively accessing their accommodations.

Other barriers that prevent SWD access to accommodations on college campuses are students' past educational experiences. Students with positive experiences in high school are motivated to disclose their disabilities and seek support services in college (Hamblet, 2014). Hamblet (2014) suggested strategies to make transition to college smoother and more successful for SWD, stating SWD who are more active in their transitional planning process before postsecondary enrollment are more knowledgeable about their disabilities, self-identification processes, the accommodations that best help them succeed, and why they are successful. When SWD are active in their transitional planning meetings before moving to postsecondary institutions, they are better equipped in expressing their needs more freely for accommodations needs on postsecondary campuses.

Many SWD choose not to disclose disabilities and needs for accommodations. Students' insights into their competence, relatedness, and autonomy assist in decisions to disclose disabilities and use support services related to accessing accommodations (O'Shea & Meyer, 2016). Self-knowledge is an essential skill for SWD and a contributing factor to postsecondary academic performance (Herbert et al., 2014). When students are knowledgeable about their strengths and how they learn best, they do not identify with the disabilities but rather with the abilities (Herbert et al., 2014). Self-determination skills assist SWD in meeting their needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy (O'Shea & Meyer, 2016). Herbert et al. (2014) identified self-determination as a predictor of academic success and a support in SWD having insight into their disabilities. Postsecondary educators and institutions need to understand how to better assist SWD in satisfying their needs of competence, relatedness, and autonomy so

students with SLD will disclose their disabilities and access their accommodations in higher education, leading them toward completion (O'Shea & Meyer, 2016).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this descriptive, transcendental, phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of SWD accessing community college accommodations.

Adapting two studies previously conducted by Newman et al. (2016) and O'Shea and Meyer (2016), this study was conducted by interviewing participants with SLD on postsecondary campuses about accessing their accommodations. Descriptions of the experienced phenomenon of accessing accommodations provided insights to assist SLD in their academic success.

To receive accommodations for documented disabilities on postsecondary campuses, students must self-identify or disclose with the ODS. Daly-Cano et al. (2015) reported, upon entering college, SWD must self-advocate to receive accommodations and services needed for their disabilities. Students with disabilities must use their self-advocacy skills for the successful navigation of this process. Key self-advocacy concepts include knowledge of self—limitations, strengths, weaknesses, and rights—and understanding one's disabilities and how those disabilities might impact their lives on campus (Daly-Cano et al., 2015). It is crucial for students with SLD to understand their disabilities, be able to explain them, and know how their disabilities affect learning in the classroom (Daly-Cano et al., 2015). Students with disabilities also need to use self-advocacy skills to communicate this information to the ODS to receive services

For this study, the recommendations of two studies were adapted. Newman et al. (2016) examined the rates of disclosure and accommodations received with specific

individual students' characteristics and secondary school experiences. Newman et al. proposed further research for a specific disability group to be studied on a college campus receiving accommodations that has been adapted for this study with students self-identified as SLD. Another study adapted for this research was O'Shea and Meyer's (2016) study on self-determination theory (SDT) and students' use of accommodations; the authors suggested further research with a smaller student-to-instructor ratio. In the current study, the researcher integrated the two studies previously discussed, with students who self-identified with SLD as the specific disability group and a smaller student-to-instructor proportion by using community college campuses to determine if the findings were similar to the findings of the studies of Newman et al. and O'Shea and Meyer.

Research Questions

The main research question for the study was: What experiences do college students who self-identify with SLD have in accessing accommodations on campus? The following subquestions derived from the literature review guided the research:

1. What experiences do students who self-identify with SLD in college have using self-advocacy skills to access accommodations on campus?
2. What experiences do students who self-identify with SLD in colleges have using self-determination skills to access accommodations on campus?
3. How have past K-12 academic experiences affected how students who self-identify with SLD access accommodations in postsecondary education?
4. What can students who self-identify with SLD recommend colleges do to assist them more effectively in accessing desired accommodations?

Theoretical Frameworks

A review of the literature uncovered the theoretical frameworks used for this study. Self-advocacy theory (Daly-Cano et al., 2015) and SDT (O'Shea & Meyer, 2016) provided some background into the skills needed to navigate the steps SWD need to access accommodations. Daly-Cano et al. (2015) reported, upon entering college, SWD must self-advocate to receive accommodations and services needed for their disabilities. O'Shea and Meyer (2016) uncovered the significance of self-determination and its importance to SWD in accessing their accommodations on campuses, as it relates to the cognitive and emotional ways students understand their individual disabilities.

Self-Advocacy Theory

Self-advocacy theory, a theory of knowing one's self and one's limitations, strengths, and weaknesses (Black & Rose, 2002), was developed from Payne's (2005) empowerment theory, which incorporates one's desire to defeat one's barriers while achieving one's objectives. Researchers of SAT have incorporated Payne's empowerment theory, guiding those who work with SWD and prepare SWD for lifelong success. Payne stressed SAT's importance in assisting the disabled in navigating everyday life opportunities. Self-advocacy power is vital for SWD in postsecondary institutions, as self-advocacy skills are part of the enrollment process into postsecondary education. Students with disabilities must use self-advocate skills themselves to receive assistance or services for their disabilities (Daly-Cano et al., 2015).

Previously, to receive services, SLD did not have to initiate the process. While enrolled in primary and secondary education programs, the individual education plan provider seeks out students and provides designated services to them (Daly-Cano et al.,

2015). College students find themselves in charge of getting what they need but not knowing how to use their self-advocacy skills to assist them in accessing their services required for academic success.

Key self-advocacy concepts include knowledge of self and knowing one's limitations, strengths, weaknesses, and rights. Black and Rose (2002) studied mental health care in the educational community and presented SAT as a broad theoretical framework of advocacy and empowerment. Black and Rose proposed SAT concepts encompass all areas of students' lives, and SWD could use SAT skills to challenge oppression and encourage self-advocacy. Researchers have described SAT skills as helping students obtain the power to make decisions to take control of their actions in their own lives (Black & Rose, 2002).

Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination theory is a framework for the study of human motivation and personality (Center for Self-Determination Theory, 2019). Researchers of SDT have framed motivational studies, defining intrinsic and extrinsic sources of motivation and providing understanding of cognitive and social development (Center for Self-Determination Theory, 2019). While studying SDT, researchers have focused on how social and cultural factors facilitate or undermine one's sense of volition and initiative, wellbeing, and behaviors (Center for Self-Determination Theory, 2019). Self-determination theory researchers have observed how self-determination skills assist in satisfying one's psychological needs of autonomy, competency, and relatedness (O'Shea & Meyer, 2016). If one psychological need is unsupported in a social context, there will be an impact on SWD wellbeing (Center for Self-Determination Theory, 2019).

Autonomy, competency, and relatedness have been argued to foster the most volitional and high-quality forms of motivation and engagement for activities, enhanced performance and persistence, and increased creativity (O'Shea & Meyer, 2016).

Self-determination theory provides educators working with SWD instructional guidance in satisfying the development of fundamental needs. Self-determination theory is related to the cognitive and emotional ways students construct meaning of their limitations and how students' high school experiences have influenced their actions and choices on college campuses. The interactions SWD have with significant adults, such as parents, teachers, and instructors, contribute to motivating them and how they access accommodations on college campuses (O'Shea & Meyer, 2016). Positive past experiences, especially experiences with significant adults, increase SWD motivations to access support services and accommodations on college campuses (O'Shea & Meyer, 2016). The more competent SWD are with their disability, the more motivated they are to access their accommodations. When SWD have been able to determine how their accommodations relate to their disabilities and how accommodations can help them to succeed, they are motivated to access their accommodations.

Self-determination skills are relevant for SWD in assisting with disclosure and communicating knowledge of disabilities, needs, strengths, and weaknesses. Developing and strengthening self-determination skills support SWD in the disclosure of their disabilities and accessing their accommodations on campuses. When students' psychological needs of autonomy, competency, and relatedness are met, they are more successful at navigating postsecondary services by using their self-determination skills to assist in their academic goals.

Methodology

The methodology chosen for the current study is qualitative because the study is an exploration of a social group and a human problem (Creswell, 2014). To orient the qualitative inquiry to a socially relevant, responsible, and sensitive endeavor, a social justice inquiry was created through research questions where the results could yield needed information for positive changes for the participants and the social group of the study, allowing others to experience the phenomenon as described by the participants (Johnson & Parry, 2015). Johnson and Parry (2015) shared social justice inquiry is capable of being used as a change agent, as the outcome of social justice paradigms should be socially relevant, responsible, multidisciplinary, and globally sensitive. The purpose of this study is to explore the phenomenon of the experiences SWD have accessing their accommodations. The researcher of this study used interviews through a specific descriptive, transcendental phenomenological approach to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences students with SLD encounter while accessing their accommodations at Southern California community college campuses, which was the setting for the study.

The information on qualitative research in Creswell's (2014) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches* guided the design of this study. Qualitative design fits this research, as this study was conducted in a natural setting for close interaction, relying on the researcher as the vital instrument for data collection. Participant perspectives were situated in the setting that each participant described (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research also involves an emerging and evolving design,

reflective of the researcher's social entities presenting a holistic picture as expressed through the researcher's experiences with SWD.

This researcher of this current study used a phenomenological approach to inquiry through the exploration of the identified phenomenon. In *Crafting Phenomenological Research*, Vagle (2014) provided a framework to address social or human challenges attributed to the participants through their descriptions. Through the observation of a phenomenon, a human problem is discovered to explore through descriptions given by the participants (Vagle, 2014). The social group in this study was SWD engaged in the phenomenon of accessing their accommodations.

Phenomenological data are usually collected in the participants' setting. In a phenomenological study, the researcher strives to uncover underlying structures of experiences through the study of individuals (Creswell, 2014). In *Phenomenological Research Methods*, Moustakas (1994) described a phenomenological study as one through which researchers compile data that can provide insight to uncover and explain the fundamental nature of a phenomenon. Researchers of phenomenology are committed to describing experiences, keeping the phenomenon alive, illuminating its presence, accentuating its meaning, and enabling it to appear as close to its original state as possible (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology is rooted in questions that give direction and focus meaning on themes that open new, substantiated inquiry through interviews and descriptions, accounting for the researcher's invested involvement though bridling and reflexivity (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher of the current study strived to explore the phenomenon of accessing accommodations through the descriptions given by students with SLD accessing accommodations. Moustakas (1994) also explained, a person who

has not experienced the phenomenon might begin to appreciate the same phenomenon themselves.

A more precise call for the current research is transcendental phenomenology, which, according to Vagle (2014), involves a search for the essence of an intentional relation of a particular phenomenon, meaning the phenomenon is intentionally studied as it relates to the experience. Through exploring the phenomenon of accessing accommodations, the researcher of this study hoped to explain the experience so others might understand the experience of the phenomenon.

The qualitative approach used for this current study is descriptive, transcendental phenomenology. Moustakas (1994) described descriptive, transcendental phenomenology as setting aside prejudgments regarding the phenomenon investigated. Vagle (2014) and Moustakas (1994) referred to Husserl's (1931) earlier studies and the descriptive phenomenology processes. Drawing from Husserl's theories of phenomenology, descriptive phenomenology is communicating both data collected from descriptions from the participants who have experienced the phenomenon and what the researcher crafts from the descriptions, demonstrating *invariant meaning* based on the analysis. Vagle described invariant meaning as one that does not change through contingencies or contexts. The researcher of this study presents how the phenomenon of accessing accommodations manifests itself and appears in the real world with a transcendental, descriptive, phenomenological design.

Sample Frame

Convenience and purposive sampling were the most appropriate sampling techniques for this study, as the participants were easily accessible and fit the criteria

needed for the research. Creswell (2014) described convenience sampling as selecting individuals to whom the researcher has access while best helping the researcher to understand the research problem and answer the research questions. Convenience sampling provides access to information through the ease of contacting the participants, or, as Creswell described, convenience sampling offers broad access to information through easy access to participants. Creswell described purposive sampling as sampling to identify and select individuals who are exceptionally knowledgeable about or experienced with the phenomenon of interest. The convenient and purposeful sample allowed the researcher to find participants who could provide information to allow the researcher to understand the problem.

The sample frame consisted of past students with SLD who graduated in the past 5 years from John Muir Charter School (JMCS), where the researcher currently provides special education services. John Muir Charter School is a public charter high school in California for students ages 16 to 26. The participants were adults over the age of 18 who graduated between the years of 2013 and 2018. The Nevada County Superintendent of Schools, the researcher's employer, holds the charter for JMCS. The most identified disabled group at JMCS is SLD, making SWD a convenient group to study. The choice of Southern California community colleges aides with distance, availability, and convenience. Graduates from JMCS who want to further their education may do so by enrolling in vocational, technical, trade, or community college postsecondary institutions. Most JMCS graduates who wish to attend community college do so locally, and Southern California community colleges are often their choice.

John Muir Charter School graduating IEP and 504 students qualify for 504 plans at postsecondary institutions. The population of SLD students studying at Southern California community colleges was chosen because of suggestions to conduct further research on a specific disability (Newman et al., 2016). Six JMCS graduates with existing IEP or 504 plans enrolled in Southern California community colleges participated in this study. Southern California community colleges were also chosen for ease of accessibility for the researcher and the JMCS graduates themselves.

Recruitment. John Muir Charter School records of students with IEPs and 504 plans for graduates in the past 5 years were reviewed for SLD qualifications. Participant recruitment began through an initial interview by a phone call or email to inquire about Southern California community college attendance. Following a prescreened protocol assisted in keeping the recruitment standard. During the screening, the answers to the questions assisted the researcher in determining if the interviewee would become part of the participant pool.

Sample. The sample of students consisted of past students of the researcher, and the student records for recent graduates with special educational needs were made available from the record department of the Southern California JMCS sites for the researcher to review for recruitment interviews. A record review of past JMCS graduates provided participants to call for interviews. Records reviewed were of former students identified previously with SLD in an IEP or 504 plan now attending Southern California community colleges. Using participants from the past 5 years allowed the researcher to locate these participants from the current information provided in their JMCS records.

From the recruitment interviews of JMCS graduates, six participants were pulled from the sample frame, all of whom agreed to the interview process for the proposed study. Six participants made up the participant pool so that if one or two participants were unable to complete the interview process as a whole, there would still be a large enough sample to answer the research question posed. A pool of possible students was made available by retaining the remainder of the original recruitment sample participants. The remaining pool allowed drawing additional or replacement participants, if needed, to elicit further participants to interview. Creswell (2014) mentioned phenomenological studies should include five to 25 participants, while Vagle (2014) stated there is no specific number of participants to use, urging the researcher not to oversaturate or underrepresent the sample but to represent the participants studied through a number that answers the research question posed. Graduates in the last 5 years provided more up-to-date information to the questions.

Data Collection

The researcher and the interviews held with the participants were the primary instruments used in data collection for this study. Data collection occurred during two in-person interviews that followed Vagle's (2014) concrete steps for transcendental, descriptive, phenomenological data collection. Conducting multiple interviews with each participant is part of the data collecting process and necessary for clarification. During the first interview, the researcher used a semistructured process and protocol, while the second interview was used by the researcher to clarify answers derived from the first interview. The first initial interview concentrated on the interview questions developed to answer the research questions. The first interview was the primary interview following

the semistructured sample interview questions developed previously to answer questions surrounding the research question. Semistructured interviews include the use of open, probing questions while room is left for the participants to generate descriptions in their own words. Semistructured interviewing allows for the formulation of follow-up questions based on the descriptions the participants give (Vagle, 2014). Keeping the interview semistructured assisted in providing enough information to gain insight, but not too much information to overstate the information. During the second interview, the researcher probed into the answers given by one participant from the initial interview. The second interview elicited unanswered questions from the first interview and answers to probing questions. The second interview provided for more in-depth insight into answers given in the first interview. The second interview was only needed and used with one participant.

The interviews were audio recorded. Voice recording the interviews, as Vagle (2014) suggested, allowed the active participation of the researcher. Voice recording enabled the participants to talk and the researcher to open up the conversation for further questions, capturing the data from the interview conversations.

Transcript accuracy and member checking are an essential component of qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). Transcript accuracy checks provided increased reliability and validity, as the interviewer carefully checked with the participants after each interview for accuracy and clarity by talking with them after transcription and re-reading their interview to them to see if it was transcribed and delivered correctly, moreover, to the participants' satisfaction. Member checking with the participants allowed for the opportunity to take a sample of the derived findings and conclusions to

the participants to ask them to verify if the researcher accurately interpreted and derived those findings from the raw qualitative data and the transcribed interviews to the participants to clarify and ensure the accuracy of details.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the heart of the phenomenological study. It is exploring the phenomenon, the essence of understanding the descriptions of the experiences in accessing accommodations (Vagle, 2014). Data analysis included the examination of the participant descriptions of accessing accommodations by describing the phenomenon and answering the research question. The unit of analysis was the description of the phenomenon of the experiences of accessing the accommodations, not the participants themselves. This phase was intended not to clarify or to interpret but to gather the data from the participants' descriptions, put them into themes, and then present the descriptions (Vagle, 2014).

The use of concrete, descriptive analysis with Vagle's (2014) whole-part-whole method was applied. The whole-part-whole method consists of focusing on intentional experiences, balancing verbatim descriptions, paraphrasing descriptions, and crafting the descriptions. Crafting is developing new information from the descriptions. The researcher used crafting as a way to communicate the data collected from the descriptions of those who have experienced the phenomenon and what the researcher crafts from those descriptions' invariant meanings based on the analysis. Using Vagle's steps assisted in the data analysis; the steps consisted of (a) reading the entire text in its holistic form, (b) performing a line-by-line reading by marking sections, (c) adding follow-up

questions, (d) performing a second and third line-by-line reading, and (e) subsequent readings.

In phenomenological research, data collection and analysis delicately intertwine throughout the study (Vagle, 2014). Interviewees participate through their answers given to the questions and the descriptions provided through the data collection phase, and as the answers developed, further interview questions emerge while the researcher is crafting new information from the descriptions drawn from the data analysis phase. The analytic methods used in phenomenological studies avoid cross-comparisons through biases or preconceived ideas of the descriptions and inform the researcher about the depth and detail in the descriptions of the experiences of the participants while using the reflexivity journal for bridling. The use of reflexivity challenges the researcher to bridle all such preconceptions so that any preconceived ideas do not limit the openness or hinder the understanding of the phenomenon throughout the study (Vagle, 2014).

Definitions of Key Terms

The following definitions were used in the literature surrounding the researched phenomenon to assist in a better understanding of the phenomenon that will be studied.

Accommodations: Accommodations refer to the removal of barriers that prevent active participation by a person or group of people (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Disability: A disability is a physical or mental dysfunction that limits a person's participation in one or more significant activities (NCLB, 2010).

504 plan: A 504 plan is defined under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which stated it is prohibited to discriminate against persons with disabilities in employment and

other fields. As a set of regulations, the regulations were established to assure civil rights to persons with physical or mental impairments. Through the legislation, it is written that no person with a disability can be excluded from or denied benefits from any program receiving or benefiting from federal financial assistance. Free, appropriate education is one provided by postsecondary schools, which includes regular or special education and related aids and services. It is designed to meet the individual educational needs of persons with a disability as adequately as the needs of a person without disabilities. Services and possibly accommodations are determined based on adherence to evaluation, procedural safeguard requirements, and the definition of the disability. A person is considered disabled in the meaning of Section 504 if they have a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more of their major life activities, has a record of such impairments, and has such an impairment.

Section 504 falls under the responsibility of the general education program. If a school has reason to believe that a student has a limitation, as defined under Section 504, the student needs special accommodations or services in the general setting to participate in the program. The district must evaluate the student. If the student is determined disabled under Section 504, the district must develop and implement the delivery of all needed services and accommodations (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Individualized education plan: An IEP is a written educational prescription a school develops for each student with a disability (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Special education: Special education refers to the procedures, materials, accommodations, and monitoring that is designed to help SWD achieve the success possible (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Specific learning disabilities: Specific learning disabilities present as disabilities that involve a severe discrepancy between intellectual abilities and academic achievement due to a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes and are not primarily the result of the visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, mental retardation, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage. Learning disabilities refer to the lack of achievement compared to ability in specific learning areas in the range of performance of individuals with equal mental capacity. Most definitions emphasize a fundamental disorder in psychological processes involved in understanding and using spoken or written language (NCLB, 2010).

Transition: The transitioning time is a purposeful, organized, and outcome-oriented process designed to help at-risk students move from school to employment resulting in a quality adult life. Expected student outcomes include meaningful employment, further education, and participation in the community (NCLB, 2010).

Transitional planning / individualized transition plan: The individual transitional plan (ITP) is an articulated, interagency educational plan designed to facilitate a student's move from school to employment resulting in a quality adult life. The ITP goals address critical aspects of a student's transition, including employment goals, residential placement, guardianship, transportation, independent living, and income support. An ITP is completed in conjunction with an IEP (NCLB, 2010).

An ITP covers the period that includes high school, graduation, postsecondary education/training options, adult services, and the initial years of employment. The IDEA has defined transition services as the coordination of activities that is designed to be a results-oriented process for students with a disability. An ITP has a focus on improving

the academic and functional achievement of SWD. It assists in facilitating the student's movement from school to postschool activities. An ITP includes postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, and community participation. The plan has an emphasis on the individual student's needs, strengths, preferences, and interests. The ITP includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment, and other postschool adult living objectives. The plan also includes the acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluations when appropriate. Transition planning is the responsibility of the IEP team. The plan is used to develop appropriate activities pertinent to the student's transition into different areas. These areas include instruction aligned with postschool goals and related services, such as transportation. They also include plans for community experiences, with community-based instruction and employment, in addition to higher education. The plans can consist of programs for supported employment and work, assistance with daily living skills, and functional evaluations to support postschool activities (NCLB, 2010).

Delimitations

Participant interviews took place in 2019. The geographic location and boundary conditions caused delimitations, as these students are the only participants studied for this project because of the use of a convenient and purposeful sample. The boundary conditions were voluntarily imposed and assisted in addressing the appropriate scope, usefulness, and transferability of results. The geographic location provided for delimitations through boundary conditions affecting potential generalizations, as the participants from Southern California community colleges might have experienced the

phenomenon differently than students in other geographical areas. Choosing only the SLD population to research yielded findings for SWD with SLD.

Limitations

The researcher of this study has a vested interest in the phenomenon of accessing accommodations because of 30 years of professional experience in education, assisting students who identified as disabled. As a professional educator, the researcher has observed firsthand the struggles that SWD have experienced in accepting, identifying, understanding, and navigating the skills needed to access educational accommodations. Due to many years working with the target group, personal assumptions and preconceptions needed to be set aside. Bias needed to be carefully considered during the interview process, as the participants could have been viewed as competent in special education and accommodations. The participants should have had strong self-advocacy skills, as these skills were skills on which JMCS teachers include practice with their curriculum. However, the students may still have struggled with labeling issues, as the students were part of a new group of college students with whom they have not interacted before. Being past students, they might not have been honest in their answers, as the students might have wanted to please the researcher. The participants were past students, and this may have hindered responses from participants. However, having past students for the sample provided an opportunity to document in the reflexivity journal through bridling, subjectivity, and biases before the study.

The use of qualitative research presents limitations in the construct of the study alone, as studies are unique and challenging to replicate precisely (Priya, 2016). Qualitative research has inherent limitations, including (a) interview responses can vary

and provide different answers depending on participant choice and (b) by using different researchers' divergent input and output reflecting on individual experiences and knowledge (Creswell, 2014). Priya (2016) explained the limitations surrounding qualitative research. However, qualitative research offers opportunities to researchers to provide for depth in understanding of the participants and their experiences. The researcher of this study used the qualitative opportunities of participant interviews to provide a deep understanding of the barriers college students with SLD have in accessing their accommodations on campus.

One of the limitations in qualitative research is the use of open-ended questions with the participants, as open-ended questions control the content of the data collected through guiding the questions, not allowing an open flow of information. Another limitation is that personal experiences and knowledge can influence the observations and conclusions, as they relate to the research problem. Personal interviews provide for individual information that changes with each interaction. Individual participant interviews are also limitations, as the study would change with different participants. Naturally, different participants would give different answers, and various researchers would give different experiences and knowledge, thus influencing the conclusions (Priya, 2016).

The methodology used has limitations, as descriptive phenomenology allows for interviewing the participants and allowing their descriptions of the phenomenon as experienced by the participants. What the participants provided in their descriptions is what is relied upon to be their experience, no one else's. John Muir Charter School graduates attending Southern California community colleges may differ in their responses

from other students who graduated from other high schools or who attended other colleges. The same results may not be found with another group of high school graduates or with another group of JMCS graduates at a 4-year university. Different results might be derived from a different disability group, different community college, and a different period.

John Muir Charter School graduates who self-identify with SLD may be unique in their needs compared to other graduate's needs from other high schools. The students JMCS service has failed other contemporary high school programs, at times more than once. Some JMCS students have been incarcerated or homeless. These students sometimes have families of their own or work full-time jobs while finishing school. At times, JMCS programs are the last resort for students to receive their high school diplomas, making them unique in their needs. John Muir Charter School provides a high school educational option to these students who might be able to now live within walking distance to JMCS. John Muir Charter School provides an alternative and an opportunity to start fresh to those students who may have experienced bullying at other campuses or did not fit in because of their sexual identity, other identity issues, and other reasons. John Muir Charter School serves unique demographics of students who have failed at many other high school programs.

Limitations might have occurred in the participants' abilities or willingness to share or describe their experiences, as they may not have felt comfortable or may not have known how to explain their experiences. However, the researcher used the time before each interview to put the participant at ease. Discussing the events about the

participants' day, what they had done over the weekend, and shared some time reminiscing about experiences they had shared.

Limitations also might have arisen in what the participants chose to disclose. The researcher assisted the participants in alleviating the limitation not to disclose by reminding them that their identity would not be known and what they were sharing would help others in the same situation they were experiencing. The researcher reminded the participants that no answer was silly or wrong, there were no right answers, and as much information as they could provide was best. Alternatively, there was the possibility the participants might have wanted to please the researcher and might not have been forthright or truthful with their answers, providing the information they thought the researcher wanted to hear.

The sample size presents limitations since there were limited differences in the experiences, as all participants were SLD, attended JMCS, were past students, and had been instructed by some of the same JMCS instructors. The students were all attending Southern California community colleges, reflecting the same policies and procedures surrounding disability services.

Transcriptions of the descriptions of the phenomenon can add limitations in the information presented; however, transcript accuracy checking assisted with the limitations in transcriptions by the researcher checking with the participants to make sure the transcribed interviews were what the participants wanted or intended to say. Crafting was used in the transcription process and in designing information from the descriptions gleaned from the participants' interviews and the researcher's invariant meanings from those descriptions (Vagle, 2014). From the derived findings and conclusions of crafted

data delivered through the participants' interviews, the researcher wrote about the phenomenon in a manner that others could experience the phenomenon as close to real-life as possible. The researcher had to be completely open and receptive, listening to the participants describe their experiences of the phenomenon as experienced and seeking to understand the experiences of the participants.

Researcher bias came from prior knowledge and experiences of working with SWD at JMCS. Biases were presented by including these biases and subjectivity before, during, and after the research process through journaling, taking notes, and bridling in the reflexivity journal. *Bridling*, as Vagle (2014) described it, is an ongoing activity to understand the phenomenon throughout the study. The researcher reflected on their understanding of the phenomenon, taking continual notes of biases and assumptions. Subjectivity was addressed through the researcher noting their self-awareness and emotions that occurred in and around the project (Johnson & Parry, 2015). Subjectivity notations in the reflexivity journal assisted with noting biases and preconceived ideas. The reflexivity journal was used continually to bridle the researcher's understandings of the phenomenon, as these are all critical issues in phenomenological studies. She had to put aside biases, preconceived ideas, and reflect continuously on these preconceived ideas and prejudices throughout the study.

Limitations included limiting factors specific to phenomenological investigations. While this form of discovery allows the researcher to focus on the essence of the lived experience of a specific population, other aspects of the SLD were not explored. The findings are best understood through the context of the six participants interviewed for

the study. The findings offer a foundation from which to build further research to continue to explore the evolving dynamic.

Importance of the Study

The researcher of this phenomenological study intended to obtain insight into how Southern California community college students, who self-identify with SLD, accessed their accommodations. The overall objective of this study was to produce findings that provide college students who self-identify with SLD the best access to their on-campus accommodations, increasing educational success. The information gained through descriptions of accessing accommodations provided useful information to college administrators and faculty to ensure students who self-identify as disabled can access the desired accommodations provided for them on college campuses. The data could also inform how educators can better equip students with self-advocacy and self-determination skills. Through in-person interviews, the students themselves were offered conscious-raising opportunities, providing findings that reflected their input.

In addition to being a useful resource for community college ODS, this study could also benefit secondary educators. Secondary schools are responsible for ensuring that students with SLD receive a high school education and assist in their transition from secondary education to postsecondary education (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Students with SLD entering higher education are another population to benefit from this study. At the high school level, formal IEPs or 504 plans are schools' responsibilities to arrange for students to receive accommodations; the challenge lies at the postsecondary level, where the student, once self-identified and approved, must request their accommodations as needed. This descriptive, transcendental phenomenological study

provided descriptions from SLD college students accessing their accommodations, allowing others to experience the phenomenon, providing a useful resource for community college ODS and could also benefit secondary educators.

Summary

Enrollment continues to rise for SWD in postsecondary education. Despite these increases, completion rates are lower, though students are more likely to persist if they use their accommodations. Often, SWD in postsecondary education do not access their accommodations. Thus, the purpose of this transcendental, descriptive, phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of SWD accessing community college accommodations.

The researcher of this study interviewed students at Southern California community college campuses who self-identified with SLD and who were on documented 504 plans, promoting and satisfying SWD needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, thus assisting them in accessing their accommodations for success. Further research with SLD on postsecondary campuses of students accessing their accommodations provided the insight needed to support them to be successful academically.

The theoretical frameworks of SAT and SDT are theories presented to support the assistance of SWD in accessing their accommodations on college campuses, while the in-person interviews allowed insight into the descriptions of those experiencing the essence of the phenomenon of accessing accommodations. Self-advocacy theory and SDT are explored through the literature presented in Chapter 2 as possible supports for SWD in accessing their accommodations on college campuses.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

To support the current study, the researcher performed the following literature review in the area of accommodations for SWD in postsecondary institutions. A search was conducted through databases using the following keywords: (a) *specific learning disabled*, (b) *disabled college students*, (c) *accommodation*, (d) *postsecondary education*, (e) *barriers*, (f) *self-determination*, (g) *self-disclosure*, and (h) *self-advocacy*. Through a review of the literature, the researcher found useful works regarding the phenomenon of SWD accessing accommodations. The viewpoints of previous authors were uncovered that presented the following issues surrounding disabled college students and their accommodations on postsecondary campuses: (a) the prevalence of SWD in a postsecondary educational setting, (b) completion rates of SWD, (c) legislation affecting SWD, (d) supports assisting SWD accommodations access, (e) barriers SWD face trying to access accommodations, and (f) the importance of self-advocacy and self-determination skills for SWD success.

Prevalence of Students with Disabilities in Postsecondary Education

A review of the literature demonstrated there had been an increased enrollment of SWD in postsecondary institutions. Leyser et al. (1998) said between 1978 and 1994, the percentage of first-time, full-time freshman SWD attending college rose from 2.6% to 9.2%. Henderson (1999), in a study of first-year college students, suggested 10% of students attending college are SWD. Newman et al.'s (2009) report from the NLTS-2 of SWD 4 years out of high school showed 26% of SWD attended college. Newman et al.'s (2011) report of the post-high school outcomes of SWD up to 8 years after high school showed 45% of SWD coming out of high school reported continuing to postsecondary

education. In Herbert et al.'s (2014) study of college SWD and graduation rates, data from a sample of 546 college students who sought disability support services over 10 years were analyzed, revealing SWD were attending college at an increased rate. The NCES (2016) said college enrollment for SWD increased from 10.9% in 2007-2008 to 11.1% in 2011-2012, compared to the enrollment of students without disabilities falling from 89.1% in 2007-2008 to 88.9% in 2011-2012.

Higher Education Completion Rates of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities list higher education as part of their plans, but few complete college once they start. Senator Tom Harkin, a Democratic representative from Iowa who chaired the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, convened a hearing pending the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act and stated SWD must be part of the plan (Rosmovits, 2014). Harkin presented that more than 80% of high school SWD list postsecondary education as a goal, but only 60% of SWD enroll and 41% complete college once they start, compared to the general population completion rate of 52% (Rosmovits, 2014). Even though SWD have intentions to enroll, and there has been an increase in enrollment over past years, completion rates for postsecondary education are still lower than the graduation rates of their nondisabled peers. Fifty-eight percent of students without disabilities obtain 4-year degrees (NCES, 2012), while 21% (Florida College System, 2009) to 34% (Newman et al., 2009) of SWD graduate with 4-year degrees. Herbert et al. (2014) stated several contributing factors for SWD not completing postsecondary degrees, including (a) the need for more academic, personal, social, and self-advocacy skills; (b) academic accommodations; and (c) sufficient preparation. They added there was also a lack of vital programs and support

services for SWD. Assisting SWD in accessing higher education equal to that of their nondisabled peers in recent legislation is discussed in the following section.

Legislation Affecting Students with Disabilities

Educational legislation surrounding equality and nondiscrimination has required educational institutions to accommodate SWD and provide information about disability accommodations (Hadley, 2007). The IDEA has mandated students in K-12 education diagnosed with disabilities be provided access to free and appropriate education (Madaus & Shaw, 2006). Madaus and Shaw (2006) reported on the impact of the IDEA 2004 and the transition to college for students with learning disabilities. The amendment of Public Law 101-476 to the IDEA mandated an ITP be included in the IEP to prepare all SWD for the transition to postsecondary education or employment. These ideas are highlighted in Leyser et al.'s (1998) report on faculty attitudes and practices regarding SWD. Specific state and federal guidelines have mandated postsecondary institutions have specific policies, procedures, and educational legislation to be prepared to serve and protect disabled college students (Hadley, 2007). Postsecondary administrators face issues in assisting students on campus and contribute to their success.

Postsecondary educational institutions must meet the needs of all students because of the educational legislation surrounding equality and nondiscrimination (Hadley, 2007). Education legislation has been developed to help all students navigate the postsecondary education system. Madaus and Shaw (2006) provided information on the impact of the IDEA and college access for SWD. Madaus and Shaw reported once SWD graduate from high school, they are no longer eligible for protection under the IDEA.

Students with disabilities in postsecondary institutions are protected under the ADA—and its 2008 amendment—in addition to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). National legislation, such as the ADA, the 2008 ADA Restoration Act, and Section 504, are in place to require postsecondary institutions to provide equal access and reasonable accommodations for SWD (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The ADA of 1990 was the nation’s first comprehensive civil rights law addressing the needs of people with disabilities and prohibiting discrimination. Section 504 prohibited discrimination against people with disabilities in programs that receive federal financial assistance, such as colleges and universities (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Section 504 began the enforcement of the ADA and the IDEA to protect SWD from exclusion and unequal treatment in schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Section 504 requires postsecondary institutions to provide equal access to all aspects of a college campus and its programming. The ADA requires postsecondary institutions to provide appropriate academic adjustments as necessary to ensure nondiscrimination by disability (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The legislation is an essential aspect in attempting to assist SWD in accessing their accommodations for success in postsecondary campuses because it mandates institutions must provide students with accommodations (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

The Importance of Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Accommodations are developed through students’ 504 plans to assist SWD in academic success, allowing SWD the same access to academics as their nondisabled peers. Travis (2014) stated SWD accessing their accommodations assists in their academic success and, in turn, higher education completion. However, many SWD are

not accessing the accommodations made available for them on campuses to assist with their disabilities (Travis, 2014). Students with disabilities can use particular supports to assist in their accommodation access, academic success, and college completion.

Supports Found to Assist in Accessing Accommodations

The following section will include supports for SWD retention in completion, including positive experiences that assist SWD in accessing their accommodations (Hamblet, 2014). Past and present positive experiences of SWD offer support in assisting SWD with accommodation access. These experiences are displayed through supportive relationships in SWD lives, staff promoting supportive staff relationships, and positive attitudes (Timmerman & Mulvihill, 2015). The more informed and trained staff are on disabilities and accommodation delivery, the more support staff can offer to assist in accommodation access (Heindel, 2014). While adjustments in instructional delivery were found to assist SWD in accessing their accommodations, universal design for learning (UDL) and instructional training (Seok, DaCosta, & Hodges, 2018) are suggested. Finally, transitional planning completed before postsecondary transitioning and specific to the SWD needs was found to be successful in assisting SWD accessing their accommodations for success (Newman et al., 2016).

Positive Experiences

When SWD experience positive social experiences, the experiences help them in the use of accommodations. Understanding the motivations of SWD in college and student uses of support services can be affected profoundly by students' prior experiences in high school (Hamblet, 2014). In a study of nine SWD and improved college transition planning, Hamblet found SWD with positive experiences in high school were often more

motivated to disclose their disabilities and seek support services in college because they experienced firsthand how to relate to their disabilities. The students studied were more competent in the knowledge of their disabilities, had the information needed to navigate the necessary services for their disabilities, and knew they existed independent of their disabilities. Students with positive experiences tend to seek out services more readily.

O'Shea and Meyer (2016) conducted a qualitative investigation into the motivations of college students with nonvisible disabilities and their use of disability services. O'Shea and Meyer found students who had positive experiences in previous educational environments were more secure in seeking out services in college, and students who were more motivated sought out accommodations more readily. The way SWD constructed meaning of their disabilities and how motivated the students were to access accommodations depended on the cognitive and emotional ways students made sense of their disabilities and their past high school experiences. Past positive experiences contributed to motivating SWD in accessing services, while the interactions with ODS, other resources, and SWD faculty also affected SWD motivation to access services. Positive experiences with these factors increased the motivations of SWD to use support services. O'Shea and Meyer provided an understanding of the motivations of SWD in college and these students' access to support services while supportive relationships and attitudes guide SWD on college campuses with their sense of belonging.

Positive and supportive relationships. Positive relationships spark motivation in SWD. Vaccaro, Daly-Cano, and Newman (2015) discussed themes that evolved from their grounded theory study of SWD at eight colleges. The answers to the questions in the in-depth student interviews demonstrated a correlation between SWD social relationships

and motivations to use accommodations. The researchers found the experiences of the eight self-identified SWD to be distinctively different from other marginalized social groups. The types of social relationships SWD have had play an intricate role in fostering accommodation access for SWD. Three themes were found concerning college SWD sense of belonging: (a) self-advocacy, (b) positive college student experiences, and (c) social relationships. In the student narratives, it became evident that a sense of belonging helped advance students' self-advocacy, allowed for more positive experiences, and supported social relationships. Positive experiences can assist SWD in forming friendships, finding strategies for self-advocacy, mastering the student role, which, in turn, can foster a sense of belonging. Vaccaro et al. (2015) suggested promoting a sense of belonging for SWD by emphasizing and celebrating student strengths and engaging in intentional advising through efforts to support students in their quests to master the student role. Relationships combined experiences of comfort and fitting in with being part of the school culture, which helped SWD gain confidence in their abilities to experience college life. Positive relationships help build positive attitudes.

Timmerman and Mulvihill's (2015) research on supportive relationships with SWD uncovered the needs of SWD to demonstrate strong self-advocacy skills, willingness to disclose their disabilities, and positive attitudes. Timmerman and Mulvihill discovered SWD must deal with negative relationships and attitudes from staff. Students with disabilities must learn to deal with negative and uninformed perceptions of the use of accommodations by both instructors and peers. Students with disabilities must also learn to ignore disrespectful attitudes and behaviors of others toward them. A faculty mentoring relationship can be a crucial element in the success of SWD in postsecondary

education (Timmerman & Mulvihill, 2015). Positive relationships between SWD and staff assist in the accommodation process.

Lux (2016) performed a qualitative study with learning disabled college students, interviewing them about their experiences on campuses, and found family support systems were an essential component to successful college life. Also, past special educators continued relationships with SWD to assist them in seeking out services. Lux discovered if SWD did not have support systems or links in their postsecondary experiences, they tended to have more struggles with academic success.

Instructional delivery. Instructional training for instructors in disability support and information surrounding disability support is pivotal for SWD. Instructors who have been ill informed can cause students to feel they are unimportant or “not normal,” and the result is that teachers do not support SWD correctly. West, Novak, and Mueller (2016) found the secure connections between staff’s knowledge of specific disability laws, a sense of confidence in their responsibilities to students, and trust in their understanding indicated disability training might improve instructors’ willingness to provide essential services to students. Instructors support SWD feeling of autonomy, and students need to feel supported in their independence in all areas of the campus and all activities that assist in feelings of belonging.

Heindel (2014) studied SWD and found instructors needed more training on how to work with SWD. Heindel researched specific instructional techniques and concepts comprised of nine principles for instructors to use in UDL, revising courses to be responsive to increasingly diverse student populations, and lessening the need for special accommodations. The nine principals of UDL include (a) fair use, (b) flexible use, (c)

simplicity and intuitiveness, (d) perceptible information, (e) tolerance for error, (f) low physical effort, (g) size and space for approach and method, (h) a community of learners, and (i) a supportive institutional climate (Heindel, 2014). Accommodations for all are built into the nine principals, especially flexibility, simplicity, intuitiveness, tolerance for error, and supportive climate. Instructors can use these principals to build accommodations in lessons and provide instructors the ability to adopt these principles so that the ODS could provide consultation and broaden awareness of available accommodations. When defining UDL, learning is integrated and presented by multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression into course curriculum (National Center on Universal Design for Learning, 2015).

One size does not fit all for SWD during elementary and secondary years. Students with disabilities' IEPs distinguish opportunities for teachers to instruct students' teaching to their individual learning strengths and styles. When teachers incorporate universal design for learning, some of the same components used when developing IEPs and what is necessary for teaching SWD are used; these three basic ideas are (a) multiple means of representation, (b) various methods of student action and observation, and (c) numerous methods of engagement, dependent on effective communication (Seok et al., 2018). The goals provided through UDL are that of universal access to provide avenues for instructors in eliminating barriers from the learning environment (Seok et al., 2018). Seok et al.'s (2018) systematic review explored methods of UDL implementation for postsecondary students with and without disabilities and the degree to which UDL is effective. Seok et al. examined 17 empirically based studies focusing on the application of UDL principles. The study supported the use of UDL, especially as student diversity

has increased in colleges, and attendance of SWD continues to rise on postsecondary campuses. The use of UDL strategies has become critical in higher education.

Pino and Mortari (2014) conducted a study with higher education students identified as having dyslexia, which is categorized as a SLD. Pino and Mortari's findings support the use of UDL, and the authors described how UDL includes the use of accommodations in instruction and responding to the challenges involving teaching and accommodating SWD. Pino and Mortari suggested academic staff should work to design courses in flexible, multilayered ways by incorporating multiple formats of content delivery to meet diverse student needs and providing individualized adjustments to students who display specialized needs.

Philosophical shifts, such as in UDL and its instructional methods, provide instructors with ideas for adequate and appropriate accommodations for SWD contextual and functional needs. Dallas, Upton, and Sprong (2014) surveyed a nonrandom sample from a population of 1,621 faculty at a medium-sized Midwestern university on attitudes toward inclusive teaching strategies and found using UDL ideas assists with accommodation delivery, costs, and access in postsecondary classrooms. This inclusive instructional approach could benefit all diverse learners, including those who do not disclose (Dallas et al., 2014).

Universal design for learning and instructional strategies for SWD accommodation access make sense when paired with supporting components, such as the importance of considering students' needs when providing instruction and accommodations (Seok et al., 2018). Colleges that embrace the spirit of the law and provide access to all are likely to invest in accommodation processes that consider the

entirety of student life, looking at individual functional needs, cost benefits, and UDL concepts that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn (Seok et al., 2018).

Institutions that provide equal access to the letter of the law only offer services to the disabled exhibiting a philosophical outlook of limiting accommodations because they are just looking at students' disabilities and classroom accommodations (Seok et al., 2018).

Transition Planning

Valuable assistance in providing successful transitional planning starts in secondary education years (Newman et al., 2016). The IDEA requires all SWD, ages 16 and over, have an IEP that must include appropriate and measurable postsecondary transitional goals and describe the transition services required to assist the student in reaching these goals (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). As a result of transition planning, SWD, parents, counselors, and teachers become more aware of a variety of postsecondary options for SWD (Leyser et al., 1998). Transition planning education is available at the postsecondary level and is necessary for educational success, as it sets reachable goals for SWD to be successful in life (Newman et al., 2016). Having a transition plan specific to the needed postsecondary accommodations and supports for SWD has proven to assist a broader range of students (Newman et al., 2016). The creation of multiyear plans that incorporate academic preparation with career activities, including self-advocacy and disability awareness before postsecondary entry, is part of the transition planning process for SWD (Newman et al., 2016).

Specified transitional planning early in SWD education, assists with college preparation. Ramsdell (2014) studied college SWD, the effects of transition planning, and how it affected college success. Through the results of 170 completed surveys of SWD,

Ramsdell found elements of transition planning to have a significant and positive impact on the college experiences of SWD. Ramsdell supported the idea that SWD, who were more involved with planning their transitions, had better self-advocacy skills and feelings toward the accommodations process and reported their faculty to use more inclusive teaching practices. Ramsdell also stated SWD felt less stigma surrounding their disability diagnoses because SWD discussed their disabilities previously in these meetings.

Effective transitional planning assists SWD in several ways to access their accommodations, aiding them with retention and completion. Newman et al. (2016) conducted a study on transitional planning, analyzing data from a longitudinal study. Newman et al. determined receiving prior transition planning education and having a transition plan that specified needed postsecondary accommodations had positive effects on SWD receiving specific services and support at the postsecondary level. The researchers discovered two critical topics revealed during the transition planning process: (a) the relationship between self-disclosure and receiving accommodation and (b) specific student characteristics related to past school experiences and access to accommodations. Newman et al.'s conclusions support transition planning in educational settings and having plans specify postsecondary accommodations as needed for post-high school services. These plans increase the likelihood of receipt of disability-specific supports in postsecondary schools. Students with disabilities were also more apt to disclose their disabilities if they had transition planning in high school since they had practice discussing their limitations in the transition planning meetings (Newman et al., 2016). Providing specific transition planning to SWD can provide successful navigation in accessing accommodation and assisting with the academic fulfillment of postsecondary

educational opportunities and goals. The end goal is presenting the importance of teamwork to make accommodation access for SWD a success on the postsecondary campus. O'Shea and Meyer (2016) delivered insight into the importance of the competence, relatedness, and autonomy in a student's experience, showing the ultimate decision to disclose a disability, use support services, and access accommodations are up to the individual student.

Summary of Supports

The supports found to assist SWD in accessing their accommodations while attending postsecondary institutions and promoting completion and retention were positive experiences, more fully trained staff who show support with positive attitudes and adjustments in instructional delivery, and specific transitional planning. Hamblet (2014) said SWD who have positive experiences are more likely to seek out and access their accommodations, while Timmerman and Mulvihill (2015) shared the more training staff receive, the more informed staff become in assisting SWD. Staff tends to be more supportive and have better attitudes towards SWD and providing them with their accommodations when staff is more knowledgeable about SWD. Changes in instruction, such as UDL (Heindel, 2014), allow SWD more confidence in accessing their accommodations. While adjustments in instructional delivery were found to assist SWD in accessing their accommodations, the ideas of UDL and instructional training (Seok et al., 2018) were suggested. Finally, specific transitional planning completed before postsecondary transition is successful in assisting SWD accessing their accommodations for success (Newman et al., 2016).

Barriers to Accessing Accommodations

Common barriers SWD faced when accessing their accommodations were found during the literature review. These barriers include faculties' attitudes and knowledge surrounding accommodation delivery, the lack of or need for special education training, adding to unwanted or unwarranted perceptions, and lack of or miscommunication between SWD and postsecondary staff. The final barrier discovered was the underuse or misuse of the ODS. The most common barriers found through the review of the literature are discussed next.

Faculty Attitude and Knowledge

Wright and Meyer (2017) explored the relationship between SWD self-disclosure of disabilities and faculty attitudes, including lack of empathy, flexibility, and self-efficacy in meeting students' accommodation needs. The goal of Wright and Meyer's research was to determine if the amount of information SWD self-disclosed regarding their needed accommodations impacted a faculty's self-efficacy in making accommodations. Wright and Meyer's study of 356 SWD and faculty included a survey of 34 items, and 70 completed surveys were returned. Wright and Meyer found the willingness and flexibility of university faculty to comply with and provide accommodations for SWD were critical to SWD academic success because students felt more comfortable because of faculty's efforts. The results of Wright and Meyer's study revealed the more a student self-disclosed about their needed accommodations, the more self-efficacy faculty had in making SWD accommodations.

In a study of the accessibility and inclusion of disabled college students, Krug (2015) found faculty and staff attitudes were significant in SWD academic success. When

faculty and staff took more time to get to know SWD and their abilities, SWD felt more included in their educational processes, leading to more accommodation accessibility. Faculty and staff who took time to understand SWD needs tended to interact with the students in a more positive manner and accommodate them more readily (Krug, 2015).

Training. Instructors can project negative attitudes toward disabilities that affect the provisions of accommodations because of the lack of knowledge and training on the issues that SWD face. Sniatecki, Perry, and Snell (2015) conducted a study of faculty attitudes toward and knowledge of college SWD. The researcher provided data from 123 anonymous surveys of postsecondary faculty. Their results suggested some faculty continued to demonstrate negative attitudes toward SWD and the provision of accommodations. Results showed some faculty were under-aware of policies, procedures, and available on-campus supports for SWD. Sniatecki et al. suggested when providing faculty with sufficient knowledge, they can make comprehensive, informed efforts to implement appropriate accommodations and remove barriers to assist SWD with academic success. The more knowledge and training faculty and staff have in working with SWD and providing them with their accommodations, the more successful staff are in delivering those services. McCallister, Wilson, and Baker (2014) conducted a study using a qualitative, open-ended questionnaire that focused on examining the staff's opinions about what tools and information they needed to work with postsecondary SWD. McCallister et al. suggested staff desire more training and knowledge about specific disabilities. The findings illustrated the need for disability-related training to equip postsecondary staff to teach SWD.

Perceptions. Instructors' lack of knowledge and training on issues surrounding SWD accommodation access can produce unwanted or unwarranted perceptions, and these perceptions can create feelings associated with normalcy. Timmerman and Mulvihill's (2015) qualitative study reviewed the perspectives of students living with disabilities in the college setting, interviewing two college SWD about their accommodations on campus. Timmerman and Mulvihill found perceptions from others of accommodations, as not being "normal" hindered SWD accommodation access. Timmerman and Mulvihill discovered during their study the issues of others' attitudes and SWD feeling of normal or feeling singled out because of hindered access to accommodations.

Hong (2015) used reflective journaling while conducting a qualitative study. They captured the anecdotal experiences of 16 college SWD for 10 weeks, seeking themes concerning barriers and frustrations SWD encountered daily when accessing accommodations. The themes captured were the faculty perceptions of SWD accommodation use, the fit of SWD advisors, college stressors, and quality support services. Hong discovered that once instructors found students were disabled, SWD felt they were treated differently. The students Hong studied confessed it took a vast amount of courage to present an accommodation letter to the instructor. The students also sensed there was a significant degree of distrust and cynicism between their instructors and themselves. Most students who had negative experiences described being humiliated in front of their professors and classmates by pretending to be "normal" and not disclosing their needs for accommodations. Findings from Hong's study demonstrate many SWD struggle with the common threat of being judged or treated differently by peers and

instructors, affecting faculty attitudes toward SWD and hindering SWD accommodation access. Having the abilities to request accommodations, SWD must be able to communicate with their instructors, a two-way process that is more successful if instructors have the specific knowledge needed to accommodate the SLD.

Communication. Communication is a central component of the relationship between instructors and SWD and the delivery of the students' accommodations. The more students self-disclose, the more self-efficacy instructors have in making accommodations, as communication offers more information to the instructors about the SWD and their needs (Wright & Meyer, 2017). Wright and Meyer (2017) sent a low-disclosure survey to 356 SWD, and 70 completed surveys were returned. The researchers hypothesized the level of student self-disclosure regarding needed accommodations would determine the amount of self-efficacy an instructor had in meeting accommodations. The primary goal of Wright and Meyer's study was to determine if the amount of information SWD self-disclose regarding needed accommodations impacts an instructor's self-efficacy in making accommodations. When an instructor had a lack of self-efficacy making accommodation, they indicated resistance in making the accommodation. If SWD perceive an instructor is not willing or able to make an accommodation, they may wrongfully assume the instructor does not believe in the student's ability to succeed in the course (Wright & Meyer, 2017). For communication to be effective, both SWD and the staff involved had to think of each other as people first, not of the disability labels put on the students. Wright and Meyer suggested self-disclosure enhanced instructor self-efficacy in making accommodations, suggesting communication improves the accommodation process. However, instructors still lacked

self-efficacy in providing SWD accommodations, impeding the students' abilities to succeed in academia.

West et al. (2016) conducted a study to determine the accommodative strategies faculty used and believed to be necessary for inclusive instruction, including accommodations for SWD in postsecondary education. West et al. examined the inclusive instructional and accommodation strategies instructors used to assist SWD in postsecondary education and what faculty perceived as most important for student success. The researchers surveyed 52 instructors on inclusive instructional practices and the perceived importance of such practices. West et al. found instructors and faculty who learned about special education laws and mandates better understood why they existed and were more likely to value the practices and responsibilities that come with supporting SWD and assisting them in the use of ODS.

Use of the Office of Disability Services

On college campuses, the ODS is the hub of services for SWD. Abreu, Hillier, Frye, and Goldstein (2016) conducted a study on student experiences using services offered by ODS. Abreu et al. sent a 28-item questionnaire to 525 students registered with the ODS, and 21% responded, providing a sample of 93. The questionnaire included questions about demographics, GPA, and the usefulness of accommodations. The participants also reported their number of visits to the ODS, the reasons, the ways the ODS had been helpful, and recommendations for improvement. Abreu et al. provided information on particular challenges SWD face accessing support services. Their findings support that SWD do not fully access the ODS despite the amount of help the ODS

provides SWD. The reasons ranged from students not being well informed to improvements needed to ODS.

Williams-Hall (2018) alluded to the importance of SWD interactions with the ODS on campus and their success of the accommodation acquisition and assistance with academic achievement, as the ODS is where SWD initiate the accommodation process. The ODS is where SWD can receive specific services to their disability they may need. The ODS has processes in place that the SWD may need to follow, and the process begins in the ODS. Kendall and Tarman (2016) looked at the use of the ODS, as assisting SWD and the lack of the use of the ODS as a barrier to success. Students with disabilities needed to be urged to go to the ODS. If SWD do not know where to go or have someone to encourage or remind them to seek out services, SWD may forgo accommodation processes, eliminating use of the ODS all together. Students with disabilities who had active support systems to motivate them through the process and even assist them were more likely to use the services of ODS.

Herbert et al. (2014) found there was a connection between training and professional competence of disability support providers and whether SWD engaged with the ODS while in college. Herbert et al. studied a sample of 546 college students seeking services through the ODS over 10 years and found self-knowledge to be an essential skill for SWD. Herbert et al. reported unless students are aware the ODS exists on campus and know how to access it, they are not able to access the services made available to them. Being one's self-advocate and developing self-advocacy skills assists with opening the door to the ODS on campus for SWD. Students with disabilities need self-advocacy and self-determination skills to initiate services with the ODS on college campuses.

Summary of Barriers

The barriers while SWD are accessing their accommodations on campus found in the literature included were faculties' attitudes and knowledge surrounding accommodation delivery; the lack of or need for special education training, adding to unwanted or unwarranted perceptions; and lack of communication or miscommunication between SWD and faculty and staff. The final barrier discovered was the underuse or misuse of the ODS. The need for self-determination and self-disclosure for SWD to access accommodations on postsecondary campuses are presented next.

Self-Advocacy and Self-Determination Skills

Self-advocacy and self-determination skills assist in breaking through barriers that hinder access to accommodations on campus for SWD assisting with postsecondary navigation toward academic success. Self-advocacy and self-determination skills are especially crucial for SWD and even more so in college. How these skills are needed will be presented in the following sections.

Self-Advocacy Skills

Herbert et al. (2014) stated self-advocacy skills assist in disclosing one's disability and seeking out services that are necessary for postsecondary education to receive accommodations. These skills are relevant for SWD, and they assist SWD in disclosing and communicating knowledge of disabilities, needs, strengths, and weaknesses (Herbert et al., 2014).

Self-disclosure procedures are new and challenging for some students, as they may not have had to initiate services themselves nor had to practice the skills previously to be strong self-advocates (Daly-Cano et al., 2015). Before postsecondary education,

assigned adults took the task of initiating and providing accommodations for SWD. Students with disabilities require strong self-advocacy skills (Daly-Cano et al., 2015), as these skills are needed for self-disclosure to receive accommodations on postsecondary campuses (Hadley, 2007). One of the reasons SWD do not access their accommodations at the postsecondary level is the lack of self-advocacy skills, such as self-initiative and insight into their disabilities. Critical concepts of self-advocacy include knowledge of self, disability, strengths, weaknesses, and rights; these skills are demonstrated through how students understand their limitations and how their disabilities impact their lives on campus (Daly-Cano et al., 2015).

Communication strengthened through self-advocacy. One of the components of self-advocacy is self-knowledge, including students' abilities to communicate their needs, evaluate their performances (or self-regulation), and know their strengths, interests, and limitations. Self-advocacy is an essential skill for individuals to communicate effectively and assert themselves (Hengen, 2018). Some SWD are unaware of the services available to them, while other SWD feel support staff is not knowledgeable enough about their disabilities to assist them in gaining access to their accommodations (Kraglund-Gauthier, Young, & Kell, 2014). The support staff who provide SWD assistance with navigation through the self-disclosure process is vital.

Williams-Hall (2018) conducted a study with postsecondary SWD accessing accommodations and found SWD were aware of the barriers interfering with the academic success they must overcome when admitting to college postsecondary. Providing a contact staff to the SWD appointed through the ODS can assist in the process of obtaining accommodations. Williams-Hall found postsecondary staff requires training

on how to work with SWD so they can promote the success of SWD by encouraging self-disclosure and self-advocacy.

Students with disabilities need to be knowledgeable about their disabilities and how the process, policies, and procedures work on campuses to gain access to their services. Kraglund-Gauthier et al. (2014) studied elements of inclusion, differentiation, UDL, and technology for successful postsecondary accommodation access for SWD because SWD need to be strong self-advocates to request the services needed to assist them with their postsecondary academic success. Kraglund-Gauthier et al. revealed SWD perspectives on challenges in learning and navigating postsecondary institutions, stating lack of communication, confidence, and self-advocacy affected students' attitudes and interactions with educators and other institutional advisors, hindering their access to accommodations. Kraglund-Gauthier et al. suggested institutions construct policies to promote awareness, advocacy, and learning partnerships among SWD in cooperation with the whole postsecondary community to assist SWD with gaining services for their disabilities. Policies and procedures that encompass the whole postsecondary community can assist SWD to overcome barriers on campus.

Students with disabilities who are more active in the earlier development of their educational plans are more comfortable in advocating for themselves in postsecondary environments. Hengen (2018) conducted a study on self-advocacy among postsecondary SWD. In a study of 136 SWD registered with an ODS, Hengen found SWD who could practice their self-advocacy skills in their IEP or 504-plan meetings were better prepared to self-advocate for themselves at the college level. In these meetings, students could learn the four components of self-advocacy: (a) knowledge of self, (b) knowledge of

rights, (c) communication skills, and (d) leadership skills (Hengen, 2018). Hengen found students who were active with their IEPs or 504 plans earlier in their education processes were better able to self-advocate for themselves in college than those students who were not active members or did not attend their IEP or 504 planning meetings.

Self-Determination Skills

Self-determination skills provide SWD the skills to support them when facing barriers that hinder accommodation access on postsecondary campuses. Defining self-determination in the context of preparing SWD for their futures has been a focus of research and demonstration activities for several years (Getzel, 2014). Getzel (2014) conducted a study on college SWD and their needs for self-determination skills, finding the responsibility of managing accommodations along with coursework presents an additional set of challenges that are unique to SWD. Success in college encompasses diligence in self-control, self-evaluation, decision making, and goal setting, all examples of self-determination (Getzel, 2014). Specific instruction that supports development, knowledge, skills, and beliefs is needed to lead to self-determination for SWD.

O'Shea and Meyer (2016) reported self-determination is a predictor of academic success. Self-determination skills assist in developing the three psychological needs of autonomy, competency, and relatedness. These needs are crucial when addressing the needs and assisting in accommodation access for SWD on postsecondary campuses (O'Shea & Meyer, 2016). Self-determination skills are essential for SWD, as they construct meaning of their disabilities and how their experiences have influenced actions and choices on campus (O'Shea & Meyer, 2016).

O'Shea and Meyer (2016) uncovered the significance of self-determination and its importance to SWD in accessing their accommodations on campuses. Self-determination is related to the cognitive and emotional ways students construct the meaning of their disabilities and how these students' experiences have influenced their actions and choices on college campuses. These experiences have affected college SWD and their disclosure because of stigmas attached to disabilities.

Stigma alleviated through self-determination skills. Stigma of the disabled is often related to feelings of being treated differently and can affect a disabled person's future (Kendall & Terman, 2016). There are two types of stigma: personal and social. Personal stigma is the stigma one has about themselves, what they believe to be true about themselves, and how the world will treat them. Social stigma is what others believe and how those beliefs affect how they are treated. Disclosure is not a simple thing for SWD, as stigmas are related to disabilities and being different and unable. Students with disabilities often do not want to be viewed or treated as different because of being disabled, and the stigma of being unable to accomplish things compared to nondisabled people gets in the way of disclosure for SWD.

Kendall and Tarman (2016) discussed the barriers of stigma on campuses of higher education and how stigma can prevent students from disclosing their disabilities, as students do not want different treatment. Kendall and Tarman interviewed 13 SWD on university campuses about their experiences on campus. Most of the participants revealed their disabilities before enrolling, but a few did not, stating stigma played a significant role in their reluctance. Disclosure was made with reluctance because students did not want to be viewed or treated as different, and they were concerned the disclosure of their

disabilities would have a detrimental effect upon their future careers, such as being told they could not do a particular job. Kendall and Tarman found while the majority of SWD disclosed their disabilities before the commencement of the research, others were reluctant to inform their instructors or peers due to a perceived stigma associated with impairments. Issues related to stigma are not simple; they involve social and personal stigmas, often manifesting as feeling inadequate as a college student (Kendall & Tarman, 2016).

The fear of social stigma can cause SWD to feel powerless or inadequate, hindering self-advocacy, and self-determination skills because of the fear of being treated differently, inferior, or unable to navigate academia. Williams-Hall (2018) collected data using document analysis from 59 public and private 4-year academic institutions about what type of admission, educational, and support services contributed to SLD and graduation rates. Williams-Hall found the fear of stigma and embarrassment was a reason SWD did not access their accommodations on campuses and were not succeeding academically. Students with disabilities did not want to be treated differently or seen as different. At times, they were embarrassed by what others thought about them because they did not understand their disabilities and were unable to seek assistance with their education.

Students with disabilities who feel less stigma around their disabilities feel more positive about, and, in turn, feel more comfortable in accessing their accommodations. Ramsdell (2014) surveyed 220 SWD and found students who were more involved with planning their IEPs had better self-advocacy skills and feelings toward the accommodations process and felt less stigma surrounding their disability diagnoses.

Ransdell concluded students whose previous schools encouraged them to develop self-advocacy and determination skills were more likely to demonstrate those skills in college, allowing SWD to feel positive about the ODS and campus culture and to be less likely to feel stigma surrounding their disability diagnosis. Those students reported their faculty used more inclusive teaching practices, assisting with feelings of stigmas surrounding students' disabilities, promoting accommodation use, and assisting in academic success.

Summary

Through the review of the literature, the researcher evaluated the growing numbers of SWD in postsecondary institutions (Leyser et al., 1998) while uncovering the significant issues of lower retention and completion rates of SWD at postsecondary levels (Herbert et al., 2014). As the number of SWD attending colleges is growing, the unique experiences of these students are a pressing concern for colleges, as not as many SWD are finishing their degrees compared to their peers without disabilities (Herbert et al., 2014). Although colleges must provide accommodations (Hadley, 2007), there are numerous reasons why many SWD do not pursue the available accommodations for their disabilities (Kendall & Tarman, 2016). Travis (2014) shared SWD experience barriers when trying to access their accommodations, highlighting that when SWD are accessing their accommodations on college campuses, the accommodations assist in their academic progress, retention, and completion.

Several themes developed during the literature review surrounding SWD accessing their accommodations on college campuses (Herbert et al., 2014). Students with disabilities need to self-disclose to begin the accommodation process at postsecondary institutions (Daly-Cano et al., 2015). Students with disabilities need self-

advocacy and self-determination skills to self-disclose (Herbert et al., 2014). Several supports are noted for assisting SWD in accessing their accommodations on college campuses. Another theme was understanding prior experiences (Hamblet, 2014) of SWD in college and how SWD past experiences relate to accommodation access (O'Shea & Meyer, 2016). Timmerman and Mulvihill (2015) discussed the importance of supportive relationships and positive attitudes. Newman et al. (2016) provided ways to successfully assist SWD in providing accommodations through successful transitional planning in secondary education. The last theme emerging from the literature review was adjusting instructional design through the implementation of UDL (Seok et al., 2018).

Numerous barriers have been presented as reasons why SWD are not accessing accommodations, including lack of self-disclosure (Daly-Cano et al., 2015), special education knowledge, and ODS access. Issues of instructional design and adjusting policy for faculty, policymakers, those who work with disabled students, and the students themselves highlighted issues of disability and UDL (Kurth & Mellard, 2006). Kurth and Mellard (2006) alluded to changes in the way instruction is delivered. Normalizing accommodations for all students are one way these issues are addressed since disabilities should be normalized; hence, seeking accommodations should be normalized too.

Barriers that hindered accommodation access included stigma (Williams-Hall, 2018), normalcy (Hong, 2015), faculty attitudes (Krug, 2015) and knowledge (Sniatecki et al., 2015), and the underuse of the ODS (Abreu et al., 2016).

Finally, the importance of self-advocacy skills (Hengen, 2018) and self-determination skills (Herbert et al., 2014) were highlighted as suggestions in aiding SWD in breaking through barriers that hinder access to accommodation on campus. O'Shea and

Meyer's (2016) study uncovered reasons why SWD need self-advocacy and self-determination skills, especially in postsecondary education. Self-advocacy and self-determination skills are needed to navigate postsecondary campuses, assist in SWD accommodation access, and promote academic success.

Studies into SWD and the phenomenon of accessing accommodations are crucial, as many SWD are not accessing their accommodations to assist in their educational success (Travis, 2014). The reviewed literature demonstrates a topic missing in the research: understanding students' experiences with SLD while accessing accommodation on college campuses. Students with disabilities encounter specific barriers or lack specific skills while accessing accommodations. By conducting further research into these experiences and exploring the ideas of self-motivation, normalcy, and stigmatization, a better understanding may be gained into the phenomenon with the hopes of providing insight for improved policy, instruction, and laws surrounding postsecondary education and disabled college students' academic success. Through the following descriptive, transcendental, phenomenological study, the researcher addresses a gap in the literature.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The researcher of this study explored SWD accommodation access on postsecondary campuses through descriptive, transcendental phenomenology, which is described in detail in this chapter. Specifically, a qualitative approach through phenomenological interviews was used to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences students with SLD encounter while accessing their accommodations at Southern California community colleges. The descriptive, transcendental phenomenological methodology chosen supported the exploration of college SWD accommodation access.

This study followed Creswell's (2014) components of qualitative research through a discussion of the philosophical background and then the research design. The research problem was uncovered through the literature review and described in detail in Chapter 1, leading to the research questions provided to guide the study. Qualitative research was chosen for this study because the problem identified required the exploration of a group or population experiencing the problem, identifying variables not easily measured (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research is used to understand an issue that is only accomplished through conversing with those involved in the problem (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research is used to empower the individuals studied through sharing their information with the researcher (Creswell, 2014). Collaborative ideas were delivered between the participant responses and the researcher's crafting of those ideas, seeking to understand the problem through the semistructured, in-person interviews. Statistical analysis overlooks the uniqueness of individuals in qualitative studies, disallowing sensitive interactions between researchers and participants with individual differences (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research is used to help understand areas of

research that pertain to reason, opinion, and motivation (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative methodology of phenomenology used by the researcher for this study builds meaning in a common phenomenon that people experience through the sense of their world by revealing and explaining their interpretations of the phenomena.

Philosophical Foundations

Creswell (2014) described philosophical foundations that influence qualitative research as ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology. Ontology is the philosophical value that one places on the nature of reality, while epistemology focuses on the nature of knowledge. Axiology is a more profound, philosophically adept way of looking at inherent value measures. Methodology is a philosophical way of observing the entire process for a qualitative answer. The philosophical foundation is essential when making sense of the information gained through a study. When attempting to understand human behavior, researchers add their own beliefs, experiences, and values to their research. The philosophical foundations of this study reflect a component of social justice research.

Researchers of social justice incorporate the philosophical commitments of ontological and epistemological focuses (Creswell, 2014). Ontologically, social justice researchers concentrate on the nature of reality, what it means to be real, and what constitutes the world (Schwandt, 2007). The social justice philosophical commitments communicated by the researcher of this study focused on the ontological concentrations of reality by drawing on the manifestations and interpretations while exploring the phenomenon. Vagle (2014) explained while researchers use ontology to make sense of a phenomenon, they draw on manifestations and interpretations. Denzin and Lincoln

(2011) provided information in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* concerning epistemology and how researchers question the nature of knowledge. Using these philosophical approaches is accomplished by asking how one knows what they know. Researchers influenced by epistemology are concerned in the way truth is processed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Epistemology is essential to this study through participant investigation and knowledge of the phenomenon through questioning. How the participants have experienced the phenomenon was investigated through the researcher's interpretations of the participants' manifestations of the phenomenon.

Research Methodology

Identifying a methodology allows the researcher to demonstrate how the study purposefully connects with the design used to carry out the study, including data collection, analysis, and the strategies used to preserve the rigor and trustworthiness of the research (Lux, 2016). The method chosen for this study is phenomenology, beginning with a need to find an empirical answer to identify patterns, concepts, and relationships developed from the belief that there are many meanings to reality (Raines, 2013). Raines (2013) stated phenomenology is constructivist or naturalistic inquiry, an inductive process, and grounded in the belief that there are multiple constructs of reality while discovering a phenomenon. The phenomenological inquiry includes identifying patterns through the examination of specific instances, experiences, artifacts, and events (Raines, 2013). Creswell (2014) suggested studying a problem qualitative phenomenological research can use an emerging approach to inquiry with an accumulation of data from the natural setting of those studied.

Research Problem

The problem uncovered in the literature review was that SWD often are not accessing their accommodations in postsecondary settings. While uncovering related literature, the researcher discovered gaps in the literature and a need for further research with specific groups of SWD, such as SLD (Newman et al., 2016), and in a smaller context, such as community college settings (O'Shea & Meyer, 2016). The type of problem best suited for phenomenological research is one of understanding several individuals' common or shared experiences (i.e., the phenomenon; Vagle, 2014). Creswell (2014) suggested in a phenomenological study, and the word *explore* fits the association involved in looking for the shared phenomenon. Bakanay and Cakir (2016) identified with Husserl's theories of phenomenology, describing transcendental phenomenology as descriptive phenomenology aiming to describe the phenomenon rather than to explain it. This study is transcendental (Bakanay & Cakir, 2016) and the researcher describes SWD accessing their accommodations.

Research Questions

With a phenomenological, social justice lens and the intention to narrow the scope of the study through suggestions provided by O'Shea and Meyer (2016) and Newman et al. (2016), the main research question was developed: What experiences do college students who self-identify with SLD have in accessing accommodations on campus? This broad research question was used as a guide for the following research subquestions to further structure the study in assisting the researcher in understanding the essence of the phenomenon.

1. What experiences do students who self-identify with SLD in college have using self-advocacy skills while accessing accommodations?
2. What experiences do students who self-identify with SLD in colleges have using self-determination skills while accessing accommodations?
3. How have past academic experiences affected students who self-identify with SLD and their accessing accommodations in postsecondary education?
4. What can students who self-identify with SLD recommend colleges do to assist them more effectively in accessing desired accommodations?

Descriptive, Transcendental Phenomenology

This study used Husserl's (1931) models of descriptive, transcendental phenomenology. Phenomenology is both a philosophy and a methodology (Vagle, 2014). Husserl explained phenomenology as the philosophy of living consciousness, thus allowing the researcher to discover the essence of the phenomena through the participants' presentations of the phenomenon through interviews with the researcher. Transcendental phenomenology is the study of the appearance of the phenomenon, as viewed by participants, and as the phenomenon appears in the participants' consciousnesses (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) described phenomenology as understanding the essences of the experiences or explicating the phenomenon regarding its constituents and possible meanings. Transcendental phenomenology is discerning the features of consciousness and gaining an understanding of the essences of the experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher of this transcendental phenomenology sought to understand the essence of experiences in accessing accommodations on Southern California campuses for students who self-identify with SLD.

Descriptive Phenomenology

Descriptive phenomenology was developed through transcendental phenomenology using stated descriptions of the experiences of the phenomenon (Husserl, 1931). Through the research questions, the researcher crafted invariant meaning through the descriptions communicated (Vagle, 2014). Descriptions were created through the data collected from those who had experienced the phenomenon. Interviews were used to help the participants describe the experience in ways so others might understand it without experiencing it.

When using phenomenology, interviews of participants were revisited and reread to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of interest. Goulding (2005) clarified phenomenological researchers discover profound meanings through exploring the lived experiences described during interviews and careful examination of collected data. Goulding suggested the collection of data through individual interviewing provides for individually descriptive experiences to encourage intense reflection and, most of all, subjective experiences. The analysis is done by scrutinizing the descriptions for meaningful units and then synthesizing the description of the whole (Goulding, 2005). Through this process, the researcher developed an understanding of the complex issue of accessing accommodations given through descriptions of experiences. The researcher of this study sought to understand SWD experiences through a design of inquiry in which their lived experiences were described by analyzing the phenomena of accessing accommodations through semistructured interviews (Creswell, 2014).

Social Justice

Researchers use the phenomenological process to guide them with social justice issues and provide insight to affect positive changes. Throughout this study, there was an attempt to identify the essence and meaning of the phenomenon of accessing accommodations to assist in the problem of SWD accessing their accommodations on college campuses. Using a social justice paradigm that reflected the researcher's experiences with injustice, there was an underlying theme of social injustice inquiry, as it related to better the opportunities for SWD accessing accommodations on campus. The researcher of this study delivered known and experienced social justice issues, heightened by her self-awareness in her connections to the research and the population chosen.

The Role of the Researcher

The researcher was an employee of the JMCS organization, had access, was authorized, and had written permission from the IRB for this study and JMCS administration to view the needed student records. It was essential for the researcher to confront the epoch process before beginning the research by using a reflective journal. The epoch process was necessary, as the researcher of the study addressed issues close to the researcher and the many years of experience working in the field. Through bracketing and the acknowledgment of bias, the problem can be reduced or mitigated, calling out possible biases. This form of bracketing is considered part of the *epoch process*, an approach where the person conducting the research is to "refrain from judgment" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33). In the epoch process, common knowledge is set aside, and phenomena are revised from a pure transcendental ego (Moustakas, 1994).

The researcher of this study is a Caucasian, female, middle-aged, college-educated, single mother, currently working full-time as a special education administrator. The researcher has been an educator for over 30 years. In the past, the researcher was in the role of a special educator to the participants. It was crucial for the subjectivity of the study that the researcher distance herself from this past role with the participants, as the previous experiences the researcher had prior experiences with the participants as a special educator at JMCS may have affected participant responses. The researcher set aside prior conceived ideas regarding individual participants, as previous students and reflected on the previous experiences in the reflexivity journal. The reflexivity journal was used to document preconceived ideas regarding this issue. The researcher journaled past associations, understandings, facts, or biases so as not to direct the interview. The researcher strove to be naïve while listening to the participants describing their experiences of the investigated phenomenon. The use of the reflexivity journal and bridling was used to document the epoch process (Moustakas, 1994). The reflective journal was used before the interviews, during the interviews, and after the interviews to assist in this process.

Representation

The researcher had to present how to represent the participants in the research, describe how the study was designed as social justice research, and explain the lived experiences with SWD as having past experiences with SLD. When writing for social justice, there are implications associated with the presentation of the study and presenting the narrative (Johnson & Parry, 2015). It was imperative to be completely open and honest, reporting the experiences as described by the participants, not the researcher's

personal experiences. The researcher also had experiences with the phenomenon but is not the authority on the phenomenon. Fine (1994) reported representation could cause issues when preparing a written report on the phenomenological experience. A connection is formed between those represented in the research and how the researcher describes the study (Fine, 1994). The researcher strove to provide insight into her own lived experiences with the researched phenomenon to alleviate problems with alienation and assist with the representation of this study.

Site Selection

Community colleges were chosen because of suggestions made for further research of a smaller postsecondary population by O'Shea and Meyer (2016). Southern California community colleges were chosen since graduates of JMCS often attend these schools, and the colleges were in traveling distance for easy accessibility for both the researcher and participants. The SLD population was chosen for the problem—identified through the literature review—of accessing accommodations on postsecondary campuses. The site selection met the criteria suggested for further research, as recommended by Newman et al. (2016). Adult graduates of JMCS with SLDs who were attending or had attended Southern California community colleges with a 504 were the participants purposefully used for this study. The adult college 504 population was purposefully selected sample because of their shared experiences in accessing accommodations for documented disabilities. Choosing JMCS graduates provided convenience and accessibility for the researcher.

Participant Recruitment

Convenience and purposive sampling were used in this study. Creswell (2014) described convenience sampling as sampling participants who are easily accessible and described purposive sampling as sampling that includes identifying and selecting individuals who are exceptionally knowledgeable about or experienced with the phenomenon of interest. Vagle (2014) stated there is no ideal number for choosing participants. Singh (2015) shared phenomenological researchers should not rely on the saturation of data. Instead, it should be realized there may be enough data when the information gleaned from the interviewed participants provides a rich, in-depth understanding of the essence and meaning of the phenomenon.

There have been approximately 100 JMCS graduates per year. Of those, there have been approximately 30 IEP or 504 students. Of those, around 10 have gone on to community college each year, with about five per year having SLD diagnoses. Using the past 5 years of students, a sample frame of about 25 should have been available.

The recruitment took place with the help of the JMCS Chief Operations Officer (COO) and the head registrar. The recruitment process began with the JMCS COO, including a “call to provide graduate information” to the researcher of this study in the weekly bulletin. This bulletin was provided to all JMCS staff. The information requested was to provide any information JMCS teachers might have had for past JMCS graduates’ students known to be attending community colleges.

The head registrar presented an exhaustive list, with contact information, for all of JMCS graduates in the past 5 years who had IEPs or 504 plans for the researcher to screen and elicit possible participants for a brief screening using the recruitment

screening protocol (see Appendix A). The list was exhaustive, but contact information was minimal, and the list did not include 25 potential participants as expected. During the prescreening process of the list, the researcher identified six individuals as possible participants for the study.

The recruitment screening interview did not take more than a few minutes. Participants were chosen who met the requirements, were willing to participate, could participate for the entire study, were attending or attended a community college, and met the time constraints of the study.

Sample

The recruitment process secured six JMCS Southern California graduates with SLD qualifications who had attended or were attending community college to participate in the study. The six participants graduated from JMCS, attended one of four of JMCS's Southern California campuses in the past 5 years, and qualified for 504 plans in college under the qualifications of SLDs. The participants were adults of either man or woman gender identity and resided in Southern California. They were single or married, parents or parents to be, and working full or part-time in addition to attending community college full or part-time, currently or in the past 5 years. All but two of the participants were attending Southern California community colleges; one of the participants had dropped out of his second community college just 1 week before the interview, and one of the participants had not yet started their classes but had initiated the 504 processes on campus. All but one of the participants had gone through the process of initiating their 504 processes on campus or had used their accommodations.

The six participants delivered rich, in-depth information about initiating their 504 processes on campus, using their accommodations on campus, and the feelings and experiences surrounding accommodation use for themselves as a college student with a SLD. The six participants provided a rich, in-depth understanding of the phenomenon needed to answer the questions for the study.

Data Collection

The main form of data collection was the semistructured interviews of the participants. The primary data collection instrument was the interview protocol, which was developed to derive information through a semistructured setting. Gelling (2011) stressed the importance of the researcher and their interactions with the participants during the data collection process for phenomenological studies. The researcher was the primary collector of data in this study. Vagle (2014) highlighted that it is essential to remember that phenomenology is not a study of the participants or objects of their experiences, but the participants' intentional relationship with the phenomenon investigated. This research did not study the SWD, but their phenomenon of experiencing accommodation access. Collection of information for this study was conducted by the researcher through in-person interviews with the participants.

Vagle (2014) referred to qualitative interviews as "lived-experience descriptions" (p. 87). Johnson and Parry (2015) stated qualitative interviewing is a tool used to capture many views and perspectives from participants. Johnson and Parry shared semistructured interviews are the most prominent data-gathering tool in qualitative research. It is a purposeful, in-person conversation to gather information related to the descriptions of the participants' realities of the phenomenon. It requires careful questioning and listening

with concern for the participants' interests (Johnson & Parry, 2015). Semistructured interviews are also referred to as *active interviewing*, as there is a dynamic interplay between the researcher and the participants. The researcher and the participants were actively involved in an exchange of dialogue guided by the questions developed. The participants were asked predetermined questions, and their answers guided the interview, allowing for possible follow-up questions to clarify areas not clearly understood or to provide room to expand on an idea. Semistructured interviews are a good fit for phenomenological designs to ensure participants' voices are maintained in the data collection process (Johnson & Perry, 2015). The in-person, semistructured interviews took place on the students' college campuses or another spot, for convenience.

The researcher followed Vagle's (2014) suggestions, noting observations of the participants during the interviews and allowing anecdotes given by the participant during recording and transcriptions. After each interview, observations of the participants were recorded by the researcher in the reflective journal. These observations and anecdotes were also noted and used in the whole-part-whole data analysis phases.

Each participant selected a pseudonym, as Vagle (2014) suggested, for use in the presentation and analysis of data and to maintain confidentiality. The researcher used the chosen pseudonym during the interview, transcription, analysis, and documentation of the study. All interviews were audiotaped, as Vagle suggested, with consent from the participant, allowing the researcher to listen and take notes. Audio taping enables the participant to talk and the researcher to pay attention throughout the entire interview. Audio taping allows the interviewer to take the lead to allow moments where the researcher assumes to know what something means and then opens it up for questioning,

allowing the participant to provide more information to the researcher. Audio taping was used, and then a copy of the audiotape was sent to an online transcribing service immediately following each interview for transcribing. Transcription of the audiotaped interview was returned to the researcher within 3 minutes.

Vagle (2014) suggested multiple interviews should be conducted with each participant as needed. As the researcher discovers that interviews need further clarification or questions, the researcher should move on to other questions required to answer the research question. For this study, the participants were interviewed in-person one time except for Participant 1, Smiley.

The First Interviews

The first in-person interviews were used to gather data to answer the research questions and gain insight into the phenomenon of accessing accommodations on campuses. Semistructured questions were used to probe into the participants' descriptions of the phenomenon (see Appendix B). The dialogue started with broad-based questions about the phenomenon and the participants' experiences, followed by open-ended questions. The participants' answers provided information, allowing for follow-up questions, which allowed the development of more precise data. The participant and their answers determined the length of the interview. Keeping the interviews semistructured assisted in maintaining the interviews with an analytical length—not too short and not too long—and were somewhat structured by following the interview guide to preventing tangent conversations.

Descriptions of the phenomenon were given by the participants. Moustakas (1994) described the phenomenological investigation beginning with a social

conversation aimed at creating a relaxed and trusting atmosphere. Semistructured, in-person interviews included open-ended questions to allow participants to generate descriptions in their own words. Each interview unfolded differently, causing the on-the-spot formulation of follow-up questions.

Adapting Patton's (2015) questioning techniques, the focus of the questions included experiences, opinions, feelings, knowledge, and visual observations. An example would be, "Tell me about the experiences you encountered when you tried to access your accommodations on campus." Patton also suggested formulating questions to generate the participants' accounts related to the past, present, and future. An example of this type of question is, "Thinking back to when you first enrolled, what did you experience when you asked about accessing your accommodations?"

The questions used in the guide were intended to keep the conversation directed on the phenomenon. The guide also included potential probes that were designed to aid the participants in describing their lived experiences and in keeping the discussion focused on the interconnected meanings participants held to the experiences they described. In addition to recording the interviews, notes were made directly preceding the interview to record observations and bridling.

Following Vagle's (2014) rules allowed the researcher to respond with phrases such as, "Yes, and . . ." or "Tell me more about . . ." The researcher, at times, asked questions; these questions accomplished leading the dialogue through more probing questions. Vagle emphasized there are no mistakes in qualitative interviews, just opportunities. These opportunities pose clarifying follow-up questions. The interview script engaged the participants, allowing them to share and reflect on their personal

experiences while the researcher practiced understanding them, hoping to explore the interconnected meanings.

The Second Interview

The second in-person interview was used to clarify answers or questions derived from the first interview from Participant 1, Smiley, to cover any unanswered questions from the first interview. The second interview provided answers derived from the first interview and was not needed for the other participants.

Transcription

The online service of Temi was used to transcribe the recordings into written documents. Temi is a service for hire that decodes recordings of interviews, reproducing them into written documents and returning them to the sender. Once the interviews were copied into written reports and returned, data analysis could begin. Following the phenomenological interviewing, starting the analysis phase, the focus was continually kept on the participants' lived experiences. Thus, the scripting of the interview was limited to each individual's responses. In phenomenological research, it is difficult to separate data gathering from the analysis, as the two are delicately intertwined throughout the study (Vagle, 2014).

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the heart of the phenomenological study. The researcher sought to uncover and describe the essential nature of the phenomenon of accessing accommodations through analyzing the data presented in the interviews of the participants. The goal was to represent the findings for others who have not experienced the phenomenon so they might appreciate the phenomenon. In this study, the researcher

tried to understand the essence of the experience of accessing accommodations. Data analysis was accomplished by reducing the information collected from the participant's descriptions of the phenomenon presented in their interviews and reducing the data to significant statements and themes. Analyzing the data was completed by developing descriptions of the participant's experiences and conveying an overall essence of understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014).

While the researcher described the participants' responses, the focus was on Vagle's (2014) whole-part-whole method, using intentional experiences, balancing verbatim what the participants described, paraphrasing the descriptions, and crafting the new information given. Vagle's steps assisted in the data analysis of the experiences of students self-identified as SLD accessing accommodations on their college campuses. The purpose of descriptive analysis is describing, not clarifying or interpreting. As suggested by Vagle, analyzing was accomplished through first reading the entire description and then identifying new and emerging themes. The next steps were to carefully reread, take notes, and transform the information from structured to invariant meaning. Information was organized using lists with assorted colors for different themes or ideas.

Trustworthiness

When using qualitative research methods, a productive researcher maintains efforts to ensure trustworthiness. The analytic methods used by the researcher in phenomenological studies avoid cross comparisons and inform the researcher about the depth and detail that can be appreciated through a study of experiences as revealed. Research methods require acknowledging issues of bias as a way of promoting

trustworthiness (Hays & Singh, 2012). Validity involves the trustworthiness or rigor of the study (Hays & Singh, 2012). Trustworthiness requires specific criteria that include specific elements (Hays & Singh, 2012). Along with implementing a methodology, appropriate strategies were used to address subjectivity by reflecting in a reflexivity journal through strategies, such as transcript accuracy, member checking, and bridling, assisting in ensuring trustworthiness in this study.

Subjectivity

The researchers of phenomenological studies document subjectivity before, during, and after the study through journaling. The researcher of this study documented subjectivities in a reflexivity journal before the study started, allowing the researcher to reflect on thoughts and biases about the phenomenon. Journaling continued throughout the study, allowing continual learning about the phenomenon from the participants.

Characterized also as *researcher bias*, *subjectivity* includes the researcher's views and lived experiences surrounding the topic presented (Schwandt, 2007). Schwandt (2007) offered ways the researcher can be cognitive of addressing subjectivity in a research project, such as acknowledging and documenting views and lived experiences.

Most phenomenologists begin their journeys because they are interested in an issue that is familiar or important to them. For this study, the researcher was a doctoral student with a background in special education. The researcher believed in the importance of increased awareness, advocacy, and implementing necessary supports for SWD. The experiences of the researcher motivated her to explore the phenomenon of accessing accommodations and assist in identifying positive interventions that promote the wellbeing of SWD. Motivated to ensure students feel supported and prosperous, the

researcher decided to use elements of this study to aid in her work with these students by recognizing the influences that led the researcher to acknowledge the importance of self-advocacy, empowerment, and self-determination to promote positive experiences for all students.

Reflexivity journals. The reflexivity journal was used to document personal ideas, experiences, mistakes, reactions, and coincidences encountered with qualitative research (Johnson & Parry, 2015). While highlighting subjectivity and reflecting in the reflexivity journal, the researcher strove to fully understand how the personal life stories of the participants delivered insight into the study. A reflexivity journal was also used, as Vagle (2014) suggested, for reflecting after the study through a post-reflection plan. The post-reflection plan allows the researcher to reflect on the results of the interviews, what was learned, and how the study could be improved. The researcher also used the reflexivity journal during transcript accuracy, member checking, and bridling.

Using a phenomenological approach to research challenges the researcher to set aside or *bridle* all such preconceptions, so they do not limit the openness of the participants' responses, and instead, the researcher strives to understand the phenomenon throughout the study (Vagle, 2014). Bridling is the process phenomenologists use to examine their internalities with the phenomenon and the intentional relationships introduced through the process of conducting the research (Vagle, 2014). Singh (2015) described components of bridling in phenomenological research as describing the research assumptions at the beginning of the study in the reflexivity journal and then noting how interview questions and data processes shift due to those biases. Bridling is used in the data analysis phase and viewed through the continuous examining and

uprooting of the data until the analysis of the essence of the phenomenon is completed through the descriptions. While bridling does not eliminate research bias, the researcher may be cognizant of their biases and use bridling to help illuminate and explore assumptions and preconceptions. Bridling helps researchers see where a question might be more appropriate than a statement, making room for new discussions and methods of thinking rather than reifying embedded assumptions (Vagle, 2014). Problems that unfold can be addressed in the reflexivity journal. Bridling was used before the interviews to discuss any assumptions, during the interviews with the participants to mention specific observations or notes on bridled statements, and after the interview to recap and debrief.

Transcript accuracy and member checking . For this study, the researcher provided the participants interviewed with a draft of their transcripts for a preliminary opportunity to clarify or correct through what is called transcript accuracy. Levy (2015) stated the opportunity for participants to review their words could happen at any stage of the research by sending experimental findings to the participants for feedback. During all phases of the research process, the researcher consulted with the participants regarding the process and the results. Member checking is especially useful in providing the most authentic participant voices. Member checking involved checking with the participants to ensure accuracy in reflecting the meaning of their experiences. Member checking requires the researcher to seek out formative feedback from participants on the preliminary findings from the data analysis (Merriam, 2014).

Ethics

Following ethical practices and procedures is an essential component of the social justice inquiry process (Johnson & Parry, 2015). Ethical practices assist in guiding

actions and help researchers decide how to report any findings that might impact contemporary policymaking (Light, 2015). Light (2015) discussed how vital it is to follow ethical practices in research.

As part of following the ethical requirements for this study, IRB and CITI training was completed. The appropriate documents were submitted to the City University of Seattle Dissertation Committee and IRB for approval before any aspect of the study was conducted. Participants signed consent forms and were kept apprised of the progress of the study (see Appendix C).

The welfare of the participants guided all stages of this study. Participants signed IRB-approved interview consent forms describing the study. The participants received and signed documents that explained the scope of the project and outlined the avenues available to them should they ever feel harmed by the process. The form indicated a participant's ability to cease involvement without any recourse. The researcher abided by the strictest code of confidentiality and maintained the data in a locked, protected environment. The participant information was coded with the participant-chosen pseudonyms from the onset of the study.

Ethical principles linked to scholarly discovery through autonomy, beneficence, and justice helped promote the trustworthiness of research and guided individual efforts throughout every aspect of the study. This study presented minimal risk to the participants because data were collected and communicated through pseudonyms. Selected participants invested their time engaging in interviews and reviewing transcripts. Participants did not receive any form of compensation for their involvement with this study. Participants may have benefitted knowing they are contributing to a body of

knowledge that further informs them of accessing their accommodation on campus.

Participants were provided access to a counselor if at any time they felt distressed during the interview process. All participant identifiers and responses were protected with the strictest level of confidentiality. All data will be stored for 3 years in a locked environment at the researcher's residence. All electronic data were encrypted and password protected.

An informed consent form provided information about the study, while the participant's signature provided consent to use the student as a participant in the study. The form offered contact information should the participant have any questions or concerns. The permission received to identify the location of JMCS by name was obtained in the letter identified as Permission to Use the JMCS Name (see Appendix D).

Summary

Through the literature reviewed, the researcher uncovered a gap in the research guiding the research question of experiences in the phenomenon of SWD accessing accommodation on college campuses. The researcher developed semistructured open-ended research questions surrounding experiences college students who self-identify with SLD have in accessing accommodations on campus. The researcher's interest in the philosophical, epistemological, and ontological focuses on social justice research governed the research question while striving to improve policy enhancement and create change

The researcher of this study used a descriptive, transcendental phenomenology, which provided for a deep understanding of a phenomenon as experienced by participants. Past research guided further study into a specific disability group on a

smaller postsecondary campus (Newman et al., 2016), leading the researcher to choose the SLD college group to research. O'Shea and Meyer's (2016) study suggested a smaller postsecondary setting be studied, providing the rationale for selecting community college for this research. The role of the researcher contributed to participant and site selection. The researcher worked for JMCS in Southern California and used current graduates who have been special education students with SLD qualifications and who were attending Southern California community colleges, thus making the sample for this study a convenient and purposeful sample.

The responses from the first semistructured, in-person interviews and the second interview from Participant 1 provided the data analyzed for this study. Data analysis is the heart of phenomenological study, and the researcher sought to uncover and describe the phenomenon of accessing accommodations through analyzing the data presented and representing the findings for others who have not experienced it so that they might appreciate the same phenomenon. Through the implementation of the methodology and appropriate strategies addressing subjectivity—member checking and bridling through reflecting in a reflexivity journal—trustworthiness was ensured in this study. When representing the research, it was imperative to be completely open and honest, reporting the experiences as described by the participants, not the researcher's personal experiences. The researcher of this study followed strict ethical guidelines set forth by the IRB and City University to protect and promote the welfare of the participants of this study.

This study was focused on learning from the collective experiences of disabled college students and the students accessing the accommodations provided for them on

campus. It is valuable for instructional staff, administrators, policymakers, and the students themselves. This study provides insight into how to assure SWD access accommodations on campuses. The findings will assist in accommodation accessibility, and the information gathered will provide insight into future educational and instructional needs for instructors to assist SWD in navigating the accommodation process guiding educational success. The findings from the interview process with the participants chosen for the study are presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

In this chapter, the researcher unveils the findings from the participant interviews, exploring the experiences of JMCS recent graduates who identified as specific learning disabled on a 504 plan, were currently attending or had attended a Southern California community college, and may have accessed their accommodations on campus. Methods common to phenomenological research guided the researcher in data collection and analysis. The results of this study are presented through the participants' voices, sharing in-depth perspectives into their lived experiences. To study the main research question—What experiences do college students who self-identified with SLD have in accessing accommodations on campus?—four subquestions were established:

1. What experiences do students who self-identify with SLD in college have using self-advocacy skills while accessing accommodations?
2. What experiences do students who self-identify with SLD in college have using self-determination skills while accessing accommodations?
3. How have past k-12 academic experiences affected students who self-identify with SLD and their accessing accommodations in postsecondary education?
4. What can students who self-identify with SLD recommend colleges do to assist them more effectively in accessing desired accommodations?

Chapter 4 includes a presentation of the findings that evolved from data collected and analyzed through interviewing a total sample of six participants selected from the recruitment process. The six participants were JMCS recent graduates with SLD and 504s plans who had been attending Southern California community colleges. The participants'

narratives were crafted into nine categories, developed into three themes, and are presented in the following findings.

Data Collection

The interview protocol provided a venue for the vibrant depiction of the participants' experiences accessing or not accessing their accommodations while attending community college within the past 5 years. The six interviews were conducted at the location of each participant's choice. All of the participants shared their experiences and expressed wanting to do so to benefit potential other 504 college students. No compensation was offered to the participants for their time. The participants participated freely and willingly. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour and 45 minutes.

Data Analysis

The interviews were recorded with the participants' permission. Upon the conclusion of each interview, a recording of the interview was forwarded to Temi Speech to Text Transcriptions. Within 3 minutes, a transcription was returned to the researcher. The researcher read the transcript for clarity, making corrections and clarifications where needed, and then began the holistic reading process. Vagle's (2014) whole-part-whole technique was used in the crafting process.

The second reading was within the next 2 days, with the researcher rereading the interview, analyzing, and making notes of commonalities. The interviews were put into parts, broken into sections where participants' responses shared ideas, or yielded follow-up questions. The only follow-up questions needed were for Participant 1, as he was the only one currently not using his accommodations, and the researcher wanted to know if

he was continuing to progress without his accommodations and if he decided to use his accommodations after further progress into the semester. During the third line-by-line reading, the researcher brought together the analyzed thoughts by color-coding them and crafting them into the categories and then notating themes. During the subsequent reading, putting the transcripts back to the whole, the interview transcripts were once again read by the researcher from beginning to end for the interview's clarity and to understand the analytic themes.

Presentation of Findings

The compiled themes provided the researcher with findings that evolved through the data collected from face-to-face interviews with the six participants about their experiences surrounding the phenomenon. The six participants consisted of five men and one woman, all aged 19 to 25, with the ethnic or racial identifiers of Black, White, and Hispanic (see Table 1). Each participant chose a pseudonym for the interviewing process, and the pseudonym was used throughout the analysis. The six participants presented enough information without over informing or repeating the information to answer the questions for the study and to allow others to experience the phenomenon as if they were experiencing it themselves.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

	Smiley	Milk	Aaron	Lite	Alex	JTB
Self-Identified Sex	Male	Female	Male	Male	Male	Male
Age	19	23	21	25	19	20
Self-Identified Race/Ethnicity	Hispanic	White	Black	White	White	Black

Participant Narratives

The participant narratives were collected over 4 weeks, and interviews ranged in length between 45 minutes to 1 hour and 45 minutes. Each interview was recorded and then sent to be transcribed. All participants but one was interviewed one time. The only participant needing a second interview was Smiley. A second interview was conducted with Smiley to question further the continued nonuse of his accommodations on campus and the success he was still encountering without them.

Smiley. Participant Number 1 chose the pseudonym “Smiley.” Smiley was the only participant not using 504 accommodations. He was in his first semester of community college and was doing well. He felt he did not need accommodations at that time but was open to seeking them if needed. Smiley was able to name his SLD, describe it, and comment on what accommodations worked for him when needed. Smiley reported his past experiences with his JMCS special education teacher provided him with the knowledge of his 504 plan and that he could use it in college.

Smiley reported that early school experiences were negative for him as Smiley had poor self-advocacy skills. However, his last few years at JMCS had taught him to use his self-advocacy skills, and he attributed his success and not needing to access his 504 plan on campus to those skills. Smiley demonstrated his self-determination skills in his current college setting. He felt the positive experiences he had at JMCS and the assistance JMCS staff gave him with growth in his self-advocacy and self-determination skills had contributed to his current college experiences. Smiley had not yet experienced any negative experiences or feelings surrounding his 504 plan or needs. He was feeling quite proud of himself and his current accomplishments without the accommodations.

Smiley was phoned for a brief second interview after he finished his quarter to inquire how he performed. He was happy to report on his recent success for a few minutes. Smiley said he passed his class and he was happy. He said he was preparing to enroll for the next quarter. When asked if Smiley would attempt the quarter again without enlisting the help of his 504 plan, he said he wanted to try again without it. He said he was still feeling confident and comfortable enough to proceed without requesting accommodations.

Milk. Participant Number 2 chose the pseudonym “Milk.” Milk was currently using her 504 accommodations on campus. She had both positive and negative experiences and feelings associated with her 504 plan. She was able to name her disability, describe it, and list the accommodations that worked best for her. Milk demonstrated she had a secure use of self-advocacy and self-determination skills while attending college and using her accommodations. Milk encountered a negative experience with one of her instructors, spoke up about it, and was moved to a different instructor. Milk commented on how sometimes the instructors made her feel uncomfortable and different when asking for help.

Milk stated the positive experiences with JMCS staff had prompted her to go forward with her 504 plan and college. She stated her success in her college classes so far made her feel more confident in herself. She knew how to communicate what she needed and to speak up when she needed help. She felt her college could do more by offering more available tutors to assist students with 504 plans.

Aaron. “Aaron” was the chosen pseudonym by Participant Number 3. Aaron was receiving accommodations at his community college. Aaron experienced his first quarter

of community college without using his 504 plan and realized he needed to enact a plan of action. Aaron talked to an educational friend and advocate who said he could use his previous 504 plan from high school. After contacting JMCS, Aaron was able to retrieve his 504 plan and submit it to his community college.

The community college accepted the previous 504 plan completed by JMCS and allowed him the accommodations he needed to assist him with his needs. Aaron felt the ODS listened to him and the staff were very helpful. With the help of a friend, Aaron navigated the 504 processes successfully and had positive experiences using his accommodations. Aaron was able to discuss his SLD, his needs, accommodations, strengths, and weaknesses. He also contributed his success to his friend and advocate and the JMCS staff. He suggested other 504 students be allowed to have an advocate to assist them. Aaron talked about his comfort in asking and receiving accommodations and using the ODS. He also said other students were accepting and did not make him feel uncomfortable. Aaron encouraged other 504 students to take advantage of their 504 accommodations and opportunities afforded them on campus. He shared he felt his communication skills assisted him through the process, and he felt very confident in himself and his accomplishments at community college so far.

Lite. Participant Number 4 chose the pseudonym “Lite” to be used during this study. Lite had attended two different community colleges, using his 504 plan at both. At the first community college he attended, he did not feel comfortable, so he went to another. He had mixed feelings about this community college and had become discouraged in the educational process. Lite was very outspoken and extremely bright, with some extreme processing and attention deficits making education very challenging

for him. He had been a special education advocate for students at JMCS in the past. Lite's previous JMCS success provided him encouragement to further his education in community college. Even though he had insight into his disability, he did not know what his disability was called, but he could describe his experiences of it. Lite was very knowledgeable of his strengths and weaknesses and had strong communication skills.

Lite said he felt bullied by the ODS and enlisted the help of a friend and advocate to help him maneuver the 504 processes. Once Lite started the 504 processes, he found it challenging to get the accommodations he needs. Lite felt the accommodations were "cookie-cutter" accommodations and not assigned individually as needed. When he requested specific accommodations, he was told he was "not disabled enough." The responses to his requests caused him some concern. Some of Lite's instructors were accommodating, and some were not. Some of his instructors provided him accommodations, and some blatantly told him, "No." He became disheartened.

Lite felt he was treated poorly and unfairly. He did not speak up, as he thought he was being bullied, and some of his instructors made him feel like they did not care. The treatment, time, and accommodation one instructor provided kept him trudging along. He was ready to start a new quarter with hesitancy when he was interviewed. Lite provided a suggestion of advocates to assist 504 students through the process and to help them get the accommodations needed. He also said he would spend more time before choosing classes and instructors based on interviewing them beforehand to see how they reacted and made him feel about the use of his accommodations.

Alex. Participant Number 5 chose to use the pseudonym "Alex." Alex had enrolled in community college but had not yet started his classes. He was able to provide

information on requesting and seeking out the 504 processes on campus. Alex described his disability, how it affected his learning, and what accommodations worked best for him. Alex described how he went to initiate the 504 processes on his campus. Alex described how he presented his current JMCS high school 504 plan to the Department of Program Services (DPS), and they walked him through the process of initiating the plan on campus. Alex stated the DPS made him feel comfortable but that he would not have known where to go if it would not have been for a friend who directed him to the DPS. He shared he needed to be able to communicate his disability to the DPS. The experiences with the DPS made Alex feel supported. Alex shared that he felt his communication skills and being able to communicate his strengths and weakness to the DPS staff assisted with initiating the 504 processes. He was confident in going forward with his 504 processes on campus and ready to start his classes with his accommodations.

JTB. “JTB” was Participant Number 6. JTB had just dropped out of his second community college a few days before the interview due to negative experiences. At the first community college JTB attended, he did not initiate his 504 plan. He wanted to try college without accommodations. JTB failed his classes, and he dropped out. At the second community college, JTB initiated his 504 plan. His instructors encouraged him but did not seem to take a sincere interest in helping him; they singled him out and belittled him in front of his classmates. He was not given the accommodations he needed. He was not successful, and he did not speak up for fear of embarrassment and more belittling. JTB dropped out again just a few days before the interview—although he had not given up. He stated he would like to try another program but would meet first with instructors and talk with them beforehand about his needs and make sure he was in the

right classes for his skill levels, as he felt the classes chosen earlier were too difficult for him. JTB also mentioned his positive high school experiences at JMCS had made a considerable impression with his wanting to continue with his community college experiences. He said many of the things he did with his JMCS prepared him for college.

Categories

The data retrieved through the six participant interviews were crafted into nine categories, providing the researcher with insight into the phenomenon of accessing accommodations on several different Southern California college campuses by the participants. The nine categories were crafted from the answers surrounding the interview question protocol used during the participant interviews (see Table 2). The nine categories were seeking services on campus (Category 1), using 504 services on campus (Category 2), reporting success in college (Category 3), naming one's disability (Category 4), describing one's disability (Category 5), using self-advocacy skills to assist in accessing accommodations (Category 6), using self-determination skills to assist in

Table 2

Categories Crafted From Participant Interviews

	Smiley	Milk	Aaron	Lite	Alex	JTB
Sought 504 Services	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No/Yes
Used 504 Services	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not yet	No/Yes
Reported College Success	Yes	Yes/No	Yes	Yes/No	Had not started	No/No
Named Disability	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Described disability	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Self-Advocacy Skills	Yes	Yes	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes	No
Self Determination Skills	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Past Experiences	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Past Transition Plan	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

accessing accommodation (Category 7), reporting past positive educational experiences (Category 8), and remembering transitional planning (Category 9).

The categories assisted in answering the interview questions developed to provide insight into the research problem of SWD and their accessing accommodations on college campuses. The categories were crafted from significant statements made multiple times by multiple participants. The categories that surfaced during the participant interviews led to the themes, which helped to answer the questions and provided insight into the phenomenon of accessing accommodations on college campuses.

Themes

Significant statements reflected through the crafting of the nine categories led to the themes (see Table 3). During the questioning of the participants with the interview protocol, the researcher used the research questions developed for this study to dig deeper into the participants' use of self-advocacy skills, self-determination skills, and the participants' past educational experiences. The themes that emerged from the participant interviews surrounding the access of their accommodations were Assigned Advocates,

Table 3

Themes Crafted From Interview Categories

Participants	Themes		
	<u>Assigned Advocates</u>	<u>Meetings with Instructors</u>	<u>Positive School Experiences</u>
Smiley			x
Milk		x	x
Aaron	x	x	x
Lite	x	x	x
Alex	x		x
JTB		x	x

Meetings with Instructors, and Positive School Experiences. In the following section, each theme is explained.

Assigned Advocates

Several of the participants stressed the importance of an advocate or friend in helping them to navigate the 504 processes on campus. In his interview, Aaron was asked how he knew the 504 processes could help him on his college campus. He responded, “An old friend of mine looked at my records saying, ‘You qualify for a 504 plan.’” When Aaron was questioned about how his 504 plan worked with providing accommodations and how to use them to his advantage in class, he replied, “My counselors from JMCS had instructed me how they would help me.” Also, later in the interview, when asked what he would tell a friend if they had a 504 plan and how to go about starting the process, Aaron said, “I know someone that can help you with. Go to the ODS. Book an appointment. The counselors can help with many things.” Aaron discussed the importance of communicating his needs to the ODS and his instructors. Aaron said it was vital for him to know his strengths and weaknesses and not to be ashamed of them in the discussions with the staff.

Aaron used an assigned counselor to assist him in seeking the advice of an educational advocate to assist him in the 504 processes. His past counselors helped to remind him that he qualified for 504 services at college and what accommodations he had used in the past that had helped him be successful. Aaron had also enlisted the help of a disability counselor on his college campus and used his counselor often to assist him when he was having issues. During his interview, Aaron said:

If I need anything on-campus, like tutoring, help with notes, or writing things, I go to her [his counselor on campus] and to let her know, and she will do what she can do. The counselor says she can help with changing classes or talking to my instructors with me.

Aaron stated after using his counselor, he was more successful. His counselor assisted him with his self-advocacy skills. He felt comfortable using her to assist him, and in turn, he felt that she also supported him in being more confident in his self-advocacy skills.

Lite also discussed the use of an advocate and friend who helped him to navigate the process to receive his accommodations. To the interview question, “What was the process of getting the accommodations started on your campus? What did you have to do?” Lite said:

I would not have been able to do it without my advocate’s reassurance. She had to go with me there and be with me on the phone. She walked me to my classes at first. She helped me go to the special education office on campus for making appointments and where I had to go in advance to get the process rolling. If it wasn’t for her, I would not have got the accommodations I needed.

Lite shared how he was not heard and felt unsuccessful with the 504 processes until his advocate got involved. Lite had an educational advocate who attended his community college campus with him after he had experienced some frustrating attempts addressing his 504 services. Lite stressed how his educational advocate was a vital component for his 504 processes and that he felt he would not have gotten through the process without them. Lite said:

I really wish I would have had an advocate that knew me or was really dedicated to getting someone to tell what I needed when I first got on campus, I had to find myself an advocate [a friend of mine from a past educational institution I attended] to go with me because I became so intimidated by the ODS. My advocate had to go with me, and the ODS still tried to give me the runaround. My advocate pushed back and fought for me and told them I needed this and I needed that, and then they [ODS] listened to me. I would not have been able to have done it without my advocate. She helped me on the phone and going to the ODS office

almost every day when I first started. She went with me to each one of my classes at first. After this meeting, I felt more comfortable and confident.

Lite felt if he had an advocate from the beginning, he would not have had such negative experiences and would have been more successful.

Alex had a friend who worked on campus who had a 504 plan and directed him where to go to receive services. Alex said his friend also made him feel more comfortable in seeking out the services of the ODS. Alex shared that since his friend was there to guide him, he did not feel alone with his special needs. His friend with the 504 plan made him feel like it was okay that he needed help too.

When Lite was asked, “How do students who self-identify with SLD believe colleges can assist them more effectively in accessing desired accommodations?” He said, “Students being their own self-advocates, having someone helping them on campus, and having teachers that actually want to help.” When Aaron was asked this same question, he said he would encourage others with 504s to use the ODS, counselors, and he would act as an advocate to help them.

Meetings with Instructors

Another common theme arising from the participant interviews was meeting with instructors to discuss student needs and accommodations before students start class. Lite was asked how he thought the process could be made accessible or better for him, and he said:

As soon as I knew who my instructors are, I would make appointments with them as soon as possible to see if they will work with me like I need to be worked with. I would get to know my instructors and their teaching styles, and if we are a good fit.

Lite used meetings with his instructors to help communicate his education needs, to become more comfortable with his instructors and their teaching styles, and to investigate if the instructors were going to be comfortable working with him.

During Aaron's interview, he mentioned several times communicating with instructors as a key to his success with his accommodations. Aaron talked about when he did not understand something and discussed the importance of communicating with his instructors to explain it differently. He said he might talk with them after class. Aaron also talked about how it was vital for him to let the instructors know about his 504 plan, not the counselors or other staff, as he could explain it best and what his strengths and needs were. Aaron discussed meeting with his instructors to talk about his strengths and weakness and how these meetings assisted him. Aaron said, "I had to tell my teachers myself. I can show and explain to them better than my counselor can." Aaron also stated his counselor set up meetings with him and his instructors at the beginning of each semester to go over his schedule and what his needs were.

JTB provided information during his interview that he had not discussed the need for assistance and accommodations with his instructors, and the absence of this discussion added to his difficulties in his college experiences so far. When JTB was interviewed, he spoke of both community college experiences, one without accommodations and one with accommodations, both resulting in adverse outcomes. When JTB was asked what he might do differently next time to assist in the 504 processes, he said:

I would meet with [staff] and tell them what I need. I would say, look, this is what I need. I can't be just sitting in class like everyone else. I learn differently. I am not going to get what you are talking about because it is hard.

JTB said he would definitely make it a point to meet with his instructors next time before his classes began, as he knew the meetings would help him be more successful in communicating his education needs.

The significance of the meetings between instructors and 504 students justified the importance that the interviewed participants voiced in addressing their communication skills. Every one of the participants addressed the importance of communication skills and how they had developed communication skills and self-advocacy skills through their prior educational years at JMCS. They all stressed how important they found these skills in accessing their 504 plans or their success in accessing accommodations on campus. Smiley stated, "I opened up and became more vocal while at JMCS. I learned how to ask for help." Milk was asked how she let her college know that she needed help and how she got started with the 504 processes and she said, "I let them know, and they walked me through the steps."

During the interview, Milk was asked how she knew what types of skills were her strengths and what were her weakness. She shared she learned those things while at JMCS, and they were necessary for her to know and explain when requesting help and accommodations at college. Milk discussed talking to her instructors after her problems started and then things improved for her. Milk said if that had been done beforehand, she might not have had the issues of her instructors making her feel like she was different because she asked for accommodations and causing her to feel uncomfortable.

After she met with her instructors, Milk did not feel as uncomfortable, and her accommodations were given to her without question, which made her feel more

comfortable and successful: “learning how to communicate with others and learning how to ask for help when I needed it.” When asked during the interview of what types of skills had assisted with her success at community college, she said she had acquired those skills while attending JMCS.

Lite spoke of his communication and self-advocacy skills and their importance in obtaining his accommodations. He felt secure with his communication and self-advocacy skills yet still sought out the help of a friend to assist him in perusing his 504 plan on campus. The development of communication and self-advocacy skills before entering college were not the only prior school experiences that developed into common themes. Lite also added meeting between students and staff would assist. Lite was able to alleviate some problems he was having with initiating his accommodations in a class by meeting with one of his instructors. Lite felt having meetings before his courses began and with all of his instructors would have assisted with his 504 processes.

Positive School Experiences

All of the participants discussed their favorable experiences with accommodations at their prior educational institution, JMCS. When asked about their past transitional planning all of the participants were able to comment on the experiences in positive ways. Smiley shared how he felt one of the reasons he was doing well and was not currently accessing his 504 plan was because during the past 3 years while attending JMCS, he had finally learned to open up, not be as shy, communicate more, and ask for help. Smiley also said, when asked what things had prepared him for college, “[The JMCS special education teacher] helped me with focusing. [The teacher] taught me how to ask for help and how to speak up for myself. I turned my disability and weaknesses around since I

started JMCS.” He was thought to be mute during his early education years, as he did not speak. During his education with JMCS, he learned to speak up for himself and discovered his strengths to assist him in his first year of community college without accommodations. A significant statement Smiley made during our interview when asked about his experiences attending JMCS was:

I learned a lot at this school. The teachers helped me open up a lot more, so I am more vocal and more down. Yeah, you know, back then I used to be so shy. I didn't ask for help when I needed it. But now I know how to do that. Looking back at how I was, I didn't ask for help, and I was shy I didn't really know how to ask for help. But today I know how to ask for help, and everything, and I feel like that can go a long way, it has opened doors for me.

Smiley stressed his positive experiences at JMCS and how the positive experiences had helped him open up and assisted in his success so far in community college.

In Milk's interview, she talked about her communication skills and how working with her JMCS teachers and staff assisted her with learning how to speak up for herself and how to communicate her needs. She said she remembered transitional meetings and discussing her disability, her strengths and weaknesses, and what accommodations assisted her. Milk said those conversations helped her when she went to her college and initiated her 504 plans. Milk said, “I let them know that I needed more time, and then they walked me through the steps of what to do.”

Aaron's interview included information about JMCS preparing him for life after high school and how these experiences helped him to prepare and pushed him to college. Aaron shared how JMCS teachers helped him to understand what accommodations worked best for him and how to ask for help. He shared the transitional planning and college preparation he did at JMCS and how he remembered that experience:

Until a few months ago, at JMCS, before I graduated, while talking with teachers, I never really understood my disability and what accommodations were best for me, and teachers pushed me to use them to be successful in class.

Aaron shared that JMCS assisted him in learning about his disability and how his successful experiences with JMCS had assisted him in community college.

Aaron talked about how JMCS taught him life skills and how to prepare for what was ahead for him. He said JMCS had a positive impact on his educational future. Aaron said he never knew what his disability was until he came to JMCS, and JMCS taught him how to use his strengths to assist him in education and with life. Aaron said his vocational and transitional training at JMCS had assisted him at community college, and the activities and assignments he did prepare him for his college assignments. Aaron said:

John Muir showed and helped me along the way; they taught me vocational skills for a job and real-world job preparation. The accommodations helped me because the teachers cared and explained them to me. Using my accommodations at JMCS gave me more confidence and has pushed me to use my 504 plan at college.

Aaron discussed his positive experiences assisted him in providing him more confidence and showed him that is teachers cared.

During Lite's interview, he talked extensively about his positive past school experiences. He said he learned about the 504 processes, his disability, and what accommodations worked best for him at JMCS. He said attending JMCS was when he finally was able to put answers to questions about why he had difficulties with learning and finally started to learn about how he learned best. Lite shared that because of the positive school experiences at JMCS, he had furthered his education. Lite talked about his previous school experiences at JMCS during his interview, stating JMCS staff listened to him and worked with him to make his accommodations work for him, and his success at JMCS was what drove him to go on to college. JTB remembered using his

accommodations at JMCS and being successful but wanted to try college without them and failed. JTB said he knew he needed his accommodations but wanted to say he could do it without them. JTB said JMCS had helped him see the need for his accommodations.

Alex's interview provided real insight into his past experiences at JMCS. He shared how JMCS provided him with a 504 that assisted him with his graduation and made him feel more successful in pushing him to his current situation of entering college. Alex stated that while attending JMCS, he became more confident and was assured he could be successful by providing him with the tools to assist him academically.

The last interview with JTB provided insight into positive past school experiences contributing to a 504 student's academic drive. JTB shared how college instructors were not as accommodating as JMCS. He did not use his accommodations at first and failed. He used his accommodations in his second attempt and failed. He shared how he needed to communicate more, and he was sure that would have helped. However, yet he still would not give up, as JMCS had taught him the drive to go on.

Summary

The interviews conducted with the six participants provided the data needed for analyzing the phenomenon of accessing accommodations presented to this study. Vagle's (2014) whole-part-whole methods assisted in the analyzing process. Through the whole-part-whole process, nine categories were crafted out of the answers provided to the researcher during the interviews. The nine categories were seeking services on campus (Category 1), using 504 services on campus (Category 2), reporting success in college (Category 3), naming one's disability (Category 4), describing one's disability (Category 5), using self-advocacy skills to assist in accessing accommodations (Category 6), using

self-determination skills to assist in accessing accommodation (Category 7), reporting past positive educational experiences (Category 8), and remembering transitional planning (Category 9).

During the interviews with the participants, the main research questions for the study were intertwined into the interview protocol. During the analyses of the transcripts, the researcher developed three essential themes: Assigned Advocates, Meetings with Instructors, and Positive School Experiences. Three of the participants spoke about the first theme, Assigned Advocates, through talking about the assistance of a friend or advocate who helped them during the process of accessing their 504 plans or accommodations and how they thought an advocate would be a significant added component to the 504 processes on campus. Three of the participants felt Meeting with Instructors before classes was an essential component that should be added to the 504 processes and emphasized the importance of being strong communicators about their strengths, weaknesses, and what accommodations they needed. All of the participants talked about Positive School Experiences at their previous school, JMCS, and how that had a positive impact on where they were with respect to handling their disabilities. In Chapter 5, the researcher answers the research questions, reviews and reinforces the themes through further examination of the literature review and presents suggestions for educational leaders and researchers through the discussion and conclusions.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher of this phenomenological study focused on the experiences of JMCS graduates self-identified with SLD and attending Southern California community colleges and their accessing of accommodations. The research intent was to augment the body of knowledge surrounding community college students with SLD and their accessing of accommodations. The researcher of this study was interested in discovering how the participants described their experiences on their community college campuses. The experiences offered relevant insight for researchers, academic staff, student affairs, policymakers, and the students themselves. The lived experiences of six student participants with SLD from Southern California community colleges were captured through face-to-face, semistructured interviews. Weaved together in Chapter 5 are the answers to the research questions, the findings of this study, and a synthesis of the literature. A discussion of implications for practitioners, field leaders, and future research are presented as well.

Discussion of Findings and Conclusions

The findings from this phenomenological study provided answers to the research questions through the analyzed data from the participant interviews. The research questions were woven into the interview protocol used to elicit information from the participants surrounding the problem of college students with SLD accessing their accommodations on campuses. The researcher used significant statements from the participant interviews for the nine crafted categories and three themes, providing insight into the experienced phenomenon. By delving into the themes, the researcher was able to

determine answers to the research questions providing suggestions for change in assisting students with SLD in accessing accommodations on community college campuses.

Answers to the Research Questions

The main research question was: What experiences do college students who self-identify with SLD have in accessing accommodations on campus? The four subquestions were developed to gain insight into the research problem of accommodation access for college students with SLD. The questions are answered using the findings from this study and research presented in the literature review.

Research Subquestion 1 and 2. Research Subquestion 1 was: What experiences do students who self-identify with SLD in college have using self-advocacy skills while accessing accommodations? Research Sub question 2 was: What experiences do students who self-identify with SLD in college have using self-determination skills while accessing accommodations? When the participants were asked these two questions, their answers yielded very similar answers, providing concepts that intertwined, so these findings are presented together.

All of the interviewed participants in this study discussed the importance of communication skills for self-advocacy. While the participants highlighted their use of self-determination skills when conducting meetings with their instructors to discuss accommodation use. Moreover, the participants talked about their disabilities and how self-advocacy and self-determination skills helped in navigating college experiences. All of the participants talked about how communicating more had or would have helped them be successful. Participants used the self-advocacy and self-determination skills of knowing and communicating strengths, weaknesses, and needs for appropriate

accommodations in the classroom. The participants discussed these skills in connection with the need also to meet with instructors before the beginning of new courses and discussing student's particular needs.

Communication is a central component of the relationship between instructors and students with SLD and the delivery of accommodations. The more students self-disclose, the more self-efficacy instructors have in making accommodations (Wright & Meyer, 2017). One of the components of self-advocacy is self-knowledge, including students' abilities to communicate their needs, evaluate their performances (self-regulation), and know their strengths, interests, and limitations.

Self-advocacy is an essential skill for individuals to communicate effectively and assert themselves. Kraglund-Gauthier et al. (2014) revealed SWD perspectives on challenges in learning and navigating postsecondary institutions, stating the lack of communication, confidence, and self-advocacy affected students' attitudes and interactions with educators and other institutional advisors, hindering their access to accommodations. Communication skills used during meetings between SWD and staff encompassed the important self-advocacy and self-determination skills needed for success on college campuses (Kraglund-Gauthier et al., 2014).

For students with SLD to discuss their needs during meetings, they need to know their strengths, weaknesses, and how they learn best. Students with SLD need to know their disabilities, how they affect learning, and how their instructors can assist them best. During all six interviews, the participants mentioned how their communication skills had grown while attending JMCS and they felt they had become better communicators. Standing up for their rights and what they deserve is an important skill when

communicating needs during meetings with instructional and other postsecondary staff on campus.

In meeting with instructors, students used self-advocacy and self-determination skills to communicate and set up meetings with instructors. Kraglund-Gauthier et al. (2014) suggested institutions construct policies to promote awareness, advocacy, and learning partnerships among SWD in cooperation with the whole postsecondary community to assist them with their knowledge and gaining services for their disabilities. The participants stated when they were able to meet with their instructors, they were able to discuss their needs, and the communication during these meetings assisted the students with SLD in communicating strengths and weaknesses to the instructors. During these meetings, the students with SLD were able to talk about their specific learning needs, gain insight about the instructors' teaching styles, and learn how comfortable the faculty was with allowing accommodations in their classrooms. The information gained during these meetings before classes started assisted students with SLD in the success of receiving or asking for accommodations.

Talking with instructors about their teaching styles and how they think they can best assist students with SLD promotes accommodation access. Moreover, these conversations can help students with SLD in discussing more individualized accommodation needs. Policies and procedures that encompass the whole postsecondary community can assist SWD in overcoming barriers on campuses. These meetings include assisting students with SLD in meeting with instructors and communicating their needs. Three of the participants in this study discussed how meetings had assisted them. Three of the participants of this study talked about how they thought more meetings and earlier

discussions in the accommodation process with instructors would have assisted in their success. Having meetings before classes start can assist in promoting positive relationships. Students with disabilities learn these skills during positive interactions with prior IEP and 504 meetings conducted during their secondary educational experiences.

Research Subquestion 3. Research Subquestion 3 was: How have past K-12 academic experiences affected students who self-identify with SLD and their accessing accommodations in postsecondary education? Students with SLD who have had prior positive school experiences access their accommodations more often than those students with SLD that have had negative prior school experiences.

Hamblet (2014) found SWD with positive experiences in high school were often more motivated to disclose their disabilities and seek support services in college and access their accommodations because they experienced firsthand how to relate to their disabilities. All of the interviewed participants talked in great detail about their prior positive experiences in secondary schools they had attended. They shared how these prior positive experiences had pushed them to further their education and how they felt more confident in communicating their disabilities and needs. Communicating needs associated with accommodation access may or may not be familiar to the broader population, as the interviewed participants had all attended JMCS. On the other hand, it is useful information, as some of the strategies of JMCS may be informative to other schools who wish to empower their students through positive experiences. These experiences may or may not be shared by other participants who had not attended JMCS or other JMCS students on other campuses, although four different JMCS campuses were represented in

the participant interviews. However, the overwhelming responses of past positive educational experiences may prove to be useful strategies for students with SLD.

All of the participants noted their prior experiences at JMCS had been positive, assisted them with navigating the 504 processes and using the accommodations on college campuses, or contributed to not needing accommodations. O'Shea and Meyer (2016) presented that students who had positive experiences in their past educational environments were more secure in seeking services in college and were more motivated to seek accommodations. Smiley was thought to be mute during his early education years, and JMCS helped him open up. Milk, Lite, and JTB talked about the positive school experiences they encountered through the individual care and genuine concern JMCS instructors provided. The interviewed participants of the study talked about the staff at JMCS, pushing them to continue their education onto community college, helping them to realize their strengths and potential.

The way students with SLD constructed meaning of their disabilities and how motivated the students were to access accommodations depended on the cognitive and emotional ways students made sense of their disabilities and their past high school experiences. These participants shared how their favorable experiences with JMCS staff contributed to their ease of seeking accommodations and wondered why it was not as easy for them on their college campus as it had been for them at high school with accessing their accommodations.

All of the interviewed participants of this study were able to share their past transitional planning experiences. Transition planning was a prior school experience that assisted the interviewed participants in navigating their postsecondary experiences.

Newman et al. (2016) stated transition planning assists in providing SWD their accommodations and results from active transition planning, starting in secondary education. One participant stated their plans had changed since their high school transitional planning. The others talked about how the prior transition plans had assisted in the process of obtaining their accommodations on their postsecondary campus.

Assisting SWD in accessing accommodations for successful transitional planning starts in the secondary education years (Newman et al., 2016), while specified transition planning early in SWD educational years assists with college preparation (Ramsdell, 2014). The participants' comments from this study about their past transitional planning were positive and mirrored findings from studies in the literature review that transitional planning supports accessing accommodation on postsecondary campuses. Ramsdell (2014) stated specified transition planning early assists with college preparation. When asked about the transition planning during their time with JMCS, all of the participants were able to recall the planning and stated it assisted in their plans.

Transition planning is part of students with SLD educational plan mandated through the IEPs in secondary educations, assisting in postacademic success. Transition plans increase the likelihood of receipt of disability-specific supports in postsecondary schools. Students with disabilities may also be more apt to disclose their disabilities if they had transition planning in high school since they had practice discussing their limitations in the transition planning meetings (Newman et al., 2016).

Research Subquestion 4. Research Subquestion 4 was: What can students who self-identify with SLD recommend colleges can do to assist them more effectively in accessing desired accommodations? Three of the participants used and stated in their

interviews the need for someone on campus, such as an advocate or friend, to help them in the 504 processes. The use of an advocate assisted the interviewed participants on their community college campuses with finding where to go to receive services, assisting in communicating their needs to the ODS, and communicating with instructors on campus. Kendall and Tarman (2016) found SWD who have active support systems to motivate them through the 504 processes and even assist them in accommodation access is helpful.

Several of the interviewed participants of this study spoke of how the help of an advocate assisted them in obtaining their 504 services and accessing their accommodations. One participant of this study said he would not have been able to have accomplished accessing his accommodations without his advocate. In some instances, the students with SLD did not experience success until the help of an advocate was enlisted. Even though the participants had strong self-advocacy skills, Alex, Lite, and Aaron found the use of additional advocates or friends helpful in the 504 processes. Lite was unsuccessful on his own to secure services, and Aaron and Alex felt more comfortable with the assistance of someone helping them through the process of securing their accommodations. William-Hall (2018), in a study of postsecondary SWD and their accommodation access, mentioned providing a contact staff, appointed through the ODS, can assist in the process of SWD obtaining their accommodations.

The interviewed participants of this study had mixed feelings about staff knowledge and attitudes. The more knowledge and training faculty and staff have in working with SWD and providing them with their accommodations, the more successful staff are in delivering those services (McCallister et al., 2014). Students with disabilities

often refrain from disclosing their disabilities due to staff or instructors who do not respond appropriately to their limitations (Wright & Meyer, 2017).

Smiley had nothing but positive things to say about his instructors, but he had not disclosed. Aaron felt his instructors treated him with respect and provided him with the services he needed to feel confident and comfortable. Milk had positive and negative experiences. Once she had more in-depth communication with her instructors about her disability, she felt the attitude and assistance from them were more positive in assisting her with accommodation access. Lite had one positive experience to share about his instructors, but most of his experiences were very negative regarding the assistance, accommodations, and attitudes he felt he received. Wright and Meyer found the willingness and flexibility of university instructors to comply with and provide accommodations for SWD were critical to SWD academic success because students felt more comfortable because of instructors' efforts made for them. The results of Wright and Meyer's study revealed that the more a student self-disclosed about their needed accommodations; the more self-efficacy instructors had in making accommodations. When staff is positive about accommodating and provide supportive relationships to SWD, accommodations are made more easily accessible (Timmerman & Mulvihill, 2015).

No previous research reviewed, none of the participants, nor did the researcher of this study question or discuss if instructors have possessed written documentation of 504 plans. Providing written documentation for instructors would be a useful tool in accommodation access for SWD. If instructors had in hand students' plans during

meetings, as students communicated their needs and accommodations, ideas of stigmas and misconceptions could be alleviated.

The participant interviews of this study provided information about students with SLD feelings associated with the stigma attached to disabilities, trying to appear “normal” and how instructors’ attitudes can affect students with SLD accommodation access on the campuses reviewed. In Williams-Hall’s (2018) study of postsecondary SWD, the researchers found postsecondary staff required training on how to work with SWD so that the personnel could promote the success of SWD while encouraging self-disclosure and self-advocacy. Instructional training for instructors in disability supports and information surrounding disability support is pivotal for students with SLD.

Participants in this study did not want to be treated differently or seen as different. At times, the participants shared feelings of being embarrassed by what others thought about them because others did not understand their disabilities and were unable to assist them correctly with their education. Heindel (2014) studied college SWD and found instructors needed more training on how to work with SWD. Because instructors lack specific knowledge of the issues that face SWD, instructors display negative attitudes toward disabilities that affect the provision of accommodation (Sniatecki et al., 2015). Lite, Milk, and JTB discussed their experiences of the feelings of stigma, not wanting to be identified as disabled, and being treated differently once that was known.

The participants also reported perceptions or stigmas surrounding their disabilities on campus when addressing the questions about self-advocacy and self-determination skills also. Kendall and Tarman (2016) discussed the barriers of stigma on campuses of higher education, preventing students from disclosing their disabilities to receive

services, as students do not want different treatment. Issues related to stigma are not simple; they involve interpersonal and intrapersonal feelings of being misunderstood, often manifesting as feeling inadequate as a college student (Kendall & Tarman, 2016). The fear of stigma can cause students with SLD feelings of being powerless or inadequate, hindering self-advocacy, and self-determination skills because of the fear of being treated differently or inferior and unable to navigate postsecondary campuses services and academics. Three of the six participants reported negative feelings surrounding the use of their 504 plans or from the staff who provided them assistance with their 504 services. The participants reported negative feelings hindered their access to accommodations. Moreover, meeting with staff to communicate individual needs would have alleviated negative feelings and assisted in students with SLD accommodation access.

Feelings of normalcy are perceptions suggested on both ends of the spectrum during the participant interviews of this study. Williams-Hall (2018) found the fears of stigma and embarrassment were reasons SWD did not access their accommodations on campuses and were not succeeding academically. During Lite's interview, he shared he felt he was made to feel he was not disabled enough to receive the accommodations he needed. However, JTB wanted to think he did not need accommodations even though he knew he needed them. Timmerman and Mulvihill (2015) found perceptions of accommodations not being normal hindered SWD accommodation access. The researchers discovered the issues of others' attitudes and SWD feeling of not feeling normal or singled out because of the perceptions hindered SWD access to accommodations (Timmerman & Mulvihill, 2015). In their study, a large number of

students who had negative experiences described being humiliated in front of their professors and classmates by pretending to be normal and not disclosing their need for accommodations (Timmerman & Mulvihill, 2015). Instructors who have been ill-informed can cause students to feel they are unimportant or “not normal,” and the result is that teachers do not support SWD correctly (West et al., 2016). Many SWD struggle with the common threat of being judged or treated differently by peers and instructors, affecting faculty attitudes toward SWD and hindering SWD accommodation access (Hong, 2015). Accommodations in education are academic assistance or adaptations given outside of the general classroom expectations, so they are considered outside of normalcy. Because of the feeling of accommodation not being normal, SWD struggle with accepting and asking for accommodations to assist with their academic progress (Hong, 2015). Positive staff attitudes result in more favorable outcomes for SWD and their educational processes (Krug, 2016).

The use of the ODS was discussed as both a barrier and a support by participants. Some of the participants made some suggestions for the ODS to assist in accommodation access. Abreu et al. (2016) supported that SWD do not fully access the ODS despite the amount of help the ODS provides SWD. There are reasons for students with SLD not using the services provided to them by the ODS. Reasons range from students not being well informed of the 504 processes or how to initiate their services through the ODS to improvements needed to the ODS process.

Lite did not have positive experiences with the ODS. His positive experiences only resumed after he enlisted the assistance of an advocate, and he still reported negative experiences. JTB could not reflect upon his experiences much with the ODS. Alex and

Aaron had reported only positive experiences so far with the ODS, and Aaron had found the ODS useful to his accommodation process. Aaron contributed his assigned counselor located at the ODS to his continued success. Milk reflected on using the ODS often and reported no negative experiences. The interviews provided both negative and positive interactions with the ODS and the impact it played on accommodation access. The ODS is the hub of services for students with SLD and plays a significant part in the access to accommodations and services for SWD. The ODS is designed to assist students with SLD in accessing their accommodations. The participants of this study and findings from the literature review provide mixed information regarding the ODS, showing it as both a support and a barrier to students with SLD and their attainment of services and accommodations.

Students with disabilities are more likely to use the services of ODS when the providers are more knowledgeable about the students with SLD specific needs, as in Lite's situation. Herbert et al. (2014) found there was a connection of training needed, as professional competence of disabilities supports providers and determines whether SWD engage with the ODS while at college. Being one's self-advocate and developing self-advocacy skills assists with opening the door to the ODS on campus for students with SLD, as postsecondary SWD must self-report their disability to the ODS. Herbert et al. (2014) reported unless students are aware of ODS exists and know how to access it, they are not able to access the services made available to them. The participant interviews provided needed suggestions regarding the ODS.

Application of Findings and Conclusions to the Problem Statement

Through the presented literature review, the participants' interview answers, crafted categories, and developed themes, the researcher was able to provide supported suggestions to leaders of education. The suggestions are supported through the studies presented in the literature review and have been applied to the findings and conclusions of this study. The suggestions shared through the literature review and participant interviews supporting students with SLD in accessing their accommodations can be viewed in Table 4.

The problem presented for this study was students with SLD in postsecondary education not accessing their accommodations to assist in their academic success. Enrollment rates of SWD are increasing, as changes in legislation mandate postsecondary institutions accommodate SWD through 504 plans. Enrollment rates of SWD continue to rise for postsecondary education institutions (NCES, 2016). Despite the increases in

Table 4

Suggestions for Application of the Findings

Suggestions	Literature Review	Participant Interviews
<u>Assisting in Accommodation Access</u>		
Self-Advocacy / Self-Determination Skills	X	X
- Communication	X	X
- Meetings with Instructors		X
Assigned Advocates		X
Positive School Experiences	X	X
- Transition Planning	X	X
<u>Overcoming Barriers to Accommodation Access</u>		
Staff Knowledge/Attitudes:	X	X
- Stigmas	X	X
- Normalcy	X	X
The Office of Disability Services	X	X

college enrollment, graduation rates for SWD are lower than those compared to students without disabilities (Agarwal et al., 2014). Accommodations assist SWD in their academic success, but SWD are experiencing barriers to those accommodations. Travis (2014) stated accessing accommodations assists in academic achievement, yet SWD are not accessing them for a variety of reasons.

The researchers of the studies examined in the literature review uncovered some of the same suggestions as arose in the participant interviews. The aligning suggestions were the importance of self-advocacy and self-determination skills, communication skills, meeting with instructors, assigned advocates, positive prior school experiences, and transitional planning. The participant interviews also confirmed some barriers as similar to those discovered in the studies presented in Chapter 2. Those barriers were faculty knowledge and attitudes, addressing SWD feelings of stigmas and the perceptions of normalcy, and the use of the ODS.

Assisting in Accommodation Access

In the studies presented in the literature review, the researchers stressed the importance of self-advocacy and determination skills for postsecondary success, which all of the participants in this study also expressed. However, there was minimal discussion from the researchers in the literature reviewed regarding the use of advocates to assist students with SLD, a strategy some of the interviewed participants stated was the key to their accommodation access. Previous researchers have considered advocate use as mostly for other disabilities, not SLD. William-Hall (2018) mentioned the use of advocates through thoughts of providing a contact staff appointed through the ODS to SWD to assist in the process of obtaining accommodations and to provide SWD

assistance in navigating the self-disclosure process. Lux (2016) stated supportive relationships developed through peers and mentors assist SWD with accommodation access on campus and academic success. Lux gave the insight to provide SWD peers and mentors to serve as assigned advocates that could assist in their accommodation access on postsecondary campuses towards academic success.

Researchers have stressed the importance of past positive educational experiences (O'Shea & Meyer, 2016) and specific transitional planning (Newman et al., 2016) in the successful navigation of postsecondary campuses for SWD. All of the interviewed participants specified the influence their transitional planning and positive previous experiences at JMCS contributed to academic success or seeking services.

Overcoming Barriers to Accommodation Access

The shared barriers presented in the literature review and the participant interviews surrounded faculty knowledge and attitudes and the students with SLD use of the ODS. The first barrier is the importance of faculty knowledge and attitudes. The more knowledge faculty have regarding disabilities alleviates feelings associated with stigmas attached to disabilities and the perceptions of others surrounding ideas of normalcy. The other shared barrier was the misuse or underuse of the ODS.

Application to Leadership

The participants provided their experiences so those reading reports of this research might experience the essence of the phenomenon and consider improved guidance in this area of social injustice for students with SLD. Applying these findings to higher education leadership could assist community college students with SLD in accessing their accommodations for academic success. The participants' voices,

expressed through their lived experiences, were always present, as they explored and defined the phenomenon. These personal accounts provided the essence of the researched phenomenon and allowed the researcher to craft the following recommendations for postsecondary institutions, ODSs, faculty, and higher education administration to increase their knowledge and foster positive attitudes to alleviate perceived stigma. The following provides information to promote positive school experiences for all SWD and prompts active transitional planning for all SWD assisting students with SLD to access their accommodations on postsecondary campuses, allowing them educational success.

Staff Knowledge and Attitudes

As several of the participants discussed during the interviews and was apparent in the literature review, community college students with SLD experience the barriers of the stigma of being disabled and the push to be normal from postsecondary staff and instructors. The researchers whose work was included in the literature review highlighted the need for more staff instruction and a change in staff attitudes to alleviate these issues. Positive staff attitudes have a more favorable outcome for SWD and their educational processes (Krug, 2016). Providing staff training and information regarding these issues of stigma and normalcy could assist in addressing and alleviating these issues for college students with SLD, and students could feel more comfortable in seeking help in accessing their accommodations on campuses.

The participants of this study addressed the treatment from staff in their interviews, and the researchers included the literature review discussed the topic of stigma. Stigma associated with being disabled hurts SWD accommodation access. Addressing the ideas of normalcy can encourage SWD to access their accommodations

without feeling different. Educating by providing specialized training to those working with students who have SLD can assist in decreasing the ideas of normalcy, decreasing the stigma surrounding disabilities, fostering positive staff attitudes, and increasing knowledge of those working with students with SLD.

Lite and Aaron talked extensively about their experiences with the ODS and how their treatment from the staff made a difference to their accommodation access. Aaron had positive experiences, and he said he felt comfortable going to staff for assistance. Lite did not have positive things to say about his staff or the ODS and how he felt treated by them. Several researchers, such as Heindel (2014), discussed the need for more training to assist staff in gaining more knowledge of SLD. Because faculty lack specific knowledge of the issues that face students with SLD, lack of knowledge causes the instructors to display negative attitudes toward SWD that affect the provision of the students with SLD their accommodation (Sniatecki et al., 2015). Students with disabilities often refrain from disclosing their disabilities due to staff or instructors who do not respond appropriately to their limitations (Wright & Meyer, 2017). Providing staff with more knowledge will not only provide them with the knowledge to work more effectively with students with SLD, but more knowledge will also help to alleviate stigma and assist with ideas of normalcy. Instructors who have not been well informed about SWD needs can cause students to feel they are unimportant or not normal, and the result is that teachers do not support SWD appropriately (West et al., 2016). Timmerman and Mulvihill (2015) found accommodations not to be the norm and since the accommodations were not considered normal it stopped SWD from accessing their accommodations. They discovered the issues of others' attitudes and SWD feeling not

normal or singled out because of hindered access to accommodations (Timmerman & Mulvihill, 2015). This application to leadership not only supports the training of staff while alleviating stigmas and addressing ideas surrounding normalcy, but it also helps to promote positive educational experiences.

Positive School Experiences and Transitional Planning

All of the participants expressed how important their transitional planning and positive experiences from JMCS had played supportive roles in their community college experiences. The data from the participant interviews reinforced the findings presented in the literature review that highlighted these experiences importance in students with SLD accommodation access in postsecondary institutions.

Positive school experiences can start in preschool, and transitional planning starts in the secondary school levels. Providing all students with positive school experiences can alleviate feelings associated with stigma surrounding disabilities and disintegrate feelings of normalcy. By starting early, these feelings can be alleviated, and educational experiences can be much more positive for all students.

Transition planning is a mandated part of SWD IEPs starting at age 14. As the researchers of the study and the interviewed participants pointed out, visiting this plan often and making this plan specific to the students' needs is a crucial part of students with SLD postsecondary journey assisting in their positive educational experiences. All postsecondary SWD have transitional plans as mandated; however, all plans need to be made specific, and students with SLD need to be active participants in these plans.

Summary of Leadership Applications

The call to leaders in education is to ensure all students have positive experiences. Moreover, steps must be taken to ensure positive actions through training and education of all those who encounter students with SLD on postsecondary campuses. Being mindful of stigmas associated with disabilities and the ideas surrounding normalcy, specific training can be provided on these topics. The training can assist staff in alleviating negative feelings for students with SLD and enhance SWD postsecondary experiences on campus to ensure their access to accommodations for ensured education success. Upon entry into postsecondary education, students with SLD transition plans should be initiated. As conscientious higher education staff, these plans should be reviewed with the students, updated, and often renewed to ensure the students' needs are being met. These interactions can lead to positive school experiences.

Recommendations for Action

Through the analysis of the participant interviews, the recommendations for action became clear. The recommendations for action include the need for advocates to assist students with SLD on community college campuses, the need for the students with SLD to meet with their instructors before classes begin, and the need for positive school experiences before college.

Assigned Advocates

As several authors of the reviewed literature and all of the participants interviewed addressed, SWD need to develop self-advocacy and self-determination skills. Students with disabilities need to be strong self-advocates to request the services and accommodations needed to assist them with their postsecondary academic success

(Kraglund-Gauthier et al., 2014). Success in college encompasses more diligence in self-control, self-evaluation, decision making, and goal setting, all examples of self-determination. Specific instruction that supports development, knowledge, skills, and beliefs is needed to lead to self-determination for SWD (O'Shea & Meyer, 2016). Self-determination is related to the cognitive and emotional ways students construct the meaning of their disabilities and how students' experiences influence their actions and choices on college campuses (O'Shea & Meyer, 2016). Self-advocacy skills were stressed throughout the literature review. Self-advocacy skills are relevant for SWD, and they assist in disclosing and communicating knowledge of SWD disabilities, needs, strengths, and weaknesses while choosing their accommodations and services (Herbert et al., 2014). O'Shea and Meyer (2016) reported self-determination is a predictor of academic success in postsecondary instances and breaking through barriers.

All participants in this study displayed self-advocacy and self-determination skills, but three of them stressed the importance of having an advocate assisting them through the process of accessing their accommodations. Three of the participants expanded on advocacy needs, specifying the support of an advocate on campus to assist them through the 504 processes and accessing their accommodations on campus. Despite strong self-advocacy skills in participant responses, additional research was sought, as the researcher was curious to find additional literature to support the use of advocates.

Farley, Gibbons, and Cihak (2014) conducted a study with mentors of intellectually disabled college students and found benefits to both the disabled students and the peer tutors. Making this type of assistance available to all SWD would assist with

their academic success. This type of assistance should be made available to other types of disabled students, not just intellectually disabled students.

Gregg, Galyardt, Wolfe, Moon, and Todd (2017) provided support for the effectiveness of virtual mentoring for enhancing the persistence of postsecondary SWD. The development of virtual mentoring relationships may contribute to student persistence through a trusting environment to support academic strategies, social strategies, development of academic supports, and growth in internal characteristics (Gregg et al., 2017). The improvement in students' perceptions of self-determination after participating in virtual-mentoring practices provided evidence that the practice enhanced autonomous decision making and goal setting for postsecondary students with SLD. A virtual-mentoring environment can provide SWD opportunities to perceive and operationalize autonomous experiences under the supportive direction of mentors (Gregg et al., 2017). Virtual student support services have the potential to improve student engagement and retention for students with SLD, while virtual mentoring may build on face-to-face mentoring by offering new opportunities for mentorship that may not be available for students with SLD. Mentoring strategies provide SWD the opportunity to enhance the three critical aspects of self-determination: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. All three strategies are essential to academic and career persistence for SWD (Gregg et al., 2017). Gregg et al. found virtual mentoring to work with the studied SLD student at the postsecondary level. Moreover, face-to-face mentoring could assist students with SLD in community colleges as well as suggested during the participant interviews.

Several of the participants in the current study discussed the need for and success due to the use of an advocate by way of an assigned counselor, peer, or mentor. With

these participants' suggestions in addition to Farley et al. (2014) mentoring for students with other disabilities and Gregg et al.'s (2017) study with virtual mentoring, one recommendation for action suggested is the provision of assigned advocates to community college students with SLD to assist in accessing their accommodations and assisting in their postsecondary success

Meetings with Instructors

All participants stressed the importance of communication skills contributing to success on postsecondary campuses. Communication skills are also considered vital to self-advocacy. During meetings, participants discussed their needs, the use of self-determination skills, with their instructors. All participants discussed meeting with their instructors and discussing accommodations as a positive or potentially positive strategy to assist in their accommodation access. Providing scheduled meetings between 504 students and their new college instructors would assist in accommodation access and promote positive experiences toward educational success. The researchers discussed in the literature review provided insight into the importance of communication skills and SWD meetings with instructors. However, the interviewed participants of this study highlighted the need for providing specific, on-campus meeting times for new students and their instructors to discuss their disabilities, strengths, weaknesses, and accommodation needs. Several of the participants of this study talked about meeting their instructors and discussing their academic needs.

Kraglund-Gauthier et al. (2014) suggested institutions conduct meetings with SWD to discuss their needs in cooperation with the whole postsecondary community to assist them with their knowledge and gaining services for their disabilities. Meetings that

encompass the whole postsecondary community can assist students with SLD in overcoming barriers on campuses. These meetings include assisting SWD in meeting with instructors and communicating their needs (Kraglund-Gauthier et al., 2014). Having these meetings before classes start can assist in promoting positive relationships. These meetings can help to develop students with SLD self-advocacy and self-determination skills; skills SWD need to be successful later in life. Aspects of self-determination—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—are essential to career persistence for SWD (Gregg et al., 2017).

Positive School Experiences

Previous researchers have highlighted how positive school experiences contribute to accommodation access and academic success. Hamblet (2014) found SWD with positive experiences in high school were often more motivated to disclose their disabilities and seek support services in college and accessing their accommodations. O’Shea and Meyer (2016) stated students who had positive experiences in their past educational environments were more secure in seeking out services in college and were more motivated to seek out accommodations more readily. All participants in this study described their past educational experiences with JMCS as supportive in continuing with a college education and lent the courage, tools, and skills to access their 504 plans and accommodations.

Promoting positive school experiences should be the goal of all educational leaders and contributors, not just postsecondary leaders or those working with students with SLD, and it should begin early and should not stop. How postsecondary staff at all departments and levels—the ODS staff members, instructors, presidents, and

paraprofessionals—treat SWD matters. How students with SLD are treated can cause or alleviate feelings associated with stigma and normalcy. Comments made to students with SLD when enrolling can impact the initiating of services, as the interviewed participants stated. Promoting positive school experiences can be initiated by making staff aware and then training instructors on how to best accommodate students with SLD can promote positive experiences. The participants of this study stated that having meetings with their instructors before classes started assisted in more positive feelings; the promotion of meetings by instructors and institutions would be a very positive step in supporting students with SLD academic success.

John Muir Charter School provides all of the full-time staff with yearly in-services, and one of the workshops is Building Positive School Culture. This workshop is an example of what can be done to provide teachers and staff tools in assisting all SWD to experience school positively and begin to be more proactive in accessing their accommodations. The target audience for this workshop is instructors and all staff wanting to build an influential positive culture and sense of belonging within their classroom/site. The goals of the workshop session are to discuss the benefits of intentional positive culture-building activities, explore best practices from JMCS veteran teachers and collaborate on how to take these strategies back to their site. A positive site culture starts with caring leaders making intentional decisions to build a strong sense of community. Participants of the workshop leave with an understanding of the importance of building a positive culture and practical strategies to implement at their sites. A website is provided to JMCS staff for positive school culture building with resources and

materials attached. A link has been added to their home site as JMCS Culture Building Resource.

A framework for building positive education can be initiated. Norrish, Williams, O'Connor, and Robinson (2013) provided information for building positive educational experiences and a framework for initiating positive education on campuses. In their study, they introduced that positive education involves combining principles of positive psychology with best practices in teaching and educational paradigms to promote optimal development and flourishing in school settings. Norrish et al. (2013) were explicit and implicit with teaching in combination with school-wide practices, targeting six wellbeing domains: positive emotions, positive engagement, positive accomplishment, positive purpose, positive relationships, and positive health, underpinned by a focus on character strengths. Norrish et al.'s (2013) framework for building positive education is presented in Figure 1.

The three concepts that Norrish et al. (2013) used to drive their positive education framework were live it, teach it, and embed it. *Live it* is examples for staff to live the skills taught within positive education and to act as authentic role models for students. *Teach it* is the teaching of positive education that helps students to understand key ideas and concepts, engage meaningfully in exploration and reflection, and apply the skills and mindsets for flourishing educationally in their lives. *Embed it* is the school-wide processes helping to embed a culture for wellbeing across the school community (Norrish et al., 2013). This framework can help to guide educators with techniques in enhancing positive education cultures.

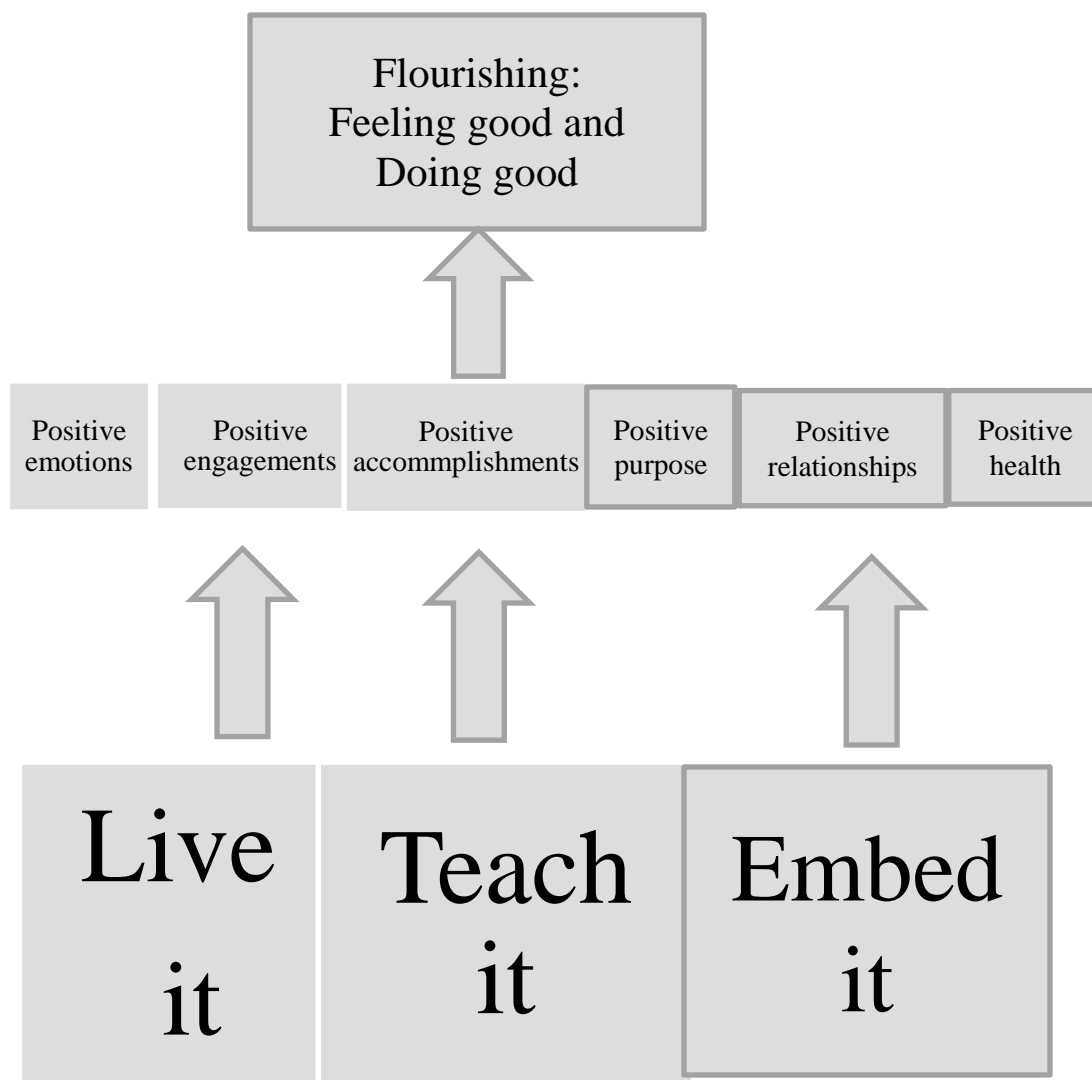


Figure 1. A Framework for Positive Education

Providing positive experiences for postsecondary students can also be addressed through UDL. Provisions of accommodations for SWD at the postsecondary level can have a focus on incorporating UDL in the classroom. Instructors that provide UDL encompass diverse populations that benefit everyone in the classroom and strive for inclusive learning environments. Providing instructors the ideas for new instructional delivery to diverse populations, UDL has opened the door to new accommodation delivery for postsecondary institutions. Philosophical shifts, such as in UDL and its

instructional methods, provide instructors with ideas for adequate and appropriate accommodations for students with SLD contextual and functional needs. Looking into new instructional design ideas may be a key to assisting with accommodation delivery.

Recommendations for Further Research

The participants' interviews for this study provided the essence of the phenomenon surrounding community college students with SLD accessing their accommodations on Southern California campuses. Previous researchers had not yet explored the interactivity between college students with SLD on smaller, postsecondary campuses. The other areas suggested for further research consideration are exploring students with disabilities other than SLD, students other than JMCS graduates, and locations other than Southern California community college campuses. Accommodation delivery is also a suggestion for further research, as the number of SWD continue to increase in postsecondary institutions, and it is the duty of educators to pursue social justice through appropriate accommodation delivery.

Students with Disabilities

More SWD are choosing to attend college (Schneider, Broda, Judy, & Burkander, 2014). Specific learning disabilities are some of the many disabilities of students entering postsecondary systems. There are many other disabilities for which postsecondary institutions are seeing a need to adjust their strategies of academic procedures. Studying accommodation access for students with other disabilities would provide other useful information to postsecondary institutions' faculty and policymakers assisting in those other SWD academic success.

Postsecondary education programs for young adults with autism, intellectual disorders, and other developmental disabilities have emerged as pathways to employment through extra instruction, coaching, and career-related preparation (Gilson & Carter, 2016). Gilson and Carter (2016) studied intellectually disabled and autistic college students and how the college's peer coaching affected the students. By exploring other disabilities, such as autism and intellectual disabilities, researchers of postsecondary institutions can study their access to accommodations. Specific avenues to accommodations may be needed, and different barriers may exist. Postsecondary programs for students with intellectual disabilities have appeared on college campuses, and the college enrollment of students with intellectual disabilities has increased over the past years (Farley et al., 2014).

Included in other disabilities to research are students with developmental disorders. Students with intellectual and developmental disabilities have joined the ranks of college students in pursuit of personal independence, community integration, and employment (Plotner & May, 2019). Plotner and May (2019) conducted a study to identify the academic, social, and personal challenges college students with these disabilities face and the support available to address those challenges. Their research provided preliminary insights into the college experience for students with the studied disabilities by comparing the perceptions, attitudes, and activities of SWD to those of students without disabilities and students with SLD (Plotner & May, 2019). Including other disabilities to study their accommodation access would provide more insight into the barriers and assistance needed for SWD on postsecondary campuses.

Although the inclusion of other disorders, such as physical, mental, and emotional disabilities on college campuses is not a novel concept, the inclusion of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities is a relatively new phenomenon (Plotner & Marshall, 2014). Moreover, also studying them in the context of accessing their accommodations. Adding other physical and mental disabilities to study their access to accommodation on campus is also suggested.

John Muir Charter School Graduates

This study specifically interviewed participants who had graduated from JMCS. Interviewing JMCS graduates might have affected the participants' responses as the interviewer was a JMCS employee and the participants' past instructor. Interviewing other than JMCS graduates would significantly enhance the diversity of the participant responses providing a wide range of information to the questions asked. Opening up the pool of participants to other than JMCS graduates are suggested for further research.

John Muir Charter School graduates are a significant group of students as JMCS is a small school environment and can provide more individualized attention to its students. Students who attend JMCS at ages 16 to 25 are offered an opportunity to finish their high school diploma and work. They usually come from having had negative high school experiences surrounding past adverse life events. John Muir Charter School also provides other services to assist its students with barriers that hinder their success in many avenues of life. Because of the JMCS atmosphere and mission, many students experience success and positive life experiences for the first time. The atmosphere and mission make JMCS and its graduates unique. The uniqueness of the school has most likely affected the interviewed participants' responses to some of the responses to prior

school experiences as the most recent school experience was from JMCS. John Muir Charter School graduates have all experienced, often for the first time, a positive academic environment, and positive educational experiences were expressed in great detail in all of the participants' interviews. These positive prior school experiences may not have been expressed from another sample interviewed. Interviewing another sample other than JMCS graduates may provide more insight into prior school experiences other than positive in how negative school experiences affect accommodation access for SWD.

Postsecondary Institutions

Even though SWD tend to choose community colleges, it would be helpful to study students with SLD access to accommodations and their academic success attending other postsecondary institutions. Students with disabilities tend to choose community colleges over other postsecondary institutions (Weis, Speridakos, & Ludwig, 2014). Weis et al. (2014) reported little is known about the academic achievement and cognitive functioning of students with SLD who attend community colleges and other 2-year, postsecondary schools. Weis et al. reported high school students with SLD were significantly more likely to attend community colleges than other postsecondary institutions (40.8% vs. 21.2%) and less likely to attend 4-year colleges and universities (15.6% vs. 37.4%) than are high school students without SLD (Weis et al., 2014). Additionally, reporting on other than Southern California community colleges would render subsequent information for a student with SLD access to accommodations. It is recommended that other postsecondary institutions be researched for insight into the presented phenomenon.

Accommodation Delivery

Accommodation access has been explored through this study, so the progression of the research would be to study accommodation delivery. As has been pointed out in this study, enrollment rates for SWD at postsecondary institutions have continued to rise, yet the completion and graduation rates have not followed. These trends provide cause for deep investigations into policies and procedures of how accommodations are being delivered. In one study on this topic, Cooper (2015) looked at service deliveries of accommodations on college campuses, reviewed issues related to success in college for students with LD, and discussed how future research could lead to improved outcomes for these students. Colleges may need to reconceptualize service delivery models for future success (Cooper, 2015), and additional research on this topic would support that growth.

Additional and Unanswered Questions with Unexpected Answers

The results from this study answered all of the questions developed for the study and the research question of accommodation access by JMCS graduates who attended postsecondary institutions in Southern California community colleges with SLD. Additional questions for further research would be how other than JMCS graduates would answer the same questions on the interview protocol. Remarkably similar responses from all participants of their positive JMCS experiences was not expected. By studying another population of other than JMCS graduates would provide additional information regarding accommodation access and past school experiences contributing to accommodation access for postsecondary students with SLD.

Summary

Researchers of previous studies had not investigated the phenomenon of community college students with SLD accessing their accommodations. As a researcher and educator working with SWD transitioning to higher education, the void in the literature held a compelling interest for the researcher. Address the void in the scholarly literature, of researching students with SLD on a smaller postsecondary campus, the researcher of this study explored how Southern California community college SLD students experienced accessing their accommodations. A phenomenological methodology was used by the researcher to form descriptive themes. Using a purposive, convenience sample of six participants, in-depth, face-to-face interviews provided rich data for the findings.

Through this phenomenological study, the researcher uncovered the problem of SWD in postsecondary education, not accessing their accommodations to assist in their academic success. In this final chapter, the researcher used the reviewed literature presented in Chapter 2 and the crafted categories and themes presented in Chapter 4 to answer the research questions formulated from the research problem in the study. From these answers the researcher provides the application of the findings and conclusions to the research questions and problem statement through suggestions that apply to leadership and calls for action. These applications of findings are summarized in Figure 2 as recommendations for actions.

This research project has provided insight into how students with SLD experience accessing their accommodations on their community college campus. The purposeful design focused on the voice of the participants. The participants each shared valuable

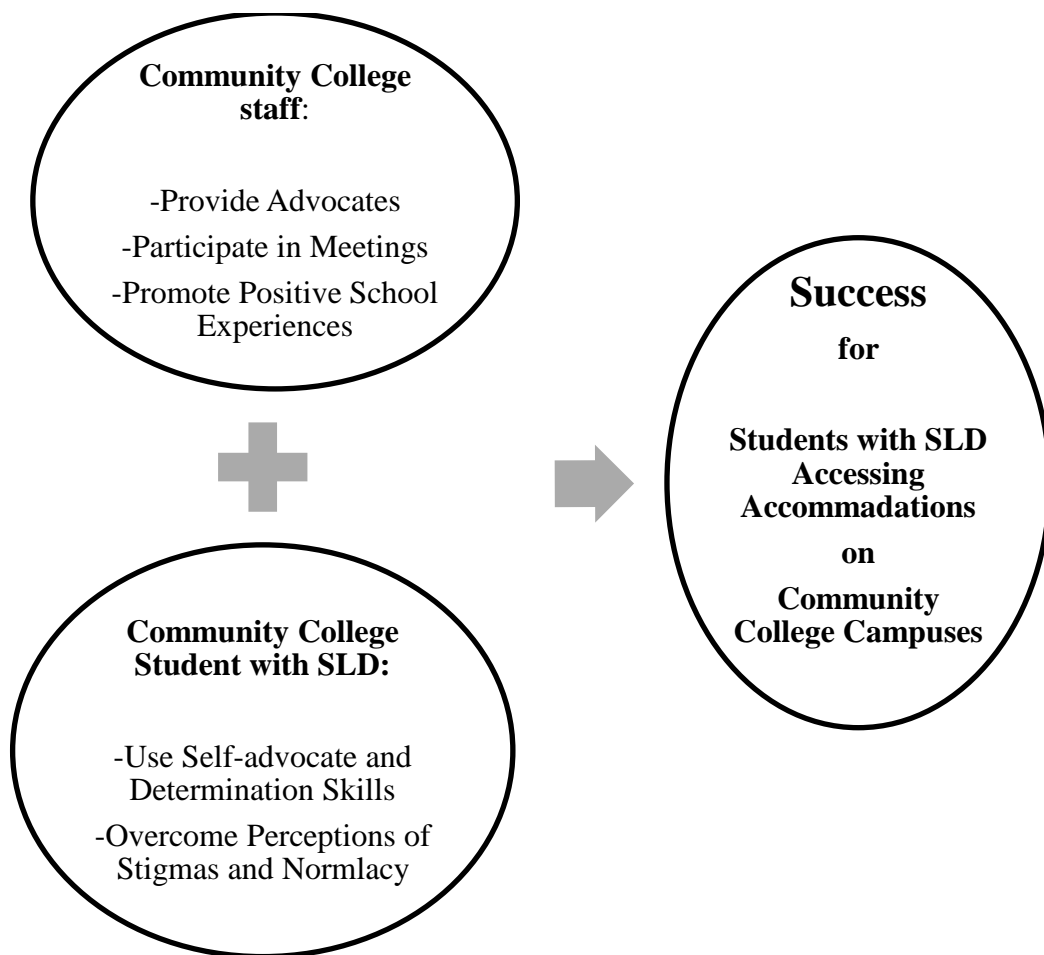


Figure 2. Recommendations for Action.

on the phenomenon. Their stories demonstrate the need for action as to how best to assist them in this phenomenon. This study is the initial step to better understanding the needs of this population in the postsecondary education system.

Implications for practice evolving from the study extend to researchers, student services professionals, postsecondary staff, special educators, and the students.

Recommendations for further research include (a) investigating other disabilities, (b) expanding the target population to include more diverse student demographics and differing types of organizations, and (c) exploring other postsecondary institutions and

the experiences students with SLD are encountering while accessing their accommodation on campus.

Concluding Statement

Since 1981, I have been dedicated to educating youth and committed to delivering the assistance needed for students to become successful members of society. Along the way, SWD have shared their successes and failures encountered through their educational journey with the researcher. Through these shared and viewed experiences, I have been committed to the students served and assisted them in the best ways possible. When it became time for me to commit to a dissertation topic in the doctoral process, it seemed only a natural progression to extend that commitment to SWD and their higher educational journey. Hence, this dissertation study focused on students with SLD and their accommodation process in higher education.

I chose JMCS as the setting because the students closest to my commitment currently attended there. Through interviews and observation of the participants, chosen participants probably would not have graduated and have been attending the colleges studied if it were not have been for JMCS instructional strategies and the positive experiences they provide in all students' academic success, not just students with SLD.

It was crucial for me to find out what JMCS was doing correctly, why JMCS students experienced academic success while attending college, and how JMCS graduates with SLD were navigating their postsecondary experiences. This topic was a natural progression for me to provide the needed information for JMCS to become a better organization while providing me the needed information to become the best possible educator for all SWD.

John Muir Charter School provides positive experiences for students with SLD to request the accommodations needed to assist in the postsecondary completion. Continuing to provide avenues to build self-advocacy and self-determination skills is a goal for JMCS and the researcher. Encouraging JMCS students with SLD to seek out advocates to assist them along the way is something JMCS and the researcher can do until postsecondary institutions can make those available for students with SLD. John Muir Charter School also prides itself on building students' self-esteem, while negative perceptions and stigmas can be softened and nurtured. Perceptions of normalcy and stigmas are something SWD are dealing with nationwide and not just students with SLD, encouraging all SWD to be mindful of others and their perceptions and stigmas in everyday life to negative feelings associated with stigma can assist them in becoming stronger self-advocates to build their self-esteem for stronger self-determination skill needed for academic success. John Muir Charter School can continue to include students with SLD as active members of their transitional meetings, teaching them to take control to assist with meetings in postsecondary settings. John Muir Charter School can become a model for assisting students with SLD in community college transitional settings in accessing their accommodations.

This study demonstrates a robust social injustice and my commitment to the study of social justice to students with SLD and their accommodation access on postsecondary campuses. All education leaders should be mindful of following the suggestions: (a) ensuring all students have positive experiences, (b) training and education all those who encounter SWD on postsecondary campuses, (c) stigmas associated with disabilities and the ideas surrounding normalcy, and (d) alleviating negative perceptions to assist students

with SLD in accessing their accommodations. Moreover, postsecondary leaders should take heed to the recommendations for action in assisting students with SLD in accommodation access on campus through (a) assigning advocates, (b) encouraging meetings with instructors, and (c) promoting positive school experiences. By addressing these leadership suggestions and action recommendations, social injustice will be addressed and students with SLD will be more successful in accessing their accommodations on postsecondary campuses and more academically successful.

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APPENDIX A
RECRUITMENT SCREENING

I am doing a research study for my doctoral program and would like to interview you. I want to learn how you are doing in community college and if you are using your accommodation services. This study will assist JMCS with their future services to 504 students and provide needed information about how colleges can better serve the SLD population to access their accommodations.

We would do an initial interview at your convenience that will take about an hour. I would later do a follow-up interview to review our information and ask any additional questions or any question derived from the previous interview. I would follow up again with a final in-person interview to check all my information against your answers, checking the accuracy of the information. Are you willing to participate? I will buy us coffee for your time.

APPENDIX B**PROTOCOL FOR INTERVIEW #1**

Do you know how your 504 works for you on your campus?

How did you learn about the 504 processes?

Do you know your disability and how to explain it?

Do you know how your disability affects your learning?

Do you know what accommodation work best for you?

Do you feel you know enough about the 504 processes to use your accommodations to your advantage?

Are you currently accessing your accommodations on campus? If not why?

If so, what experiences have you had trying to access your accommodations on campus?

Remember back when you first enrolled what happened when trying to learn about the particular 504 processes on campus?

How did these experiences make you feel?

How were you prepared for what you needed to do to access your accommodations?

Do you feel comfortable accessing the ODS and their services? Do they help you? If so, How? If not, how could they help you?

What skills or types of skills do you think assisted you the most in accessing your accommodations on campus?

Did you have transitional planning before entering college?

Explain your high school experiences with receiving accommodations and special services.

How do you perceive your teachers' reactions to your requesting accommodations?

How were you prepared for accessing your accommodations?

How have the accommodations assisted you in your college activities?

How do you feel when you are accessing your accommodations on campus?

How could the college assist you better with accessing your accommodations?

Do you feel comfortable asking your instructor for your accommodations? If not, how can this be alleviated? If so, what assisted in the process?

What changes do you think are needed in the accommodation/504 process on campus to make it a smoother process for you to use services for your disabilities?

What is the process of using accommodation on campus for students who self-identify with SLD?

What skills are needed?

What feelings are brought about during this process?

How does/did one gain the skills or knowledge to use the accommodations offered?

What process did the participants need to follow to access their accommodations?

What were the procedures to follow for the students to access their accommodations?

How were they made aware of these?

How are the accommodations assisting the participants?

Do you feel comfortable using your accommodations or what feelings if any, do you feel about using their accommodations?

How might you go about using your accommodations if you were new to the campus?

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORMS



School of Higher Education Leadership

CITY U RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

I, _____ agree to participate in the following research project to be conducted by Denise Hoogendoorn, a student, in the Doctoral Program. I understand that this research study has been approved by the City University of Seattle Institutional Review Board.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form, signed by all persons involved. I further acknowledge that I have been provided an overview of the research protocol as well as a detailed explanation of the informed consent process.

Title of Project: Accessing Southern California Community College Accommodations by Students Who Self-Identify with Specific Learning Disabilities

Name and Title of Researcher(s): Denise Hoogendoorn

For Faculty Researcher(s): Dr. Corey Johnson, Committee Chair
Professor Pressley Rankin IV, Committee Member
Kelly Flores, EdD, Program Director

Email: xxxx@cityu. edu

Email: xxxxx@cityu. edu

Purpose of Study: A proposal submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Research Participation:

I understand I am being asked to participate in this study in one or more of the following ways (the checked options below apply):

Respond to in-person and/or telephone Interview questions;

I further understand that my involvement is voluntary, and I may refuse to participate or withdraw my participation at any time without negative consequences. I have been advised that I may request a copy of the final research study report. Should I request a copy, I understand I may be asked to pay the costs of photocopying and mailing.

Confidentiality

I understand that participation is confidential to the limits of applicable privacy laws. No one except the faculty researcher or student researcher, his/her supervisor and Program Coordinator (or Program Director) will be allowed to view any information or data collected whether by questionnaire, interview and/or other means. If the student researcher's cooperating classroom teacher also has access to raw data, the following box will be checked. All data (the questionnaires, audio/video tapes, typed records of the interview, interview notes, informed consent forms, computer discs, any backup of computer discs and any other storage devices) are kept locked and password protected by the researcher. The research data will be stored for 5 years (5 years or more if required by local regulations). At the end of that time, all data of whatever nature will be permanently destroyed. The published results of the study will contain data from which no individual participant can be identified.

Signatures

I have carefully reviewed and understood this consent form. I understand the description of the research protocol and consent process provided to me by the researcher. My signature on this form indicates that I understand to my satisfaction the information provided to me about my participation in this research project. My signature also indicates that I have been apprised of the potential risks involved in my participation. Lastly, my signature indicates that I agree to participate as a research subject.

My consent to participate does not waive my legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, and/or the City University of Seattle from their legal and professional responsibilities concerning this research. I understand I am free to withdraw from this research project at any time. I further understand that I may ask for clarification or new information throughout my participation at any time during this research.

Participant's Name: _____ Date: _____

Please Print

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name: Denise Hoogendoorn

Please Print

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

If I have any questions about this research, I have been advised to contact the researcher and/or his/her supervisor, as listed on page one of this consent form.

Should I have any concerns about the way I have been treated as a research participant, I may contact the following individual(s):

Pressley Rankin: xxxxx@cityu.edu

Phone: 206.XXX.XXXX | 1.800.XXX.XXXX

Fax: 206.XXX.XXXX

Email: info@cityu.edu

521 Wall Street Suite 100

Seattle, WA 98121

APPENDIX D**PERMISSION TO USE JOHN MUIR CHARTER SCHOOL NAME**

August 28, 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is to confirm that Denise Hoogendoorn, Educational Specialist with Nevada County Superintendent of Schools, has the authorization to use the John Muir Charter Schools (JMCS) name in her academic dissertation. She is assigned to provide support services to students at various JMCS sites throughout Southern California and is free to name JMCS for purposes of her research and observations.

If you have any questions or require further clarification, please feel free to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

MW

Michael Wegner Chief Operations Officer John Muir Charter School

APPENDIX E

REFLEXIVITY JOURNAL

Before Interviews/Data Collection

Trying to set my biases aside, I know I will be difficult. I think the participants will all be using their accommodations on their college campuses. I am not sure how they will be doing as in having positive or negative experiences. I think they might have had problems trying to utilize their services on campus as it is a new experience for them. I think some of them will have a difficult time speaking up about their disabilities to their instructors as this is a new experience for them also. All of the participants should know what their diagnosis is and how to explain it. The participants should know their strengths and weaknesses. I am hoping the participants will speak freely and truthfully and not give me answers they might think I want to hear.

During Interviews/Data Collection

After holding my first interview, I might have coaxed him a bit too much. I want to try to leave it more open for my next interview, but after my second interview, she was challenging to get to answer. I found I had to do even more coaxing to get her to answer. I felt as if I was “feeding” her. However, I did get a bit of useful information. My third and fourth interviews were much more informative, and I did not have to “lead” them as much their interviews flowed. My fifth and sixth interviews had to be rescheduled several times, and the information from these interviews was different altogether. I was never able to find a seventh participant to interview.

Assisting with the recruitment of the participants for this study, I discussed a plan with the COO of JMCS. He writes a weekly bulletin to all JMCS teachers. Just before I

was ready to start recruitment for the participant for my study, he sent out a blurb addressing the needs of my study. If any JMCS staff knew of past JMCS graduates in the last 5 years they were asked to forward their information to me; I would then determine if the students fit the other criteria for the recruitment of participant for my study. I received three leads from this, but the students did not fit my other criteria.

I still keep in touch with some past JMCS graduates via Facebook and know of one that fit the criteria for my study whom I contacted for an interview via instant messaging. We were then able to converse via phone and schedule an interview.

Another way JMCS assisted me in the recruitment for the participant for my study was through the lead JMCS registrar provided me with a list of over 100 JMCS graduates in the past 5 years that possessed either an IEPs or 504 plans. The list contained the student's name, the year they graduated, and the campus the student graduated from. The list also contained a phone number and if available an email to contact the students with. This assistance of a list at first seemed like the "golden ticket," however, presented with problems.

The first problem encountered was out-of-date or no-longer-working phone numbers and emails. Few students were able to be contacted from the list. Even though the pool appeared to be significant, it dwindled quickly. If the number was still in use by the students, many of the students contacted were not attending any college. I quickly began to lose hope. I did not end up with as large of a pool of candidates to draw from as expected. I was only able to find six actual participants to interview.

I scheduled my first interview; I started nervously. However, as it went on, I began to feel more comfortable. The first interviewee is not using his 504 plan on campus but was able

to provide insight as to how he was experiencing his first class on campus as a student with a specific learning disability. A second interview will be conducted with Participant 1, “Smiley,” over the phone to see if he is continuing to be successful without his 504 plan and accommodations.

Was anxious to get home and send the recording to Temi to see how their services worked and how the transcription turned out. Temi services proved to work great. The transcription had a few errors that I read through and cleaned up as the interview was still fresh in my mind. I was pleased with the outcome and saved the transcript as a word document. I scheduled my second interview.

For the second interview, I was not as nervous. However, the interviewee was not as communicative. She needed much coaxing to expand on her answers. She was as not as explanative and gave short answers and yes and nos and had difficulty understanding some of my questions. When I received the transcript from Temi, she was hard to understand, very jumbled and mumbly. I had to go back and decipher a lot of the interview afterward.

I continued to go through the list of numbers hoping to reach more students. In the meantime of have three more interviews scheduled. I am a bit disappointed (a) that it has not been as easy to locate past students and (b) that so few are attending college. I have already begun to see a commonality in my two interviews.

The participants have verbalized the importance of communication for their success in college so far. Both participants one and two had communication issues early in their educational experiences. Communicating was a goal that they worked on in high school in general education class assignments and with their past IEP goals. The

participants have mentioned how communication and advocating for themselves have helped them now that they are in college.

The third interview provided some insightful information. The JMCS graduate using the name Aaron started his first semester of community college, not utilizing his 504. He had been told about it upon entrance, but then forgot about retrieving the proper documents to support his 504 status resulting in him starting college without the 504 plan and its accommodations. He began to fail, became distressed, and started to lose hope. Remembering what JMCS had done to help him in the past be successful with his education, he returned to seek some advice. It was at that time they reminded him of the fact he had a 504 plan and qualified for accommodations at his community college, but he must present it to them and to provide that plan to his community college to see how they could assist him through their accommodation process.

Aaron did just that, began the process of initiating his 504 plan, developing a positive relationship with the disability services center, and a counselor that started to assist him in being more successful. He was able to share about what accommodations assist him the most in classes. Aaron shared that he is much more confident on campus. Aaron said that he feels comfortable asking for help from counselors, teacher, and even other students; no one makes him feel uncomfortable during this process. Aaron shared that he is now passing all of his classes, and his counselor checks in with his periodical to see how he is doing and gives suggestion when he is having problems. Aaron stated that he could make appointments to speak to his counselor in the disability office at any time. When asked about the critical skills needed for his success, he reassured this interviewed, his own words, about the importance of self-advocacy and self-determination skills

needed; both in seeking out 504 services and utilizing his 504 services on his community college campus.

The fourth interview needed to be conducted twice as the first time it did not record. However, it provided some conflicting information from the three other previous interviews. This participant used the name Lite. Had many negative feelings and interactions to report musing his 504 plan in community college. He too, had been to two different community colleges and was awaiting entrance into another program when we talked. One community college he spent a semester at and earned a few credits at and the other he did not make it through more than a few days when he decided the experiences appeared to be worse than the first.

He utilized his 504 plan at both campuses. The experiences obtaining his services started on a sour foot as he felt pushed around and made to feel like he did not need his accommodations to because he did not 'appear' disabled. He sought the help of an outside friend to assist in advocating for him to get him through the 'obtaining services' part.

He then found using his accommodations meant different things to different teachers on campus and also affected his feelings about using them in different ways, depending on what class he was enrolled in. Some of his instructors were very accommodating and made him feel comfortable using his accommodations, while others were quite the opposite. Some instructors told him he could not use his accommodations, and others made him feel as if he had to jump through many hoops to be able to use them.

Lite found he was not as successful with his academics because he could not use his accommodations as Lite was familiar to high school where he had experienced success after implementing a 504. His love for education started to dwindle. It was very

disheartening to listen to his interview. Lite also stressed the importance of knowing one's self and their strengths and weaknesses and being a strong self-advocate. He felt he was being pushed around to the point he enlisted the help of a friend to help advocate for him. Lite felt some of the accommodations that were allowed him were helpful, but Lite needed some other accommodations, and the college told him, he was not disabled enough to use. This refusal to provide him with the accommodations he knew he needed to be successful made him feel discriminated against for not being disabled enough!

It was difficult for me to listen to him say these negative things as I knew him to be so excited about education. However, when I asked him if he would give another community college a try and utilize his 504 plan again, he said most definitely. He is going to re-enroll soon for phlebotomy.

I continued to go through the list of numbers provided me from the JMCS registrar. As before, many of the numbers are out of order or did not belong to those I intend to talk to. I have left a few more messages. I am still trying to locate one more participant to schedule an interview with.

Interview 5 once again provided some problems with recording. The recorder kept turning off. After starting over about four different times, we finally were able to complete an entire interview. I felt the interview was not near as proper or complete the fifth time around as it was the first, the first time the information seemed more 'raw.'

Participant Number 5 chose the name Alex to use during his interview process. The experiences of this participant were a bit different as he had not started his classes yet so had not experienced using his accommodations on campus. The interview zeroed in on the experiences he encountered during the process of enrolling for college as a

student with disabilities and signing up for services through the ODS or as he called it the department of program services (DPS) to provide for his 504 plan on campus.

Alex made note that he did not know enough about his disability or what it was called and needed to know more about it. However, he could explain it and how it affected his learning. He was also able to explain the accommodations that assisted him best with his learning. Alex relayed that his earlier experiences at JMCS and using his accommodations encouraged him to seek out his 504 plan services at the college. He stressed how confident he was feeling about the process ahead of him and felt he was ready for what was to come next. Although Alex did not know the next step as far as going forward with his 504 plan, as the DPS center had not relayed to him about what he was to do. He is still waiting for his classes to come available for him this next quarter to attend. Alex also stressed the importance of communicating and knowing himself, and his strengths and weaknesses had helped him so far in this process. He also mentioned the help of a friend to get him through the process.

Interview 6. This participant chose to go by JTB. This interview was a different interview altogether as he had tried two different colleges. The first he did not utilize his 504 plan and dropped out because of failure. The second community college he utilized his 504 plan and still did not do well and had just dropped out 2 weeks before we conducted our interview. He was able to name his disability and describe it. He was able to discuss the type of accommodations that worked for him. However, it appeared as if he did not speak up for himself while on campus, and he let things get out of hand, and it became too late for him to find help and fix it. JTB was able to tell me what he needed to do to be successful, and he said he was willing to try another program and utilize his 504

plan. When I asked him why he did not use his 504 plan and accommodations at his first community college, he said he wanted to try it out on his own and see if he could do it. JTB also experienced some negative feelings from staff and students at his second attempt at community college and using his accommodations. He did not ask for help because of this. He did say that past JMCS experiences had encouraged him to move on and try again.

I have read through the current interviews now several times and have found commonalities. I am going to start to highlight these commonalities with different colors to color code the different participant interviews for analysis purposes. By whole-part-while reading, as suggested by Vagle, I was able to find useful information for my study. I also organized the information into a graf, reflecting my studies' research questions. By crafting the participants' interviews, several statements were made from a few of the participants providing significant information to the study

All of the participants were able to name, describe their disability, and explain how it affected their learning. All of the participants discussed the importance of self-advocacy and self-determination skills when trying to access their accommodations. All but one of the participants were accessing their 504 plans on campus. The one participant not accessing his 504 plan felt it was not needed, he was passing his current class without accommodations, and he was the only taking one, and it was his first. Of the participants using their accommodations, all of them felt their accommodations were assisting them on campus except for one who felt he needed more and varied accommodations tailored more to his needs to assist him further. The accommodations used by the participants varied. Of the participants using their 504 plan on campus, several participants voiced

negative experiences. The experiences the participants had as previous JMCS special education or 504 students prepared them for their 504 experiences on their college campus. Of those students using their 504 plans on the Southern Californian community college campuses, only one participant listed some of his college instructors not providing his accommodations as requested. Three of the participants using their 504 on campus mentioned the help of a friend/advocate assisting them in the process of initiating and acquiring their 504 plan on campus. This advocate was also suggested by several of the participants as an added assistance to make the process smoother and more manageable in attaining the 504 plan on campus.

I was never able to secure a seventh interview. However, after reviewing the interviews, the information gathered was significantly substantial, and a seventh participant was not needed, although the first participant was called for a second interview to inquire on his continued success without his accommodation access. Smiley was interviewed a second time by phone for a brief interview. I wanted to know how his quarter went without his use of his 504 plan and if he was going to continue without it in the future. I called him in the morning and got him just before he was leaving for work. We were able to speak for a few minutes. He had just finished his first quarter and did so successfully, and he was very pleased with himself. He said he was preparing to enroll in next quarter classes. I proceeded to ask him if he would enlist the assistance of his 504 plan for next quarter. He said he was going to try it without again since he did so well without it this last quarter. He said he was getting anxious and excited to start again and I asked if I could call and check up on him again after he started and he said yes.

Before analyzing the data, I met with each of the participants (transcript accuracy) again to read over their transcribed interviews to make sure it was as they stated and what they wanted to say. They were all happy with what was down on paper. We met at the graduation of their classmates at the end of the year. All of the participants were able to meet in person except Lite, and his was done by phone. I read his to him. Everything was ok, and nothing needed to be changed. They all wanted a copy of my study when it was completed.

During Analysis

Information gleaned from the analysis was unexpected, at times. I thought the experiences were going to be more positive, and I was surprised by the need for outside assistance. I knew the participants would be able to comment on self-advocacy and determination skills and the use of their transitional plans as those were things I highlighted as a past special education instructor. I was pleased to hear that these things assisted them in their accommodation process and has contributed to their success with college so far. I was discouraged to hear the negative experiences some of the participants had. I had felt that the time of stigma had lessened, but not as some of the participants also commented on this. I was especially pleased to hear about the positive experiences from their past education at JMCS assisting and making such a tremendous positive impact on the postsecondary experiences so far. However, I want to through caution to the wind as they might have been telling me what I wanted to hear. However, since it came from, all interviewed participants, I am hoping not. After documenting the findings I called each participant and read over the findings. They did not over any changes or

corrections. The participants were pleased with what I had discovered and were anxious to read my entire study. I told them I would get them a copy as soon as it was completed.

Post Reflective Plan

I would be interested to learn the experiences of other than SLD students and other than JMCS graduates. My plan for this study is to present it and make it available for the organizations I work with: Nevada County Special Ed. and John Muir Charter School. I would also like to have it published in a special education journal as I feel it offers essential information for all those working with SWD and the students themselves.

APPENDIX F**SECOND PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

(Derived from first interview questions as needed)

The second interview with ‘Smiley’ (Held over the phone)

Are you continuing to experience success without using your 504 plan and accommodations?

Will you use them next quarter?