

THE PERSONAL JOURNEY OF INDIVIDUALS SELF-DISCLOSING THEIR
DISABILITY STATUS WITHIN AN URBAN POSTSECONDARY ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

THE PERSONAL JOURNEY OF INDIVIDUALS SELF-DISCLOSING THEIR DISABILITY STATUS WITHIN AN URBAN POSTSECONDARY ENVIRONMENT

Nelson Carrillo

A qualitative narrative study was conducted on the personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment. The study was intended to uncover the personal journey of students with disabilities self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment. Through semi-structured interviews and targeted journal responses, it explored the students' lived experiences of seeking out and using accommodations and the students' perceptions of faculty members' use of universal design for instruction and universal design for learning. The findings demonstrated that a community-based institution that values diversity among professors, faculty members, and students is an environment that helps students who self-disclosed their disabilities feel accepted and at ease as they work toward their degrees, especially with Disability Resource Office (DRO) support, by opening doors and opportunities for students who might not otherwise have access to proper education and assistance.

The findings also demonstrated that the DRO provided quality accommodations and accessibility, enriching the experience for students who self-disclosed their disability. Finally, the data showed that students with disabilities frequently self-disclose their difficulties, emphasizing the importance of effective communication in advocating for

themselves and getting appropriate help. The results of the study suggest that on the institutional, local, and national level, awareness should be raised regarding the rights and needs of students with disabilities with respect to seeking and accessing support services in higher education. Additionally, further research in this area has the potential to drive positive change in policies, practices, and attitudes. It can provide a more inclusive, supportive, and empowering postsecondary experience for students who self-disclose their disabilities.

Keywords: accommodations, urban postsecondary, universal design for instruction, universal design for learning, critical disability theory, students self-disclosing disabilities, disabilities, academic supports

DEDICATION

This dissertation work is dedicated to my father, Alfonso Carrillo-Sanchez, who recently turned 100 years old, and to my sister, Nilda L. Carrillo-Ortiz, who has also been a significant source of inspiration and a family role model for me. I would also like to take this opportunity to dedicate this dissertation to my daughter, Kayleen Carrillo-Velez, who has been a tremendous source of support for me as I have worked through this process. To my grandson Kayden Velez, who just turned 2 years old and fills my heart with joy and happiness. The voyage was also backed by Ruben Velez, who is my son-in-law.

In addition, I want to dedicate this dissertation to my niece, Sharyne M. Ortiz-Roman, and my nephew, Albert S. Ortiz, who have both been supportive members of my immediate family and have been there for me in times of need. To my closest friends, whom I love more like a family: Joseph Piscopo, who has supported this dissertation journey from day one, and Carlos Burgos, who has been my co-editor and read my work before submission since the beginning of this degree program.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
CHAPTER 1	1
Introduction.....	1
Purpose of the Study	4
Conceptual Framework.....	5
Universal Design for Learning.....	5
Critical Disability Theory	6
Significance of the Study	7
Research Questions.....	9
Definition of Terms.....	9
Conclusion	10
CHAPTER 2	11
Conceptual Framework.....	11
Universal Design.....	12
Universal Design for Learning.....	13
Critical Disability Theory	14
Critical Disability Theory and Universal Design for Learning	14
Review of Related Research	15

The Importance of Urban Postsecondary Environment.....	16
The Rights of Students With Disabilities	17
Stigma Against Students With Disabilities in Higher Education	18
Students With Disabilities’ Experiences With the Accommodations Process	21
Students With Disabilities’ Disclosure With Disability Resource Office	23
Barriers Students With Disabilities Face in Higher Education.....	23
Experiences of Students With Self-Disclosed Disabilities in Higher Education	25
The Use of Universal Design for Instruction and Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education Classrooms	27
Conclusion	27
CHAPTER 3	29
Research Questions.....	32
Setting.....	32
Participants.....	33
Data Collection Procedures.....	37
Interviews.....	38
Document Analysis.....	39
Journaling.....	39
Data Analysis Procedures	41
Interviews.....	44
Document Analysis.....	45
Journaling.....	45

Trustworthiness.....	46
Research Ethics.....	49
Researcher Role	50
Conclusion	55
CHAPTER 4	56
Findings.....	56
Urban Community-Based Supports Within a Higher Learning Environment for Students With Disabilities	58
Reasonable Accommodations Within an Urban Postsecondary Environment	59
Understanding of Students With Disabilities in an Urban Institution Setting.....	70
Reaction to Universal Design for Learning	76
Summary	78
CHAPTER 5	81
Discussion.....	81
Connection to the Conceptual Framework	81
Discussion of Findings.....	83
Connection to Prior Research	86
Connection of Findings to Research Questions	89
Limitations	91
Implications for Future Research.....	92
Implications for Practice	94
Conclusion	95
APPENDIX A LETTER OF CONSENT	98

APPENDIX B INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....	100
APPENDIX C JOURNALING.....	102
APPENDIX D SOLICITATION LETTER	104
APPENDIX E DISABILITY RESOURCE OFFICE VERIFICATION OF DISABILITY FORM.....	105
APPENDIX F DISABILITY RESOURCE OFFICE ACCOMMODATION ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM.....	107
REFERENCES	110

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Description of the Study Participants	34
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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Integration of Universal Design for Learning and Critical Disability Theory	12
Figure 2 Integration of Universal Design for Learning and Critical Disability Theory	82

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

During the past few decades, institutions of higher education (IHEs) throughout the United States have seen more students with disabilities (Fovet, 2020). Support services and accommodations are intended to give students with disabilities educational support during their higher education experience to improve academic performance (Hong, 2015). Yet, students with disabilities have challenges obtaining proper services and accommodations in their postsecondary institutions (Squires & Counterline, 2018; Gin et al., 2020). Disability laws require IHEs to offer adequate support for students with disabilities to secure educational opportunities (Abed & Shackelford, 2020). Although there are policies and procedures to support students in the higher education environment, including students with disabilities, to ensure the postsecondary setting is free of discrimination, at times students with disabilities are stigmatized or not offered an entirely inclusive academic experience (Gearhart et al., 2018). As such, social justice has come to the fore in the higher education access debate, as advocates seek to create the proper educational setting for students with disabilities (Phasha & Mosia, 2017).

According to Heward et al. (2017), students with disabilities are individuals whose physical, sensory, cognitive, and emotional characteristics differ from the norm to the extent to which they require an individualized education plan and related services and accommodations to participate in instruction. Kourea et al. (2021) stated that students with disabilities had difficulty accessing accessible software and learning materials, obtaining appropriate services and accommodations, and feeling supported in their environment. For students with disabilities to receive services and accommodations in an

IHE, they must self-disclose their disability to the institution, specifically through its disability resource office (DRO; Aquino & Bittinger, 2019). IHEs are not required to provide any assistance for students with disabilities if they do not formally identify with their institution's DRO. Unless a student self-identifies, IHEs would not know if a student has a disability because they cannot ask that question during admissions. It is the student's responsibility to self-identify and disclose their disabilities (Singh, 2019).

According to the Office for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Education disclosing a disability must be voluntary. Although it is the individual's choice, failing to self-disclose a disability and failing to receive services and accommodations may jeopardize a student's overall postsecondary experience (Aquino, 2021). Institutions should be aware of students' needs and provide reasonable accommodations (Mull et al., 2001); however, students may hesitate to disclose this personal information (Aquino, 2021; Shackelford, 2009). Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a Federal law prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals based on their disability. Additionally, Section 508 was added in 1998 to protect against digital discrimination (Lorbeer, 2020), as it requires federal agencies to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access to and use of electronic information technology.

National Center for Education Statistics (2015) data indicate that only 35% of students identified as having disabilities in secondary education self-disclose in college. Only 24% of students with disabilities accessed disability-related support in college. In comparison, 98% of these students received these support types in high school (Newman et al., 2020). Also, the results of the NLTS2 study found that only 40% of postsecondary students who received special education services while in secondary school identified

their disability at their postsecondary institution. Of these identifying postsecondary students, 88% received supportive services, accommodations, or learning aids (Newman et al., 2020).

Most research on college students with disabilities has focused on those who have self-disclosed their disability. However, for a range of reasons, including concerns about stigma and lack of knowledge about legal rights, available services, accommodations, and their specific disability and its impact on learning, only 35% of students with disabilities who received services in their secondary education schools disclosed their disability to their college or university (Newman et al., 2020). Hence, most students with disabilities are not known by college and university disability services and other administrative offices. Nevertheless, they are enrolled and using student academic support services.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2017), students with disabilities constitute the largest minority group within the United States (United States Department of Labor, n.d.). Nearly 19% of all undergraduate students in the postsecondary environment have physical, cognitive, or psychological limitations that impact one or more major life activities (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Additionally, roughly one in every five college students is self-disclosed as having disabilities, resulting in nearly 3.8 million students with disabilities enrolled in IHEs (Aquino, 2021).

The student's decision to disclose their disability to their university is very personal and will undoubtedly vary over time (Aquino & Bittinger, 2019; Edwards et al., 2022). As a result, it is logical that disability often goes unreported (Brett, 2016; Edwards et al., 2022). One possible explanation is that in order to self-identify, students must be

aware of available options (Kent et al., 2018; Toutain, 2019). Researchers have suggested that unfamiliarity with university procedures plays a small role, and other, darker factors are at work: for instance, the fear of the stigma associated with disability, low self-worth, uncomfortable feelings around sharing information, a lack of experience in self-advocacy, the belief that a disability would not meet the threshold required for support, and the inability to produce academically (Edwards et al., 2022).

Research has also focused on students with disabilities who generally expressed satisfaction with their services in their IHEs. However, Los Santos et al. (2019) found that most of the students in their study indicated that they had encountered barriers to their education, including a lack of understanding and cooperation from administrators, faculty, staff, and other students; lack of adaptive aids and other accommodations; and inaccessibility of building grounds. A significant area that remains to be explored is the personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative study explored the personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment. Specifically, this study investigated students with self-disclosed disabilities enrolled in an urban postsecondary institution and their potential obstacles to accessing and utilizing accommodations within the classroom environment. Thus, the data this study uncovered can shape best practices and policies to enhance the experience of students with self-disclosed disabilities in higher education. Understanding underserved populations, such as students with disabilities, can significantly contribute to the understanding of higher education

leadership, faculty, and staff that higher education “promotes the expansion of other capabilities” (Terzi, 2007, p. 759). It also emphasizes the need for ongoing advocacy with and on behalf of students with disabilities. This impetus for advocacy is heightened by IHEs being unprepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Hong et al., 2011). This research allowed urban college students with self-disclosed disabilities to be heard, exposing the discrimination and challenges of current laws, policies, and practices in higher education while highlighting such students’ strengths and capabilities. Although literature exists on the experiences of students with disabilities in higher education, very few studies have considered the personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment.

Conceptual Framework

To guide this study of the personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment, the researcher developed a conceptual framework based on integrating two theoretical paradigms: the universal design for learning (UDL) and critical disability theory (CDT). Therefore, the researcher proposes the iterative relationships between UDL and CDT to study the journeys of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment.

Universal Design for Learning

UDL, which originated in the field of architecture (Mace, 1985), aims from the initial planning stages to create spaces and structures that are accessible to all users, regardless of their physical and mental needs (Harvey-Carter, 2008). UDL is a teaching approach that accommodates all learners’ needs and abilities while removing unnecessary

barriers to learning. This entails creating a flexible learning environment in which information is presented in various ways, students participate in multiple ways, and students are given options for demonstrating their learning. As a result, UDL may be a viable option for educators seeking to promote accessible education for all students, including students with disabilities.

The UDL framework gives students the individualized assistance they need to succeed. Educators use UDL to mitigate barriers to learning that are caused by environmental factors; these barriers are not caused by students themselves (Levey, 2021). According to UDL, the best way to overcome these obstacles is to use personalized learning strategies and promote inclusion. Universal design emphasizes creating environments accessible to all people, regardless of ability. UDL is essential in higher education because 60% of students with disabilities do not disclose their disability to professors or institutions. Furthermore, many students may not be diagnosed with a disability but still require an accessible learning environment (Burgstahler, 2008).

Critical Disability Theory

CDT addresses the issue of access for students with disabilities through a theoretical framework. It allows us to grasp the images and descriptions of disability, prejudice against students with disabilities (ableism), and how narrative relates to the disability with their learning experiences in higher education. CDT evolved from critical race theory (CRT), which proposed that the United States had become a color-blind society where one's racial identity no longer affected one's social or economic situation (Crenshaw et al., 1995). Also, CRT is mainly responsible for the acknowledgment of intersectionality. Finally, the theory of overlapping or intersecting social identities,

particularly minority identities, relates to systems and structures of oppression, domination, or discrimination (Annamma et al., 2013). This conceptualization of critical disability theory is built on the work of disability scholars and borrowed from the work of CRT.

CDT focuses on inclusive education—it rejects the individual or type of disability. Instead, CDT promotes the notion that “disabled” identities are socially constructed and negotiated (Iannacci & Graham, 2010, p. 53). In addition, CDT refers to lived experiences and attempts to transform the circumstances under which oppressed subjects live through critical, intersectional analysis (Minich, 2016).

Significance of the Study

This study is noteworthy because it explored the experiences and journey of students with self-disclosed disabilities within an urban higher education environment. In an urban postsecondary environment, it was essential to ensure that students, most of whom are young adults, including students with self-disclosed disabilities, feel welcome, are involved at their school, and contribute to the campus community (Velez & Jessup-Anger, 2022). Compared to their suburban classmates, urban postsecondary students are more likely to come from low-income families, have attended underperforming high schools in low-income neighborhoods, and be the first in their families to attend college (Sotomayor et al., 2022).

Previous research explored the importance of faculty and administrators’ perception of students with disabilities and awareness of these students’ essential needs, as well as why staff should be knowledgeable about the available services and reasonable accommodations (Sachs & Schreuer, 2011). This study is vital due to limited research

exploring the personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment. There is a fundamental need for this research since higher education stakeholders can benefit the institution by making changes to improve the accessibility for students with self-disclosed disabilities. Furthermore, it brings to more administrators, faculty, and staff awareness of the needs of students with disabilities. With further awareness, college personnel can secure supplementary aid for those students in need. Thus, through studies such as this, public and private colleges and universities can be better informed of the needs of students with disabilities to meet the bylaws of sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act that pertain to them and ensure academic success for students with disabilities in higher education. The research study allowed the researcher to consider, for example, other studies that center on student experience and focus on services for students with self-disclosed disabilities. Moreover, studies do more to differentiate the services needed and received by students who choose to identify or do not identify as having a disability and consider differences in experiences, for instance, with different types of disability, temporary disability, and permanent disability.

This study explored the gaps in the literature on the experiences of students with self-disclosed disabilities seeking out and obtaining accommodations for their academic coursework. Previous research has uncovered that postsecondary students with disabilities often lack understanding of their disability, rights, and how to request good services and accommodations. The lack of faculty and staff awareness and knowledge of students with self-disclosed disabilities in postsecondary contexts can be an obstacle to student success. The researcher also explored the experiences and effectiveness of

services and accommodations provided by the DRO within an urban postsecondary institution.

Research Questions

This qualitative study investigated the personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment. The following three questions guided this narrative research:

1. What is the personal journey of students with disabilities self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment?
2. What are the lived experiences of students with disabilities seeking out and utilizing accommodations within an urban postsecondary institution?
3. How do students with self-disclosed disabilities perceive faculty members' use of UDI and UDL within an urban postsecondary institution?

When discussing disability, an author can use either person-first (“individual with a disability”) or identity-first (“disabled individual”) language. The person-first language emphasizes the person first, then the disabilities (Flink, 2021). Person-first language focuses on the individual rather than the topic, as in characterizing a person with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD; James et al., 2020). For this dissertation, the researcher intentionally uses person-first language when discussing individuals with disabilities.

Definition of Terms

Accommodations:

Are provided to students who need to complete the same tasks as their peers who do not have disabilities but with variations in time, format, environment, and

presentation. Also, accommodations give students equal learning access and opportunity (Schreuer & Sachs, 2014).

Students With Disabilities:

Are described as students with a self-disclosed single disability or a combination of disabilities (Singh, 2019). Students with disabilities have some form of physical or mental impairment that significantly affects one or more key life activities, such as learning or working. Typically, students with disabilities have poor academic performance, and many students with impairments have trouble recalling knowledge delivered physically or audibly in a classroom setting (Heward et al., 2017).

Urban Postsecondary:

Is a socially engaged higher learning institution. It serves as a resource for educating citizens and improving the city's health and the region in which it is located.

Conclusion

The proposal highlights that IHEs must ensure that students with self-disclosed disabilities are fully equipped with the proper facilities and educational materials to succeed academically. Therefore, postsecondary institutions must be prepared to provide students with self-disclosed disabilities with the tools they need for success from the inception of their higher learning experiences. The literature review in Chapter 2 explores students' experiences with self-disclosed disabilities in postsecondary institutions and themes that characterize those experiences.

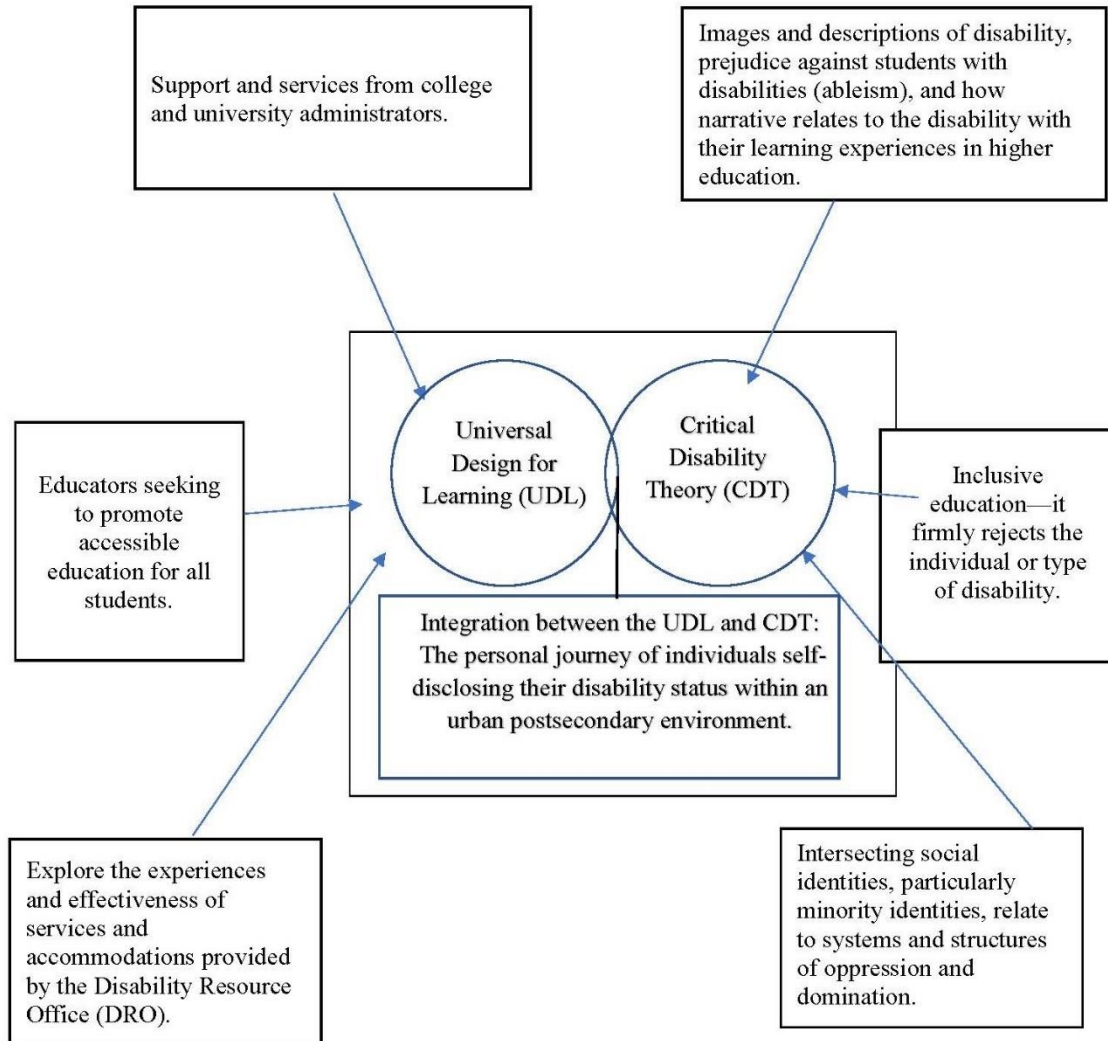
CHAPTER 2

Conceptual Framework

To facilitate this study of the personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment, this chapter's guiding conceptual framework helps to enlighten an understanding of CDT integrated with UDL research (Baglieri, 2020). CDT sits at the crossroads of liberationist programs and offers a liberating intellectual framework and practical techniques for addressing educational inequities students with disabilities experience (Strimple, 2013). UDL has supported inclusion by ensuring that instructional environments include pathways for participation, progress, and success for students with varied abilities and needs, including students with disabilities (Rao et al., 2017). See Figure 1.

Figure 1

Integration of Universal Design for Learning and Critical Disability Theory



Universal Design

Universal design (UD) came from product design. Marc Harrison, a professor of industrial engineering and a person with a physical impairment, originally underlined the importance of designing products for persons of various abilities rather than the “average” person. In the 1970s, architect and product designer Ronald Mace coined the term *universal design* to describe “the design of things and settings to be accessible by all

people, to the maximum extent possible, without the need for adaption or specialist design” (Burgstahler & Cory, 2010).

Universal Design for Learning

UDL is a philosophy that aims to incorporate diversity into teaching and learning in ways that are responsive to the diversity of students. UDL also creates flexible curricula to adapt to learner differences, including instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments (Rose et al., 2005). Rose et al. (2005) stated that UDL is based on “barriers to learning occur in the interaction with the curriculum—they are not inherent solely in the learner’s capacity.” As a result, when education fails, it is the responsibility of the curriculum, not the learner, to adapt. Likewise, having more flexible learning environments will benefit all students, including those who do not have special needs, when a curriculum is universally designed to enable all types of learners to access and progress. UDL also identifies and removes curriculum barriers while creating scaffolds, supports, and alternatives to meet the needs of diverse students (Hashey et al., 2020).

UDL is an instructional design concept that tackles student variability by supporting the removal of curriculum barriers (Center for Applied Special Technology, 2011). Educators can address the heterogeneity in learners’ abilities to acquire and absorb information, engage with subjects and instruction, and convey what they know through planning. The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 and the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 define UDL as a scientifically viable framework (Lowrey et al., 2017).

Critical Disability Theory

CDT emerged to move disability studies away from a subject-focused emphasis on disability and toward an analytic and activist focus on the normative assumptions that pervade specific conditions of power and oppression (Grenier, 2021). Minich (2016) defines CDT as a methodology that entails “examining not only physical or mental disabilities, but the social norms that define specific attributes as impairments, as well as the social conditions that concentrate stigmatized attributes in specific populations.” CDT’s goal is social change activism, or “producing knowledge in support of justice for or with people with stigmatized bodies and minds” (Grenier, 2021).

Critical Disability Theory and Universal Design for Learning

Even though CDT emerged as a critical theory field in the late 1980s, the field still needs to receive significant recognition and support from critical theories, university curricula, and the academy. From the standpoint of liberation theology, CDT destabilizes the status quo by questioning race and ethnicity as the current foundations of minoritized identities (Strimple, 2013). In addition, it provides a focal point to examine assumptions regarding teaching methods in the classroom. UDL sits at the crossroads of liberationist programs and CDT; moreover, it offers a liberating intellectual framework and practical techniques for addressing educational inequities students with disabilities experience (Strimple, 2013).

In this study, CDT was used to investigate the images and descriptions of disability, prejudice against students with self-disclosed disabilities (ableism), and how narrative relates to the disability with respect to their learning experiences in higher education. Inclusive education firmly rejects students or those with a disability who are

self-disclosed in urban postsecondary institutions. Finally, intersecting social identities, particularly minority identities, relate to systems and structures of oppression and domination within the urban postsecondary institution.

In contrast, the framework of UDL, as used in this study, supported understanding whether the needs of students with self-disclosed disabilities are being met in the urban postsecondary environment. Teaching methods and strategies must be conducive to the learning of students with self-disclosed disabilities in an urban postsecondary institution and aligned with UDL. UDL can create a more inclusive environment for students with self-disclosed disabilities (physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities). Learning about students with self-disclosed disabilities in an urban postsecondary institution; their lives; and experiences in their accommodation process, learning experience, and teaching methods in the classrooms verified to what degree UDL is utilized in their education.

Educators must promote accessible education for all students, regardless of their abilities in learning. Students with self-disclosed disabilities within an urban postsecondary institution require more support and services from college and university administrators. Investigating the experiences and effectiveness of the DRO services and accommodations assessed what is necessary to better equip higher education administrators with best practices for improving students' academic performance.

Review of Related Research

As noted in Chapter 1, the number of students with disabilities has increased over several decades throughout the United States (Fovet, 2020). Nonetheless, students with

disabilities face challenges in obtaining appropriate services and accommodations in their postsecondary institutions (Gin et al., 2020; Squires & Counterline, 2018).

This qualitative narrative study aimed to determine the personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment. This chapter reviewed current research findings on students with self-disclosed disabilities in postsecondary institutions. Themes were also identified and presented, such as the rights of students with disabilities, stigma against students with disabilities in higher education, students with disabilities' experience with the accommodations process, students with disabilities' disclosure with DRO, barriers students with disabilities face in higher education, and experiences of students with self-disclosed disabilities in higher education.

This selection criteria included articles that were both qualitative and quantitative in design. The inclusion criteria were studies published within the past 10 years; articles lacking detailed accounts of students with disability experiences were excluded. The databases used were mainly Google Scholar, ERIC, JSTOR, and EBSCOhost. The search terms or keywords were precisely connected with self-disclosed disabilities, accommodations, and urban postsecondary environment. The research articles were documented using a review matrix, including columns for author(s), title, journal, year published, purpose, subject characteristics, sample design, year data collected, intervention, and conclusions.

The Importance of Urban Postsecondary Environment

Creating an inclusive campus where students (the majority of whom are emerging adults) feel welcomed, engaged, and able to contribute to the community is crucial for an

urban postsecondary environment (Velez & Jessup-Anger, 2022). As compared with their suburban peers, urban students are more likely to reside in low-income homes, attend underperforming high schools in low-income neighborhoods, and be the first generation to attend college. Consequently, many urban students lack the financial and household resources to pursue postsecondary education (Sotomayor et al., 2022).

Since the 1960s, postsecondary education has been viewed as a great equalizer that propels young people into the middle class and increases prospects for political engagement, economic success, and engagement with one's community (Hrabowski, 2019; Velez & Jessup-Anger, 2022). Indeed, there have been numerous triumphs in expanding access to postsecondary education, such as the increase from 9.7% in 1960 to 33.7% in 2017 in the percentage of Americans over age 25 with a bachelor's degree (McFarland et al., 2018; Velez & Jessup-Anger, 2022). Despite the rise in the number of bachelor's degree recipients overall, inequalities between demographic groupings persist (Velez & Jessup-Anger, 2022).

The Rights of Students With Disabilities

Both houses of Congress unanimously approved the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA), and President George W. Bush signed it on September 25, 2008. In addition to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the ADAAA was enacted by Congress to overturn four Supreme Court judgments that had narrowly limited the scope of people protected by the ADA and to give "a national mandate for the elimination of discrimination" (Befort, 2013). The ADAAA, which took effect on January 1, 2009, expressly rejects the logic of four previous Supreme Court rulings that restricted the scope of the ADA's disability term (Befort, 2013). One of the primary goals of Congress

in creating the ADA was to emphasize the ADA's stance on discrimination rather than on difficulties (Befort, 2013). The ADA and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Sections 504 and 508) protect the rights of students with disabilities. These laws ban disability discrimination and provide students with disabilities opportunities, access, and accommodations equal to those of students without disabilities (Squires, 2015). The ADA and Sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protect postsecondary students with disabilities from disability discrimination (Rothstein, 2004). This regulation includes reasonable accommodations, which requires all public and private postsecondary institutions that receive federal funding to provide equitable learning opportunities to all students (Slaughter et al., 2020). Students with disabilities are not automatically granted accommodations when they enter college, even if they received services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or Section 504 and 508/ADA in primary and secondary school. Students must initiate this process once they reach the postsecondary level, which means they must submit documentation of their disability to receive accommodations in college (Slaughter et al., 2020). Once a student's disability has been documented and self-disclosed, the postsecondary institution must make reasonable accommodations (Slaughter et al., 2020).

Stigma Against Students With Disabilities in Higher Education

Goffman (1963) and Akin and Huang (2019) indicated that labeling students with disabilities might negatively affect an individual's identity. As Goffman emphasized in his work, distinguishing personal attributes that distinguish an individual from others might be viewed negatively. That is to say, owning a distinguishing characteristic may result in the experience of stigma—when an individual's unpleasant characteristics are

ascribed to them as a distinguishing characteristic. Goffman remarked that disability might be a source of difference and stigma. Also, the stigma experienced by an individual with a disability could be impacted by their belief that others are aware of their condition—for instance, if the condition is visible or by the individual’s belief that others perceive their condition.

According to Trammell (2009) and Whitaker (2018), stigma related to disability in the context of higher education can be defined as the unintended academic, social, and psychological effects of disclosing a disability. Universities can produce stigma through academic and social contexts. Students are expected to learn, and those perceived as less academically successful or needing accommodations are stigmatized. In higher education environments that stigmatize disability, students with disabilities may perceive themselves as incapable of academic success and have skill sets inferior to those without disabilities (Markoulakis & Kirsh, 2013; May & Stone, 2010; Whitaker, 2018). Some students may alter their conduct or activities in the classroom to make the connection to their impairment less obvious (Stage & Milne, 1996; Whitaker, 2018). Trammell (2009) assessed the impact of disability stigma on academic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and global awareness among 121 college students from three campuses. According to the findings, students were stigmatized in all areas, with the most stigmatized being their peer status. Of the groups of campus stakeholders studied, students were shown to be less interested in global disability concerns.

Further legislation has improved the inclusion of students with disabilities in postsecondary settings. Improved accessibility on campus, for example, has increased awareness of disability services through improved terminology. This includes enacting

the Higher Education Opportunity Act (Aquino, 2021). Despite advancements in supporting students with disabilities in the postsecondary environment, stigma is frequently associated with postsecondary student disability. Research has shown that higher education community members frequently do not have adequate information to comprehend student disability and/or accommodation plans fully (Aquino, 2021; Brockelman et al., 2006; Hergenrather & Rhodes, 2007).

Flink and Leonard (2018) studied students' experiences with disabilities in an urban, two-year community college. The findings revealed that students with disabilities are highly aware of the stigmatization of having a disability. They fear being discriminated against or treated differently, leading them to avoid disclosing any information about their disability, consequently contributing to their needs being underserved. Students are also aware of the specific language others use when referring to individuals with specific disabilities. The findings are particularly relevant given that students with disabilities are an at-risk, marginalized population in college. Exploring the perspectives of students with disabilities will help better understand their experiences and how experiences shape their academic success and perseverance. As Newman et al. (2020) explained,

Most research on college students with disabilities is based on students who have self-disclosed their disability. Only 35% of students who received special education services in high school do not disclose their disability when attending college for various reasons, for example, concerns about stigma, a lack of knowledge of legal rights, and available services. (e.g., Denhart, 2008; Walker & Test, 2011; Newman & Madaus,

2015). Disability office services and university administrators are often unaware of most students with undisclosed disabilities who are enrolled in using student support services; this lack of knowledge creates a dilemma.

Unfortunately, those individuals who self-disclose their disabilities do not often receive adequate services specific to their disabilities.

Students With Disabilities' Experiences With the Accommodations Process

Students with disabilities are not taking advantage of the available services despite legislative mandates requiring IHEs to accommodate students with disabilities and provide information about disability accommodations. Research has shown that students with disabilities are not maximizing services in two ways. First, they are not seeking out these services, and second, they are seeking out these services too late.

According to disability service providers, 9% of full-time college students report having a disability, and between 1% and 3% of all students request disability-related services (Barnard-Brak et al., 2010; Hartman, 1993). Other students may be apprehensive about requesting accommodations or need help determining where to begin. As a result, they may be reluctant to discuss their academic needs (Barnard-Brak et al., 2010; Lynch & Gussel, 1996).

In contrast, Los Santos et al. (2019) studied how the academic success of students with disabilities was affected by students' registration with the DRO for the use of accommodations institutional and social support systems. Findings included a lack of student registration with the DRO on their campuses. The participants officially enrolled with the DRO were 54.9%, with 48.4% having earlier registered. Also, 63.1% of the

participants did not receive academic accommodations, while only 18% answered they had used them since their first semester, and 38.5% said accommodations influenced their academic progress.

Lyman et al. (2016) studied the experiences of students with disabilities who had faced obstacles to using accommodations. The findings revealed six main themes concerning the barriers students with disabilities face when attempting to access and use accommodations. Four identified themes contained subthemes and were considered complex, while the other two were more straightforward and contained subthemes. The four complex themes were the desire for self-sufficiency, the desire to avoid negative social reactions, insufficient knowledge, and the quality and usefulness of DSS and accommodations. The two more specific themes were negative experiences with professors and fear of future ramifications.

Another study on students with disabilities was performed by Barnard-Brak et al. (2010). In this study, the students explained that they had disclosed private and confidential information about their disabilities to faculty and staff strategically to receive classroom accommodations while serving their own psychosocial needs. The researchers discovered that academically successful students with disabilities share three behavioral strategies in requesting accommodations for the postsecondary classroom after conducting and analyzing participant interviews: (a) scripting the disclosure of their disability and request for accommodations; (b) negotiating accommodations rather than reporting ADA non-compliance; and (c) downplaying the disability. Students with disabilities' disclosure as part of the classroom accommodations process is more than a one-time event; it is a method students use to meet and manage their academic demands.

The researchers concluded that disclosure appears to be primarily a question of self-acceptance and interpersonal skills of academically accomplished students with disabilities, as seen by the themes of scripting; making peace, not war; and downplaying their disability status techniques disclosed in the study.

Students With Disabilities' Disclosure With Disability Resource Office

Correa-Torres et al. (2018) studied students with visual impairment attending IHEs and receiving services from their DRO. The findings revealed that the participants shared their experiences only with the DRO in IHEs. The data analysis revealed themes within the following areas: (a) self-advocacy and problem-solving, (b) orientation and mobility, (c) technology, and (d) personal management skills. The themes in this study echo what other studies have found, including students not seeking services, negative experiences, and DSS staff's need for knowledge on how to provide accommodations (Barnard-Brak et al., 2010; Hong, 2015). Besides the themes mentioned above, a troubling pattern of responses was observed: participants in this study experienced more challenges than satisfaction when attempting to receive services from DSS. The results revealed that the participants in this study were not satisfied with their disability support services at their IHEs.

Barriers Students With Disabilities Face in Higher Education

Marshak et al. (2010) studied the ongoing barriers (institutional and personal) that may prevent college students with disabilities from seeking or making regular use of disability services and accommodations available on campus. The findings revealed that some students take advantage of potentially reasonable accommodations or services because they are dissatisfied with the speed at which they are provided or overwhelmed

by the procedures involved in obtaining them. This would emphasize the importance of ODS seeking honest feedback from the students they regularly serve to keep a finger on the pulse of their opinions of service quality and utility.

A few years later, Hong (2015) studied the barriers students with disabilities experience in higher education. The findings revealed that students with disabilities felt judged, humiliated, or embarrassed by instructors, either privately or in front of the class. Lower expectations and previous experiences emerged as subthemes under this category. In addition, they did not want to be perceived as “less capable of getting it through the semester,” and students avoided having to “confront” their instructor(s) concerning academic accommodations.

Prior research on students with disabilities has primarily focused on identifying social, psychological, or physical impediments in everyday life (Smith-Chandler & Swart 2014) rather than minimizing them. A team of researchers used a national online poll to investigate the difficulties students with disabilities face in science and engineering laboratories. Their most significant challenges included limited laboratory access, inadequate accommodations, and instructor support (Jeannis et al., 2020). A separate study examined the disparities in physical access to buildings and physical ability to work in the area once inside. The findings revealed that even for individuals who had no trouble entering the building, participation was hampered by the design of the physical setting, posing both access and environmental design barriers to participation (Charles & Chinaza, 2018). Another study examined physical barriers to involvement for students with vision and hearing impairments. The study discovered limited conditions with

insufficient adaptable equipment, a lack of teacher assistance, and a lack of instructors who knew how to help them (Clarke et al., 2019).

Experiences of Students With Self-Disclosed Disabilities in Higher Education

Magnus and Tossebro (2014) studied how students with self-disclosed disabilities negotiate accessibility issues at IHEs in Norway. The study aimed to characterize and comprehend students' daily lives with self-disclosed disabilities as personal preferences and barriers molded these experiences. The findings revealed that self-disclosing students had a few things in common regarding some form of disability and environmental challenges. The disability may necessitate substantial assistance in study and other daily tasks, or it may simply necessitate extra time during tests. According to the findings of this study, obtaining individual accommodations frequently took the form of discussions, both with oneself and the social environment. Parts of the procedure were based on whether the disability was visible to others. The studies presented here show several facets of the bargaining process. It begins with students' considerations of whether to disclose their disability. Individual accommodation requires disclosure but may also entail several unclear societal procedures. The final portion discusses the opposition some students face when requesting reasonable accommodations. Overall, these bargaining processes include a risk some students are unwilling to incur.

Several years later, Aquino and Bittinger (2019) studied students with self-disclosed disabilities within the higher education environment and the changes in their self-disclosed disabilities circumstances during their postsecondary experiences. The students with self-disclosed disabilities who participated in this study had the opportunity to receive accommodations to help them succeed in their postsecondary educational

endeavors. According to the authors, students with self-disclosed disabilities may fail to take advantage of available support services if they have preconceived notions about how accommodations should be used in a postsecondary institution setting or have not engaged in transition planning before enrolling in a university program. This study indicated that over 10% of students self-disclosed as having a disability during the base year of data collection. The percentage increased marginally to 11% at the initial follow-up two years later. This may indicate consistency in self-disclosure of disabilities; nevertheless, the students in this group who self-disclosed as having at least one type of disability were inconsistent. Although 1,670 students self-disclosed a disability during the base year, 59% did not declare their disability during the first follow-up year. Only 38% of the 1,820 students who self-disclosed a disability during the first follow-up year also self-disclosed during the base year.

In the same year, Mngomezulu (2019) sought to understand disability disclosure considerations among college or university students with an invisible disability. The students were chosen for the study from a group of 30 others who self-disclosed as “at-risk” for school failure at the end of their first academic year. They also admitted to not disclosing their disability to the university disability services while transitioning from high school to the university. The findings revealed three major themes of delayed disability disclosure. The first theme was unmet academic and physical accommodation expectations: Students disclose their disabilities after experiencing unmet academic and physical accommodation expectations. The second theme was concealment: Students tended not to disclose their disabilities to the lecturers or participate in the support programs that were available to them. Instead, they appeared anxious and preoccupied

with the stigma that their status might bring. The final theme was discovery and belated disclosure: Students appear unaware of the various institutional support structures to help students, particularly those with disabilities.

The Use of Universal Design for Instruction and Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education Classrooms

Black et al. (2014) studied to determine if faculty were incorporating UDI and UDL into their instruction and their attitudes toward students with disabilities, as these could be barriers to learning. This quantitative study surveyed the practices and attitudes of faculty members from October 2011 through March 2012. The setting of this study was an urban four-year IHE in southern California. The community was culturally diverse, and half of the faculty population was culturally diverse. The study's findings indicated that certain faculty members were integrating universal design for instruction (UDI)/UDL principles into their teaching practices. However, there was a notable variation in the specific approaches employed by these faculty members. Additionally, it was observed that faculty attitudes continued to pose obstacles to establishing an inclusive educational environment that ensures equal opportunities for students with disabilities. There is a pressing need for increased education and training in the realm of working with students who have disabilities, as well as in the adaptation of teaching methods to cater to their specific needs through the utilization of UDI and UDL.

Conclusion

This chapter covered the theoretical framework and reported literature that reviewed evidence regarding the educational experiences of students with disabilities in IHEs. In the following chapter, the discussion of the methodology approach shows the

process of ascertaining and studying the personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment.

CHAPTER 3

In this study, a narrative research design was employed to explore the personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status and seeking out and utilizing accommodations within an urban postsecondary environment. Additionally, this narrative study explored the lived experiences of students with disabilities within the classroom environment and how faculty may or may not use the UDL approach to promote an inclusive learning environment. Over the past several years, narrative research methodology has grown in popularity as a method of inquiry. The premise of narrative inquiry is that humans are essentially raconteurs who experience the world and interact with others through storied lives. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explained in their seminal work on narrative inquiry: “Narrative studies have temporal dimensions and address temporal matters; they focus on the personal and the social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry, and they occur in specific places or sequences of places” (p. 50). Traditions or portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997; Holley & Colyar, 2009), ethnodrama (Saldaña, 2005; Holley & Colyar, 2009), and the life story all use narrative as a research method (Barone, 2007; Holley & Colyar, 2009).

Additionally, narrative research takes many forms, utilizes a wide range of analytic techniques, and is rooted in various social and humanities disciplines (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004). The phenomenon being studied could be “narrative,” such as the procedures for analyzing stories told (Chase, 2005; Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). It begins as a method with individual experiences as expressed in lived and told stories. Clandinin (2013) argued for the importance of paying attention to the context in which the

narrative is embedded, advising that the focus of the narrative inquiry is not only valorizing individuals' experiences; it is also an investigation into the social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences were, and continue to be, constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted. (p. 18)

Czarniawska (2004) defines "narrative" as a type of qualitative design in which a "narrative is understood as a spoken or text giving an account of an event/action or series of events/actions, chronologically connected" (p. 17). The research procedures include focusing on one or two individuals, gathering data by collecting their stories, reporting individual experiences, and chronologically ordering the meaning of those experiences (or using life course stages). Narrative research has roots in literature, history, anthropology, sociology, sociolinguistics, and education and has spread to other fields of study (Chase, 2005). Narrative inquiry is distinguished by its definitions and a well-established perspective as both a methodology and a phenomenon (Clandinin, 2007). With numerous recent books on narrative research, it remains a popular "field in the making" (Chase, 2005, p. 651).

An understanding of narrative emphasizes the researcher's role as a storyteller. The practice of narrative inquiry considers both the individual act of storytelling and how researchers select, shape, and present stories to stimulate engagement with a larger audience (Holley & Colyar, 2009). This plays a critical role in academic culture. The academic community exists due to members' "mutual exchange of stories" (Nash, 2004, p. 2). This emphasis does not absolve the researcher of the responsibilities of being a community member; the stylistic components that provide conventional structure to

academic discourse remain essential when presenting data to a peer audience (Holley & Colyar, 2009).

The approach of asking pointed questions can provide insight into the narrator's culture, historical experiences, identity, and way of life (Lieblich et al., 1998). The narrative approach entails research directed at narratives of human experience or research that yields data in narrative form. The stories become the raw data in narrative inquiry, a type of qualitative research (Bleakley, 2005). Interviews soliciting stories, oral histories, or written autobiographies and biographies are examples of inquiries that yield narrative data (Butina, 2015).

As narrative research, this study gathered stories from students with self-disclosed disabilities (fieldnotes were taken during the process) and learned about individuals' lived and told experiences. The researcher collected the stories through various forms of data, such as observations and field notes, based on the participants' narrative stories. The narrative stories were analyzed using varied strategies. The analysis was constructed through participants' responses (thematically) to the nature of the telling of the story (structural), as the story was directed toward dialogic/performance (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The objective of this narrative research was to bring awareness to services to which all students with self-disclosed disabilities are entitled. This initiative should bridge gaps in understanding students' needs and handling sensitive matters concerning disability services. Equal opportunities must be extended to students with disabilities, according to the U.S. Department of Education (2018–2019). Therefore, colleges and universities must adhere to this mandate. The consequences of non-compliance result

from what is written in Section 504/Title II Right-Title II of the ADA, which prohibits disability discrimination by state-funded schools.

Research Questions

Using a narrative research design, the topic was explored through the personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment. These three questions guided the study:

1. What is the personal journey of students with disabilities self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment?
2. What are the lived experiences of students with disabilities seeking out and utilizing accommodations within an urban postsecondary institution?
3. How do students with self-disclosed disabilities perceive faculty members' use of UDI and UDL within an urban postsecondary institution?

Setting

In this study, the setting was an urban postsecondary institution in the New York City area. According to the University Statistic Report (2021–2022), the urban postsecondary institution has a total enrollment of 5,237 (all undergraduate students) for 2020–2021. There are 3,856 full-time and 1,381 part-time students by attending status, with a gender distribution of 1,483 male and 3,754 female students. The urban postsecondary institution offers a distance learning opportunity (online degree program), and 5,012 students have enrolled exclusively in the online program. Out of the 5,237 students enrolled at the urban postsecondary institution, approximately 150 students self-disclosed their disabilities.

The DRO is staffed by individuals in the following positions. The director of DRO oversees the office policies and procedures and admits students into the program. The senior academic advisor guides students with course selection and requirements pending the degree's primary curriculum. The accommodations specialist ensures that appropriate services and accommodations are provided, depending on the individual needs. This department manages approximately 150 students who self-disclosed their disabilities within an urban higher education environment.

Participants

The researcher recruited 10 participants by emailing the consent form to those willing to participate in the study, out of 12 randomly selected from the list of approximately 150 students enrolled in the program (See Table 1). Creswell and Poth (2018) found many examples with one or two individuals in narrative research unless a larger pool of participants develops a collective story. The study included 10 participants who have self-disclosed their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment to lead to greater understanding of their individual stories and experiences and to gather a shared narrative. Also, the researcher worked in the urban postsecondary institution in the DRO, which allowed the researcher to know the research site programs and resources for students with self-disclosed disabilities. Table 1 includes demographic information about each of the participants.

Table 1*Description of the Study Participants*

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Disability	Major
John	25	Male	Speech Impediment	Mass Communications
Kelly	36	Female	ADHD and Dyslexia	Nursing
Jane	22	Female	Scoliosis	Psychology
Jessica	29	Female	Cerebral Palsy	Education
Lee	25	Female	Dyslexia	Nursing
Jonathan	51	Male	Dyslexia	Public Administration
Aaron	28	Male	Sickle Cell Anemia	Computer Science
Bobbie	31	Female	ADHD and Bipolar Disorder	Nursing
Jordan	23	Male	Autism	Fine Arts
Josh	21	Male	Learning Disabilities	Public Administration

John is 25 years old and majoring in liberal arts with a concentration in mass communications. He has a speech impediment, often known as a speech disorder, which is a type of speech difficulty. John’s future ambition is to become a broadcaster. His accommodations are extra time and assistive technology.

Kelly is 36 years old. She has ADHD, which is characterized by a pattern of persistent inattention and hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with functioning or development, as well as with dyslexia, a reading disability characterized by detecting speech and learning how it relates to letters and words (decoding). Her major is nursing, and she plans to complete her bachelor’s degree. Kelly’s accommodations are extended time for exams and assistive technology.

Jane is 22 years old and has scoliosis, a curvature of the vertebrae. Her major is psychology; after graduating, she plans to attend a culinary school. Her goal is to open

her own bakery shop. Jane's accommodations are extended time for exams and assignments.

Jessica is 28 years old. She has cerebral palsy (CP), which is a group of conditions that make it hard to move and keep her balance and posture. She would like to pursue a degree in teacher education and later become a special education teacher. Her accommodations are extended time for exams and assistive technology.

Lee is 25 years old. She has dyslexia, and currently, her major is biology. Lee plans to become a registered nurse. Lee's accommodations are extended time for exams and assistive technology.

Jonathan is 51 years old and has dyslexia. His major is public administration with a concentration in community development. Jonathan sees himself working in a local, state, or federal government agency because he has a passion for helping citizens fight for human rights and achieve their goals in life. Jonathan's accommodations are extended time for exams and assignments.

Aaron is 25 years old. He has sickle cell anemia, in which is a mutated form of hemoglobin changes the shape of the red blood cells when oxygen levels are low. His major is computer science, and he plans to start working after graduation. Aaron's accommodations are extended time for exams and assignments.

Bobbie is 31 years old. She has ADHD and bipolar disorder. Bipolar disorder, formerly known as manic depression, is a mental health condition characterized by extreme mood fluctuations, including mania, hypomania, and depression. Her major is liberal arts. Later, she will switch to nursing. Bobbie's future goal is to become a

psychiatric nurse practitioner. Her accommodations are extended time for exams and assignments.

Jordan is 31 years old. He has autism, also known as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), which encompasses a wide variety of conditions and is characterized by difficulties with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech, and nonverbal communication. His major is fine arts. Jordan is working on finishing his BA and plans to later pursue his master's degree in performing arts and work in a high school. His accommodations are extended time for exams and assignments.

Last, Josh is 21 years old. He has learning disabilities that impact his ability to understand or utilize spoken or written language, calculate mathematical quantities, coordinate actions, and focus attention. His accommodations are extended time for exams and assignments, and the use of assistive technology.

The criterion sampling approach was used in this study, which best fits the study on the personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study involved individuals who self-disclosed their disabilities and lived to experience the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In the criterion sampling approach, the researcher identifies the participants and investigates the cases that meet the criteria. Participants are chosen because they have knowledge and experience with the phenomenon of interest and can thus provide pertinent information. Typically, there is a large group of samples from which researchers draw a model to provide the information. As a result, the information is comprehensive and generalizable to a larger group (Palinkas et al., 2015). Even though the researcher used a narrative methodology with criterion sampling for the research

project, it might cause biased responses from students with self-disclosed disabilities due to the researcher's role in the DRO at the institution.

Data Collection Procedures

For this qualitative research study, the primary types of data collection were in-depth interviews, document analysis, and journaling of 10 participants with self-disclosed disabilities currently enrolled in an urban postsecondary institution. As an educator and administrator in DRO, the researcher had access to the 10 students with self-disclosed disabilities from the Information Technology Office (ITO) database list and/or the Director of the DRO.

The researcher interviewed 10 participants using interview protocols and journal prompts to collect data in this study. These interviews were conducted on the Webex platform due to the COVID-19 pandemic since in-person interviews were not an option. The interviews were audio recorded and later converted into written transcripts using the iPhone application Otter.ai. The researcher considered the multiple activities often involved in collecting data that extend beyond the common reference point of conducting interviews or making observations. (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 148). Also, the researcher emailed the journaling prompts to each of the 10 human subjects participating in the study and collected the data electronically. Since the data were entered on a computer, the researcher secured data with McAfee, Norton, and Webroot Security malware virus protection software. All hard copies are kept securely, both the written manuscripts and flash drives for Otter.ai, and recorded data containing participants' most sensitive and confidential information, which was transferred to a flash drive and deleted from the

recording device. The researcher kept all data in connection with the study confidential. Only the research project chair was privy to such data.

Interviews

An interview protocol is a social interaction based on a conversation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), an interview is a situation in which “knowledge is constructed through the interaction of the interviewer and the interviewee” (p. 4). The qualitative research interview is “an attempt to comprehend the work from the subjects’ perspective, unravel the meaning of their experience, and uncover their lived world” (p. 3). According to the study’s purpose and research questions, who is interviewed and what questions are asked vary according to the study’s purpose and research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pp. 143–144).

The 10 interviews and two journaling prompt questions were conducted upon IRB’s approval from the institutions. Hence, one-on-one interviews were scheduled and conducted virtually via Webex (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher composed 11 research questions for the interview protocol and two open-ended research questions journaling prompts related to the dissertation topic: The personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment (See Appendices II & III). The researcher recorded the participants’ responses and noted their interaction behavior during the interviews. The researcher was mindful to consider the multiple activities usually involved in collecting data beyond the common reference point of conducting interviews or making observations (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 148).

The 10 interviews were conducted on scheduled dates, and the researcher recorded the 10 participants’ responses and noted their interactions during this process.

Moreover, the researcher protected participants' privacy and guaranteed confidentiality, as their real names did not appear in this study's analysis, writing, presentation, or guide. Also, to protect participants' privacy, they were required to provide an alias name for the evaluation and for writing up their interview responses.

Document Analysis

Document analysis is a systematic process for assessing or evaluating printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) data. Like other qualitative research methodologies, document analysis necessitates examining and interpreting material to extract meaning, comprehend it, and develop empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2009). According to Atkinson and Coffey (2004), documents are social facts, generated, disseminated, utilized, and socially ordered. Documents used for systematic evaluation as part of a study come in various shapes and sizes. Attendance registers, student files, background papers, application forms and summaries, institutional reports, and various public records can all be documents used for a study (Bowen, 2009). Indeed, the source of data requires the researcher to rely on data descriptions and interpretation rather than raw data as a basis for analysis. Finding, selecting, assessing (making sense of), and synthesizing data contained in documents is part of the analytic procedure. Document analysis produces data—excerpts, quotations, and/or entire passages—arranged into primary topics, categories, and case examples (Bowen, 2009).

Journaling

New data types have developed in recent years, such as journaling in narrative story writing utilizing e-mail or text-based messages and observing through examining videos and photographs. The introduction of processes for qualitative research using

visual, acoustic, and digital methodologies has been particularly notable (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 160). In addition, the journaling data-gathering approach was utilized as the inclusion criterion in a narrative study; studies were defined as qualitative if the researcher used one of the following data collection or creation techniques: (a) journaling or writing in logbooks to document the participants' responses; (b) open-ended questions, which are written responses to the study's research questions; (c) structured, semi-structured, or unstructured interviews; (d) focus groups; and (e) nonparticipant or participant observations (Culver et al., 2012).

The researcher developed a flexible journaling data collection approach based on the advantages of the diary/interview approach. The journal/dialogue method described differs from the diary/interview method in three ways: The journal and the interviews are ongoing. The emphasis is on the participant and researcher developing an ongoing dialogue about everyday experiences. The journal and the interviews are organized logically, encouraging readers to pay close attention to the everyday experiences that are the focus of the study. Journaling allows participants to capture experiences as they happen, which may be missed in a traditional interview (Breheny et al., 2020).

Retroactive interviews produce minor contextual detail, more idealized biographical narratives, and general opinions (Breheny et al., 2020). Because journals can record events in real-time, they tend to produce snapshots of meaning-making at the time (Breheny et al., 2020). For instance, following participants' feelings and behaviors over time will likely provide a more thoughtful appreciation of everyday life's transitory and embodied complexities (Breheny et al., 2020). This provides a rich source of information

about the mundane aspects of everyday life on which to base subsequent interview questions (Breheny et al., 2020).

Data Analysis Procedures

The data analyzed include the data collected from the interviews, document analysis, and journaling prompts. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), *narrative analysis* refers to “interpreting text that has in common a story form” (p. 198). A narrative inquiry’s data regarding a chronology of events and turning points or epiphanies must be examined. Butina (2015) stated that data analysis is “making sense of data,” and to do so, one must immerse oneself in the data and consolidate it, focusing on segments that may provide insight (even a glimmer) into the research questions. The researcher compared segments to find patterns or themes in the data. The researcher interpreted what the participants said and derived meaning from the patterns/themes identified. These interpretations or understandings became the findings of the researcher’s investigation (Butina, 2015).

According to Butina (2015), data collection and analysis are not sequential procedures because data collection and rudimentary analysis occur concurrently. The researcher identifies emerging insights or hunches during the first interview or document analysis and journaling prompts where the initial analysis begins. This can prompt the researcher to dig deeper or revise the interview questions. Once the data have been collected, a more in-depth analysis will begin (Butina, 2015).

Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested that it is vital for a narrative researcher analyzing data to have it set up in a three-dimensional space approach as an element to interact (personal and social), continuity (past, present, and future), and situation

(physical places or the storyteller's places). This will allow the researcher to see the common elements of narrative analysis in collecting stories or personal experiences in field texts, such as conducting interviews or having conversations and retelling the stories based on the narrative elements (e.g., the three-dimensional space approach; Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 198). Creswell and Poth (2018) also suggested that a chronological approach can be used as an analytical approach to the participants' narrative, beginning with biographical analysis by identifying an objective set of experiences in the participants' lives.

Narrative analysis is a type of qualitative data analysis frequently employed in narrative inquiry. Although there are no standardized protocols for narrative analysis, numerous narrative scholars have developed rules and processes for studying narratives. Narrative analysts can employ one of four methods. In this study, the researcher used a narrative, thematic analysis process consisting of five stages: (a) organization and data preparation, (b) obtaining a general sense of the information, (c) the coding process, (d) categories and themes, and (e) interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2014).

During the data analysis process, the researcher examined the texts and images of the data from the Otter.ai software transcripts. This entailed organizing the data, performing a preliminary read-through of the transcripts, coding and organizing themes, representing the data, and forming an interpretation. In a qualitative study, data analysis entails preparing and organizing the data (i.e., text data as in transcripts or image data as in photographs) for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 183). Significant steps in the study are coding the data (dividing the data

into meaningful segments and assigning names to the segments), combining the codes into broader categories or themes, and displaying and comparing the data. These are essential components of qualitative data analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 184).

The coding process was the next stage in this study, in which the data were coded manually. According to Glesne (2016), coding is “a progressive process of sorting and defining and defining and sorting those scraps of collected data that apply to the research purpose.” The coding process generates data’s recurring words, ideas, or patterns (Butina, 2015).

The coding process was central to qualitative research and entailed making sense of the text from interviews, observations, and documents. The researcher coding entails breaking down text or visual data into small categories of information, looking for evidence for the code in various databases used in the study, and then assigning a code label. The steps are as follows: First, analyze the data by creating initial coding, which is open-ended. This is a stage of the qualitative approach to the data to compare how different transcripts are coded. Second, create axial coding to extend the analytical work from initial coding and, to some extent, focus coding. Third, create focused coding following in vivo, process, and/or initial coding. In addition, in this process, the researcher describes the characteristics, attributes, and dimensions and explore how the categories and subcategories are related. Finally, the researcher converts them into themes according to the categories.

The researcher used a codebook as a set of codes, definitions, and examples used as a guide to help analyze data. Codebooks are essential to analyzing qualitative research because they provide formalized operationalization of the codes (Fonteyn et al., 2008).

Nonetheless, codebooks, like codes, are created through an iterative process that may necessitate revising definitions as the researcher better understands the interview data (Butina, 2015).

Interviews

The researcher interviewed 10 participants registered with the DRO in this study. The list of students was generated from the urban postsecondary institution's office of information technology (OIT) and DRO. Letters of consent were emailed to 12 potential participants; only 10 were included in the study. The consent letters were signed and dated before conducting the interview process.

Before conducting the study, the researcher reviewed the "Informed Consent Form" with the participants, which required their signature (see Appendices A & D). The researcher asked the participants 10 questions related to the research project (see Appendix B) and two journaling prompt questions (see Appendix C). The participants in the study were not obligated to answer any uncomfortable questions related to the research topic. The researcher explained to the participants the primary purpose of the interview: namely, to learn and express their opinions and concerns regarding the accessibility and accommodations provided at the urban postsecondary institution. The researcher acquired participants' approval before recording and taking notes during interview sessions. The participants were reminded that the interview sessions would take approximately 30 to 45 minutes, the journaling session would take approximately 15 to 30 minutes.

Document Analysis

Documents used in the DRO for students with self-disclosed disabilities enrolled in the program were analyzed for this study (see Appendix F). According to Bowen (2009), documentary content serves five distinct purposes. Documents reveal past events and provide background knowledge and historical insight, such as whether students have self-disclosed disabilities. Such information and insight can assist researchers in understanding the historical roots of specific challenges and identifying the factors that influence the phenomena under examination. Data derived from documents, for example, can be used by the researcher to contextualize data gathered during interviews. Second, the verification of disability and accommodations forms can assist in formulating specific questions to ask and scenarios to observe as part of the investigation. Third, documents supply more study data. Document-derived information and insights can be valuable additions to a knowledge base. Fourth, documents allow for the tracking of change and development. Where multiple drafts of a specific document are available, the researcher might compare them to find changes. Even minor changes in a draft can reflect significant changes in a project (Bowen, 2009). The researcher may also look at periodic and final reports (if available) to understand how an organization or program performed over time. Finally, documents might be evaluated to confirm or refute results or evidence from other sources (Bowen, 2009).

Journaling

The data analysis for journal/dialogue prompts was identified through participants' responses to their stories being told in the interviews. Once the critical narratives had been identified with all the participants, the researcher compared the data

across participants to understand similarities and differences in the narrative stories. The journals prompt each participant to tell their story about their identity. Participants actively negotiate the description of photographs and diaries used in narrative interviews, as Gibson et al. (2013) explained. The interviewer's focused questioning and the participant's elaboration facilitate more profound insight into the meaning of the primary data (Breheny et al., 2020).

The researcher employed journal/dialogue prompts to ask two open-ended questions related to the research project for each participant in this study (see Appendix C) as a document for analyzing data from participants' responses. This allowed the researcher to better understand their experiences as students self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment. The participants were required to sign a consent letter to participate in this interview process (see Appendix A).

Trustworthiness

Collecting and reviewing the data from the 10 participants, the researcher provided evidence of trustworthiness. Trustworthiness consists of four criteria: internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity (Guba, 1981). The trustworthiness in qualitative research is likened to reliability and validity in quantitative research (Golafshani, 2003). Golafshani (2003) noted that "although reliability and validity are treated separately in quantitative studies, these terms are not viewed separately in qualitative research" (p. 600) but instead considered both encompassing trustworthiness. The transcript interviews were coded into themes. These were revised to ensure a level of trustworthiness. Also, the researcher checked the iPhone Otter.ai audio recordings and established that it was working correctly before performing interviews with the

participants. Post interviews, transcripts were substantiated against the audio recordings for authenticity.

In this study, triangulation helps compare data, such as various data sources, different investigators, different perspectives (theories), and different methods with one another to cross-check data and interpretations (Mathison, 1988). For example, an information item should only accept data that can be verified in at least two other sources. The research should be divided into two so that the perceptions of several investigators can be compared. Different theories should be brought to bear on data to yield alternative explanations that can be tested. Different methods—for example, interviews, field notes, and documentary analyses—can be used whenever possible. In the field, techniques of cross-examination should be used when reports from different informants conflict. Further triangulation regarding the perspectives and experiences of the participants required by university regulations was provided to protect students' confidentiality and compliance with federal law (Barnard-Brak et al., 2010).

Data triangulation in this study is a technique for identifying the convergence of data gathered from several data sources and methodologies (for example, interviews, document analysis, and journaling) to eliminate or minimize mistakes or biases and enhance accuracy in data gathering and analysis procedures (Johnson et al., 2020). Researchers must respect the contributions and quotes of participants, and results must be reported truthfully and honestly (Johnson et al., 2020). Interview techniques range from highly organized to improve dependability to entirely open-ended to allow interviewers to clarify a participant's response for increased credibility and confirmability. Interview techniques and structure are frequently adjusted or refined in response to concurrent data

collecting and analysis processes to support or contradict preliminary interpretations and refine focus and ongoing investigation. Recognizing researcher bias or reflexivity is crucial to data collection, interpretation credibility, and trustworthiness in such study designs (Johnson et al., 2020). Interviews should be recorded and transcribed verbatim before coding and analysis (Johnson et al., 2020). A widely accepted criterion of rigor is member checking, which entails asking the research subject to verify the transcription of an interview to strengthen the study's credibility and confirmability (Johnson et al., 2020). The participants in the study were asked to confirm the completeness and accuracy of their interview transcript to guarantee that the transcript accurately reflects the meaning and intent of the subject's contribution. Prolonged engagement entails the researcher becoming acquainted with and comprehending the examined participants' culture and background. This method promotes reflexivity by allowing the researcher to understand how they may be a source of bias throughout the data-collecting process by changing how individuals behave or interact with others in the researcher's presence. Facial expressions, spoken language, body language, dress style, age, race, gender, social standing, culture, and the researcher's relationship with the participants all influence the participants' responses or the researcher's interpretation of those responses (Johnson et al., 2020). "Fitting in" by exhibiting an appreciation and comprehension of the community's cultural norms replacement may assist the researcher in obtaining more open and honest replies from participants. However, if the research subjects or issues are overly familiar or personal, this may impact data collection, processing, and interpretation (Johnson et al., 2020).

As a narrative researcher, the researcher worked to acknowledge and mitigate any biases due to the researcher's role in the DRO. The researcher disengaged from any personal opinions on the participants' interview responses, collected and analyzed the data collected in response to the questions being asked, and allowed the participants to share their lived experiences as students who self-disclosed their disabilities in an urban postsecondary institution.

Research Ethics

In this study, incorporating proven practices, anonymity, and confidentiality are ethical practices designed to protect the privacy of human subjects while collecting, analyzing, and reporting data. Protecting the anonymity of the participants by assigning numbers or aliases to individuals is crucial. It also allowed for gaining support from participants. As a researcher, one must convey to the participants that they have partaken in the study as it was described to them and reassure them that there is no deception about the nature of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 151). Awareness of addressing these concerns for the participants can make the researcher more mindful while asking data collection questions of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

By definition, the word *deception* means the action of being misleading, hypocritical, or misrepresenting the truth. The researcher's goal was to gain confidence and trust of participants when they answered the data collection questions with sincerity and to respect their honest responses to questions asked.

This study also entailed studying a research site and obtaining permission to examine the site to collect data. Obtaining access to sites and individuals involves several stages. Regardless of the approach taken, clearance from a human subjects review board

is required, particularly in the United States. This entails seeking approval from institutional review boards at universities and colleges and personnel at the study site—and, in some situations, from an administrative body such as a school research committee (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 154). In this study, the researcher obtained approval of the institutional review board at the study site and the researcher's home institution.

In this study, the researcher's responsibility continues after ensuring trustworthiness or ethical soundness in conducting a narrative inquiry. This responsibility includes deliberate writing choices that position the text as an informed reflection of the participants' reality. With a better understanding of the storytelling properties of research, the author can focus on how text reflects social reality (Holley & Colyar, 2009).

Interviews, direct observation approaches, and textual/document analysis are all used to obtain qualitative data. As the researcher's data are unique and often very sensitive, trustworthiness is vital for the researcher-participant connection. Ethical behavior relates to how moral concepts and values are incorporated into the research process. Participants' impressions of ethical behavior are critical to a connection likely to produce high-quality data. Care must be taken at all stages of the study process to ensure participants' confidentiality and protect them from damage related to concerns of respect and dignity. In this study, the participants were reminded that their participation was voluntary and their decision to participate or cease participation posed no risk to them.

Researcher Role

The researcher's position in the interview with the students with self-disclosed disabilities was intricately linked to the disciplinary settings and concerns it was based on. For one reason, narrative research has several ancestors, influencing its current

prominence as a paradigmatic choice in social and cultural studies. According to Slembrouck (2015), the narrative is present in every age, place, and society; it begins with the very history of humanity. The “narrative turn” appears as an ontology at times, an epistemology at others, and often as a heuristic technique or method. With the ontology technique, the researcher can understand the social reality as essential to organizing the narrative (Slembrouck, 2015). The researcher can better understand how social reality makes sense using epistemology. For instance, stories about “x,” for example, are the most significant approach to explaining occurrences of “x” (Slembrouck, 2015). Last, the researcher can use dynamic tactics and systematic methodologies to capture relevant social representation components (Slembrouck, 2015).

The researcher developed research on the personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment; the researcher adopted an epistemological approach well suited to the researcher’s field of inquiry. Epistemology is an area of philosophy concerned with the nature and justification of human know-how (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997). The researcher has a sense that perspectives such as critical inquiry and Deweyan pragmatism were a significant help in the researcher’s efforts to address some issues, including the insensitivity that faculty often display toward the needs of students with self-disclosed disabilities and their unique learning styles.

A researcher’s epistemological perspective critically affects their reasoning and judgment and has significant implications for teaching, educational psychology, and cognitive improvement (Hofer, 2001). The researcher has decided which epistemological perspective to adopt and considered different research programs that employed varying

conceptual frameworks and methodologies (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997). However, the researcher has decided to integrate the UDL and CDT as the conceptual framework and narrative approach as the methodology, which the researcher believes best fits the study on the personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment.

These beliefs have been called philosophical assumptions, epistemologies, ontologies, broadly conceived research methodologies, and alternative knowledge claims (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Also, with the epistemological assumption, conducting a qualitative study on the personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment meant that the researcher needed to develop good rapport with participants to gain their trust and increase their comfort level. This gave the researcher a more subjective view of individuals self-disclosing their disability experiences within an urban postsecondary institution. Eide and Kahn (2008) demonstrated that for qualitative researchers, it is necessary to have a mutual standpoint, either as a researcher to a participant or as one human to another. It also necessitates a conversation and dialogue between people in the expected qualitative research processes. It focuses on human beings' actions, reactions, recollections, and meaning-making in response to their passage through life (Eide & Kahn, 2008).

Merton's insider-outsider and Collin's within conceptualizations helped the researcher clarify and add complexity to the ideological debates and discussions about whose knowledge is authentic, who can know what, and who speaks for whom (Banks, 1998). Another critical dimension of these questions is the relationship between knowledge and power. For instance, what factors determine the knowledge systems and

canons that become institutionalized or marginalized in mainstream institutions (Banks, 1998)?

Banks (1998) stated that the indigenous insider endorses their primordial community and culture's unique values, perspectives, behaviors, beliefs, and knowledge. The indigenous outsider was socialized within the cultural community but has experienced high desocialization and cultural assimilation into an outside oppositional culture or society. This individual's values, beliefs, perspectives, and knowledge are indistinguishable from outside culture or community (pp. 7–8). Thus, Banks's insider and outsider theory explicitly expresses the importance of carefully observing culture or community's values, beliefs, perspectives, and knowledge, including those of students with self-disclosed disabilities.

This study explored the personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment. Drawing on the teaching and counseling experiences the researcher has had over the years, the researcher explored the various obstacles and challenges that students with self-disclosed disabilities may encounter as they move through the educational system in an urban postsecondary environment. These challenges may include failure to reason and demonstrate knowledge prescribed by a standardized school curriculum. Furthermore, school can help students to overcome these challenges by applying the necessary educational tools to assist students with self-disclosed disabilities in an urban postsecondary environment. When teaching students with self-disclosed disabilities, the faculty must remain attentive to each student's unique learning style, ensuring they are not closed out or discouraged from mastering the subject matter. Likewise, the faculty must assure themselves that students

with self-disclosed disabilities are provided with the educational supports to help them to succeed academically.

Recruiting participants was crucial to the research process (Sutton et al., 2003). To boost the rate of subject involvement, the researcher must rely on the DRO and OIT, who frequently function as gatekeepers for potential research study subjects. The researcher recruited individuals from a list the DRO and the OIT provided, contacting them via email. Out of 12 volunteers randomly selected from the list, 10 participated in the study. Since the researcher worked in the office where participants were recruited, extra precautionary measures were taken to avoid contaminating the data interpretation and compromising the study's findings due to familiarity with participants served by the department. Consequently, the researcher refrained from expressing personal comments regarding the participants' responses to the research questions.

The researcher requested permission to record the interview and used anonymous names when referring to the respondents in the research reports. The qualitative data collected by the researcher were the strength of the interview process. The interviewer's primary responsibility is to manage the conversation, clarifying any ambiguity before the interview ends and remaining neutral so that the researcher's actions do not influence the respondent's comments (Luna-Reyes & Anderson, 2003). After conducting several interviews, the researcher analyzed the data and looked for patterns in their lives, told stories, and experiences that cut across the material elicited from all respondents. In addition, the researcher looked for parallels and variations in their narrative stories during and after the interview and organized them into categories, themes, and subthemes of their experiences at an urban postsecondary institution.

Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the narrative methodology approach designed to conduct the study. Additionally, this chapter covered the procedures for selecting student participants, as well as the procedures for conducting interviews, observing the participants' responses, and collecting data through in-depth interviews and data analysis. This chapter addressed the strategies used to ensure trustworthiness, research ethics, the details of the analysis procedures, and the researcher's role in the study. The final two chapters of this dissertation present the findings and conclusions of this study.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

This study aimed to explore the personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment. This chapter analyzed the findings from the data collected from 10 self-disclosed disabled students enrolled in an urban postsecondary environment. The data were collected through interviews, document analysis, and journaling prompts, where the participants answered specific questions about their experiences in an urban postsecondary institution. The one-on-one interviews, document analysis, and journaling prompts guided the researcher to focus on many codes and themes created for this study. The research questions employed for this study are: What is the personal journey of students with disabilities self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment? What are the lived experiences of students with disabilities seeking out and utilizing accommodation within an urban higher education institution? How do students with self-disclosed disabilities perceive faculty members' use of UDI and UDL in an urban postsecondary institution? This chapter analyzed the themes that best captured the participants' experiences in an urban postsecondary environment. It is essential to note that this research was conducted after the COVID-19 pandemic, which altered how the participants thought about and responded to this study.

This chapter explores themes from the interviews, document analysis, and journaling prompts based on the research questions. The themes are Urban Community-Based Supports Within a Higher Learning Institution for Students With Disabilities, Reasonable Accommodations Within an Urban Postsecondary Environment,

Understanding Students with Disabilities in an Urban Institution Setting, and Reaction to Universal Design for Learning.

In discussing the current study's findings, pseudonyms were assigned to each of the 10 participants. A detailed description of the participants is included in Chapter 3. In this research, a significant concept to note about students who self-disclosed their disabilities in an urban postsecondary environment is that they have different life paths. Even though there may be some similarities, each person's road is unique due to individual circumstances, as this study explored through their stories.

Findings suggest that students who self-disclose their disabilities within an urban postsecondary environment are more likely than those who do not self-disclose to receive reasonable accommodations and support to help them navigate the demands of their academic programs and maximize their learning potential. This may include assistive technology support, extra time for exams, note-taking assistance, or other reasonable accommodations that can address the specific challenges associated with their disabilities. Additionally, self-disclosure can help students feel a sense of belonging and support from their peers, faculty, and staff, building self-esteem and, hence, feeling more comfortable and confident in their academic pursuits.

Hence, self-disclosing disabilities can affect the successful adaptation of students with disabilities to an urban postsecondary environment. By self-disclosing, students can access reasonable accommodations, services, and support, which can help them navigate their urban postsecondary environment, overcome academic challenges, and succeed academically.

Urban Community-Based Supports Within a Higher Learning Environment for Students With Disabilities

Community-Based Institution. A community-based institution is an organization that serves the needs of a particular community. This institution is typically established and run by community members, focusing on addressing the community's specific challenges and opportunities. Urban community-based institutions, including schools, social service agencies, and cultural centers, can take many forms.

Kelly is 25 years old with ADHD and dyslexia. Her major is nursing. She stated that this urban postsecondary environment made her aware of its status as a community-based institution; this diverse college made her feel welcomed. She expressed,

Being in a community-based college, and it is a diverse college, I feel more welcomed . . . , there's a lot of professors that understand that there is a difference. Individuals are from a different life. Walks of life who are pursuing their degree make me comfortable because, with my disability, I can pursue my degree and know that I have the [DRO] there to help me through. My classes to get my degree.

Kelly expressed that a community-based college that welcomes diversity in professors and students makes the individual feel accepted and comfortable as they pursue their degree, with the DRO providing support.

Jessica is 29 years old with CP. She felt this urban postsecondary environment was like a community setting (community-based institution), having opportunities she had never received in the past. Jessica shared,

[I] found that disclosing my disability led to many things regarding how to get between classes and finding a community setting. Um, it has also made me aware of my own needs being that previously . . . as I am I did not have those opportunities to be someone with a disability and adequate education, so that was definitely a plus for me.

Thus, Jessica stated that disclosing her disability brought awareness to her transportation needs, community connections, and self-awareness, providing opportunities for adequate education and support for those with limited access to such opportunities.

Bobbie is 31 years old with ADHD and bipolar disorder. She felt welcomed through receiving help and support as well. Bobbie said, “I always just feel welcomed and able to talk about anything like. So, like, that’s a big thing. Could come to the office for anything. I like, you know, get help and support.” Consequently, she said she felt welcomed and pleased discussing any topic in the DRO, expressing their desire for help and support.

Kelly, Jessica, and Bobbie expressed appreciation for the diversity in a community-based environment and that they felt welcomed and free to discuss any issues as they arise related to their academic needs. All three participants’ experiences parallel each other regarding the urban postsecondary environment.

Reasonable Accommodations Within an Urban Postsecondary Environment

Accommodations. The theme of *Reasonable Accommodations Within an Urban Institution* refers to the measures an institution takes to give individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in all programs and services offered. As mandated by law, all institutions must provide reasonable accommodations their facilities, programs,

and services so that students with disabilities are not excluded from them or discriminated against due to their disabilities.

Jessica felt the accommodations she received helped her to have a great experience. Jessica shared,

In terms of accommodations and access to the facility as a disabled person, I say it's pretty much top-notch. I haven't had issues with accessibility. Also, as we discussed, I've been given support, so you have just taken it. So, if you have a test coming up, they help schedule your test, as I do, and let me guide the, like, ritual. If you are technical, schedule it, and you have the time to take it. And get you extra time; they also help with tutoring . . . , and other services.

Overall, she expressed satisfaction with the facility's excellent accommodations, accessibility, support, assistance with tests and technical tasks, tutoring, extra time, and guidance for students with special needs.

Lee is 25 years old with dyslexia (like Kelly). She felt that managing accommodations was manageable because they were for exams only. Lee said,

I would say that my accommodations are light because . . . and mostly just have testing accommodations, but other people who don't know about accessibility, it could be for physical or . . . nonphysical disabilities, you could see, because not everyone would look at me and assume that I am dyslexic, but, you know, a couple of days getting to know me and you can see a couple of little tactics that I would do that wouldn't stand out to people.

Thus, Lee expressed that her accommodations were feasible and primarily testing-based but acknowledged that not everyone would assume she has a disability. She highlights her unique tactics to avoid being perceived as such.

Jonathan is 51 years old and also has dyslexia. He felt that his accommodations were only note taking and tutoring services as needed. Jonathan articulated,

Note takers and tutoring services. Yes, it has. I said earlier. It has given me a note-taker, and it goes back to the support we get in this school, especially in the library, the writing center, the reading center, and the testing center. It goes back to the library when the professor was here. He was that note-taker. He was that person that read for us and did everything that we needed him to do; even technology-wise, he would help us.

Thus, Jonathan expressed gratitude for the accommodations and support provided by the urban postsecondary environment, particularly in the library and the writing, reading, and testing centers, where the professor served as a note-taker and aided with technology.

Aaron is 28 years old with sickle cell anemia. He also felt that accommodations of having a note-taker every semester were needed. Aaron explained, “I always have every semester. I always have a note-taker. I get the notes from them on days when I don’t make it in time or make it to the class. I remember there was a week when I was out of class because of my health condition, and I could make up the class because I had the notes from the note-taker.” Consequently, Aaron recognized that his accommodations (note-taker) supported his academic success.

Jessica, Lee, Jonathan, and Aaron reflected on how tutoring and note-taker services enabled them to keep up with their classes throughout the semester. Jessica

emphasized the benefits of having additional time while taking exams. These services proved essential since they enabled students to complete their academic coursework. Hence, the four participants praised accommodations such as tutoring and note-taker services for helping them stay on track, providing extra time for exams, and enabling them to succeed academically.

Accessibility Support. Accessibility support in an urban postsecondary environment ensures that students who self-disclose their disabilities are given the same opportunities and resources as non-disabled peers.

Lee felt that his accessibility support was a comfortable experience in an urban postsecondary environment. She shared,

I felt a lot more comfortable having those conversations in this institution . . . , versus other institutions . . . , because sometimes you're not in in the classroom setting, where, you know, people would [not] even take accommodations or accessibility that seriously people just see you at school. You know, you just got to do what you got to do. And to an extent, that's true. But the normal education system doesn't work for everyone, so I feel that it's essential to be in the loop about how you feel about yourself.

Thus, Lee stated that she felt more comfortable discussing her experiences in the urban postsecondary environment study site compared to other settings, as she feels more comfortable in the classroom there and understands the importance of being aware of one's feelings about oneself.

Jonathan also felt that his accessibility support was a comfortable experience. He said,

But at college average, because it's a small environment, you get the help from the disabilities office because they'll help you get a note-taker, they'll help you get more test time. It's a very comfortable environment. Nobody looks down on you; as a matter of fact, some of the students do. And the same classes I might take, some of them might have a disability, but it has not been exposed yet. But I feel comfortable in my environment where I think most students with a disability get the accessibility support because, in other schools, you're a number. Still, here you're a person, and they help you transition into the classes, talk to the professor, and give you the necessary tools to survive in a college atmosphere.

Thus, according to Jonathan, this urban postsecondary environment provides a comfortable setting with accessibility support from the DRO, which helps students transition into classes, communicate with professors, and provide necessary tools for survival. This urban postsecondary environment allows students who self-disclosed their disabilities to feel comfortable and not looked down upon, allowing them to thrive in a supportive and inclusive environment.

Aaron felt his accessibility support was adequate in the urban postsecondary environment experience. He stated,

I am getting the accessibility help I would normally get. I didn't get back in middle school and lots of it. The people are helpful and care about the students here. I can get through the work done whenever needed because of them.

Thus, Aaron believed that receiving regular accessibility support and care from the supportive and caring staff has helped him overcome challenges and complete tasks efficiently.

Bobbie also felt his accessibility support was beneficial. She shared, “I’m just, I’ve gotten a lot of accessibility assistance from this institution. It’s pretty much it . . . it’s been a good experience. It hasn’t been anything negative from it.” Bobbie expressed that her accessibility support has been a positive experience, citing a supportive urban postsecondary environment and no negative aspects to report.

Jordan felt that this urban postsecondary environment has given him adequate accessibility support that lessened his worries and allowed him to focus on doing well. He said,

I saw it as a great opportunity to get the help and accessibility assistance I needed to ensure my college experience is easier and less of a headache. Knowing I have people I can ask for help or accessibility assistance comforts me.

Thus, Lee, Jonathan, and Aaron appreciated this institution’s comfortable urban postsecondary environment. As Lee aptly expressed, “I feel that’s very important to be in the loop about how you feel about yourself.” Jonathan said, “It’s a very comfortable environment. Nobody looks down on you,” Aaron said, “the people are helpful and care about the students here.” He feels that he can get through his classes because of the support he’s receiving. Bobbie and Jordan also expressed their position based on experience from the accessibility support received in general from the DRO and other departments in the college. Jonathan also has benefited from the DRO’s accessibility assistance in providing note-takers, transitioning between classes, contacting professors, and other adequate provisions.

Academic Support. Academic support is a crucial aspect of success in an urban postsecondary environment. Students who disclose their disabilities have access to

academic support resources and are likelier to perform well in their coursework, stay motivated, and persist to graduation.

Jane felt that the urban postsecondary environment had given her options for different academic support to help her do well in her education. Jane said,

The school, in general, has the options, like the writing center, the reading center, tutoring needs, and the Department of Accessibility. I, like, if I would tell them, I have. The option for, they get a note taker, and the school does lend a device if a laptop is needed if you don't have one or I think a tablet they have as well.

Hence, Jane stated that the urban postsecondary environment offers various services, including writing, reading, tutoring, and accessibility. Students can use note-takers and devices like laptops or tablets for their academic needs.

Jonathan felt that the urban postsecondary environment has given him plenty of academic support and financial aid matters, and the DRO has been there to ensure he gets the support needed. Jonathan stated,

A lot of support, even when I had financial issues, getting financial aid, um. The disability office ensured I got financial aid, even when I stayed out of the semester. It was driving me crazy saying where you're at, and I got telephone calls from the disability office. The staff was very supportive of that. Also, the writing center, because he would always take care of all the students with disabilities and all the other students even when we had problems with technology. Available staff. They worked in the library and were always very supportive.

Consequently, Jonathan stated that the DRO provided him with financial aid support even during semester absences, and the writing center was always available to assist students with disabilities and other students, even when technology issues arose.

Aaron felt that the writing center had given him academic support in his writing skills. Aaron shared,

Uh, whenever I need help with a subject, they told me where I could get it and who was the best teacher or professor for it . . . ; when I needed to write an essay, they told me about the writing center, there are people there who show me how to structure my essays and work correctly. And since then, I've just been using that formula.

Hence, Aaron stated that he received assistance in various subjects and essays from the writing center, which guided him in developing his writing structure and supported him in his work.

Jane, Jonathan, and Aaron benefited immensely from the learning center regarding loaned advice (i.e., laptops or tablets). Jonathan also received guidance from the DRO on how to apply for financial aid and who could best assist him. In addition, Jonathan received assistance from the library staff with equipment on the premises. Aaron received guidance from the DRO regarding the best faculty member to assist him with specific coursework topics, besides receiving tutoring sessions on essay writing from the writing center. Thus, the participants greatly benefited from the learning center, receiving loaned devices, financial aid guidance from the DRO, library staff and faculty member assistance, and essay writing tutoring sessions from the writing center.

Faculty and Staff Support. Faculty and staff support can be valuable resources for students who self-disclose their disabilities in an urban postsecondary environment. Faculty may have unique perspectives and experiences in urban contexts that enhance students' educational experiences. Staff support is another essential resource that may provide unique insights and connections to the campus community.

Jane felt that the faculty have supported her with extended time on exams and assignments and has given her the extra help needed to do well in class. She uttered, "Yeah, um, when I tell people professors about my disability, they usually give me extra time on assignments, extra time on tests they give me, extra help if I need it." Subsequently, Jane expressed that when she informs professors about her disability, they are typically granted extra time for assignments, tests, and assistance as needed.

Lee felt that her experiences with the faculty members in the urban postsecondary environment have been marked by respect. Lee stated,

As an adult, you could be a bit more discreet about your disability since dyslexia is not visible, so keep the professors in the loop because I need a bit more extra time or when I could stay after class with the professor. Even if it's not explicitly stated in my grades, like they didn't give me an extension, my relationship with the professor was good overall. Unlike my experiences with another institution where faculty, if I were here to talk about how faculties treated me throughout my academic career, we'd be here all day. I would say faculties have the biggest impact on me. Um, because faculties looked at any institution that I've been in one or two ways with either an admirable amount of support or the other just kind of like, you know they're going to need a bit more extra time patients are you

know, they're the more difficult one just trying to like, push you on the side because you're not keeping up to pace with the rest of everyone else just to being isolated on the side or faculty giving you support.

Thus, Lee stated that as an adult, it's essential to be discreet about your disability and inform professors about your needs. Her relationship with professors was good. Faculty have the most significant impact on her; they can either support her admirably or push her to the side. Maintaining a balance between being isolated and receiving support from faculty is essential to maintaining a positive academic experience.

Jonathan also felt the faculty have supported him as a student with disabilities. He said,

Well, like, for me . . . , I study early. Suppose I have an assignment to do an assignment, that's due two weeks from now. I go to the library, and I start that assignment right away. Just in case I need somebody to review the assignment and if I need to make changes. The faculty is very supportive of the students with disabilities. I mean, that goes back again if we don't get it right, so they go back; we can go to the library and wait for staff to help us or another staff who works in the lab and does a lot from the math section, who's always here on the campus and so on. I think that the disability services have been pretty good here. I think it's one of the best in the country, because of our school and the support that we get.

Hence, Jonathan studies early, starting assignments in the library and seeking assistance from faculty members who support students with disabilities. He believes the disability

services at their school are among the best in the country, with staff from the lab and math section always available to help.

John felt that the faculty had given him positive feedback in the classroom. He is 25 years old with a speech impediment. John said,

Yes. I say the professors are providing a positive thing. Positive, yeah, positive, they are helpful for me too, um, you know. To ensure that I got feedback from them after I asked questions to go over each work or if I didn't understand anything, I just raised my hand, and then they gave me feedback to know what I was trying to say.

Therefore, John stated that the professors provide positive feedback, ensuring students understand their work, enhancing their overall learning experience.

Jane, Lee, Jonathan, and John have benefited from exposing their disabilities to their professors since it's allowed them more time with course assignments and test-taking. Jonathan begins his assignments in advance since he knows he needs support proofreading his work for errors from the learning center and library staff. Lee's experience with another institution was negative and discouraging. However, she has found great support with her current institution and has developed a trusting relationship with her professors by informing them of her disability. The four participants have benefited from revealing their disabilities to their professors, who have allowed them more time for course assignments and test-taking. Jonathan starts his assignments early, and Lee has found an institution that cares.

Understanding of Students With Disabilities in an Urban Institution Setting

Understanding Students With Disabilities. It is imperative to understand and support students who have self-disclosed disabilities and ensure they have equal opportunity in their academic pursuits in an urban postsecondary environment. One way to support students who self-disclose their disabilities is by creating an inclusive campus environment that is welcoming and supportive to all students despite their disabilities. This can be achieved by promoting accessibility and universal design principles throughout the campus offering resources and accommodations that meet the needs of students. More importantly, it is crucial to acknowledge that every disability is unique and may require a different approach regarding reasonable accommodations and support. It is vital to approach each student's needs individually and tailor support and accommodations.

Confidence. In an urban postsecondary education environment, students who disclosed their disabilities reported feeling confident about their experiences on campus.

Lee felt confident in prioritizing her goal of completing her education despite her disability. Lee stated,

I feel that personally, for me, my education was always like a top priority for my family and me to make sure that I was always on track. I was always set to have the best chance. That I would have to succeed Clearly, if you have dyslexia or have a learning disability, take standardized tests. It won't work out; I already know it won't work without my accommodation.

Although Lee had dyslexia, she assured herself that she would do what it took to succeed in her education. However, she could not have done it without her accommodations.

Kelly felt confident in not disguising her disability because she realized that others might be experiencing the same problem. She recognized that her disclosure of her disability will help others advance in their education. Kelly said, “I don’t hide behind my disability because I don’t know who else is going through the same thing and what I can share for them to move forward.” Hence, feeling confident, Kelly was willing to share her experiences as a student with a disability and expose her disability so that other students may learn from her.

Lee and Kelly felt confident and recognized their education’s importance and the need to disclose their disabilities to achieve their goals. Also, they acknowledged that they are paving the way for other students who can benefit from their examples in disclosing their disabilities, making them eligible for accommodations. Both participants demonstrated confidence in their education by disclosing their disabilities and encouraging their peers to follow their lead and qualify for accommodations.

Being Proactive. For students who self-disclose their disabilities in an urban postsecondary environment, being proactive is the key to academic success.

Jessica felt that being proactive was necessary to make progress in education. She stated,

I would say, though, honestly, the only . . . uh, the difficulties after that were you must be a little more proactive in seeking that assistance. So, do you see the assistant, so it is self-directed, like if someone doesn’t know your accommodation needs? You would not get how good that is unless, like . . . well, personally knows you and can probably remind you, so it’s pretty much like a subdirectory.

Hence, Jessica suggested being proactive in seeking assistance, as it's better to have a personal assistant who knows your accommodation needs and can remind you, similar to a subdirectory.

Lee felt being proactive allowed her to get the extra support that she needed. She shared,

Um, because of that. All communication is part of you advocate for yourself and know who can help you. It is a big piece because you will not know who and where to go. If you don't put the message out there that you need . . . some assistance, and there's nothing wrong with that. . . . Do you know that you need a bit of extra help? I think advocating for yourself and my whole experience was great."

Thus, Lee stated that advocating for oneself involves effective communication to identify and seek assistance. It's crucial to communicate your needs and seek help when needed, as this help is essential for a successful and fulfilling experience.

Both participants believe that being proactive in seeking assistance and having a personal assistant to understand accommodation needs are crucial for advocating for oneself and knowing who can help. It's essential for students to communicate their need for assistance and ensure they know where to go next.

Infrastructure. Infrastructure is essential to creating an accessible environment for students who self-disclose their disabilities in an urban postsecondary environment.

John felt the infrastructure in the DRO needs to be completed so that the DRO can have its grand opening. John said, "The services provided by the DRO are working on

Zoom now, but after the construction for the building is complete, DRO will have a grand opening that way.”

Bobbie also felt she was waiting for the infrastructure of the DRO to be completed so staff and students could all be in person again. She is 31 years old with ADHD and bipolar disorder. She shared,

Well, they are renovating the place now, so just got to wait, but they’re making it nicer and more spacious. I guess we can do an on Zoom and call. Oh, that’s pretty much it right now, but it works. It’s good.

Therefore, Bobbie stated that DRO is being renovated, making it more spacious and nicer. A Zoom call may be scheduled for further discussion until the DRO reopens.

Jonathan felt the infrastructure of the DRO would include more space due to the support of the DRO, academic advisors, and the former student government of the urban postsecondary environment. He stated,

They have it here at the college, and that situation here, maybe they got a bigger room. They’ve got more space. They could accommodate all the students, which goes back to the students being active in the disability office. We were very active to get that office . . . , thanks to the advisors and the former student government president whose language, not to mention her name right now, was a big help.

Jonathan attributed the urban postsecondary institution’s construction of sufficient space to accommodate all students with disabilities to the active role of the DRO, the advisors, and the former student government [resident].

Participants identified the infrastructure of the DRO as significant to the functioning of this unit in the urban postsecondary environment. John and Bobbie stated

that communicating with the DRO via Zoom and phone calls has been successful, but they're looking forward to the DRO grand opening for in-person services. Jonathan's vigorous efforts and those of the student government president motivated the institution to construct a more spacious and adequately equipped DRO that would suit all his colleagues efficiently.

Disability and Learning. Disability and learning can intersect in many ways for students who self-disclose their disabilities in an urban postsecondary environment.

Lee felt that her disability and learning experiences have impacted her in the urban postsecondary environment. Lee revealed,

Although my disability is not visible, it still impacts me with simple tasks I do daily. My disability has impacted me academically within the past two weeks. It shows how I must plan my week to stay on top of my coursework.

Also, she shared,

The stigma of itself about learning disabilities and just being perceived, like, in the wrong way, you don't want to get help because you already feel like you need help. Just get the support, and there's a lot of love here to help you to support you; you have to give yourself that love to acknowledge and show up for yourself to get that support you need.

Hence, Lee believed that an individual's disability, despite being invisible, still affects daily tasks and academic performance. She emphasized the importance of planning and staying on top of coursework. Lee acknowledged the stigma surrounding learning disabilities and encouraged seeking support from others, as well as acknowledging one's own needs.

Aaron felt his disability affected him when he was sick with sickle cell anemia. He shared, “The only time my disability has affected me is when I get sick and unable to get out of bed. But recently, I haven’t had any problems with it.” Thus, Aaron does not regularly experience learning interruptions as a result of his disability.

Jordan felt his disability and learning affected him on occasion. He said, “My disability has affected me sometimes. I need a little more time to comprehend the information being taught, so I may sometimes need to ask to repeat what they said and rephrase it to help me understand and comprehend.” For Jordan, learning with his disability has caused him to need more time to implement the strategies that help him learn.

Josh felt that his disability and learning affected him, in contrasting ways. He shared, “My disability had affected me good and bad because it allowed me to get the support I needed, but the downfall is the time it takes to complete assignments.” Thus, Josh felt that his disability provided him with necessary support and impacted his ability to complete assignments.

The participants’ experiences show various ways that disability affects learning in an urban postsecondary environment. Lee struggles with the fear of being stigmatized but is encouraged by the love and support that she receives from the DRO. Aaron’s illness sometimes prohibits him from getting out of bed, and Jordan sometimes requires repetition of what’s being discussed since he has difficulty comprehending new concepts. Josh needs additional time to complete coursework for which he is receiving assistance. Because of the nature of their disabilities, there is no visual evidence of their needs.

Reaction to Universal Design for Learning

UDL offers equal opportunities for students who self-disclose their disabilities, including those with ADHD, dyslexia, bipolar disorder, scoliosis, sickle cell anemia, autism, learning disabilities, and other disabilities. In flexible and accessible learning environments, students can learn and demonstrate their knowledge in different ways that match their strengths and abilities in an urban postsecondary environment.

John felt satisfied with the use of UDL approaches in the classroom over the past several weeks. John stated,

Yes, there have been inclusive UDL approaches in my classroom for the past few weeks during the spring and fall semesters. Examples include my FS 101 seminar, LIB 100 logic, and other classes. Also, I have felt included in the classrooms. I participate and ask questions to the professors, and I ask students if they can use their phones to take my notes. Yeah, I take down notes on that first. I write down notes in front of the class when I'm sitting in front of the class, and I also ask students if they want to copy down my notes, but I'd say yes, they get recorded.

John stated that inclusive UDL approaches have been implemented in his classroom, including seminars and logic classes. He felt included, participating, asking questions, and using a phone for notes.

Kelly felt that UDL approaches were used in her classes. She shared, "The UDL approach this week in my Monday to Friday class was excellent." Kelly expressed satisfaction with the UDL approach during her weekly classes. "Excellent" was her word choice.

Jessica felt that UDL approaches were used in her biology classes. She said, “Yes, they have been inclusivity in the classroom. I am a part of a group for my lab session for my bio class, and it has helped me feel supported and complete assignments and lab assignments.” Hence, Jessica stated that the classroom environment has fostered inclusivity, with group participation in lab sessions for biology classes, providing support and enabling the completion of her assignments.

Lee felt that UDL approaches needed to be more readily apparent in the classroom. She said, “There needs to be more push for definitive UDL approaches in the classroom environment.” Therefore, Lee believed that more definitive UDL approaches should be present in the classroom environment.

Kelly explained that she always felt included in her classes. She said, “I never feel excluded. . . . Even with my peers and the professor, they, professors, mainly will know who I am because I introduce myself to them and let them know who I am . . . and from there, I’m not treated differently. I’m still put in a group setting if needed to.”

Kelly stated that she feels comfortable introducing herself to peers and professors, is not treated differently, and can still participate in group assignments because of the design of the courses.

Jane also felt included in the classroom. She said, “I feel included. Even though I would tell professors about I’m with the Department of Accessibility, they don’t treat me any differently. I might only get extra time for assignments or tests, but they don’t treat me differently than all the

other students. Also, please give me the same amount of work. They treat me like all the other students don't treat me differently.

Accordingly, Jane feels included by professors and other students, and she is gratified that she receives equal treatment and workload despite having a disability.

The participants indicated that UDL measures taken in their classes help them to feel included as part of their learning community. John feels included among his classmates; he takes notes and sometimes asks one of his classmates to assist him with some note-taking. Kelly and Jessica feel they are part of the group and have an excellent experience and support in their coursework. Lee feels that there should be more done with UDL in the classroom. Jane is treated equally to her peers, other than receiving extra time for assignments and exams. In short, no participants felt excluded from any class activity or coursework despite their disabilities and felt equal to their peers.

Summary

In closing, the participants in this study shared their experiences in a community-based institution or community setting in the urban postsecondary environment. They revealed that In this judgment-free environment, everyone can discuss any issues or concerns concerning their educational endeavors. While the students have different types of disabilities, all have received appropriate accommodations regarding extra test time, note-taking, and tutoring. Students reap the benefits by self-disclosing their disabilities with DRO since this department will reach out to their professors along with support documentation with specifics about their individual needs. Five of the participants explicitly identified accessibility support experience as positive. They expressed that the support received from the DRO improved their academic performance immensely, in

addition to the cohesive effort displayed by the institution's accessibility support, which enhances their capability to undertake new challenges in postsecondary academic coursework.

Four participants shared similar experiences with academic support availability, dependability, and ensuring academic success for students who self-disclosed their disabilities in an urban postsecondary environment. Participants revealed that they experienced similar scenarios, with faculty and staff support being valuable and encouraging in their academic endeavors. Two participants specifically said that they were confident and understood the value and necessity of higher education by disclosing their disabilities to succeed. They recognized that this set the precedent for other students to disclose their disabilities and receive accommodations. These students encouraged their peers to pace themselves, accept change and adjust, and confidently attain their education. Being proactive allowed participants to venture out of their comfort zone and find what works best. They shared that students who self-disclose their disabilities in an urban postsecondary environment should never hesitate to ask for assistance or reach out for resources when needed. Three of the participants felt a need for improved infrastructure in the DRO. Due to the effort displayed by the DRO, advisors, and student government president, a bigger office space has been added for the students who self-disclosed their disabilities in the DRO.

The findings from the interviews, data analysis, and journaling prompts presented in Chapter 4 reveal the lived and told narrative stories of students who self-disclosed their disabilities within an urban postsecondary environment. The researcher will explain in

Chapter 5 how these findings and discussion corroborate the related literature and conceptual framework that supported the study.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

The following chapter discusses the research study's findings on the personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment, corroborating the conceptual framework and the related literature in Chapter 2. Moreover, this chapter includes the connection to the conceptual framework, a discussion of the findings, the connection to prior research, the connection of findings to research questions, implications for future research, and implications for practice.

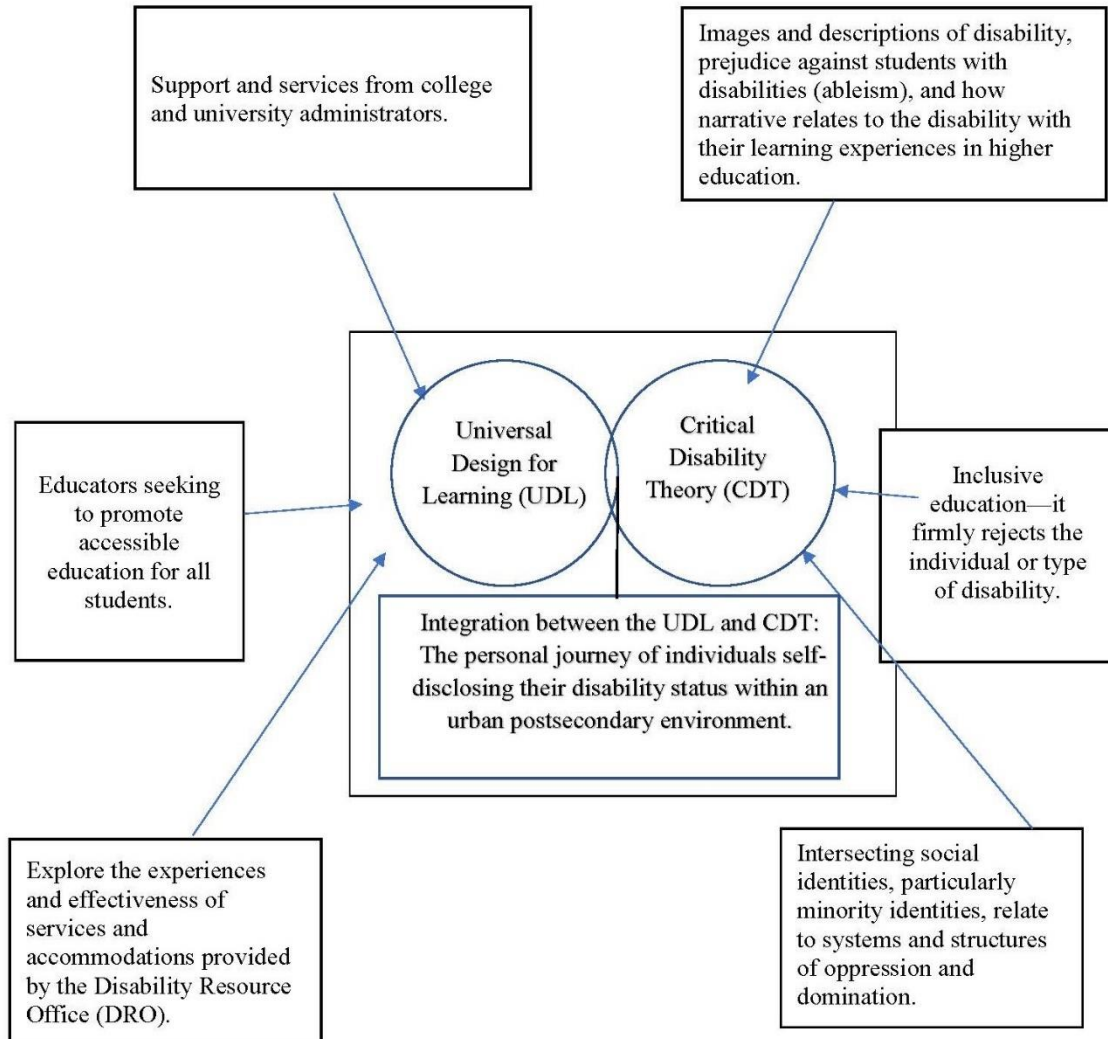
Students who self-disclose their disabilities within an urban postsecondary environment have unique and diverse needs, given the unique and diverse nature of the disability. The researcher conducted and analyzed the data collected through the interviews, document analysis, and journal prompts. Based on these findings of the study, the researcher discerned themes: Urban Community-Based Supports Within a Higher Learning Institution for Students With Disabilities, Reasonable Accommodations Within an Urban Postsecondary Environment, Understanding of Students With Disabilities in an Urban Institution Setting, and Reaction to Universal Design for Learning.

Connection to the Conceptual Framework

The researcher used the UDL integrated with CDT as the conceptual framework to reveal the study's findings on the personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within the urban postsecondary environment. Figure 2 illustrates the conceptual framework.

Figure 2

Integration of Universal Design for Learning and Critical Disability Theory



The findings supported the view of UDL and CDT with students who self-disclosed their disabilities in an urban postsecondary environment. UDL examined the support and services from college and university administrators and educators to promote accessible education for all students, and the findings showed the results of students who self-disclosed their disabilities in an urban institution. The findings supported the

students' positive experiences and the effectiveness of services and accommodations provided by the DRO.

The students with disabilities who participated in the study revealed that they understood the framework of CDT; however, prejudice against students with disabilities (ableism) was not demonstrated in the findings of students who self-disclosed their disabilities experiences in an urban postsecondary environment. Students who self-disclosed their disabilities shared their lives and told stories that demonstrated how narrative relates to the disability experiences in an urban postsecondary environment. The findings revealed that inclusive education rejects the individual or type of disability, and intersecting social identities, particularly minority identities, relate to systems. However, oppression and domination were not demonstrated in the findings of this study. The findings exposed that students who self-disclosed their disabilities were included in classroom activities or coursework despite their disabilities and felt equal to their peers within an urban postsecondary environment.

Discussion of Findings

Four themes emerged from the findings: Urban Community-Based Supports Within a Higher Learning Institution for Students With Disabilities, Reasonable Accommodations Within an Urban Postsecondary Environment, Understanding of Students With Disabilities in an Urban Institution Setting, and Reaction to Universal Design for Learning.

The first research question was: What is the personal journey of students with disabilities self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment? The theme Urban Community-Based Supports Within a Higher Learning

Institution for Students With Disabilities emerged from the findings related to this question. The findings revealed that a community-based institution that values diversity among professors, its faculty members, and students is an environment that helps students who self-disclosed their disabilities to feel accepted and puts them at ease as they work toward their degrees, especially with the support from the DRO, by opening doors and opportunities for students who might not otherwise have access to proper education and assistance. As expressed by students in this study, by receiving assistance and support, they felt respected, motivated, and encouraged the DRO provided; moreover, they experienced a sense of validation and were able to engage in discussions on any academic concerns that may emerge in their academic pursuits with the DRO. Students expressed satisfaction with the willingness of the DRO support service, and that their confidence had grown despite their disability. All will receive a sufficient level of support.

The second research question was: What are the lived experiences of students with disabilities seeking out and utilizing accommodations within an urban higher education institution? The theme Reasonable Accommodations Within an Urban Postsecondary Environment emerged from the findings related to this research question. The findings revealed that accommodations and accessibility were provided by quality service by the DRO, thus enriching the experience for students who self-disclosed their disabilities. The DRO service aids in coordinating test dates and times, allowing individuals to manage their study routines effectively. These provisions allow students to navigate the process with guidance, ensuring a structured and systematic approach to test preparation. One student expounded on the advantages associated with the provision of extended time during the administration of examinations. Students are grateful for the

DRO guidance and direction with financial aid protocols, or who would be the best faculty member to tutor them on specific topics. These services are vital because they facilitate students' completion of their academic coursework. Other resources are available, such as the learning center, writing center, and library, providing one-on-one assistance that is highly appreciated by students. The participants expressed that these accommodations enable them to engage in the process of self-analysis regarding the efficacy of tutoring and note-taking services in facilitating their academic progress over the semester.

In general, individual students conveyed contentment with the institution's comfortable and welcoming atmosphere as they were not looked down upon after self-disclosing their disability status. Most noticeable to students was the DRO's sincere care without judgment, besides exceptional amenities, such as loan equipment (laptops, tablets, etc.), convenience, provision of aid, facilitation of examinations, technical and educational support, additional time allocation, and guidance for their specific needs.

The third research question was: How do students with self-disclosed disabilities perceive faculty members' use of UDI and UDL within an urban postsecondary institution? Two themes, Understanding Students With Disabilities in an Urban Institution Setting and Reaction to Universal Design for Learning, emerged from the findings related to this question. The study found that students with disabilities often self-disclose their disabilities, emphasizing the importance of effective communication in advocating for their needs and accessing support. Using UDL strategies in classrooms promotes inclusivity and active engagement. However, some students believe more efforts are needed to enhance this approach. Promoting transparency about disabilities

and accommodations fosters inclusivity and equitable treatment, creating an environment where students who have disclosed their disabilities feel a sense of belonging and parity with their peers.

Connection to Prior Research

Research Question 1. What is the personal journey of students with disabilities self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment?

The findings revealed that a community-based institution that values diversity supports students who self-disclosed their disabilities, fostering acceptance and ease in their academic pursuits. The DRO provides support, validation, and opportunities for academic discussions. Students feel respected, motivated, encouraged, and satisfied with the DRO's willingness to support them and the DRO's mechanisms for building confidence in the students.

In contrast, Hong (2015) studied the barriers students with disabilities experience in higher education. The findings revealed that students with disabilities felt judged, humiliated, or embarrassed by instructors, either privately or in front of the class. Hong's findings do not support the current researcher's findings. A similar study was conducted by Flink and Leonard (2018) on students' experiences with disabilities in an urban two-year community college. The findings indicated that students with disabilities are highly aware of the stigmatization of having a disability. They fear being discriminated against or treated differently, contributing to their underserved needs. Students were also aware of the specific language others use when referring to individuals with specific disabilities. Flink and Leonard do not support the current researcher's findings on the personal

journey of individual students with disabilities self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment.

Research Question 2. What are the lived experiences of students with disabilities seeking out and utilizing accommodations within an urban higher education institution?

The findings revealed that the DRO provides quality accommodations and accessibility services, enhancing the experience for students who self-disclosed their disabilities. They help coordinate test dates, manage study routines, and provide guidance on financial aid protocols. Resources like the learning center, writing center, and library offer one-on-one assistance. Students appreciate the institution's comfortable atmosphere; sincere care from faculty and staff; and exceptional amenities like loan equipment, convenience, aid, examination facilitation, technical and educational support, additional time allocation, and guidance for specific needs for their academic coursework.

The current researcher's findings support the findings of Barnard-Brak et al. (2010), who studied the effects of self-disclosure of disability status. They studied students with disabilities who disclosed private and confidential information about their disabilities to faculty and staff strategically to receive classroom accommodations while serving their psychological needs. Barnard-Brak et al.'s findings revealed academic success with students with disabilities requesting accommodations for postsecondary classrooms. One of the themes was the disclosure of their disability and request for accommodations. The researchers concluded that students who self-disclosed their disabilities are academically successful in requesting accommodations.

A couple of years later, Aquino and Bittinger (2019) studied students who self-disclosed their disabilities within the higher education environment and the changes in their self-disclosed circumstances during their postsecondary experiences. The students with self-disclosed disabilities who participated in this study had the opportunity to receive accommodations to help them succeed in their postsecondary education. The findings revealed that more than 10% of students self-disclosed as having a disability during the base year. The percentage increased marginally to 11% at the initial follow-up two years later. The current researcher's findings on the experiences of students with disabilities seeking out and utilizing accommodations within an urban higher education institution corroborate the findings of Aquino and Bittinger.

In contrast, Lyman et al. (2016) studied the experiences of students with disabilities who had faced obstacles to using accommodations. The findings revealed six main themes concerning students with disabilities and barriers to accessing and using accommodations. Two of Lyman et al.'s significant themes were (a) the Quality and Usefulness of DRO and Accommodations for Negative Experiences with Professors and (b) Fear of Future Ramifications. Themes in Lyman et al. echo what other studies have found, including students not seeking services, negative experiences, and DRO staff's need for knowledge on how to provide accommodations. The findings of Lyman et al. do not corroborate the current researcher's findings on seeking out and utilizing accommodation within an urban higher education institution.

Research Question 3. How do students with self-disclosed disabilities perceive faculty members' use of UDI and UDL within an urban postsecondary institution?

The findings revealed that students with disabilities frequently engage in self-disclosure of their disabilities, highlighting the significance of effective communication in advocating for their needs and accessing suitable support. The utilization of UDL strategies in the classroom has been found to engender a sense of inclusivity and foster active engagement among the majority of pupils. Nevertheless, some students believe that further efforts should be undertaken to enhance the UDL approach, and they have expressed their desire for more comprehensive initiatives in this regard. Promoting transparency regarding disabilities and necessary accommodations fosters inclusivity and equitable treatment, cultivating an environment where students who have voluntarily disclosed their disabilities experience a sense of belonging and parity with their classmates. The current researcher's findings supported Black et al.'s (2014) findings as they sought to determine if faculty were incorporating UDI and UDL into their instruction and their attitudes toward students with disabilities, as these could be barriers to learning. The researchers found that some faculty members incorporate UDI and UDL principles into their teaching practices, but their approaches vary. Despite this, faculty attitudes still hinder inclusive education for students with disabilities, highlighting the need for increased training and adaptation.

Connection of Findings to Research Questions

The first research question was: What is the personal journey of students with disabilities self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment? The findings related to this question revealed the first theme, Urban Community-Based Supports Within a Higher Learning Institution for Students With Disabilities. The study discovered that students who self-disclosed disabilities are

supported by a community-based institution that embraces diversity, fostering acceptance and comfort in their academic endeavors. The DRO offers opportunities for academic conversations, support, and validation. Students appreciate the DRO's willingness to help and confidence-building methods, and they feel appreciated, inspired, and encouraged.

The second research question was: What are the lived experiences of students with disabilities seeking out and utilizing accommodation within an urban higher education institution? The findings revealed Reasonable Accommodations Within an Urban Postsecondary Environment as the second theme. The findings indicated that the DRO provides exceptional accommodations and accessible services to students who self-disclosed their disabilities, enriching their experience. The DRO assists in the coordination of test dates, the management of study routines, and the provision of financial aid procedures. Other resources, such as the learning center, writing center, and library, provide one-on-one help. Students value the institution's welcoming environment, genuine concern, and remarkable facilities such as loan equipment, convenience, assistance, examination facilitation, technical and pedagogical support, extra time allocation, and counsel for individuals' needs for their academic coursework.

The third research question was: How do students with self-disclosed disabilities perceive faculty members' use of UDI and UDL in an urban institution? The findings revealed within the third and fourth themes, Understanding Students With Disabilities in an Urban Institution Setting and Reaction to Universal Design for Learning. The findings revealed that students with disabilities often self-disclose their disabilities, demonstrating that effective communication is crucial for advocating for themselves and finding appropriate support. Communication with the DRO through Zoom and phone calls has

yielded positive outcomes, but students eagerly anticipate accessing services in person. Most students are satisfied with using UDL methods in the classroom, creating an environment of belonging and encouraging participation. However, some students feel more should be done with the UDL method and hope for more robust initiatives. Being upfront with disabilities and needs leads to acceptance and equal treatment, ensuring that students who self-disclose their disabilities feel included and on the same level as their peers.

Limitations

While the study on students who self-disclosed their disabilities in an urban postsecondary environment using qualitative research methods such as interview protocols, document analysis, and journaling prompts provides valuable insights, it is essential to acknowledge this study's limitations.

First, the study's findings may only be generalizable to some students in urban postsecondary environments. The sample size and selection process may have introduced bias, limiting the representativeness of the findings. The study's focus on a specific urban context may not capture students' experiences in different geographical or cultural settings.

Second, using qualitative research methods inherently relies on self-reporting and subjective interpretations. This introduces the potential for recall bias, social desirability bias, or the influence of personal biases on the part of the participants or researcher. It is essential to consider these limitations when interpreting and generalizing the findings.

Third, the study's reliance on interview protocols, document analysis, and journaling prompts may limit the depth and breadth of the data collected. Other methods,

such as observation or focus groups, could provide additional perspectives and insights into the experiences of students who self-disclose their disabilities.

Fourth, the study's focus on self-disclosure may overlook the experiences of students who choose not to disclose their disabilities. Understanding the reasons behind non-disclosure and its impact on their experiences is essential for future research.

Despite these limitations, the study provides a valuable starting point for understanding the personal journeys of individuals who self-disclose their disabilities in an urban postsecondary environment. It offers insights into the challenges, triumphs, and growth that individuals experience, highlighting the need for further research and the development of inclusive policies and practices in postsecondary institutions.

Implications for Future Research

The implications for research on the personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment can be far-reaching and have practical implications for various stakeholders.

The findings can guide other urban postsecondary institutions in enhancing support systems for students who self-disclose their disabilities. This can include improving the availability and accessibility of accommodations, providing targeted resources and services, and fostering a culture of inclusivity and acceptance. The research can raise awareness about the experiences and challenges faced by students with disabilities in an urban postsecondary environment. It can help dispel misconceptions and stereotypes, promoting a more inclusive and empathetic campus community.

Additionally, the findings can inform educational initiatives and training programs for faculty, staff, and students to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment.

Understanding the personal journey of self-disclosure can empower students with disabilities to navigate the postsecondary environment more confidently. Shedding light on the experiences of others who have gone through similar journeys can provide validation, guidance, and a sense of belonging for students who may feel isolated or uncertain about disclosing their disabilities. The research can highlight the importance of peer support networks and advocacy within the urban postsecondary community. It can encourage the development of programs and initiatives that facilitate connections among students who self-disclose their disabilities, fostering a sense of community and empowerment. The findings can inform the professional development of educators, administrators, and support staff. By understanding the experiences and needs of students who self-disclose their disabilities, professionals can enhance their knowledge and skills in providing appropriate support, accommodations, and resources. The research can underscore the importance of addressing the mental health and well-being of students who self-disclosed their disabilities. It can advocate for the availability of mental health resources, support services, and strategies to promote self-care and resilience in other urban postsecondary environments.

Overall, the research on the personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment has the potential to drive positive change in policies, practices, and attitudes. It can provide a more inclusive, supportive, and empowering postsecondary experience for students who self-disclose their disabilities.

Implications for Practice

The research on the personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment can have several implications for practice on the institutional, local, and national levels.

The findings can guide outreach efforts to raise awareness about the resources and support available to students who self-disclose their disabilities in urban postsecondary environments. Urban postsecondary institutions can use the research to develop targeted outreach strategies, reaching out to prospective students, families, and high schools to provide information about the support services and accommodations available. The research can inform the training and professional development of other urban institutions' faculty, staff, and administrators. It can help educators understand the experiences and/or challenges faced by students who self-disclose their disabilities, enabling them to create inclusive learning environments, deliver effective instruction, and provide appropriate support and accommodations. The research can inspire the development of peer support programs within urban postsecondary institutions. These programs can facilitate connections among students who self-disclosed their disabilities, allowing them to share experiences, offer support, and advocate for their needs. Peer mentors can play a crucial role in helping new students navigate the self-disclosure process and adjust to the urban postsecondary environment. The research can encourage collaborative partnerships between urban postsecondary institutions and disability advocacy organizations. These organizations can share resources, expertise, and best practices by working together, ultimately enhancing the support and services available to students who self-disclose their disabilities.

The research can influence other urban institutional, local, and national policy development. Urban institutions can use the findings to advocate for policy changes that promote more inclusivity, accessibility, and support for students who self-disclose their disabilities. This can include advocating for increased funding, improved legislation, and implementation of best practices in DRO.

By implementing these practices and strategies, urban postsecondary institutions can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for students who self-disclose their disabilities, ultimately enhancing their educational experiences and success.

Conclusion

In this research study, students who self-disclosed their disabilities had their voices heard as they shared their experiences within the urban postsecondary environment. Ten participants were part of the study through interviews, document analysis, and journaling prompts. The results of the personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disabilities status within an urban postsecondary environment emerged through the themes: Urban Community-Based Supports Within a Higher Learning Institution for Students With Disabilities, Reasonable Accommodations Within an Urban Postsecondary Environment, Understanding Students With Disabilities in an Urban Institution Setting, and Reaction to Universal Design for Learning.

The personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment is a deeply personal and transformative experience. The researcher gained valuable insights into individuals' challenges, triumphs, and growth through interview protocols, document analysis, and journaling prompts. The findings reveal that self-disclosure was influenced by various factors, including

community-based institutions, accommodations, accessibility support, academic support, faculty and staff support, understanding students with disabilities, confidence, being proactive, infrastructure, disability and learning, and reaction to UDL. The interview protocols allowed us to delve into the lived experiences of these individuals, providing rich narratives that shed light on the emotional and psychological aspects of self-disclosure.

Document analysis enabled us to examine institutional policies, support services, and accommodations available to students who self-disclose their disabilities. This analysis highlighted the importance of creating inclusive environments that foster a sense of belonging and provide necessary resources for students to thrive academically and personally.

Journaling prompts proved to be a powerful tool in capturing the introspective reflections and self-awareness that individuals experienced throughout their self-disclosure journey. These prompts facilitated a deeper understanding of the personal growth, empowerment, and resilience that emerged as individuals navigated the challenges and triumphs of disclosing their disability status.

Overall, our research highlights the significance of self-disclosure as a catalyst for personal growth, self-advocacy, and community building within an urban postsecondary environment. It underscores the need for institutions to prioritize inclusivity, support services, and accommodations that empower individuals to embrace their disabilities and thrive academically.

Moving forward, it is essential to continue exploring the personal journeys of individuals self-disclosing their disability status using a combination of qualitative

research methods. This will allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities and nuances involved, ultimately informing the development of policies and practices that foster inclusivity, support, and success for all students in urban postsecondary settings.

APPENDIX A LETTER OF CONSENT



Title of Research Project: A study on the personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment.

Researcher: Nelson Carrillo

Introduction:

I am a doctoral candidate at St. John's University in the School of Education. The primary purpose of this study is to explore the personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment. Specifically, this study will investigate students with self-disclosed disabilities enrolled in an urban postsecondary institution and their potential obstacles experienced in accessing and utilizing accommodations within the classroom environment. Therefore, I would like to invite you to participate in my research study to discuss your experiences.

Procedures:

In this study, participation is with interviews and journaling. While participating in this study, you may choose to discuss any issues and concerns you may have about the research project. For example, related to your experiences in an urban postsecondary environment. The primary purpose of this interview is to learn about your opinion and concerns about the questions. Please feel free to answer the questions. Also, let me know if it is okay for you to audio record during this interview session. I will be taking notes as well. I would like you to feel comfortable during the interview. I know that your time is valuable, so, therefore, this interview procedure will take only 30 to 45 minutes of your time. Before I start, I will go over the "**Informed Consent Form**" that I will be providing for you to read and sign. If you have any questions, issues, or concerns about the form, please do not hesitate to tell me.

Possible risks or benefits:

It is possible that you will not benefit from participating in this study. Others may benefit from increased information on college experiences, which may assist others. The data gathered will be protected from all inappropriate disclosure under the law. All data will be kept in a secure location. Any information from the study linked to you or identified will be kept confidential. Access to data will be disclosed to the researcher and the research project chair.

Additionally, your participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate in this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits.

Confidentiality:

To protect your privacy and guarantee your confidentiality, your actual name will not be used anywhere in this study's analysis, writing, presentation, or guide. Also, to protect

your privacy, you will be asked to provide a pseudonym to use in the evaluation and write up your interview responses.

If you agree to participate, please indicate this decision by signing below. If you have any questions about this research project, please do not hesitate to contact me at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. If you have any questions regarding your rights and participation as a research subject, please contact Dr. Katherine C. Aquino, Ph.D. at [REDACTED] or the St. John's University IRB Chair at [REDACTED].

I agree to participate in the above-described study. You have received a copy of this consent.

_____ I agree to be audiotaped during the interview.

_____ I disagree to be audiotaped during the interview.

Print Name of Participant

Date

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

APPENDIX B INTERVIEW PROTOCOL



INTRODUCTION:

Hi! My name is Nelson Carrillo, and I am a doctoral candidate at St. John's University in the School of Education. I am here to learn more about your journey of self-disclosing your disability status within an urban postsecondary environment. Thank you for allowing me to talk to you about this with me today. The primary purpose of this interview is to learn about your opinion and concerns about the questions. Please feel free to answer the questions. Also, let me know if it is okay for you to audio record during this interview session. I will be taking notes as well. I would like you to feel comfortable during the interview. Please be sure that everything you say will remain confidential, and it will only be used for this study. I know your time is valuable, so this will only take 30 to 45 minutes. Before we start, I would like to go over this "**Informed Consent Form**" that I will be providing for you to read and sign. If you have any questions, issues, or concerns about the form, please do not hesitate to inform me. Thank you so much for your participation.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM:

All participants will read and sign the letter of consent forms

QUESTIONS:

1. Introduce yourself using an anonymous name, and tell me your disability, major, and future goals.
2. Please share your experiences after self-disclosing your disability status within an urban postsecondary environment.
3. What measures have you taken to overcome any challenges encountered after self-disclosing your disability status?
4. Did you reach out to the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations Services for assistance?

5. How has the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations Services access proper building facilities in the urban postsecondary institution?
6. Has the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations Services given you sufficient support for your needs in and out of the classrooms? For example, assistive technology, note-takers, and tutoring services.
7. To help others understand your perspective, how would you explain your experience in the classroom setting? For example, do you feel included or excluded from your professors in the classroom?
8. What type of support has the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations Services given you?
9. Based on what you have experienced, what can be improved in the urban institution in the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations Services?
10. What have you experienced with faculty members? Please share any positive or negative scenarios and how they impacted you.
11. What improvements would you like to see with faculty members providing services and accommodations? All suggestions are encouraged and welcome!

CONCLUSION:

Thank you so very much for sharing time your thoughts today. I appreciate the worthwhile time to answer my question(s). Your answers will be beneficial to my research project. How do you feel about this interview? Do you have any final thoughts? Alternatively, do you have any questions for me about this research study before we close this session? Thank you once again for your time. Have a Good Day!

APPENDIX C JOURNALING



Journal/Dialogue Prompts

Participant _____

Questions	Responses
1. How has your disability affected you in your coursework in the past two weeks?	

<p>2. Have there been any inclusive UDL approaches in the classroom in the past weeks?</p>	
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APPENDIX D SOLICITATION LETTER



As a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at St. John's University, I would like to invite you to participate in a study on the personal journey of individuals self-disclosing their disability status within an urban postsecondary environment. This study will allow me to hear your challenges and concerns about the quality and efficacy of your services and accommodations.

Also, your contributed comments can improve the best practices and policies within an urban postsecondary environment. Participation in this study entails interviewing and journaling.

This interview will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes. Participation is entirely voluntary, and all responses will be kept strictly confidential. You can choose not to participate or skip any interview questions without penalty or loss of benefits. Each individual participating in this study will not be identified in any spoken or written communication, including reports and publications.

If you are interested in being part of this study, please contact me via email at

████████████████████.

Respectfully,

Nelson Carrillo

APPENDIX E DISABILITY RESOURCE OFFICE

VERIFICATION OF DISABILITY FORM



Purpose: The student named below has indicated that s/he has a disability and will require reasonable accommodations to participate in a program or activity at the college. The information you provide will be used to determine the nature and severity of the student's condition and the appropriateness of requested accommodations or services. Please take the time to complete this form.

**Please note: For hearing disabilities, please attach the most recent audiogram.
For visual disabilities, please attach acuity information.**

Student Name: _____

Medical Diagnosis(es):

Current Status of Condition(s) (e.g. Active, Progressing, In Remission):

How long is this condition(s) likely to persist (*be as specific as possible: e.g., lifetime, one academic year; one semester; one month*):

What are the student's current functional limitations, e.g., physical – hand function, mobility, hearing, vision limitations; cognitive – learning, memory, concentration problems; interpersonal – difficulty interacting with others; psychological (be specific in all indications)

What exacerbates the specific disability(ies) this student has? (*again, be as specific and detailed as possible*)

Please list any medications related to the condition(s) that the student is currently taking, including dosage and frequency, if pertinent. Please include both the positive as well as any negative effects of the medication:

Please describe the impact this student's condition has on his/her overall ability to learn, or on other cognitive abilities:

Identify any accommodations you believe may be necessary in order for the student to participate in the College's programs, activities and services:

Name of Medical Professional:

License #: _____

Telephone: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX F DISABILITY RESOURCE OFFICE
ACCOMMODATION ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM



To: Professor

From: Office of Accessibility and Accommodations Services

Semester:

Subject Verification of Disabilities

I am writing to verify that my office holds documentation of disability for _____
Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the policy of the City University of New York, mandate full access to postsecondary education for students with disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) strengthens this mandate. The accommodations listed on this form are considered appropriate and necessary for this student. These accommodations ensure that the results of course examinations and assignments represent the student's achievement in the course, rather than reflect the student's disability.

Please refer to the publication *Reasonable Accommodations: A Faculty Guide to Teaching College Students with Disabilities* and *The Services with Disabilities Program Handbook* for further information and to learn more about accommodations and teaching strategies related to specific disabilities. Both are available upon request from the **Disability Resource Office**.

To ensure the students are provided with the appropriate accommodations by their disability, it is best for quizzes and exams to be proctored by the **Disability Resource Office, also referred to as DRO**. Please forward the quizzes, examinations, midterms, and finals to my office via email or in person. You can also arrange to have one of our staff members retrieve them from you/your department, and I, in turn, will ensure that they are administered and returned to you once completed within an appropriate timeframe.

Students are provided with **Examination Proctoring Forms**. These forms allow students to inform our staff of an upcoming exam. On this form, the student will provide the course, location, name/contact information for both yourself and the student, and the date and time the exam is scheduled to be administered to the class. If a student cannot take an exam on the scheduled date, they are instructed to inform you and upon your approval, they will insert that new date/time on the space, which reads **Alternate date**. We will not administer an exam without your approval.

If you have any questions or concerns or require additional information about test-taking procedures or accommodations for our students in general, feel free to contact us and we will be happy to assist you.

Student:

Class:

Semester:

Telephone:

1. Exam time

- Double-Time
- Half-Time
- Un-timed

2. Course material format

- Braille
- Large print
- Tape
- Oral

3. Auxiliary Aids

- Adaptive Equipment
- Laboratory Equipment
- Note-taker
- Reader
- Tutoring (one-on-one) (group)
- Use of tape recorder in class
- Writer

4. Examination location- Students can be tested at the following sites:

- Academic Computing Center
- Department Office
- Learning Center
- Regular Classroom
- Disability Resource Office (DRO)

Other

Instructor _____

Date ____/____/____

Student _____

Date ____/____/____

OAAS Staff _____

Date ____/____/____

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