

The Reasons for Asynchronous Online Course Withdrawal of Community College
Students with Disabilities

Submitted by
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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
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GRAND CANYON UNIVERSITY

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by

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Successfully Defended and Approved by All Dissertation Committee Members

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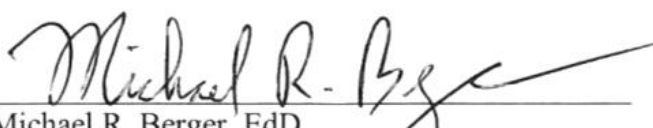
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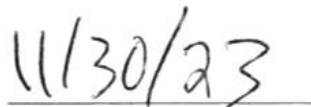
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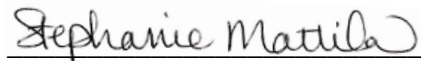


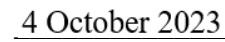
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Stephanie Mattila


Date

Abstract

Community college students with disabilities (SWD) find disability-related challenges in online learning. Online learning is plagued with high withdrawal rates that impede educational goal completion. Prior to this study, the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD were not known. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how community college SWD in the United States describe how student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. The study employed Rovai's composite model as the foundation. Twenty-five community college SWD from California completed the questionnaire and twelve separate community college SWD from the United States participated in semi-structured interviews. The research questions asked how community college SWD describe how the student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influence their reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal. Inductive and deductive thematic analysis revealed community college SWD describe how disabilities, time management issues, external crises and commitments, the type of course, the instructor's teaching style, the lack of personal connection with the instructor, and the lack of personal connection with peers influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Implications highlight a need to increase awareness of SWD' preparedness for and potential challenges with online learning, increase support for online SWD, and increase faculty' awareness of online SWD' challenges and the role they play in the withdrawal of online community college SWD.

Keywords: Community college, students with disabilities, asynchronous, distance, online learning, withdrawal, attrition, persistence.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. First, to John—you may not have understood why I chose this path; regardless, you helped me navigate it. Without even knowing, you gave me exactly the space and time I needed without complaining that I took up so much space and time. Twenty-nine years of your unwavering love made this endeavor possible. You are selfless and I owe you a debt of gratitude I will never be able to repay. I love you.

To Tanner and Carly—Back when you two were little, I would read you these words by P.K. Hallinan and darn it, every time, a lump would form in my throat: “For if I had a million days and time enough for all the praise, I couldn’t tell you all the ways I love you.” That same lump still forms as I read them today because as a Mom, you never stop realizing new ways in which you love your children. I am so proud of who you both have become and thank God every day for you. I love you, Carly and Tanner. You truly are the lights of my life. By the way, you don’t actually have to call me Dr. Mom.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

College can be a challenging time for students. Students with physical, learning, mental health, neurological, or other health disabilities face challenges that transcend those of their peers without disabilities (Varkula et al., 2017). College students with disabilities (SWD) are responsible for seeking out services, describing their disability-related needs, providing documentation, and requesting and managing accommodations (Fowler et al., 2018), a process described as frustrating (Herbert et al., 2020).

Compounding the issue, SWD often encounter disability-related stigma on campus, leading some to believe they will not be successful (Squires et al., 2018). As a result, enrollment by SWD in online college courses is increasing (Terras et al., 2020).

Flexibility (Terras et al., 2020) and minimization of disabilities (Lee et al., 2021) are possible in the online environment. In asynchronous online courses, SWD can avoid complicated social interactions and respond at their own pace (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020); although many find it hard to stay focused with the lack of structure and increased need for self-motivation online (Murphy et al., 2019). College SWD often find learning online adds to the challenges they already encounter.

Even students without disabilities struggle to complete online courses successfully. Online outcomes for community college students are contradictory. Research has shown that university students who took at least one online course had higher 6-year completion rates than those who did not (Wavle & Ozogul, 2019). However, research also shows if community college students take even one online course, they are less likely to continue and earn a degree (Huntington-Klein et al., 2017).

Community college students often begin online courses only to withdraw before completion which hinders their momentum and chance of graduation (McKinney et al., 2019).

Four factors are theorized to affect a student's decision to withdraw from an online course. Rovai (2003) described these factors as student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors in his composite model of student persistence. The model is an amalgamation of multiple models and theories on attrition and persistence in higher education. It is an extension of these ideas into the realm of online learning. Since online students tend to be nontraditional (Rovai, 2003), and different skills for success are required in online learning (Joosten & Cusatis, 2020), what is needed is an approach that is focused solely on the understanding of online student withdrawal.

Moreover, community college students differ from university students. Community college students are typically nontraditional, a population described as older and minority, attending college part time, and academically underprepared (Bean & Metzner, 1985). McKinney et al. (2019) explained that community college students have life circumstances that interfere with their ability to succeed and graduate from college. These circumstances can include jobs, family commitments, financial responsibilities, and transportation issues that traditionally aged residential university students do not typically encounter (McKinney et al., 2019).

The population of SWD is growing. Over 20% of public 2-year or community college students report having a disability (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2019a). Madaus et al. (2018) conducted a systematic literature review of over

1,000 peer-reviewed journal articles from 233 separate journals related to SWD in higher education. The authors found that only 19% of the articles focused on community college SWD. For this reason, research regarding community college SWD should be conducted (Flink & Leonard, 2019; Madaus et al., 2018). The increased online course enrollment of SWD, the contradictory outcomes of nontraditional community college online students, and the dearth of research regarding community college SWD indicate a need to explore and define the support needed by community college SWD to avoid online course withdrawal. Because of the distinctiveness of this specific population, support interventions aimed at SWD online may need to differ from those of their peers without disabilities online.

The literature agrees. It is vital to expand the knowledge of and literature base regarding the online course experiences of SWD (Terras et al., 2020). Qualitative research regarding the reasons for online course withdrawal has been called for in the literature (McKinney et al., 2019), aligning with calls for a qualitative exploration of the experiences of community college SWD (Flink & Leonard, 2019) and SWD who study online (Terras et al., 2020). For these reasons, research regarding the reasons for online course withdrawal of community college SWD should be conducted. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how community college students with disabilities in California describe how student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Exploration of these descriptions could potentially uncover information needed to understand SWD' reasons for online course withdrawal and how the reasons may differ from those of their peers without disabilities. A better understanding of their

reasons for online course withdrawal could lead to more effective withdrawal interventions, increased graduation and employment rates, more lucrative financial opportunities, and better quality of life for individuals with disabilities.

Background of the Study

Research regarding the experiences of students with disabilities (SWD) in higher education is not new. Historically, studies that address the topic of college SWD included their experiences in teacher training programs (Bender et al., 1968), their levels of self-advocacy (Test et al., 2005), and appropriate campus services (Bursuck et al., 1989). Individuals with disabilities benefit from the increased protections of federal laws (Office for Civil Rights [OCR], 2020). More recently, SWD have been ensured learning accommodations that help level the playing field throughout their schooling (OCR, 2020).

The outlook for SWD is improving. SWD are entering higher education at rates never seen before (Fowler et al., 2018). Individuals with disabilities find improved employment and financial opportunities with the attainment of a college degree (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics [USBLS], 2020). Through higher education, SWD gain exposure to the resources necessary to find and keep jobs that can support their quality of life (Ressa, 2021). However, SWD often find unique disability-related challenges in higher education (Varkula et al., 2017). As a result, the higher education system is unfavorable toward SWD (Ressa, 2021). Regardless, SWD find online learning accommodative of their disability-related needs and an inherently accessible and normalizing environment (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020; Terras et al., 2020). As a result,

the enrollment rate of SWD in online learning is higher than ever before (Alamri & Tyler-Wood, 2017).

Nonetheless, students encounter challenges in online learning. Higher withdrawal rates are prevalent in online learning (Seaman et al., 2018). Many students misunderstand and misuse the withdrawal option (McKinney et al., 2019). In addition, students with ‘Ws’ or course withdrawals on their college transcripts encounter delayed and decreased goal completion, increased out-of-pocket costs, and higher student debt (Chatman et al., 2019). The research regarding community college online course withdrawal tends to focus quantitatively on the online experiences and reasons for withdrawal (McKinney et al., 2019). Nevertheless, McKinney et al. (2019) recommended that future research should include a qualitative approach to online course withdrawal.

Still, not all students are prepared for the rigors of college. Community college students often do not read at a community college level (Taylor, 2019), are not prepared for online learning (Iloh, 2019), and often withdraw from online courses before course completion (McKinney et al., 2019). This lack of preparedness is especially damaging to the marginalized, nontraditional students who make up most community college enrollments (McKinney et al., 2019). Large-scale studies conducted within the last 20 years have shown that community college online withdrawal rates vary from 11% across the Florida community college system (Florida Department of Education, 2011) to 36% across the Los Angeles Community College District (Hagedorn et al., 2007). Online course withdrawal is widespread and problematic in community colleges (McKinney et al., 2019).

Research regarding SWD in online learning is scant. What exists has included topics such as preference for synchronous or asynchronous discussions (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020), interactions with online instructors (Alamri & Tyler-Wood, 2017), and experiences of students with psychiatric disabilities (Murphy et al., 2019). However, research has not yet addressed descriptions of the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD, despite their increasing online enrollment rates (Alamri & Tyler-Wood, 2017). Terras et al. (2020) studied accommodation use of SWD online and subsequently proposed a call for research that seeks student recommendations for improving the online course experience for SWD. Therefore, the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD need to be better understood. McKinney et al. (2019) suggested investigating the reasons for withdrawal from online courses. Flink and Leonard (2019) recommended a qualitative approach to research regarding SWD in community college, and Terras et al. (2020) proposed a focus on SWD who study online.

Results of such research could provide valuable data to administrators, faculty, and student support professionals that would help them understand, and thereby, hopefully, improve the online course experience for community college SWD. The descriptions of their experiences could be used as the foundation for data-driven support interventions intended to target and decrease online course withdrawal of community college SWD. A decrease in online course withdrawal rates could result in an improvement in the graduation rates of SWD and an increase in their employability, lifetime financial stability, and overall quality of life.

Definition of Terms

The following is a list of operational and technical terms used throughout this study and definitions for each:

Accommodations. These modifications are made to tasks, procedures, or the environment in the workplace and schools to remove barriers to participation for individuals with disabilities (OCR, 2020). Accommodations are a right afforded to students with disabilities (SWD), yet the use of accommodations is not required (Aquino & Bittinger, 2019). Students may choose to use accommodations or forego the use of accommodations at their discretion (Aquino & Bittinger, 2019).

ADA Amendments Act of 2008. This federal act of the United States included amendments of both the *Americans with Disabilities Act* and *Section 504* by broadening the definition of disability and protections from discrimination (OCR, 2020).

Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990. Disability-based discrimination is prohibited in every aspect of public life as a result of this law (OCR, 2020). The *ADA* includes mandates that public institutions of higher learning ensure accessibility of programs, facilities, and activities to SWD (Becker & Palladino, 2016). Additionally, the *ADA* indicates the range of accommodations available to SWD (Becker & Palladino, 2016).

Asynchronous Communication. A form of online interaction in which students do not communicate in real-time (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020). Asynchronous environments do not include linear presentation of information and can be confusing to students (Murphy et al., 2019). Examples include email and discussion board postings (Alamri & Tyler-Wood, 2017).

Deductive Research Approach. In this approach, a researcher develops knowledge by testing hypotheses and theories (Dewey, 1910). Deductive reasoning is focused on validating emerging ideas or concepts (Hyde, 2000) and manipulation of variables (Gibbs, 1979). The researcher employed the deductive approach in the development of the questionnaire and interview questions, addressing the research questions according to Rovai's model.

Hybrid Learning. A combined format of online and on-campus learning that includes synchronous and asynchronous methods (Ghaffari, 2018). Students who excel in each method can find benefit in the mixed format (Ryan et al., 2015).

Inductive Research Approach. In this approach, researchers create new knowledge through the amalgamation of data (Dewey, 1910) with a holistic view of this new knowledge (Gibbs, 1979). An inductive approach will appreciate all the data the participants offer, including data that does not conform to Rovai's model. Hyde (2000) proposed that focus on only one research approach could deny the researcher the guidance of theory that aids the exploration of the phenomenon or could rule out the appreciation of unique, potentially alternative explanations. The researcher will employ an inductive approach to data analysis in this study.

Nontraditional Students. These college students commute to campus, are older than 24 years of age, and attend college part time (Bean & Metzner, 1985).

Nontraditional students often choose online learning (Rovai, 2003).

On-Campus Courses. In this traditional learning format, students and instructors are physically present in the classroom (Ghaffari, 2018). Younger students and those who receive Pell grants tend to take on-campus courses (James et al., 2016).

Online Course Withdrawal. This type of withdrawal from an online course after the census date results in a 'W' or 'EW' on the student's transcript and at least partial payment required for the course (McKinney et al., 2019). Researchers should study withdrawal from online courses independently of unsuccessful course completion due to specific concerns relative to each variable (Murphy & Stewart, 2017). In this study, online course withdrawal will be defined as student departure from an online course that results in at least one 'W' for withdrawal or 'EW' for excused withdrawal listed on the student's transcript for an asynchronous online course in at least one of the prior two semesters.

Online Learning. Students who cannot attend in person find higher education democratized in this mode of learning (House-Peters et al., 2017). Online students can learn independently from anywhere, at any time using computers, cell phones, or tablets (Ghaffari, 2018). Students continue to enroll in online courses in the United States despite a decline in higher education enrollment (Seaman et al., 2018). Older students and those who do not receive Pell grants tend to take online courses (James et al., 2016).

Researcher Inference. This type of inference is a description of the thought and interpretation needed to conclude from data (Jiggins Colorafi & Evans, 2016). Researchers employ minimal inference when approaching the data with a qualitative descriptive design (Sandelowski, 2000). In this study, the researcher will incorporate low inference levels consistent with the qualitative descriptive approach.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The passage of this federal law prohibits disability-based discrimination by all public schools, school districts, public charter schools, and magnet schools that receive Federal financial assistance (OCR, 2020).

Student Attrition Theory. These theories address the lack of student persistence from the beginning to the end of a course or program (Berge & Huang, 2004). Online student attrition is caused by the interaction with and influence of several variables (Bean & Metzner, 1985). Nontraditional student attrition is affected by factors in the external environment, including employment and family commitments (Bean & Metzner, 1985).

Students With Disabilities. A student with a record of physical, mental, or psychological disorder or impairment that limits their major life activity is regarded as impaired (OCR, 2020). Researchers who study students with disabilities (SWD) focus on disability type, for example, by studying the effects of a specific type of disability on student performance (O'Shea & Kaplan, 2018) or SWD as a homogenous group (Aquino & Bittinger, 2019). In this study, the definition of SWD included any student enrolled with the campus disability support office at a community college in California.

Synchronous Communication. This form of interaction includes communication that occurs in real time between and among participants and instructors in an online course (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020). Examples include remote instruction via videoconferencing and real-time chat opportunities (Alamri & Tyler-Wood, 2017).

Anticipated Limitations

Every study has limitations or constraints outside the control of the researcher that could affect study results and conclusions (Simon & Goes, 2013). Undoubtedly, the researcher will encounter limitations during this study. The following is a list of anticipated limitations for this study:

Limitations of Sampling Strategy

The researcher will employ multiple sampling strategies in this study to generate an adequate sample. The use of purposive sampling will produce relevant and plentiful data (Yin, 2011). Though it will limit diversity in the learning environment and course outcome, the researcher's use of purposive sampling will ensure diversity of participants within these confines by not limiting participants by age (other than over the age of 18 years), gender, type of disability, or any other demographic variables.

The population for this study is specific. Students who are over the age of 18 years, an emancipated adult, able to make their own legal decisions, enrolled with the campus disability support office, who have a 'W' for withdrawal or 'EW' for excused withdrawal listed on their transcript for an asynchronous online course in at least one of the two prior semesters, are currently enrolled in or registered for at least one course at a community college in California, and are willing to answer optional personal, identifiable, demographic questions related to age, number of dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type will make up the sample.

Therefore, the researcher will not attempt to transfer the findings to the following students: those under the age of 18, those who have not withdrawn from an asynchronous online course, those who are no longer enrolled at a community college in California, those who are not enrolled with the campus disability support office, those who only take on-campus courses, those who withdrew from a remotely taught synchronous online course, those who withdrew from an asynchronous online course before the census date, or those who are not willing to answer optional personal, identifiable, demographic questions related to age, number of dependents, employment status, income level,

housing, gender, race, and disability type. The researcher's use of purposive sampling will ensure participants are found whose characteristics match the inclusion criteria for the study (Andrade, 2021). Only these participants can answer the proposed research question regarding their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD.

Limitations of Data Sources

Online questionnaires and video-recorded semi-structured interviews include self-reported data that cannot be independently verified. If a student participates under pretenses or ulterior motives, the results could be compromised. Because the researcher is a counselor at a community college in California, researcher influence could cause participants to alter their responses due to a desire for approval. The researcher assumes the participants will respond non-deceptively and to the best of their ability.

The researcher chose Zoom™ interviews due to inexperience with conducting focus groups and time constraints that precluded the use of observations or ethnographies. The use of other data sources such as structured interviews could provide more opportunities for replication or comparability across participants (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). However, the use of semi-structured interviews ensured researcher flexibility in obtaining descriptions of how community college SWD in California describe how student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal, which was the purpose of this study.

Limitations of the Qualitative Methodology

Academic researchers often misunderstand the goals of research. Opponents of the qualitative methodology criticize it for a lack of generalizability (Sandelowski, 1997) and prediction (Gergen, 2014). However, researchers who utilize the qualitative method do not seek generalizability or prediction. The researcher of this qualitative study will not seek generalizability or prediction. Reality is socially constructed and differs according to the perceiver (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Moreover, people live in tremendously varied contexts (Yin, 2011). Researchers who employ the quantitative methodology often overlook these facts (Gergen, 2014). The researcher in this study seeks to understand the multiple realities and tremendously varied contexts of asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college students with disabilities (SWD). The researcher will accomplish the goal explained by Sandelowski (1997) of transforming instead of accumulating knowledge through the use of the qualitative method.

Summary and Organization of the Remainder of the Study

To summarize, the design of this study incorporates three advantages built into it. Participants will be required to invest minimal time and effort to complete the study. Moreover, participants will be familiar and comfortable with the platforms utilized. Additionally, because college representatives rarely ask students why they withdrew from a course, students' voices likely have not been heard regarding a decision that impacted their online course experience at the school. Many factors that lead to the withdrawal decision can have an effect on the experiences of SWD. Hopefully, by gaining a thorough understanding and reporting the descriptions of the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal, the researcher will encourage administrators, faculty, and student

support professionals to acknowledge and strive to improve the online course experiences of community college SWD. Improving their experiences through targeted interventions could decrease withdrawal rates and increase the community college graduation rates of SWD.

Table 1

Alignment Table

Alignment Item	Alignment Item Description
Problem Space Need:	The current research tends to be quantitatively approached when regarding SWD (Flink & Leonard, 2019) and online learning (McKinney et al., 2019). Future research should focus on SWD in online learning (Terras et al., 2020). Additionally, the current research tends to focus on university students who are different from community college students (McKinney et al., 2019). Of the few studies that combine SWD and online learning, none currently explore how community college SWD describe how student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.
Problem Statement:	It was not known how community college students with disabilities in California describe how student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.
Purpose of the Study:	The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how community college students with disabilities in California describe how student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.
Phenomenon:	Asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college students with disabilities
Research Questions:	Overarching research question: How do community college SWD describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal? RQ1: How do community college SWD describe how student characteristics influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal? RQ2: How do community college SWD describe how student skills influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal? RQ3: How do community college SWD describe how external factors influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal? RQ4: How do community college SWD describe how internal factors influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?
Methodology/Research Design:	Qualitative descriptive

In Chapter 1, the researcher discussed the problem space defined as a lack of descriptions of the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community

college students with disabilities (SWD). McKinney et al. (2019) recommended qualitative research focus on the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Flink and Leonard (2019) added that the focus should narrow to community college SWD and Terras et al. (2020) suggested a focus on the experiences of online SWD. The researcher explained the recent history of research regarding SWD, online learning, and SWD in online learning. Operational and technical terms to be used in this study were reviewed, along with a discussion of the researcher's anticipated limitations regarding this study. In Table 1, the researcher outlined the study alignment items and item descriptions. The feasibility checklist is located in Appendix H and in it, the researcher addressed the (a) gatekeepers and processes to gain access to information and participants for the study, (b) benefits of the study, (c) activities needed to complete the study, (d) methods of recruitment and data collection, (e) informed consent, (f) site authorization, (g) the amount of time needed to complete the study, (h) organizational and participant benefits, and (i) possible risks and challenges to access.

A brief reintroduction to and an overview of the lack of knowledge regarding the phenomenon of asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD will be offered in Chapter 2. The problem space will be identified, and the theoretical foundation of Rovai's (2003) composite persistence model will be detailed. The researcher will discuss the three major themes that emerged in preparation for this study in the review of the literature. The three themes include SWD, online learning, and SWD in online learning. The researcher will then define the problem statement for this study.

The remainder of this study is contained in Chapters 3 through 5. The researcher will discuss the qualitative methodology and descriptive design of the study, including

the rationales, strategies, procedures, and considerations in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, the researcher will offer a thorough discussion of the analysis of data and results from the study. Finally, the researcher will discuss the summarization, conclusions, and recommendations of the study in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction to the Chapter and Background to the Problem

Introduction

All college students face challenges as they work toward their educational goals. Students with disabilities (SWD) face unique disability-related challenges in college (Varkula et al., 2017). Barriers to success faced by SWD are eliminated in the online environment (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020). Additionally, disabilities are minimized online and disclosure of them is often unnecessary (Lee et al., 2021). However, in the online environment, new, often unexpected challenges are often encountered (Murphy et al., 2019). Moreover, community college students differ from their university counterparts (Murphy & Stewart, 2017) and often do not read at the community college level (Taylor, 2019). Accordingly, community college students tend to withdraw from online courses, hindering their momentum toward graduation (McKinney et al., 2019).

The research topics of online course withdrawal and community college students are not new. The literature indicates that online course withdrawal experiences of community college students have been studied adequately (Christensen & Spackman, 2017). However, researchers have only recently begun to explore the online experiences of SWD, and an understanding of their online learning needs is not yet reflected (Terras et al., 2020). In the fall of 2018, 5.7 million students (NCES, 2019c), including approximately 20% who declared a disability (NCES, 2019a), enrolled in American two-year institutions. The current rates of SWD enrolling in online courses indicate the numbers are higher than ever (De Los Santos et al., 2019). Student graduation rates are increased at universities that offer online learning (Wavle & Ozogul, 2019). However,

community college students who take even one course online are less likely to graduate (Huntington-Klein et al., 2017).

An introduction to the chapter and the background of the problem are presented in Chapter 2. The researcher will explain the problem space and the theoretical framework upon which the study is built. Current and prior research will be reviewed regarding the three main themes of students with disabilities, online learning, and students with disabilities in online learning. Additionally, the literature review includes subthemes regarding the phenomenon of this study, including, but not limited to, the peer and faculty perceptions of SWD, academic outcomes of SWD, online course completion and withdrawal, reasons for online course withdrawal, and academic outcomes of SWD in online learning.

The researcher accessed peer-reviewed journal articles using the Grand Canyon University library, EBSCOhost, ERIC, Google Scholar, and ProQuest databases. Search items included “college students with disabilities,” “online learning,” “online withdrawal,” accommodations,” “disability stigma,” “community college,” “attrition theory,” and “online student success.” The researcher also utilized reference lists from articles and dissertations and the Google Scholar cited by feature to expand the search to include additional resources.

Background to the Problem

The current state of American individuals with disabilities varies from that of those without disabilities. Individuals with disabilities in the American labor force are less likely to be employed and more likely to be employed part time than those without a disability (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics [USBLS], 2020). Compared to those

who are employed part time or unemployed, individuals with disabilities employed full time present the best overall functioning and the fewest secondary health conditions (Muller et al., 2017). Conversely, unemployed individuals with disabilities have a lower mental health-related quality of life, higher depression scores, lower life satisfaction, more secondary health conditions, and higher functional disability (Muller et al., 2017). In 2019, only 19% of individuals with a disability were employed compared to those without a disability who were employed at 66% (USBLS, 2020). However, individuals with a disability with higher educational attainment have a greater likelihood of employment (USBLS, 2020) and, therefore, a higher quality of life (Ressa, 2021).

Consequently, individuals with disabilities are going to college. The rates of enrollment in higher education for individuals with disabilities are higher than ever before (De Los Santos et al., 2019). High rates of college enrollment results in improved future employability of the population (De Los Santos et al., 2019). Up to 20% of the 5.7 million community college students in the United States report a disability (NCES, 2019a, 2019c). Students with disabilities (SWD) face barriers to success in college that are unencountered by their peers without disabilities (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020; Terras et al., 2020). SWD find the barriers to success decreased and their accessibility needs met in the normalized learning environment of the online format (Terras et al., 2020).

Accordingly, researchers have begun investigating online SWD. Though, their investigations tend to be quantitatively based (McKinney et al., 2019), focused on SWD at universities (Flink & Leonard, 2019), and on those who completed the online course (Murphy & Stewart, 2017). In a quantitative study of online course withdrawal patterns,

McKinney et al. (2019) found that online withdrawal rates were higher for sections taught entirely online (14.9%) than for those taught on campus (10.9%). However, the quantitative approach can only identify specific aspects of the online course experience. Therefore, McKinney et al. (2019) suggested that qualitative research would offer the nuanced insights needed to understand the reasons for online course withdrawal. To better understand the lived experiences of and challenges faced by SWD on campus, Flink and Leonard (2019) qualitatively interviewed 10 community college students with various disabilities. The results of their study suggested that for community college SWD, college life is a matter of positive and negative extremes. The participants described extremes in their interactions with faculty and staff, with the disability support office, perceived stigmatization, and an obligation to function as student advocates for other SWD (Flink & Leonard, 2019). According to Flink and Leonard (2019), a need exists for future research that explores qualitative data regarding community college SWD. Results of qualitative research regarding community college SWD could help to broaden the understanding of the population. In one of the few qualitative studies regarding online SWD, Terras et al. (2020) explored the similarities and differences of online accommodation use of SWD. Their conclusion indicated that regardless of disability type, SWD have unique needs when learning online. Consequently, research that explores the online experiences of SWD is needed (Terras et al., 2020).

The current knowledge base is insufficient. The research that needs to be better understood is the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal (McKinney et al., 2019). This study will extend the research regarding students who withdrew from an online course conducted by McKinney et al. (2019) to the population of SWD. Moreover,

it will address the suggestions of Flink and Leonard (2019), who recommended a qualitative focus on community college SWD, and Terras et al. (2020), who described the need to study SWD online.

In this study, all community college students enrolled with a campus disability support office in California define the term SWD. The departure from an asynchronous online course that results in at least one 'W' for withdrawal or 'EW' for excused withdrawal listed on the student's transcript in at least one of the prior two semesters defines the term asynchronous online course withdrawal. This study will uncover unknown descriptions of the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD. Data-driven support interventions developed upon these findings could result in decreased asynchronous online course withdrawal, increased graduation rates, and improved future employability and overall quality of life for community college SWD.

Identification of the Problem Space

Research regarding college students with disabilities (SWD) has been conducted throughout the twentieth century. The topics range from SWD in teacher education courses (Bender et al., 1968), supportive campus services for SWD (Bursuck et al., 1989), and self-advocacy of SWD in college (Test et al., 2005). With the passage of federal legislation, SWD have garnered legal protection from disability-related discrimination throughout their education (OCR, 2020). As a result, more individuals with disabilities are going to college than ever before in the United States (Fowler et al., 2018).

Concurrently, American society has become more digitally based due to advancements in technology and widespread use of the internet. Online learning is growing in the United States (Seaman et al., 2018). The online format is emancipatory for marginalized students, including SWD (House-Peters et al., 2017). SWD often find that their unique learning needs are met in the asynchronous online format (Terras et al., 2020).

Terras et al. (2020) qualitatively explored accommodation use by disability types with online graduate SWD. The results of interviews with 13 students with learning disabilities (LD), ADHD, psychological disabilities, chronic health conditions, and visual impairments revealed a difference in the impact of disability between disability types while learning online. Students with LD, ADHD, and psychological disabilities were the most impacted by their disability, while students with health conditions and visual impairments were the least impacted (Terras et al., 2020). The authors suggested that future research is needed to understand the online experiences of SWD.

The online format is liberating for SWD. However, online learning is dominated by high withdrawal rates (Seaman et al., 2018). McKinney et al. (2019) quantitatively analyzed online course outcomes of almost 6,000 community college students in Texas. In their study, the marginalized students, for example those that were African American, male, and held a GED instead of a high school diploma, were most likely to withdraw from an online course (McKinney et al., 2019). Furthermore, students tended to withdraw most from math, science, and writing courses (McKinney et al., 2019). However, the authors acknowledged a limitation to their study. Although they evidenced who was most likely to withdraw and from which online courses students most often withdrew, they

could not explain why. Qualitative research that explores the reasons for online course withdrawal is still needed (McKinney et al., 2019).

Little is known regarding the topic of community college SWD. Flink and Leonard (2019) conducted one of the few qualitative studies exploring the lived experiences of community college SWD. The authors conducted semi-structured interviews with 10 SWD and concluded that college life is filled with extremes. Participants indicated positive extremes including feeling welcomed on campus and negative extremes including perceiving disability-related stigma on campus (Flink & Leonard, 2019). The authors suggested that SWD base their level of investment on the fear of stigmatization and how it affects them. Furthermore, they advised that qualitative research regarding community college SWD is needed.

Research is lacking, yet, evolving when it comes to online SWD. While researchers focused on SWD and online learning separately for decades, they have only recently begun to combine the two (Terras et al., 2020). More recent research has focused on the online interactions of SWD (Alamri & Tyler-Wood, 2017; Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020), the benefits and challenges encountered by SWD online (Murphy et al., 2019), their counseling needs (Warren & Schwitzer, 2018), and online readiness (Joosten & Cusatis, 2020). Additionally, it focused on accommodation use by SWD online (Terras et al., 2015), faculty provision of accommodations (Francis, Duke, et al., 2019), and the online experiences and outcomes of underrepresented students, including SWD (Athens, 2018).

The current research regarding SWD, online learning, and online SWD tends to be quantitatively approached and focuses on university students. A systematic review of

peer-reviewed articles regarding college SWD revealed that of over 1,000 articles included, only 19% focused on community college SWD (Madaus et al., 2018). Community college students tend to be nontraditional (Bean & Metzner, 1985), have issues caused by life circumstances typically not faced by residential university students (McKinney et al., 2019), and tend to be ill-prepared for online learning (Iloh, 2019) with many unable to read at a community college level (Taylor, 2019). Of the few studies that combine SWD and online learning, none currently address descriptions of their reasons for online course withdrawal. Without a thorough understanding of the descriptions of the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD, it is impossible to know how to support them to decrease asynchronous online course withdrawal. However, researchers attempting to address the potential of online SWD must first uncover the barriers to such potential (Massengale & Vasquez, 2016).

The overarching research question of this study addresses the need for further research regarding the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. The overarching research question is qualitatively approached and focuses on the need to conduct research regarding community college SWD suggested by Flink and Leonard (2019) and those who study online proposed by Terras et al. (2020). In this study, the phenomenon of asynchronous online course withdrawal will be defined as the receipt of at least one 'W' for withdrawal or an 'EW' for excused withdrawal on the transcript for an asynchronous online course in at least one of the prior two semesters. Results of this study could lead to a better understanding of online community college SWD and contribute to the scant body of literature that currently exists. SWD could benefit from data-driven targeted interventions aimed at decreasing asynchronous online course

withdrawal and increasing graduation rates. SWD with improved college outcomes could find increased employability, lifetime financial earnings, and quality of life.

Theoretical Foundations

The theoretical foundation of this study is Rovai's composite persistence model. The model is based upon Tinto's (1993) retention theory and Bean and Metzner's (1985) conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition. Additional concepts integrated into the model include the academic skills identified by Rowntree (1995) and Cole (2000), the needs of online learners detailed by Workman and Stenard (1996), and the influence of online teaching and learning styles suggested by Grow (1996). Rovai (2003) suggested that these theories and concepts better address adult persistence in online learning than the theories and concepts of the past. Online community college students are often older than traditional university students, do not live on campus, are typically employed at least part time, often attend school part time, and have family responsibilities that influence their decision to withdraw from online courses (Rovai, 2003). An examination of the theories and concepts incorporated into Rovai's composite persistence model and their pertinence to this study follows.

Since the 1970s, Tinto has studied issues related to dropping out of college. His theory claims that students must integrate into the college campus community to persist in college (Tinto, 1975, 1993). Tinto associated leaving college with committing suicide, basing his theory, in part, upon the work of Emile Durkheim, who suggested suicide is a decision to leave society (Tinto, 1993). While controversial, Tinto viewed the decision to leave the college society as comparable to the decision to leave society altogether.

Furthermore, Tinto has collaborated with other theorists in the field. Schwartz and Tinto (1987) proposed that the process of integration into the college community consists of three stages of which each student's progression is unique and determines their likelihood of withdrawal. First, they proposed that students separate from their past communities, including their families, neighborhoods, and high school peers. When successfully separated, they suggest students enter a stage in which they are in transition between their former community and the college community. If the navigation of the transition stage is successful, the student will have left behind the former communities and become fully incorporated into the college community in the third and final stage (Schwartz & Tinto, 1987). If unsuccessful in this transition, the student will likely withdraw from college (Schwartz & Tinto, 1987).

Modern day students look different than the students Tinto studied. The students upon which Tinto based his theory were university students between the ages of 18 and 24 years who lived on campus, whose key role was that of a college student, and whose main goal was to graduate with a bachelor's degree in four years (Bean & Metzner, 1985). The author claimed that students with greater academic and social integration are more likely to persist (Tinto, 1993). In addition, effectively integrated students will be more committed to graduation and college and more persistent (Tinto, 1975). Conversely, when students exhibit a low commitment to graduation or college, they are more likely to withdraw (Tinto, 1975). He also emphasized that establishing and cultivating a sense of community on campus can help students increase their integration, commitment, and persistence (Tinto, 1975, 1993).

Tinto (1975, 1993) focused his attention on the factors of commitment, interactions, community, and their effects on student withdrawal. However, student demographic and characteristic changes over the past five decades have challenged how student withdrawal is viewed and approached (Rovai, 2003). According to Bean and Metzner (1985), as the average age of college students rises, the effectiveness of Tinto's theories to describe the factors that influence student withdrawal diminishes. Individuals who have jobs, families, and finances to manage must juggle multiple roles and manage multiple commitments. The role of college student is only one role that a nontraditional student assumes (Bean & Metzner, 1985).

Bean and Metzner took Tinto's theory in a different direction. The authors shifted the focus of student withdrawal research from the traditional students of Tinto's theory to nontraditional students (Bean & Metzner, 1985). Nontraditional students are more prevalent on college campuses today and differ from their traditional counterparts in age, residence, and college enrollment status (Bean & Metzner, 1985). Their conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition was heavily based upon, yet divergent from Tinto's retention theory. It included four variables influential to student withdrawal: academic performance, intent to leave, background and defining variables, and environmental variables (Bean & Metzner, 1985).

The factors that affect nontraditional students are different than the factors that affected the students in Tinto's work. Bean and Metzner (1985) considered the effects of a student's academic and environmental variables on their academic outcomes. These academic outcomes include grades and chances of graduating, and the psychological outcomes include utility, satisfaction, goal commitment, and stress. The authors

acknowledged Tinto's (1993) theory that social integration influences a student's decision to withdraw. However, they considered social integration secondary to the influence of the background, defining, academic, and environmental variables on the decision to withdraw (Bean & Metzner, 1985). The authors insisted that academic and environmental variables influence the withdrawal of older, nontraditional students and typically do not influence the withdrawal of younger, traditional students.

Rovai took it one step further. Rovai (2003) included in his composite model the influence of key factors identified in both Tinto's (1993) theory and Bean and Metzner's (1985) model. He agreed with Tinto (1993) that student characteristics, integration, commitment, and community played essential roles in withdrawal. Simultaneously, he concurred with Bean and Metzner (1985) that external and academic factors were critical. He contended that the online student-specific factors, inappropriate to on-campus students, made direct application of either of their ideas unrealistic in the context of online learning. Online learning and online students differ significantly from on-campus learning and on-campus students (Iloh, 2019; Su & Waugh, 2018). For this reason, online-specific factors must be addressed in withdrawal research if the findings are to be applied to students who study online (Rovai, 2003). Consequently, Rovai (2003) insisted on the incorporation of the results from online learning research into his composite model.

The model includes four additional perspectives that address online-specific skills, needs, and teaching and learning styles. First, Rovai included Rowntree's (1995) suggestion that successful online students possess computer literacy, time management, and online interpersonal skills. Then, he integrated the idea that online students need

high-level reading and writing skills (Cole, 2000). Moreover, they need self-esteem, a sense of institutional identification, social integration, online support services, and consistency and clarity of programs, policies, and procedures (Workman & Stenard, 1996). Finally, he incorporated compatibility between the instructor's teaching style and the student's learning style (Grow, 1996).

The focus of research changes with the times. Theories and models that only focus on traditional residential university students, such as those of Spady (1970) and Pascarella (1980), would not be appropriate for this study. Furthermore, models such as Kamens (1974) that emphasize the role of size and prestige of universities in student retention would not be appropriate for this study as community colleges are seldom known for their prestige. Rovai's (2003) model has provided the framework for studies regarding online retention from massive open online courses (Kizilcec & Halawa, 2015) and the withdrawal of online graduate students (Su & Waugh, 2018).

In short, Rovai's model incorporates multiple goals concerning this study. It helps identify struggles encountered by online students, explains potential causes of withdrawal, and can guide withdrawal intervention development (Rovai, 2003). The student characteristics Rovai (2003) proposed include focus on a student's personal characteristics brought with them into college including their age, ethnicity, and gender, as well as their intellectual development and academic performance and preparation. Rovai's (2003) student skills include those needed to learn remotely such as computer and information literacy, time management, proficiency in reading and writing, and patience with and mastery of computer-based interactions. According to Rovai (2003), external factors can affect an online student's persistence and include but are not limited

to non-college related responsibilities such as family and child care, employment, finances, life crises including relationship or health issues, and the opportunity to transfer. Lastly, the internal factors he proposed include influences such as a student's educational goal and institutional commitments, study habits, satisfaction, self-esteem, their perceived compatibility between instructor teaching style and student learning style, and the college's course availability, clarity of policies, and accessibility of services, among others. As establishing an understanding of the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD is the goal, Rovai's (2003) composite persistence model, which addresses all of these factors, is best suited for this study.

This study extended the online student withdrawal research to SWD. SWD are a population that includes up to 20% of the 5.7 million students in American community colleges (NCES, 2019a, 2019c). SWD are less likely to graduate community college, matriculate to university, and earn a bachelor's degree than their peers without disabilities (Rosenbaum, 2018), and enroll in online courses at rates higher than ever (De Los Santos et al., 2019). Through the lens of Rovai's (2003) composite model of persistence, the researcher will explore how community college SWD describe how student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Review of the Literature

The review of the literature section provides a foundation that assists the reader in understanding the current literature regarding the themes of students with disabilities (SWD), online learning, and at the confluence of the two, SWD in online learning. It describes the need for qualitative research regarding the reasons for asynchronous online

course withdrawal of community college SWD. The goal of this section is to establish an understanding of the experiences of the target population of community college SWD, the current state and realities of the online learning format, and the lack of and need for research regarding SWD in online learning.

Students With Disabilities

The first section of the review of the literature explores the current literature base regarding students with disabilities (SWD). The subthemes describe (a) disability law; (b) disability disclosure, identity, and the fight for accommodation; (c) accommodation effectiveness; (d) peer perceptions; (e) faculty perceptions; (f) a hidden curriculum; and (g) academic outcomes of students with disabilities. This discussion describes the college experience for SWD and establishes an understanding of what may draw SWD to asynchronous online learning.

Disability Law. Over the last 50 years, individuals with disabilities have gained increased rights and protections afforded by the law. Americans are protected from disability discrimination by beneficiaries of federal aid (OCR, 2020) under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The United States Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, extending that mandate to all public entities (OCR, 2020). Moreover, students with disabilities (SWD) were ensured that schools will provide learning accommodations to help them learn effectively under the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (OCR, 2011). These federal regulations are an attempt at leveling the playing field for SWD.

Students transitioning from secondary to postsecondary education encounter many changes. In high school, parents, teachers, and staff address student

accommodations using an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP; Fowler et al., 2018). An IEP is used to specify and define the student's limitations and define the addressing of those limitations (Fowler et al., 2018). However, in college, the student is responsible for seeking out and applying for services, and requesting accommodations in the classroom (Fowler et al., 2018). Today, up to 20% of the 5.7 million American community college students report at least one disability (NCES, 2019a, 2019c).

Students with a wide range of disabilities are protected under the law. Students can have physical, learning, and psychological disabilities, developmental delay, visual and hearing impairments, brain injury, and other health impairments (OCR, 2011). To qualify for services, a student must provide written verification of the disability that explains the limitations to their participation in higher education without additional services (OCR, 2011). Typically, college students find an outline of available services and accommodations through the campus disability support office (OCR, 2011).

Accommodations provided by disability support offices include auxiliary aides including recording devices and computer screen readers or voice recognition software, and services such as notetakers, extended test time and proctoring, and sign language interpreters (OCR, 2011). Various resources are available to SWD; however, students often decline the utilization of these resources.

Disability Disclosure, Identity, and the Fight for Accommodation. Disability identity and disclosure are fluid. A study by Aquino and Bittinger (2019), based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics, compared the disability identification tendencies of students with physical, learning, and sensory disabilities. Participants in their study included 1,670 community college SWD in their first year and 1,820 SWD in

their second year of college (Aquino & Bittinger, 2019). The results showed that students with physical disabilities tended to un-identify over time, indicating their disability-related needs had been met (Aquino & Bittinger, 2019). Students with learning and sensory disabilities tended to remain identified year after year because their needs had not been met and they continued to require accommodation (Aquino & Bittinger, 2019). The authors concluded that disability disclosure is profoundly personal and complex and that disability identity is fluid, meaning that students often choose when and for how long they disclose.

Still, not all students disclose their disabilities. Consequently, SWD are underrepresented on campus (De Los Santos et al., 2019; Morris et al., 2016). In their quantitative study regarding the value of closed captioning, Morris et al. (2016) stated that 13% of the campus population reported having a disability, yet only 6% registered with campus disability support services. Additionally, De Los Santos et al. (2019) revealed comparable results in their study regarding the prediction of academic success of SWD. Results of their quantitative study indicated that 16% of the university students who disclosed a disability decided against registration with disability support services (De Los Santos et al., 2019). Student motivations to avoid disclosure and disability-related support services stem from complex life experiences that influence their view of self and hopes for the future (O'Shea & Kaplan, 2018). The literature emphasized barriers to disability disclosure, including the fear of stigmatization (Aquino & Bittinger, 2019; Squires et al., 2018), perception of weakness (O'Shea & Kaplan, 2018), and the negative perceptions of others (Becker & Palladino, 2016; Bettencourt et al., 2018).

More recently, researchers have shifted the focus away from fear-based barriers toward the disclosure and accommodation process itself. Authors have described the disability identification and accommodation process for students in higher education as ineffective (Weis & Beauchemin, 2020), frustrating (Herbert et al., 2020), and unfavorable to SWD (Ressa, 2021). Herbert et al. (2020) conducted a qualitative study to explore how university policy, culture, and resources impacted SWD. Their focus groups included 26 students from various academic levels and with various disabilities from a large Northeastern university. Students in the focus groups reported that they bear the responsibility of proving the existence and validity of their disability (Herbert et al., 2020). Students must fight for accommodations from untrained faculty who often cannot accommodate disabilities or even understand them (Herbert et al., 2020). These results indicate a significant difference between the disability-related treatment received by SWD in high school and college.

Francis, Duke, et al. agreed. The participants in their qualitative study referred to the fight for accommodations as constant. Through interviews with eight university SWD, Francis, Duke, et al. (2019) reported that university professionals who understood the struggles and genuinely cared for the wellbeing of SWD proved just as important, if not more important than the classroom accommodations. They concluded that the university's lack of effective accommodation training for faculty contributes to the lower academic outcomes of SWD (Herbert et al., 2020). Authors repeatedly claimed that this lack of faculty training poses a barrier to disability disclosure (Bettencourt et al., 2018; De Los Santos et al., 2019; Francis, Duke, et al., 2019). While SWD are afforded the

right and given the responsibility to disclose a disability, the research suggests that those who do find disappointing results.

Accommodation Effectiveness. Depending on their limitations, SWD have a range of accommodations available to them. These modifications to tasks, procedures, or the environment allow SWD to participate without barriers (OCR, 2020). However, the literature often described accommodation ineffectiveness. De Los Santos et al. (2019) reported that less than 31% of the students who accessed services and accommodations in their study felt the accommodations met their needs. Aquino and Bittinger (2019) suggested that a student's need for accommodations varies by the type and severity of their disability. Institutions find it easier to accommodate students with physical needs by improving access to the interior and exterior spaces of the campus (Aquino & Bittinger, 2019). However, accommodating the needs of students with learning and sensory disabilities proved to be a more challenging and lengthier process (Aquino & Bittinger, 2019). Hence, the authors suggest a fluctuation in needs over time (Aquino & Bittinger, 2019).

Graduate SWD experience some of the same needs as their less experienced counterparts. Terras et al. (2020) studied the accommodation use of online SWD and found that the impact of a student's disability and their ease of accommodation online differed by their disability type. Their findings indicated that students with health or visual impairments required specialized access to the course and found their impairments were lessened online since their needs were easily accomplished (Terras et al., 2020). On the other hand, students with LD, ADHD, and psychological disorders needed help comprehending and processing the course content (Terras et al., 2020). As a result, they

reported an increase in the impact of their disability and need for ongoing accommodation while they studied online (Terras et al., 2020).

Integration and growth are important aspects of the college student experience. The social integration and emotional and psychological development of SWD were common themes in the literature (Bettencourt et al., 2018; Francis, Duke, et al., 2019; Rosenbaum, 2018; Sarrett, 2018). Specifically, students with autism reported feeling stressed and out of place (Sarrett, 2018). While many SWD find that accommodations meet their needs, students with autism declare their unique needs remain largely unmet (Sarrett, 2018).

Students on the autism spectrum have become a focus of research. Sarrett (2018) asked the participants for suggestions of accommodations that could address their specific needs. Their answers corresponded and overwhelmingly focused on improving their social skills (Sarrett, 2018). Their suggestions included the service of mediators and peer mentors who could work individually with students with autism to help them become more comfortable on campus. The participants also suggested creating separate sensory and safe spaces that could help them meet their unique sensory needs (Sarrett, 2018). Their responses highlighted the multitude of needs of different types of students and the importance of addressing them all.

SWD achieve success over time through trial and error just as do their peers without disabilities. Success for SWD is not a result of accommodation use (Squires et al., 2018). The current literature suggests that the process of securing accommodations needs improvement (Francis, Duke, et al., 2019; Herbert et al., 2020). Moreover, many students report that accommodations are ineffective for their disability (Aquino &

Bittinger, 2019; Bettencourt et al., 2018; Francis, Duke, et al., 2019; Rosenbaum, 2018; Sarrett, 2018). Authors repeatedly indicate that multiple opportunities exist for improvement in higher education related to disability services and accommodations.

Peer Perceptions. College can be a time of blossoming independence. Squires et al. (2018) suggested SWD seek to be viewed similarly to their peers without disabilities (Squires et al., 2018). However, SWD often perceive negative attitudes toward them in college. After examining the effects of disability stigma, Akin and Huang (2019) found that peer perceptions are influenced by disability type. When quantitatively surveyed about their perceptions of and attitudes toward SWD, 116 students without disabilities from the University of California at Davis tended to agree that students with visible and non-visible disabilities do not differ in most respects (Akin & Huang, 2019). However, they regarded psychiatric disabilities as something for which the student was responsible and in control. In addition, the participants claimed that students with psychiatric disabilities are less deserving of accommodation than students with visible disabilities (Akin & Huang, 2019).

Some students view disability as a personal responsibility. This view of disability aligns with Gill's (1987) medical model of disability. In the model, disability is defined as a deficiency or negative attribute within the individual's responsibility that can be medically treated to appear more normal (Gill, 1987). In contrast, in the social model of disability, disability is defined as a difference or a neutral attribute that makes an individual unique but causes difficulty in functioning in a non-accessible society (Gill, 1987). Several articles in the current literature refer to disability stigma and society's

view of disability (Akin & Huang, 2019; Bogart et al., 2018; Culp et al., 2017; Thurston et al., 2017).

Culp et al. agreed. The authors found similar results when they conducted a quantitative study at a large American metropolitan university (Culp et al., 2017). The authors examined students' knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, self-efficacy, and intentions toward individuals with disabilities. Descriptive statistics, multiple multivariate analysis of covariances, multivariate analysis of variance, and univariate F-tests revealed that 146 students in health education courses tended to have low knowledge of disabilities, more negative than positive attitudes toward individuals with disabilities, and high levels of self-efficacy to work with individuals with disabilities (Culp et al., 2017). Additionally, women had more positive attitudes than men toward individuals with disabilities (Culp et al., 2017). The authors recommended interventions to increase knowledge, attitudes, and self-efficacy regarding disability because negative effects of these factors harm individuals with disabilities and lower their quality of life (Culp et al., 2017).

The social model of disability is attitude changing. Results of a quantitative study by Bogart et al. (2018) mirrored the negative attitudes found by Culp and colleagues (Culp et al., 2017). The authors compared the attitudes toward individuals with disabilities and belief in the medical or social model of disability of 215 SWD and 1,548 students without disability at a university in the Pacific Northwest. Quantitative analysis indicated that subscription to the medical and social models of disability strongly predicted attitude favorability (Bogart et al., 2018). Peers without disabilities who subscribed to the medical model had less favorable attitudes than those who subscribed to the social model (Bogart et al., 2018). Additionally, those students who had more contact

with individuals with disabilities had more favorable attitudes toward them (Bogart et al., 2018). It appears that attitudes toward SWD are positively influenced by subscription to the social model of disability and experience with individuals with disabilities (Bogart et al., 2018). Therefore, interventions to increase social model subscription and experience with individuals with disabilities should positively influence SWD's college experiences and overall quality of life (Bogart et al., 2018).

Faculty Perceptions. Peers without disabilities are not the only people to have preconceived ideas about students with disabilities (SWD). The views of faculty impact the experiences and retention of SWD (Cash et al., 2021). Bettencourt et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative study that used focus groups to explore how university faculty understand disability and the needs of SWD in STEM courses. At a large public university in the Northeastern United States, 27 faculty members across 17 STEM majors discussed their experiences and understanding of how to help SWD in their classes. Findings indicated that most faculty members had good intentions in accommodating SWD. However, their lack of experience with and training regarding how to accommodate SWD made accommodating them difficult (Bettencourt et al., 2018).

The faculty discussed how SWD in their classes struggled to secure accommodations and feared disability stigma from their peers. Their students shared their fears that others would consider their accommodations unfair (Bettencourt et al., 2018). Faculty need formal training in understanding disability and accommodating SWD, a sentiment that was echoed in the current literature (Francis, Duke, et al., 2019; Herbert et al., 2020). Bettencourt et al. (2018) advised that such training should be integrated into professional development programs early in a faculty member's employment.

Studies have emerged regarding attitudes toward Universal Design (UD) principles. Gawronski et al. (2016) assessed the attitudes and actions toward SWD of 179 faculty and 449 students at one community college in the Northeastern United States. The results of their quantitative study indicated that faculty and students agreed on the importance of inclusive instruction through UD principles. Nevertheless, they reported that faculty seldom practice those beliefs in the classroom (Gawronski et al., 2016). SWD are negatively affected by this discrepancy between belief and action because they appear to be supported by faculty but do not reap the benefits of supportive actions in the classroom (Gawronski et al., 2016).

Becker and Palladino agreed. Many faculty try to accommodate SWD and have experience doing so. However, in their quantitative study conducted at a university in the midwestern United States, a small group of faculty felt accommodations were unfair to the other students (Becker & Palladino, 2016). Important to note, the same were more likely to indicate a lower self-efficacy to teach SWD (Becker & Palladino, 2016). The authors concluded that through professional development explicitly designed to educate faculty on the rights and accommodations of SWD, and equally important, how to implement them, change in attitude and self-efficacy is possible (Becker & Palladino, 2016).

Cash et al. took this idea one step further. In a quantitative study that included 116 full-time faculty from a large metropolitan university in the Southeastern United States, Cash et al. (2021) set out to reveal whether a correlation existed between faculty attitudes and actions related to accommodations and inclusive instruction. All participants had completed online instructional training and had experience with online teaching and

course design (Cash et al., 2021). Results of an inventory regarding online teaching strategies and two exploratory factor analyses revealed a correlation between faculty attitudes and actions in teaching practice (Cash et al., 2021). In their study, as faculty attitudes improved toward accommodation and inclusive teaching practices, so did their actions toward accommodation and inclusive teaching practices (Cash et al., 2021). Bettencourt et al. (2018) concurred; attitudes and behaviors, including those of faculty, can be changed for the better through intervention.

Attitudes are not always put into practice. While faculty in the literature generally had good intentions (Bettencourt et al., 2018), believed in the importance of inclusive instruction (Gawronski et al., 2016), and were willing to accommodate SWD (Becker & Palladino, 2016), they lacked inclusive classroom practices, which is concerning. Interventions to improve faculty attitudes and increase the use of inclusive teaching practices were reported effective (Bettencourt et al., 2018; Cash et al., 2021). Nonetheless, another perspective of the barriers faced by SWD warrants consideration.

A Hidden Curriculum. College education is not always what it seems. McLean and Dixit (2018) theorized that the educational system focuses on a knowledge transfer from instructor to student. They explain that the material taught, also known as explicit curricula, is the subject matter taught in classrooms today. However, the authors insist this curriculum is only part of what students internalize through participation in formal education. A hidden curriculum exists within the educational system that teaches students norms and values without formal identification (McLean & Dixit, 2018). Students internalize these norms and unknowingly reproduce social inequalities (McLean & Dixit, 2018). These social inequalities subsequently perpetuate racism, sexism, and classism

(McLean & Dixit, 2018). If true, improving the experience for all students, including SWD, must go deeper than simply improving the perceptions of individual faculty. It must encompass a broader view that incorporates the entire institution and educational system (McLean & Dixit, 2018).

Ageism and disability discrimination are alive and well. Ressa (2021) and Quinn et al. (2019) asserted that the hidden curricula perpetuate ableism or disability discrimination for college SWD. In a qualitative study regarding the college experiences and academic challenges of SWD at a Midwestern state university, Ressa (2021) interviewed five undergraduate students. The use of inductive and deductive thematic analysis revealed how SWD were impacted by what the author called the hidden curriculum of time (Ressa, 2021). Ressa's (2021) findings showed that SWD experience an exacerbation of environmental barriers and lose time because of their disability. Participants reported barriers in settings inconducive to their physical limitations, health conditions that increased their personal costs, fear of disability discrimination, and faculty that allowed biases to affect their inclusion in school activities (Ressa, 2021). The author recommended that critical thinking be taught and encouraged with SWD to lessen the impact of these barriers on their experiences.

Quinn et al. took the idea of disability bias another step forward. The authors extended the idea of a hidden curriculum to the accessibility of university websites for SWD (Quinn et al., 2019). The authors conducted a study researching the accessibility of 35 university writing center websites. Results indicated that SWD encountered inaccessibility of up to 70% of the content on the websites (Quinn et al., 2019). SWD are a marginalized population of students (House-Peters et al., 2017). Quinn et al. (2019)

claimed that SWD are harmed by the discriminatory cultures and unconscious messages about normalcy that are perpetuated by student support center websites that are inaccessible to them (Quinn et al., 2019). University administration and staff that incorporate inclusive website design acknowledge the barriers faced by SWD and can help enact change toward increased inclusion of SWD, improving their college experience and quality of life (Quinn et al., 2019).

Academic Outcomes of Students with Disabilities. Studies have repeatedly included data that showed that students with disabilities (SWD) have lower academic outcomes than their peers without disabilities. SWD exhibited lower levels of preparedness for college-level work (Thurston et al., 2017), academic performance (Showers & Kinsman, 2017), and graduation and matriculation rates (Rosenbaum, 2018). To evaluate these outcomes with the population of students with learning disabilities (LD), Showers and Kinsman (2017) performed a quantitative secondary analysis of data from the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002, 2004, and 2013. They interviewed 346 secondary students with LD in the 10th and 12th grades and again, nine years after graduation. Using maximum likelihood estimates and model specification, the authors found that nine years after high school graduation, only 38% of the sample had graduated with a bachelor's degree compared to the national average of 59% (Showers & Kinsman, 2017). Furthermore, the sample reported an overall grade point average of 2.4 compared to the national average of 2.7, indicating lower bachelor's degree attainment and academic performance for students with LD (Showers & Kinsman, 2017).

Even studies conducted outside of higher education agree. Thurston et al. (2017) examined 117 different projects funded by the National Science Foundation's Research

in Disabilities Education Synthesis Project or RDE-SP. The authors quantitatively analyzed annual and evaluation reports, publications related to the projects, project websites, and data from online questionnaires completed by project investigators related to SWD in STEM education (Thurston et al., 2017). After studying the challenges, best practices, and lessons learned from the projects, the authors concluded that SWD tend to be unprepared for college-level coursework (Thurston et al., 2017). However, they concluded that the challenges they identified, including lack of preparation in high school, administrator and faculty cooperation, available accommodations, and faculty knowledge of how to accommodate SWD, could be overcome, resulting in success in STEM education for SWD (Thurston et al., 2017).

Research has also focused on predictors of academic success for SWD. For example, Rosenbaum (2018) studied predictors of community college and university graduation for students with health impairments. Using a quantitative case-control research design, Rosenbaum (2018) analyzed data from the Add Health National Longitudinal Study that focused on students' educational achievement from high school graduation to community college and university graduation. The author examined the effects of 57 health impairments on educational attainment (Rosenbaum, 2018). Results indicated that students who were overweight, obese, recently hospitalized, and who wore eyeglasses and stuttered were less likely to earn a bachelor's degree than their peers without disabilities (Rosenbaum, 2018). Surprisingly, blind students and those on diabetes medications were more likely to graduate with a bachelor's degree than their peers without disabilities (Rosenbaum, 2018). Similar to Ressa's (2021) findings,

Rosenbaum (2018) confirmed that health impairments could delay and even derail the learning and graduation rates of SWD.

In recent literature, the impact of disability support services has been called into question. De Los Santos et al. (2019) studied the effects of registration with the campus disability support office, academic accommodation, and social and institutional support on the academic performance of SWD at a university in Texas. After analyzing surveys from 122 SWD, the authors concluded that none of the variables used in the study predicted academic success for SWD (De Los Santos et al., 2019). Fleming et al. (2017) concurred that use of campus disability support services does not predict success. The authors quantitatively studied relationships between student characteristics, the academic environment, and academic performance of 325 SWD from three prominent universities (Fleming et al., 2017). In their study, SWD who accessed disability support services found no positive influence on academic performance (Fleming et al., 2017).

The literature also offered recommendations to improve the academic outcomes of SWD. For example, Rosenbaum (2018) suggested a cautious approach to college success. Students with health disabilities should earn community college certificates or associate degrees first before earning a bachelor's degree (Rosenbaum, 2018). Students should also lessen dependence on accommodations while in college to transition more smoothly to the workplace, which typically will not offer the accommodations found in college (Hadley, 2018). Institutions can also help SWD increase their self-advocacy skills by developing and implementing interventions that teach them about their disability, learning styles, interests, and strengths (Thurston et al., 2017).

To summarize, this section of the review of the literature shows that SWD are a significant population on American college campuses (NCES, 2019a), protected from disability-related discrimination (OCR, 2020), yet tend to have lower graduation and matriculation rates than their peers without disabilities (Rosenbaum, 2018). In addition, they experience an unfavorable disability service and accommodation system (Ressa, 2021), negative reactions from peers (Akin & Huang, 2019) and faculty (Becker & Palladino, 2016), and disappointment in ineffective accommodations that lead many to forego disability service use altogether (Bettencourt et al., 2018). McLean and Dixit (2018) even suggested a hidden curriculum exists that covertly perpetuates disability discrimination.

Additionally, the research regarding SWD tends to be quantitatively approached. Flink and Leonard (2019) added that the current literature seldom focuses on community college SWD. Thus, this study that will explore descriptions of the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD addresses an unmet need in the literature.

Online Learning

The second section of the review of the literature explores the current literature base regarding online learning. The subthemes include (a) an introduction to online learning; (b) online course completion and withdrawal; (c) reasons for online course withdrawal; (d) the decision to study online; (e) misunderstood expectations; (f) success online including online student demographics, academic skills and habits, and personal attributes; (g) online interaction and engagement; and (h) interventions to decrease online course withdrawal. Through this discussion, the researcher will establish an

understanding of the online learning experience, the needs of online students, and the appropriateness of the format for different populations of students.

Introduction to Online Learning. Achieving a college education can be difficult for marginalized individuals. Marginalized individuals find online learning a helpful tool in their educational pursuits (House-Peters et al., 2017). Although overall higher education enrollments in the United States have slightly declined since 2012, online enrollments have increased (Seaman et al., 2018). As of 2016, almost seven million students, comprising 43.5% of all undergraduate students in the United States, were enrolled in at least one online course at a degree-granting institution (NCES, 2019b). Additionally, busy adult students benefit from the flexibility of access to course material from anywhere an internet connection is available and on a personalized schedule in the online format.

Currently, multiple formats of learning are offered on college campuses. Students can take courses in the on-campus format, the hybrid format with a mix of online and on-campus attendance, and the online format with no on-campus attendance (Ghaffari, 2018). Students find benefits and drawbacks to each of the three formats; though, some find more benefit and success in one format over another (Ghaffari, 2018). For example, in a study of 26 nursing students enrolled in three formats of the same physiology course at a university in the southeastern United States, Ghaffari (2018) compared and highlighted the benefits and drawbacks of each format. Participants in his study appreciated the socialization, study groups, and personal contact with the instructor in the on-campus format. The participants appreciated the flexibility and accessibility of materials in the hybrid format; however, participants reported feeling lonely and looking

forward to their on-campus meetings. Participants most appreciated the flexibility and convenience of the fully online format; however, they, too, reported feeling lonely and expressed the most dissatisfaction with the course (Ghaffari, 2018). The results revealed positive and negative aspects of all three formats suggesting students must understand their unique learning preferences and needs and what online learning entails before they choose to learn online (Ghaffari, 2018).

Nevertheless, the current literature lacks definitive answers regarding the benefit and detriment of online learning to student success. Studies investigating online student retention suggested that online courses help students persist to graduation (James et al., 2016; Shea & Bidjerano, 2018; Wavle & Ozogul, 2019). To gain a deeper understanding of the impact of taking online courses on graduation rates of university students, Wavle and Ozogul (2019) quantitatively compared the graduation rates of 12,840 students from a large Midwestern public university between 2010 and 2016. The study compared students who took at least one online course to those who took no online courses. Contrary to previously cited research, students who took at least one online course had a significantly higher 6-year graduation rate and almost equivalent grade point average than those who did not take any online courses (Wavle & Ozogul, 2019).

Agreement has been found in the literature. James et al. (2016) analyzed over 650,000 student records from five community colleges, five universities, and four fully online institutions across multiple states. They found that although students who took only online courses had a lower likelihood of retention, those who mixed online with on-campus courses had a higher likelihood of retention (James et al., 2016).

Students can gain momentum toward graduation by supplementing their schedule with online courses. Shea and Bidjerano (2018) defined what they called the tipping point or the point at which online course supplementation becomes a detriment to community college degree completion. After performing a secondary analysis of national data of 4,400 students in community college degree programs, they concluded that students who enrolled in online courses for up to 40% of their course load benefitted from those online courses. Conversely, when students took more than 40% of their courses in the online format, the format became detrimental to their degree completion (Shea & Bidjerano, 2018). Subsequently, Shea and Bidjerano (2018) recommended advising community college students not to take more than two online courses for every three on-campus courses.

Online Course Completion and Withdrawal. The evidence presented thus far casts online learning in a primarily positive light. However, conflicting research shows that taking any online courses negatively impacts the experiences of college students, whether through increased course repetition (Hart et al., 2018) or lower likelihood of graduation (Huntington-Klein et al., 2017). Studies conducted at community colleges (Chatman et al., 2019) and universities (Athens, 2018; Murphy & Stewart, 2017) demonstrated similar conflicting results.

Breit and Schreyer (2018) studied enrollment and retention data from nearly 750 American public undergraduate universities between 2012 and 2015. Firstly, what they found confirmed that public and private universities with more exclusively online students reported lower overall retention rates (Breit & Schreyer, 2018). Secondly, with each incremental increase in the percentage of online course enrollments, the authors

found that retention rates in the data decreased (Breit & Schreyer, 2018). The authors stressed this significant caveat. While institutional enrollment may increase due to online course offerings, these increases occur at the price of decreased retention (Breit & Schreyer, 2018). Murphy and Stewart (2017) concurred that students risk negating the benefits of online learning when they do not complete online courses.

Murphy and Stewart followed suit. The authors investigated the variables of unsuccessful online course completion by comparing course completion rates of on-campus physics courses from 2004 to 2013 at a large university in the southern United States to three semesters of course completion rates in equivalent hybrid physics courses (Murphy & Stewart, 2017). After conducting multiple statistical analyses, the authors reported that the course withdrawal rate for online sections of the course was 14% higher than for the on-campus sections. Additionally, course completion rates, defined as a final grade of A, B, or C, were 11% lower in the online course sections (Murphy & Stewart, 2017).

A study by Chatman et al. offered comparable results. In the Virginia Community College System, the authors examined the grade distribution of students who enrolled in and either completed or withdrew from an online course between 2015 and 2018 (Chatman et al., 2019). In over 206,000 student attempts at online courses, 29% were unsuccessful and resulted in a 'W' for withdrawal or a non-passing grade of 'D' or 'F'. Moreover, each year, more than 10% of all enrolled students withdrew without completing the course (Chatman et al., 2019). These results indicate that any attempt to increase student success and graduation rates could be a challenge.

McKinney et al. (2019) conducted a study that investigated the characteristics of community college students who withdrew from their courses and the types of community college courses with the highest withdrawal rates. After comparing the institutional records of 5,878 students in a community college district in Texas over a 6-year span, McKinney et al. (2019) found that African American students, male students, and students with GEDs instead of high school diplomas were most likely to withdraw from their courses. Moreover, students who withdrew from courses tended to attend school part time, have grade point averages lower than 2.0, and take developmental courses (McKinney et al., 2019). The courses with the highest withdrawal rates included math, science, and college-level writing courses (McKinney et al., 2019). Additionally, compared to hybrid courses, entirely online courses indicated higher withdrawal rates (McKinney et al., 2019). The authors noted that while their results suggested the type of students likely to withdraw from courses and the courses with the most withdrawal, the reasons for withdrawal have not been suggested (McKinney et al., 2019). Yet, as the authors point out, their quantitative research only focused on the numbers associated with the phenomenon. While it conveys the breadth and extent of online course withdrawal, the literature falls short of exploring the reasons for online course withdrawal.

Quantitative researchers agree that a need exists in the current literature for qualitative research regarding the reasons behind online course withdrawal, as they were unable to meet that need in their quantitative studies (McKinney et al., 2019; Murphy & Stewart, 2017). Consequently, researchers who address the reasons for online course withdrawal can provide the new knowledge needed to understand how to approach positive change that could increase student success (McKinney et al., 2019).

Reasons for Online Course Withdrawal. Online withdrawal is widespread. Researchers found similar results at community colleges (Fetzner, 2013), public universities (Athens, 2018; Peck et al., 2018), private undergraduate universities (Christensen & Spackman, 2017; Sorensen & Donovan, 2017), and private graduate universities (Shaw et al., 2016). This indicates the severity and significance of the problem of online course withdrawal. Attention to the problem is crucial if progress in improving online learning is a goal.

Furthermore, online withdrawal is ongoing. Fetzner (2013) conducted a longitudinal mixed-methods study in which she surveyed by phone 438 community college students from one institution in New York who were unsuccessful in an online course in the 2000-2001, 2005-2006, and 2009-2010 academic years. The author asked the participants about their reasons for their lack of success in the online course, with lack of success defined as either receiving a D or F grade or withdrawing from the course. Additionally, the author solicited advice for potential first-time online students based on the participants' experiences (Fetzner, 2013). Responding to Likert-type questions, participants reported the reasons for their lack of success in the online course included falling behind in work and the inability to catch up (19.7%); personal issues such as health, employment, and childcare (14.2%); and the inability to manage the combination of schoolwork and home responsibilities (13.7%; Fetzner, 2013). Furthermore, they offered advice for potential first-time online students that included staying up to date with requirements from the start, practicing effective time management and organizational habits, having a regular schoolwork schedule each week, and determining early how to access technical help (Fetzner, 2013). The study suggested insights that college staff used

to design and implement an orientation for first-time online students (Fetzner, 2013). At the time of the study publication, the college administration was considering making the orientation mandatory for all first-time online students (Fetzner, 2013).

SWD are sometimes included in largescale studies that produce little knowledge about the population. For example, Athens (2018) conducted a quantitative study regarding the learning community and engagement of underrepresented populations, including SWD in online courses at a public university in the southeastern United States. One of the numerous factors analyzed in the study that included 643 online students, the online course retention rate for the Spring 2016 semester was approximately 3% lower than in matched on-campus courses. The most often cited reasons for online withdrawal included personal (39%), academic difficulty (22%), employment (20%), and health (10%; Athens, 2018). Similar to the Fetzner study, Athens' (2018) results were used as the basis for intervention strategies to increase the success of underrepresented populations in online courses at the university (Athens, 2018). The authors did not define the personal category thus, the study's results remain unclear (Athens, 2018).

Online course withdrawal has been documented at private institutions, too. Investigating online student withdrawal at a private university, Sorensen and Donovan (2017) conducted a mixed-methods study that collected archived data, online surveys, phone and email interviews, and classroom walk-throughs. The participants reported several reasons for withdrawal from an online program with the most common being work and family commitments (39%; Sorensen & Donovan, 2017). Remarkably, the participants reported work and family commitments were also the most common reason for choosing to study online (79%; Sorensen & Donovan, 2017). It appears the reason

these students chose to study online became the reason they could not experience success online.

The three previously mentioned studies focused on the reasons for the online course withdrawal of students in three different types of higher education institutions. However, only Sorensen and Donovan (2017) used qualitative methods to offer participants the ability to respond in an open-ended format instead of choosing from a predetermined list of responses. While the strict adherence to the quantitative, deductive approach could provide generalizations of their reasons for online course withdrawal, it would not allow the participant to be specific and describe their unique experiences. By utilizing both deductive procedures in the development of research questions and inductive procedures in the data analysis, the researcher can benefit from useful theoretical perspectives while appreciating all results, even those not proposed in the literature (Hyde, 2000). A better understanding of the reasons for online course withdrawal is needed (Sorensen & Donovan, 2017), specifically using the qualitative approach (McKinney et al., 2019) because it magnifies the student's voice.

Additional studies have assumed the reasons for online course withdrawal without directly asking the students involved why they withdrew. Studies correlated online course withdrawal with factors including the time of withdrawal (Christensen & Spackman, 2017) and motivational orientation (Peck et al., 2018) but again, quantitative methods cannot obtain firsthand descriptions of the reasons for online course withdrawal. These descriptions remain unaddressed in the current literature.

The Decision to Study Online. Some decisions are made in haste. Students should give precedence to their individual learning preferences (Grow, 1996) and needs

(Workman & Stenard, 1996) when considering online learning. However, this approach is often ignored. Students choose online courses most often for the convenience of the format, the ability to study at their own pace, and the flexibility to attend class around busy schedules (Murphy et al., 2019). Students today are comfortable using digital technology in the online space and increasingly choose online learning (Wavle & Ozogul, 2019). Although students are drawn to the technological incentives of online learning, research suggests that students are also drawn to online learning incentives of different types.

Some students find a comfort level in online learning not found on campus. Chadha (2018) offered a view from the feminist perspective. She surveyed and studied the online posting habits of 458 online students from public and private universities and community colleges across multiple states and semesters. She found that female students often choose online courses in response to a feeling of intimidation when participating in the on-campus classroom. Some female students find intimidation to be a barrier to on-campus participation (Chadha, 2018). In the online format, students can deliberate before they respond and increase their perception of gender equity in class discussions (Chadha, 2018).

Still, others presented a different view. In a study of student motivations behind online community college enrollments, Fox (2017) interviewed 18 students from a Midwestern community college and found that students enrolled online to avoid negative on-campus experiences. Some students prefer to remain faceless online after negative interactions with peers or instructors on campus (Fox, 2017). One older student identified a sense of discomfort while conversing with students much younger than himself. The

student indicated he felt intimidated to speak his mind in front of students so different than himself (Fox, 2017). Although people of all backgrounds can be brought together through higher education, not all students are comfortable with that diversity.

Students' ability to juggle online learning and personal commitments often proved to be too much to handle in this review of the literature. However, students found several incentives to studying online including convenience and flexibility (Murphy et al., 2019), increased gender equity (Chadha, 2018), and a greater comfort level with their learning experiences (Fox, 2017). Regardless, online learning is growing (Seaman et al., 2018).

Misunderstood Expectations. Students tend to be unaware when they decide to begin an online course or program, that differences exist between online and on-campus learning. As previously noted, students find benefits to the online format such as convenience and flexibility (Murphy et al., 2019), gender equity (Chadha, 2018), and a greater sense of social comfort (Fox, 2017). Nevertheless, students' reasons for enrolling online are not always based on a solid understanding of what to expect. Multiple studies have focused on students' misunderstood expectations of online learning and the influence these misunderstood expectations can have on online course outcomes (Fetzner, 2013; Iloh, 2019; Murphy & Stewart, 2017; Su & Waugh, 2018).

Focusing specifically on adult learners at a community college in the Western United States, Iloh (2019) interviewed 34 online students, of which 79% had little or no online course experience. She found that they considered themselves unprepared for online work. Participants reported a learning curve they did not expect and a misunderstanding regarding the level of technological literacy needed to do well online (Iloh, 2019).

Mistakes can be costly. Su and Waugh (2018) conducted a longitudinal quantitative study of 25 graduate students who completed a fully online program at a university in the Eastern United States. They compared the online expectations, preferences, and outcomes of the students who completed the program with the expectations, preferences, and outcomes of students who dropped out of the program. When asked about their perceptions of the amount of time and work needed to succeed in the program, all the participants who dropped out and 64% of the participants who completed the program indicated they underestimated the amount of time and effort needed to be successful (Su & Waugh, 2018). The authors explain that this perception may be due to a tendency of prospective students to mistake the advertised convenience of the online program with the difficulty level of completing it (Su & Waugh, 2018). In other words, students often confuse online convenience with ease of completion.

Some results can be eye opening. After discovering that almost half the participants (43.2%) in her study misunderstood when the course began and assumed they could start at any point in the semester, Fetzner (2013) realized and reported that students lack a basic knowledge of how online courses work before enrolling online (Fetzner, 2013). Misunderstanding a fundamental course concept such as when the course began clearly shows that students misunderstand online expectations in their first attempt at an online course (Fetzner, 2013). These misunderstandings can lead to unwanted consequences.

What appears to be an easy way out is not always the easy way. While analyzing the data from their study on unsuccessful online course completion, Murphy and Stewart (2017) noted that several previously unsuccessful students chose to enroll in the online

section under what they assumed to be a belief that the online section would be easier than the on-campus section. Students who had previously failed or withdrawn from the same course on campus and re-enrolled in the online section for their second attempt had a significantly lower rate of success online (35%) compared to those who repeated the course on campus (69%; Murphy & Stewart, 2017). In agreement with the Fetzner (2013) article, Murphy and Stewart (2017) concluded that students do not understand what to expect online and confuse the ease of course access with the ease of course completion. These observations indicate that the online format is a markedly different environment, often more challenging to navigate and stressful on the student than initially expected. Furthermore, Murphy and Stewart (2017) attest that when students are not successful in their online courses, the instructional effectiveness and positive benefits of online instruction are negated. Therefore, identifying students who were previously unsuccessful and intervening early in the semester with targeted interventions could prove beneficial for these students who misunderstand what to expect online (Murphy & Stewart, 2017).

Success Online. College students who choose online learning display characteristics that differentiate them from traditional students. These characteristics are differentiated in the literature as demographic including age, gender, and enrollment status; academic including study habits; or personal attributes including self-advocacy. As Hobson and Puruhito (2018) claimed, student achievement of online success cannot be predicted by only one variable: rather, students achieve success because of an interplay of several variables.

Online Student Demographics. Students who take online courses are typically nontraditional (Rovai, 2003). Bean and Metzner (1985) defined nontraditional students as

older, part-time enrolled due to employment or other responsibilities, and commuters. Traditional students reside on campus, are between 18-24 years old, and attend school full time (Bean & Metzner, 1985). Bean and Metzner's (1985) model of nontraditional student withdrawal emphasizes the difference between the nontraditional and traditional student experience. The authors insist that they must be viewed as separate student groups.

From a demographic standpoint, the research agrees that specific student populations tend to choose online learning more than others and demonstrate better online performance. Online students tend to be women (Bir, 2019; Fox, 2017; Wavle & Ozogul, 2019; Wladis et al., 2015) and older or nontraditionally aged (James et al., 2016; Zimmerman, 2017). Theories suggested women tend to enroll online more often than men, possibly due to the threat of stereotyping, specifically in online STEM courses (Wladis et al., 2015). If women feel intimidated and fear being stereotyped for hoping to enter a male-dominated field, taking STEM courses online may help to alleviate that fear. Older or nontraditionally aged students tend to enroll online for theorized but not confirmed reasons including full-time work or family commitments (Zimmerman, 2017) and increased access to higher education due to online flexibility (James et al., 2016; Wavle & Ozogul, 2019). Additionally, the literature primarily showed that older students experienced better academic performance in online courses (James et al., 2016), possibly due to years of prior business experience (Slover & Mandernach, 2018) and higher levels of self-directed learning (Wladis et al., 2015). However, researchers did not reach a full agreement.

Not all research agrees. After quantitatively comparing online developmental math course outcomes of over 2,400 community college students in the southeastern United States, Francis, Wormington, et al. (2019) found that nontraditionally aged students evidenced lower course outcomes than both online and on-campus traditionally aged students. Nontraditionally aged students have reasons for enrolling online that may affect their academic performance. However, the quantitative methods used frequently in the literature limit the ability to understand their performance levels (Francis, Wormington, et al., 2019). The authors suggested that future research investigate their reasons for enrolling online.

Less agreement was found regarding the gender of students who perform better online. Schommer-Aikins and Easter (2018) suggested women manage online assignments and stress better, have better study skills, less procrastination, and better online comprehension. Additionally, they suggested that men exhibit higher confidence levels with online testing (Schommer-Aikins & Easter, 2018). Gering et al. (2018) that students with more academic experience fared better online. Hobson and Puruhito (2018) and Wladis et al. (2015) concluded that in their studies, no statistical difference was found between the academic performance of male and female students.

Moreover, research demonstrated that online learning is better suited to full-time students. For example, Bir (2019) conducted a quantitative study regarding the effect of the online format on course outcomes for engineering students at a Midwestern university. The authors compared course outcomes of 80 students enrolled in online or on-campus sections of an engineering course. The results indicated that part-time and male and female students' outcomes were negatively influenced by the online format.

However, full-time students' outcomes were not negatively influenced by the online format (Bir, 2019). Although the author stopped short of speculating the reasons for these results, Bean and Metzner (1985) and Zimmerman (2017) addressed this suggestion in their work.

Bean and Metzner's model of nontraditional undergraduate student withdrawal suggests that older, nontraditional students tend to have outside responsibilities that affect their ability to attend college full time (Bean & Metzner, 1985). For this reason, nontraditional students tend to take online courses part time (Bean & Metzner, 1985). Zimmerman (2017) agreed and added that older online students tend to work full time and encounter unexpected complications from outside commitments leaving less time to devote to their schooling than their younger peers who attend full time with fewer outside commitments. If applied to Bir's (2019) study, the theory could explain how the full-time engineering students avoided the negative influence of the online format. If they had fewer outside commitments and responsibilities than the older students and more time and energy available to devote to college, they may be able to avoid any negative online influence. While it is only a theory, it has been repeatedly proposed in the literature (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Zimmerman, 2017).

To summarize, the literature suggests that women and those who are older and attend school part time due to external responsibilities, tend to experience more online course success. This statement is not presumed to be accurate because as shown, the research does not always agree. While busy, older students are attracted to the flexibility and convenience of online learning, some students do not possess the skills and habits

needed for success online. The students who typically choose online courses and the students that the research predicts would fare better online are often not the same.

Academic Skills and Habits. According to Ghaffari (2018), different academic habits and skills are needed in online learning than in on-campus learning. In the review of the literature, the researcher frequently noted that specific academic habits and skills were attributed to successful online students. For example, Dvorak and Jia (2016) looked for correlations between work habits and online course outcomes by analyzing data logs from the course management systems of two online courses at a small liberal arts college in the United States. They analyzed whether the factors of timeliness, regularity, and intensity of student work habits differed by course outcome. What they found indicated that students who started their assignments well before the deadline had higher course outcomes than those who procrastinated (Dvorak & Jia, 2016). Schommer-Aikins and Easter (2018) supported this claim when they posited that students who procrastinate in college will procrastinate online and accordingly, find less success with online assignments and discussions.

Additionally, students who logged into the online classroom in the early afternoon had higher course outcomes than those who logged in late at night (Dvorak & Jia, 2016). Students who take initiative on assignments and dedicate consistent daytime hours to online classwork had higher incoming grade point averages and higher online course outcomes (Dvorak & Jia, 2016). Gering et al. (2018) and MacGregor et al. (2017) agreed. Students with higher incoming grade point averages and more academic experience (Gering et al., 2018), and with higher placement scores (MacGregor et al., 2017) had higher online academic outcomes. Incidentally, Dvorak and Jia (2016) added that the

average number or length of online classroom interactions did not correlate with course outcomes. This result mirrors those of Shelton et al. (2017), who noted that while students with a higher number of course interactions did well, those who had more consistent, sustained course interactions experienced greater online student success.

Carraher Wolverton et al. (2020) studied the online computer skills and self-efficacy of business students at a public university in the Southeastern United States. Quantitative surveys from 83 undergraduate students were collected. Findings indicated that online business students who held pre-conceived positive perceptions of their ability to use computers had significantly higher levels of engagement and better overall online experiences (Carraher Wolverton et al., 2020). This indicates that students experience a long-lasting effect when their beliefs and attitudes are positive before beginning the online course (Carraher Wolverton et al., 2020). Recommendations from the study included interventions to increase computer self-efficacy to avoid negative effects on students' online course engagement (Carraher Wolverton et al., 2020).

In general, it seems that students with established high-quality study habits, academic skills, and self-efficacy tend to do well online. Students without these skills and habits tend not to do well online. This conclusion is important when regarding the types of students who enroll in online courses and their ability to succeed. This fact is indicative of the need for interventions to decrease online withdrawal and increase online completion rates. Nevertheless, academic habits and skills are not the entirety of what is needed to succeed online.

Personal Attributes. Student success in college is attributed to more than the habits and skills the students possess. The student's personal and attitudinal attributes

contribute to the way they feel about their ability to succeed. Students are more responsible for their learning when studying online (Gering et al., 2018; Ghaffari, 2018; Peck et al., 2018; Schommer-Aikins & Easter, 2018) and some students are often ill-equipped to handle the increased responsibility.

Successful online students exhibit specific personal and attitudinal attributes that aid in their online success. Schommer-Aikins and Easter (2018) surveyed 138 undergraduate students at two American universities to investigate online self-directed learning and cognitive flexibility. Their results indicated that the student characteristic of cognitive flexibility is a significant influence on self-directed learning online. What is meant by this is that students who are more knowledgeable of themselves and willing to change as needed in the online environment are better able to comprehend the online material and manage online assignments, discussions, and tests (Schommer-Aikins & Easter, 2018). As their data showed, more effort is required to manage and master learning online.

Effort regulation online is not easily attained. In a study that sought to find the influential factors of online withdrawal or completion and performance, Peck et al. (2018) surveyed 91 students continuously enrolled and 22 students who withdrew from online undergraduate and graduate programs at two Midwestern universities. The authors found that effort regulation can be a positive influence on course retention and self-efficacy can be a positive influence on retention and performance (Peck et al., 2018). As Peck et al. (2018) posited, students must take control of their learning in the online classroom due to the lack of the external motivating factors found in the on-campus classroom. The students in their study who could monitor and regulate their learning and

those with higher self-efficacy for learning the material were more likely to be retained (Peck et al., 2018). These results correspond with findings that suggest that self-efficacy and self-motivation are positive influences on academic performance (Hobson & Puruhito, 2018).

Online Interaction and Engagement. Students tend to overlook the typical level and method of instructor interaction in the classroom when they enroll online. Students who engage in on-campus interactions with the instructor benefit from academic conversations about the material and reminders about the course requirements (Gering et al., 2018). Additionally, they benefit from an often-unnoticed increase of attention and interest in the topic that occurs while clarifying misunderstandings with the instructor (Athens, 2018). Students become accustomed to and expect similar instructor interaction and teaching presence in the online classroom, yet these aspects in the online environment are markedly different (Tanis, 2020).

Gering et al. appreciated the differences. The authors conducted a longitudinal, mixed-methods study in three phases at an American public research university exploring variables influencing online student success from a strengths-based perspective (Gering et al., 2018). First, the authors compared archived demographic data of over 27,000 online course enrollments from the fall 2011 semester to spring 2015 semester. Then, they surveyed 251 undergraduate and graduate online students and interviewed 12 of them in the spring semester of 2016. The qualitative data from the third phase, student interviews, emphasized common themes related to the influence of teaching presence and social interaction online (Gering et al., 2018). Participants indicated that they did not highly appreciate peer interaction online, but that instructor teaching presence was crucial

to their success (Gering et al., 2018). They also appreciated the opportunity to hear the instructor's voice in course media (Gering et al., 2018). In asynchronous online courses, the students and instructor never meet in person, so when students see the instructor and hear their voice in course media, the course experience is enhanced (Gering et al., 2018).

Online students value factors that some may consider trivial. The results of Mandernach et al. (2018) mirrored the sentiment of Gering et al. when their participants indicated they preferred hearing personalized audio lectures online instead of standardized lectures. Their experimental, qualitative study investigated the impact of personalized audio lectures at a private university in the American Southwest (Mandernach et al., 2018). When the students learned the voice of the lecturer was that of their instructor, as opposed to a standardized voice from the university, the students indicated higher levels of satisfaction, connection to the course, and engagement (Mandernach et al., 2018). Although course outcomes did not vary, students accessed twice as many audio lectures in the experimental group, indicating a student preference for hearing the instructor's voice over the voice of an unknown person not associated with their course (Mandernach et al., 2018).

Likewise, improvements to course design can be effective at improving student outcomes. In a quantitative study that compared retention rates before and after the redesign of an online student success course at a community college in North Carolina, McLeod (2019) found a preference for personalized course content. McLeod (2019) noted that students were retained at significantly increased rates when the course was taught by a program-specific instructor and included contextualized course modules that reflected their major and intended career field. Similarly, Tanis (2020) surveyed 12

graduate-level faculty and 111 graduate program alumni from a private metropolitan university in California regarding online teaching and learning. Descriptive statistical analysis revealed the most influential factors to online teaching and learning. Alumni considered engagement with faculty more important than engagement with peers or the content (Tanis, 2020). They also reported a preference for prompt personalized feedback and individual communication and collaboration with the instructor (Tanis, 2020). Conversely, they reported that isolation and lack of connection online were detrimental to their engagement and performance (Tanis, 2020).

These results, combined with those of Gering et al. (2018) and Mandernach et al. (2018), suggest that online students appreciate and prefer personal interaction with the instructor when it comes to online course content. This personal interaction is an enhancement to the online experience. Students reported increased interest and success online (Mandernach et al., 2018).

Additionally, predictions of student outcomes are found in the current literature. To investigate the predictors of online student satisfaction and perceived learning, Alqurashi (2019) surveyed 167 undergraduate and graduate students who had taken at least one online course at a mid-sized private university in Pennsylvania. He used six quantitative scales to examine the predictability of the following variables on student satisfaction and perceived learning: online learner student engagement, learner-content interaction, learner-instructor interaction, and learner-learner interaction. The results of sequential multiple regression indicated that three of the four variables predicted student satisfaction and perceived learning (Alqurashi, 2019). Of the three predictors, online student engagement was the strongest predictor, while learner-content interaction and

learner-instructor interaction were less predictive, and learner-learner interaction was not significantly predictive (Alqurashi, 2019). The authors explained that online students need confidence in their ability to handle online learning. Also critical was their capacity for independent learning while they interact with the content of the course (Alqurashi, 2019). Participants indicated that the most valuable online engagement strategies included using the content presented in various formats and clear, well-prepared, and organized content (Alqurashi, 2019). The least valuable strategies were discussion forums, peer review work, and group work, which participants stated was useless busywork (Alqurashi, 2019).

Often, online students disengage from the course. This can lead to negative outcomes including withdrawal. When students feel disconnected from the online course, they increase their chance of disengagement and decrease their chance of success (Buelow et al., 2019). Buelow et al. (2019) surveyed 417 online students at a small American state university in 2017 regarding their course engagement. Connection was the most common desire of online students in their study (Buelow et al., 2019).

Participants indicated that their engagement levels were much higher when they made connections (Buelow et al., 2019). Opportunities for interacting with the instructor and peers, real-world application of learning, and sharing experiences and opinions influenced this connection (Buelow et al., 2019). When these opportunities were absent in an online course, their feelings of connection and engagement levels were decreased (Buelow et al., 2019).

Experienced online instructors possess a wealth of knowledge regarding online course experiences. One study took advantage of the knowledge possessed by the mass of

experienced online instructors attending regional, national, and international online teaching conferences. Over two years, Dunlap and Lowenthal (2018) compiled a list of crowdsourced recommendations for teaching online from experienced online instructors who attended seven different teaching conferences. By collaborating with professional online instructors, the authors created a list of recommendations for online teaching. Throughout the qualitative data, the predominant recommendations to increase student success and retention included course personalization, authenticity, the instructor's sharing of themselves, and developing a sense of online community (Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2018). In the absence of these connections, online students feel disconnected and discouraged and often disengage from the course (Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2018), a sentiment shared by Tanis (2020). Disengagement frequently leads to course or program withdrawal (Fetzner, 2013). Subsequently, interventions to decrease online course withdrawal are needed (James et al., 2016; McKinney et al., 2019).

Interventions to Decrease Online Course Withdrawal. Online learning is growing. Moreover, it is ranked fourth out of the top 10 challenges to community college student success (American Association of Community Colleges, 2019). Innumerable students choose to take online courses for the inherent flexibility only to withdraw for the same reason (Sorensen & Donovan, 2017). Students who access the online format to pursue a college certificate or degree encounter significant challenges.

This review of the literature provided several recommendations to help students navigate these challenges and decrease online course withdrawal. Additionally, the research posited that not all courses translate well from on-campus to online delivery (Huntington-Klein et al., 2017). Because the instructional design of a course can increase

student motivation (Peck et al., 2018), investigating online course designs to pinpoint potential problems affecting engagement and success is an effective way to approach the issue of online withdrawal (Christensen & Spackman, 2017).

Wladis et al. agreed with Christensen and Spackman. In a study of course-level factors and their influence on online course withdrawal, Wladis et al. (2017) compared the outcome data of 1,001 students who took a course online and 1,329 students who took the same course, taught by the same instructor, on campus at one community college in the Northeastern United States. Results indicated the rates of successful course completion were 58.6% online and 65.3% on campus (Wladis et al., 2017). According to the study, online course characteristics with an effect on course outcomes included major or elective course type, difficulty level, and STEM status (Wladis et al., 2017). For this reason, institutions should target interventions to specific types of online courses. For example, withdrawal from elective courses was more likely than from courses in their major (Wladis et al., 2017). In agreement with Hobson and Puruhito (2018), the results of this study indicate that students who take online courses within their major may have more interest and find more value in the course as opposed to those who take elective courses online (Wladis et al., 2017). Nevertheless, approaching online course withdrawal from the course level could be much less costly and more effective than approaching from the student level, where interventions are designed to target specific student characteristics (Wladis et al., 2017).

Researchers who approached it from the student level agreed that support interventions implemented early in the semester produce the best effects (Murphy & Stewart, 2017; Shaw et al., 2016; Sorensen & Donovan, 2017; Yang et al., 2017). For

example, Shaw et al. (2016) conducted an experimental study in which they provided outreach to at-risk online students and implemented an intervention that proved successful. In their study, students in both the experimental and control groups were given support information and resources before the start of the course. Then, an advisor contacted the students in the experimental group and advised them regarding resources such as the library, academic success center, and academic coaching. In addition, the students in the experimental group received an email containing links to those resources. Six months later, students in the control group had 11% lower retention than the experimental group and more late assignments, failing grades, and course withdrawals (Shaw et al., 2016). This example shows that support interventions are effective at decreasing online course withdrawal.

The results of this literature review suggested examples of resources needed by online students including how to find support online (Fetzner, 2013), time management and organizational skills coaching (Sorensen & Donovan, 2017), best practices of successful online students (Dvorak & Jia, 2016), and orientation to online learning (Chatman et al., 2019). Online students often misunderstand online program goals and outcomes (Sorensen & Donovan, 2017) and may even choose online courses to repeat failed courses, assuming that online courses are easier than on-campus courses (Murphy & Stewart, 2017). Proactive and responsive advisors can provide the guidance needed to help online students succeed instead of withdrawing from the course (Su & Waugh, 2018).

The current knowledge base regarding online learning is plentiful. Students enjoy the flexibility (Murphy et al., 2019), an alternative to uncomfortable on-campus

experiences (Fox, 2017), and continued growth of online learning in the United States (Seaman et al., 2018). However, students often misunderstand the expectations of online learning (Fetzner, 2013). Demographics (Zimmerman, 2017), academic skills and habits (Dvorak & Jia, 2016), and personal attributes (Schommer-Aikins & Easter, 2018) are influences on online student success. Women tend to choose online learning more frequently than men (Wavle & Ozogul, 2019) and studies regarding student age produced conflicting results regarding online success (Francis, Wormington, et al., 2019; James et al., 2016). Nevertheless, the students who fared best online exhibited effective study habits (Dvorak & Jia, 2016) and computer skills (Carragher Wolverton et al., 2020), had higher cognitive flexibility (Schommer-Aikins & Easter, 2018), self-efficacy for online learning (Peck et al., 2018), motivation levels (Hobson & Puruhito, 2018), and incoming grade point averages (Gering et al., 2018). Additionally, online students value relevancy (Athens, 2018), feeling as though they matter (Buelow et al., 2019), personalized instructor feedback (Athens, 2018), course content (Gering et al., 2018), and delivery (McLeod, 2019).

Finally, the review showed that early interventions can be effective at decreasing online course withdrawal (Shaw et al., 2016). Targeted interventions should be implemented early in the semester for best results (Murphy et al., 2019). While the literature base thoroughly addressed the experiences and withdrawal of students in online learning, it fell short of addressing the experiences and withdrawal of SWD in online learning.

Additionally, the literature base regarding online learning was heavily quantitative (Shaw et al., 2016) and tended to focus on online university students who differ from

online community college students (Iloh, 2019). McKinney et al. (2019) argued that while quantitative research is valuable for identifying patterns of withdrawal, qualitative research is needed to understand the underlying reasons. Thus, qualitatively addressing the research question of how do community college students with disabilities describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal fulfills multiple unmet needs in the literature.

Students With Disabilities in Online Learning

Finally, the third section of the review of the literature explores the current literature base regarding the experiences of students with disabilities (SWD) in online learning. The subthemes include (a) the online benefits and challenges for SWD, (b) online accommodation use, and (c) the academic outcomes of SWD online. Through this discussion, the researcher will establish an understanding of the lack of research regarding SWD in online learning and the critical need to expand the current knowledge base.

Online Benefits and Challenges for Students with Disabilities. The research that incorporates the experiences of students with disabilities (SWD) in online learning is limited. Nevertheless, as researchers begin to explore the benefits and challenges faced by SWD in online learning they describe online learning as a potentially positive way for SWD to participate in higher education (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020; Terras et al., 2020). However, that participation is not without cost.

Some populations have a harder time achieving success in college. House-Peters et al. (2017) called online higher education radical and emancipatory for marginalized students including SWD. They claimed that within online education, individuals with

impeded access can find a diversification of access to a college degree. Terras et al. (2020) claimed that SWD can flourish in an inclusive, normalized environment. However, some researchers criticize online learning and claim that while SWD may find benefits online, they also will find unexpected challenges.

Online students appreciate different aspects of the online environment for various reasons. Dahlstrom-Hakki et al. (2020) conducted a mixed-methods study of students with high-incidence disabilities in online courses at a 4-year college exclusively for students with learning disabilities (LD), ADHD, and autism. The 105 students who participated in the focus groups and individual interviews explored their perceptions of the synchronous and asynchronous discussions that occurred online in an introductory statistics course taught by the same instructor for four semesters (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020). The findings revealed that the students preferred synchronous discussions over asynchronous discussions (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020). Students indicated their reasons for this preference included the ability to ask clarifying questions, get immediate answers, and interact with both the instructor and peers in real time (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020). Additionally, they felt more accountable for attendance and participation in the synchronous discussions as the instructor would immediately notice non-participation (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020). The students increased their organization, motivation, and attention because of this accountability (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020).

Conversely, students offered that they were less distracted in the asynchronous discussions and could avoid troubling social situations (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020). The few who indicated a preference for the asynchronous discussions reported that they appreciated the ability to respond in their own time, control the media incorporated in the

discussions, and participate despite technical difficulties (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020). The participants indicated a personal preference that went beyond the characteristic of disability status (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020). Though some students learn and feel more included in synchronous discussions, others may experience a greater sense of control and better performance when participating in asynchronous discussions (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020). According to Dahlstrom-Hakki et al. (2020), SWD appreciate the differentiated benefits of online learning.

SWD often need differentiated learning strategies and more time to learn course material than their peers without disabilities (Alamri & Tyler-Wood, 2017). SWD report their needs are compatible with the flexible pacing of coursework and the convenience of working from home found in the online format (Alamri & Tyler-Wood, 2017). In a study regarding interactions with online instructors, Alamri and Tyler-Wood (2017) surveyed 40 SWD at a midwestern university. The authors used quantitative analysis to reveal the result that SWD have favorable impressions of their online course experiences and interactions with their instructors and peers (Alamri & Tyler-Wood, 2017). The study showed that SWD like and perform well in online courses and that their interaction increases their achievement.

However, not all SWD tend to do well online. Murphy et al. (2019) studied why SWD enrolled in online courses and the benefits and challenges they encountered. The authors surveyed 1,165 students, 17.2% of whom identified a psychiatric disability (PD) including depression, anxiety, eating disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia. The survey results of students with PD were compared to the survey results of students without a PD. The results across all three questions were

similar between groups. The students with PD indicated more often than their peers without disabilities that they felt more comfortable in online courses as they could participate from the privacy of their home (Murphy et al., 2019). Additionally, the students with PD indicated more often than students without PD that they encountered challenges in time management, concentration, and course content navigation (Murphy et al., 2019). These results suggest that students with a PD may be more affected than students without a PD by the lack of structure in online learning and need more support creating a structure for themselves (Murphy et al., 2019).

Students with psychological disorders experience their own issues in college. Warren and Schwitzer (2018) explored the counseling needs and hurdles encountered in online learning. In their qualitative study, the authors interviewed seven students from a community college in Virginia diagnosed with psychological disorders that included ADHD, bipolar, borderline personality, dissociative identity, obsessive-compulsive personality, and post-traumatic stress disorders. The college staff designed a model of counseling needs and responses for online community college students with psychological disorders based on the results (Warren & Schwitzer, 2018). The model included six key aspects: three counseling needs of self-disclosure, personal connection, and time management, and three counseling responses of psycho-emotional, relationship, and learning support (Warren & Schwitzer, 2018). Community college students with psychological disorders need mental health support that includes psycho-emotional, relationship, and learning support in addition to classroom accommodations (Warren & Schwitzer, 2018). Additionally, they need to alert instructors of their unique learning challenges, engage in deeper interpersonal relationships, and increase their time

management and self-regulation skills (Warren & Schwitzer, 2018). Online community college students with psychological disorders have unique needs and require support that they cannot find in on-campus accommodations (Warren & Schwitzer, 2018).

SWD make up only one population under study in the current research. Joosten and Cusatis (2020) quantitatively examined the student characteristics of online learning readiness and online student outcomes of 466 underrepresented students at a public 2-year and a public 4-year Midwestern institution. The authors defined student underrepresentation as incorporating at least one of the following: Pell eligibility, racial minority status, first-generation status, and disability status (Joosten & Cusatis, 2020).

The variables of online learning efficacy, work skills, and socialization predicted student satisfaction and learning, while online learning efficacy also predicted academic outcomes (Joosten & Cusatis, 2020). For underrepresented students, including SWD, only online learning efficacy predicted student perceptions of learning (Joosten & Cusatis, 2020). Moreover, their results indicated that SWD have much lower perceptions of their organizational skills and self-directedness than their peers without disabilities (Joosten & Cusatis, 2020). Often, SWD do not believe in their ability to learn online and those beliefs influence their online success (Joosten & Cusatis, 2020). According to Joosten and Cusatis (2020), students in underrepresented groups, including SWD, experience inequities in online preparedness and readiness when compared to the general population of online students. Consequently, the authors suggested that SWD who take part in interventions aimed at increasing their organizational skills and self-directedness could increase their success online (Joosten & Cusatis, 2020).

Online Accommodation Use. A dearth of knowledge was found in the current literature regarding accommodation use by students with disabilities (SWD) online. The research that was found offered conflicting results regarding the experiences of online SWD. As stated earlier in this review, it appears that SWD experience differences in the effectiveness of accommodations online just as they do on-campus (Terras et al., 2020). In their qualitative study regarding accommodation use in online courses, Terras et al. (2020) explored the range of graduate student experiences by disability type. The authors conducted interviews with 13 online graduate SWD at a university in the Northern Plains region of the United States. Upon discussing disability-specific experiences of accommodation use and the similarities and differences between students with varying disabilities, the authors concluded that the graduate SWD generally succeeded, self-accommodated, and understood their responsibility for meeting their needs online (Terras et al., 2020). Examining the results by disability type revealed that students with health and visual disabilities were the least impacted by their disability online while students with ADHD were the most impacted (Terras et al., 2020). Moreover, those with LD, ADHD, and psychological disorders (PD) needed more accommodations and greater self-advocacy, had higher levels of concern regarding them, felt they had fewer accommodation options available to them, and perceived less disability support (Terras et al., 2020). In agreement with Aquino and Bittinger (2019), Bettencourt et al. (2018), Francis, Duke, et al. (2019), and Rosenbaum (2018), Terras et al. (2020) concluded that the experiences and accommodation use of SWD are dependent on their disability type in online and on-campus courses alike.

Furthermore, the focus of study has been narrowed. Williams (2017) conducted interviews with nine service providers who worked with students with traumatic brain injuries (TBI) to understand the students' online needs related to self-directed learning. The results indicated that students with TBI tended to be unsuccessful online without accommodations (Williams, 2017). Students with TBI reported to their service providers that they find accommodations are more readily available and easily obtained in the physical classroom than online (Williams, 2017). The students with TBI were negatively affected by the lack of access to the instructor, the structure of the course, accommodation use, and problems in executive functioning or self-directed learning (Williams, 2017). Interestingly, the author noted a significant limitation regarding this study. Service providers working with students with TBI provided the study data, not the students. Therefore, their perceptions may vary from those of the students and as secondhand information, are considered less valid (Williams, 2017). Nonetheless, various professionals working with students with TBI can help to provide a holistic view of how students with TBI meet their needs.

Academic Outcomes of Students With Disabilities Online. The current literature has not addressed online student outcomes specifically with students with disabilities (SWD). One author included the subpopulation of SWD in their definition of underrepresented students in online learning, yet the author offered little information regarding student outcomes. Athens (2018) conducted a quantitative study regarding perceptions of the learning community, engagement, course grades, and variations in the experience of different subpopulations at a Utah dual-method university and community college. A total of 643 online students participated in online surveys and their results

were compared across all participants and between subpopulations based on gender, age, ethnicity, Pell grant eligibility, disability, and first-generation student and orphan status (Athens, 2018). While the study addressed many aspects of the student experience and outcomes online, the only results about SWD showed that SWD reported lower engagement levels, yet similar grades compared to their online peers and that they were 95% successful (Athens, 2018). More research is needed to understand the online outcomes of SWD.

Moreover, the current literature does not adequately address the unique needs and experiences of SWD online. The current review of the literature included only one example. In a quantitative study regarding self-efficacy for online learning, Lee et al. (2021) surveyed 278 SWD at a large public university in the Southeastern United States. Participants answered questions regarding their demographic information, disability type, mode of online accommodation, prior online learning experience, preference for mode of instruction, and technological competence. After conducting stepwise multiple regression and exploratory data analyses with SPSS, the authors concluded that the self-efficacy of SWD online was positively correlated with technological competence and preference for online learning (Lee et al., 2021). These findings suggest that SWD with high levels of technological competence tend to do well online and prefer to learn online (Lee et al., 2021). These authors began to describe the online experiences of SWD, but a need exists for more information to develop a thorough understanding. With the lack of literature on the topic, the outcomes of SWD online remain largely unknown.

In this concluding section of the review of the literature, the researcher combined the themes of SWD and online learning and clarified the limited breadth and depth of the

current research. For example, online SWD have been shown to prefer the synchronous online format (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020), find academic success online (Athens, 2018), and increase their achievement by increasing their interaction (Alamri & Tyler-Wood, 2017) and technological competence (Lee et al., 2021). On the other hand, the literature showed that SWD harbor negative beliefs about their online abilities (Joosten & Cusatis, 2020), need mental health support (Warren & Schwitzer, 2018), and are negatively affected by the lack of asynchronous online structure (Murphy et al., 2019).

Finally, the results showed that disability types are correlated with the experiences with and effectiveness of online accommodations just as they are correlated with the experiences with and effectiveness of on-campus accommodations (Terras et al., 2020). In brief, the review exposed and emphasized the critical need for research focused on SWD in online learning. As Massengale and Vasquez (2016) argued, attention to the barriers faced by SWD in online learning is vital to understanding them. Thus, research that explores the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD addresses a need and should be pursued with fervor.

Problem Statement

It was not known how community college students with disabilities in California describe how student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Therefore, the population of interest for this study included community college SWD who take asynchronous online courses. In this study, students who enroll with the campus disability support office define SWD.

It is vital to research the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD because disability-related research tends to focus on university students (Flink & Leonard, 2019; Madaus et al., 2018) even though 20% of the 5.7 million American community college students report having a disability (NCES, 2019a). SWD are enrolling in online courses at rates higher than ever before (Alamri & Tyler-Wood, 2017) due to the multiple disability-related benefits they find in the online platform (Terras et al., 2020). However, high withdrawal rates plague online learning (Seaman et al., 2018). Community college students frequently withdraw from online courses, impeding their degree completion (McKinney et al., 2019). Online SWD have unique needs (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020), but the online experiences of SWD have only recently begun to be explored (Terras et al., 2020). The research falls short of addressing community college SWD' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Individuals with disabilities are unemployed or underemployed in the American labor market (USBLS, 2020). However, their functioning, quality of life, and health are optimal while employed full time (Muller et al., 2017). Additionally, those with a college degree are more likely to be employed full time (USBLS, 2020). Thus, a current and high-quality knowledge base regarding how community college SWD describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal could serve as the impetus for the development and implementation of data-driven interventions to decrease asynchronous online course withdrawal. Thus, this study is a worthy endeavor.

Summary

This review of the literature suggested that students with disabilities (SWD) represent a significant and unique population on college campuses (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020; Terras et al., 2020). SWD are legally protected from disability-related discrimination by public entities (OCR, 2020). Additionally, when SWD use accommodations or modifications to tasks, procedures, and environments, they encounter a more level playing field (OCR, 2020).

Up to 20% of all community college students claim at least one disability (NCES, 2019a, 2019c). However, the accessibility and provision of support services change when students enter postsecondary education and they must increase their responsibility levels regarding their provision of services (Fowler et al., 2018). Students with a variety of disabilities and impairments qualify for accommodative and support services, but they must medically document and disclose their disabilities and impairments (OCR, 2011). As a result of the difficulty encountered in the process, many students opt out of these assistive services.

Numerous SWD do not identify themselves, request disability services, or continue receiving services as they progress through college (De Los Santos et al., 2019; Morris et al., 2016). The reasons cited in the literature for avoiding disclosure included no longer needing accommodation (Aquino & Bittinger, 2019), perception of weakness (O'Shea & Kaplan, 2018), fear of stigmatization (Aquino & Bittinger, 2019; Squires et al., 2018), and fear of adverse reactions from peers (Bettencourt et al., 2018) and faculty (Becker & Palladino, 2016). Additionally, students find their life experiences become shaped by their view of themselves and this affects their disclosure decisions (O'Shea &

Kaplan, 2018). The identity and accommodation processes were described in the literature as cumbersome for SWD (Herbert et al., 2020; Ressa, 2021) and even ineffective (Weis & Beauchemin, 2020). Students must often fight for accommodation from untrained and sometimes uncaring faculty (Francis, Duke et al., 2019; Herbert et al., 2020).

Additionally, students report that accommodation effectiveness is varied by disability type (Aquino & Bittinger, 2019; Terras et al., 2020) and few students affirmed accommodation effectiveness (less than 31%; De Los Santos et al., 2019). For example, Terras et al. (2020) found that online students with health or visual impairments experienced less disability impact than online students with LD, ADHD, and psychological disorders. Sarrett (2018) added that the social, emotional, and psychological needs of students with autism remain unmet through accommodations. However, her participants offered examples of accommodations that could meet their unique needs. Their recommendations included sensory safe spaces, mediators, and peer mentors who could work with students to increase their social understanding and skills (Sarrett, 2018). Authors echoed calls for improvement in the effectiveness of accommodations and the process of securing them (Aquino & Bittinger, 2019; Bettencourt et al., 2018; Francis, Duke, et al., 2019; Herbert et al., 2020; Rosenbaum, 2018; Sarrett, 2018).

College peers without disabilities often adopt the medical model of disability (Akin & Huang, 2019; Bogart et al., 2018; Culp et al., 2017; Thurston et al., 2017), through which they believe that disability is a negative attribute to be fixed for a more normal appearance and fit in society (Gill, 1987). Culp et al. (2017) found college

students in health education exhibited insufficient knowledge of disability and more negative than positive attitudes toward those with disabilities. Bogart and colleagues agreed (Bogart et al., 2018). In their study, participants who supported the medical model had less favorable attitudes than those who subscribed to the social model, which views disability as a difference that makes people unique yet causes difficulties in a non-accessible society. Both authors suggested interventions to increase knowledge of disability and social model support to improve attitudes toward SWD (Bogart et al., 2018; Culp et al., 2017).

Faculty generally have good intentions regarding accommodations for SWD (Bettencourt et al., 2018), believe inclusive instruction is necessary (Gawronski et al., 2016), and are willing to help SWD (Aquino & Bittinger, 2019), but sometimes view accommodations as unfair (Bettencourt et al., 2018), and lack the training to accommodate students effectively (Bettencourt et al., 2018; Francis, Duke et al., 2019; Herbert et al., 2020). When faculty beliefs and classroom actions differ, SWD suffer. Therefore, SWD need interventions that are proven effective in increasing the use of inclusive instruction and changing faculty attitudes toward SWD (Bettencourt et al., 2018; Cash et al., 2021; Francis, Duke et al., 2019; Herbert et al., 2020).

McLean and Dixit (2018) proposed a hidden curriculum in education in which students are implicitly taught values and norms while perpetuating social biases. In support of that notion, Ressa (2021) claimed that SWD experience barriers to success that include lost time, decreased inclusion in activities, increased costs, and fear of discrimination (Ressa, 2021). Furthermore, Quinn et al. (2019) added that SWD experience inaccessibility to school websites. The inclusive design was suggested as an

acknowledgment of hidden barriers faced by SWD that increase their accessibility and inclusion in the campus community (Quinn et al., 2019; Ressa, 2021).

SWD continually exhibited lower academic outcomes when compared to their peers without disabilities (Rosenbaum, 2018; Thurston et al., 2017). Additionally, SWD graduate at rates lower than the national average (Showers & Kinsman, 2017).

Community college students with health impairments tend to matriculate to university at decreased rates (Rosenbaum, 2018) and are unprepared for college-level work (Thurston et al., 2017). Rosenbaum (2018) explained that academic outcomes are predicted by disability type. Her study showed students with various health impairments had different outcomes, with blind students and those on diabetes medication more likely to graduate with a bachelor's degree than their peers without disabilities, and those who stuttered, wore eyeglasses, were obese, overweight, and had been recently hospitalized less likely to graduate (Rosenbaum, 2018). Furthermore, students who enrolled with the campus disability support office did not experience greater academic success (De Los Santos et al., 2019). However, SWD with greater levels of self-advocacy experienced greater academic success (Fleming et al., 2017).

Online learning is an expanding learning format in the United States (Seaman et al., 2018). Students find benefits and challenges in each of the three standard course delivery modes that include on-campus, hybrid, and online (Ghaffari, 2018). Wavle and Ozogul (2019) reported the online format was a positive effect on students, although the number of online courses taken seems to influence that effect. James et al. (2016) reported students taking primarily online courses had a lower likelihood of retention; however, students who mixed online and on-campus courses had a higher likelihood of

retention. In agreement, Shea and Bidjerano (2018) claimed that students reach a tipping point at a course load of approximately 40% online courses, where online courses become a detriment to graduation. Advising is needed to educate students regarding this finding.

Much of the research stated that online courses are a negative influence on retention and graduation rates. Breit and Schreyer (2018) suggested the more exclusively online students enrolled at an institution, the lower the retention rates for that institution. Murphy and Stewart (2017) evidenced that university student online withdrawal rates were 14% higher than on-campus withdrawal rates and that successful course completion rates were 11% lower online. McKinney et al. (2019) added that African American and male students, and students with GEDs instead of high school diplomas were more likely to withdraw online. Additionally, those who withdrew attended school part time, had lower grade point averages, and took developmental courses. Most of the research was approached quantitatively; therefore, the reasons for withdrawal were omitted from the research.

Online course withdrawal is widespread, documented at community colleges (Fetzner, 2013), public (Athens, 2018) and private undergraduate universities (Sorensen & Donovan, 2017), and private graduate universities (Shaw et al., 2016). Fetzner (2013) found that the most often cited reason for withdrawal was falling behind, personal issues, and conflicting home responsibilities. Athens' (2018) results agreed, with personal reasons reported most often, followed by academic difficulty and employment. Sorensen and Donovan (2017) concurred, with work and family commitments most often indicated

as the reason for withdrawal in their study. Often, the reason students enroll online is the reason they cannot achieve success online (Sorensen & Donovan, 2017).

Students choose to study online for reasons that include convenience and flexibility (Murphy et al., 2019), gender equity in classroom discussions (Chadha, 2018), and avoidance of negative interactions in the on-campus classroom (Fox, 2017). However, students have misunderstood expectations of online learning. Results have shown that students often realize they are unprepared for online work after beginning an online course (Iloh, 2019). Students reported misunderstanding the amount of time and effort necessary to succeed online (Su & Waugh, 2018), when the course began (Fetzner, 2013), and incorrectly assuming the online section of a course would be easier than the on-campus section. Students are surprised to find that online courses are often more difficult (Murphy & Stewart, 2017).

Nontraditional students tend to choose online learning (Rovai, 2003), although they tend to have outside commitments such as family and work obligations that detract from their experience and achievement (Bean & Metzner, 1985). In this review, women (Wladis et al., 2015) and older students tended to have higher academic outcomes than younger students (James et al., 2016; Slover & Mandernach, 2018; Wladis et al., 2017), though not all studies agreed (Francis, Wormington, et al., 2019). Students with more academic experience fared better online (Gering et al., 2018) and men exhibited higher confidence with online testing (Schommer-Aikins & Easter, 2018). Furthermore, students who took online classes full time had higher academic outcomes (Bir, 2019) and diligent students tended to fare better in online courses (Gering et al., 2018). Procrastination proved to be a negative influence on student success (Schommer-Aikins & Easter, 2018)

and regular homework schedules were a positive influence on success (Dvorak & Jia, 2016).

Additionally, students must be more responsible for their learning online (Gering et al., 2018). A student's cognitive flexibility or ability to adapt to changing situations seems to have a positive influence on self-directed learning (Schommer-Aikins & Easter, 2018). Additionally, students who can monitor and regulate their learning experienced higher rates of online course retention and those with higher levels of self-efficacy experienced greater academic performance (Peck et al., 2018).

Students become accustomed to the interactions with their instructors in on-campus classes. In the online classroom, students experience interaction much differently (Tanis, 2020). Studies showed that students felt their instructor's online teaching presence was critical to their success (Gering et al., 2018), and agreed that they were motivated by hearing the instructor's voice in course media (Mandernach et al., 2018) and learning personalized content (McLeod, 2019). According to this review of the literature, students prefer the personal touch (Mandernach et al., 2018), seek relevancy (McLeod, 2019) and connection in their courses (Buelow et al., 2019), and appreciate personalized content (Gering et al., 2018) and feedback (Athens, 2018; Bogart et al., 2018). Online engagement was the strongest predictor of student satisfaction and learning (Alqurashi, 2019). Dunlap and Lowenthal (2018) suggested that faculty who teach online agree that establishing teaching presence is the most valuable way to get students to connect, feel encouraged, and engage in the course.

Interventions have proven successful at decreasing online withdrawal when the focus is on course design (Christensen & Spackman, 2017), course characteristics such as

major or elective type (Wladis et al., 2017), and supportive advising (Shaw et al., 2016). Equally important, online students need online support services (Fetzner, 2013), time management skills (Sorensen & Donovan, 2017), study skills (Dvorak & Jia, 2016), and online course orientation (Chatman et al., 2019). However, similar to the studies regarding SWD, most studies regarding online learning were conducted with a quantitative approach and with university students.

Research regarding SWD in online learning is scant. For example, the literature included studies focused on online student preferences for synchronous or asynchronous discussions (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020), online interactions with instructors (Alamri & Tyler-Wood, 2017), the challenges of time management and concentration (Murphy et al., 2019), and the need for psycho-emotional support (Warren & Schwitzer, 2018). In addition, the predictors of online success for SWD included online learning efficacy, work skills, and socialization (Joosten & Cusatis, 2020).

The literature suggests that online learning had the most impact on students with ADHD and the least impact on those with health and visual disabilities (Terras et al., 2020). These results indicate that SWD exhibit accommodation needs and self-advocacy that vary according to their disability type (Terras et al., 2020). For example, professionals associated with students with traumatic brain injury indicated that these students were highly affected by the lack of instructor interaction, the online accommodations, and the self-directed learning needed to be successful online (Williams, 2017). Another study included academic outcomes of SWD online, yet the only results offered stated that SWD had equivalent course outcomes and less engagement than their peers without disabilities online (Athens, 2018). Furthermore, SWD with high

technological competence tended to perform better in and prefer online learning (Lee et al., 2021).

As evidenced in this review of the literature, little knowledge exists regarding SWD in online learning as the population has only recently begun to be studied (Terras et al., 2020). In the same way that studies regarding SWD and online learning tend to be quantitatively approached, the studies regarding SWD in online learning tend to be quantitatively approached. Moreover, the research tends to focus on online SWD at universities (Flink & Leonard, 2019) and on those who completed an online course. Fetzner (2013) pointed out that it is crucial to include the voice of the unsuccessful student when attempting to understand the reasons for the non-completion of online courses. In agreement, Murphy and Stewart (2017) suggest it is vital to separate the data analyses regarding students who withdrew from the course and those who finished it unsuccessfully. Mixed results make a thorough understanding of either one impossible (Murphy & Stewart, 2017).

Studies that focus on a seldom researched population at a seldom researched type of institution, including the voice of seldom researched students, would obtain data that could significantly impact the scant knowledge base that currently exists. A knowledge base that includes descriptions of the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD could be the catalyst needed to develop targeted interventions that decrease asynchronous online course withdrawal. Decreasing the asynchronous online course withdrawal of SWD could increase their graduation rates, preparing more SWD for better paying full-time employment in the American labor market. Individuals with disabilities with full-time employment exhibit optimum health,

functioning, and overall quality of life (Muller et al., 2017). Researchers should pursue with fervor studies that hold the potential for this type of social justice.

In this study, Rovai's (2003) composite persistence model will be the lens through which the descriptions of the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD are viewed. The model incorporates the work of Tinto (1993) and Bean and Metzner (1985). It also proposes the importance of online-specific factors, including necessary online student academic skills (Cole, 2000; Rowntree, 1995), online student needs (Workman & Stenard, 1996), and online teaching and learning styles (Grow, 1996). This study was an extension of the model to the population of online SWD because they have only recently begun to be explored (Terras et al., 2020).

Student withdrawal research indicates a need for evolution (Rovai, 2003). No longer can researchers focus solely on the experiences of traditional university students and their integration into campus life, as did Tinto (1975, 1993). Instead, researchers must consider diverse nontraditional students and the external factors that affect their success (Bean & Metzner, 1985). Finally, researchers must identify and include online-specific factors with an influence on the withdrawal of online students (Rovai, 2003). Without each of these perspectives, withdrawal research cannot be considered effective or applicable to online students.

Neergaard et al. (2009) and Turale (2020) agree that knowledge of understudied phenomena can be best achieved through the qualitative descriptive design. Online SWD and the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal are understudied phenomena (McKinney et al., 2019; Terras et al., 2020). Therefore, the qualitative descriptive design

of this study was the best method to approach the descriptions of the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD.

The overarching research question in this study, which asks how community college SWD describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal, is addressed by two data sources. The first data source, the online questionnaire, includes questions regarding the demographic data and academic profile of the sample and addresses the overarching research question by asking participants about their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal without the guidance of any theory or model. The second data source, the Zoom™ interview, explores their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal guided by the student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors of the composite model of student persistence (Rovai, 2003). The interviews address RQ1 through RQ4 accordingly.

In Chapter 3, the researcher explains the methodology for this study, including the purpose, research questions, and rationales for the qualitative methodology and descriptive design. The population and sample selection will be discussed, along with the qualitative sample size and the recruiting and sampling strategies utilized. An explanation of the data sources will be offered which includes the research and additional data, and the study's trustworthiness which includes credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. Data collection and management will be examined along with the data analysis procedures, ethical considerations, assumptions, and delimitations of the study. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the main points.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how community college students with disabilities in California describe how student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Students with disabilities (SWD) find a sense of inclusion (Terras et al., 2020) and less perception of disability-related stigma in the online environment (Lee et al., 2021). However, SWD find unexpected challenges in online learning (Murphy et al., 2019). Additionally, students withdraw from online learning at rates higher than they withdraw from on-campus learning (Seaman et al., 2018).

The current literature base includes research regarding a wealth of aspects of the college experience of SWD and students in online learning. Nevertheless, research is lacking regarding SWD in online learning (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020; Terras et al., 2020). Despite a growing number of SWD enrolling in online courses (Alamri & Tyler-Wood, 2017) and findings that suggest SWD encounter unique barriers online (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020), research tends to omit the focus on SWD at community colleges (Madaus et al., 2018) and often overlooks the qualitative approach (Flink & Leonard, 2019). To date, the qualitative method has not been used to explore the descriptions of reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD.

In Chapter 3, the researcher offers the purpose of this study and the research questions to be explored. The researcher provides rationales for both the qualitative

methodology and the descriptive design with a thorough description of the population and sample selection. The chapter includes the sources of data that include the research data and additional data and the concepts included in trustworthiness that include credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. Additionally, Chapter 3 incorporates the processes of data collection and management and data analysis. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ethical considerations, assumptions, and delimitations of this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how community college students with disabilities (SWD) in California describe how student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. The researcher utilized two data sources in this study that include an online questionnaire and Zoom™ interviews that will help the researcher better understand the phenomenon. The composite model of student persistence by Rovai (2003) was used as the lens through which the participants' descriptions were viewed. The model considers the four theorized factors that affect online course withdrawal: student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors. The researcher employed thematic analysis to understand the phenomenon of asynchronous online course withdrawal in a context-specific yet holistic manner.

Research Questions

This study sought to understand the phenomenon of the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college students with disabilities (SWD) in

California. McKinney et al. (2019) suggested that qualitative research is needed to understand their reasons for online course withdrawal. Flink and Leonard (2019) added that community college SWD are different from their counterparts at university; therefore, research should focus on the experiences of community college SWD and should be qualitatively approached. Finally, Terras et al. (2020) highlighted a need to explore the online experiences of SWD. The overarching research question addressed the recommendations of all four authors. It focused on the reasons for online course withdrawal (McKinney et al., 2019), qualitatively focused on community college SWD (Flink & Leonard, 2019), and emphasized SWD who study online (Terras et al., 2020).

Rovai (2003) combined the retention theory of Tinto (1993), the model of nontraditional student retention of Bean and Metzner (1985), necessary online skills of Rowntree (1995) and Cole (2000), the needs of online students of Workman and Stenard (1996), and the online learning and teaching styles of Grow (1996). Rovai (2003) proposed that course withdrawal of online students is affected by multiple factors, including student characteristics such as grade point average, student skills such as computer literacy, external factors such as employment, and internal factors such as goal commitment. The four factors, including student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors frame how asynchronous online course withdrawal is viewed and analyzed in this study. The researcher defined SWD as any student enrolled with a community college disability support office in California. Additionally, the researcher defined withdrawal as at least one 'W' for withdrawal or 'EW' for excused withdrawal listed on the student's transcript for an asynchronous online course in at least one of the prior two semesters. The overarching research question and research questions for this

study addressed the recommendations of McKinney et al. (2019), Flink and Leonard (2019), and Terras et al. (2020) through the lens of the composite model of student persistence of Rovai (2003).

Overarching RQ: How do community college students with disabilities describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ1: How do community college students with disabilities describe how student characteristics influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ2: How do community college students with disabilities describe how student skills influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ3: How do community college students with disabilities describe how external factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ4: How do community college students with disabilities describe how internal factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

Two primary data sources, online questionnaires and individual interviews were used to gather data to answer the research questions. The researcher recruited participants who met the study criteria for the questionnaire from a community college in California and through social media. The online questionnaire addressed the overarching research question. It included closed-ended demographic and academic profile questions and a multiple-choice question in which participants rank ordered their three most significant reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal without any theory or model guidance. It also offered an “other” option for participants to respond if their reasons were not listed. Demographic and academic profile questions allowed the researcher to

establish a profile of the participants that can be used to understand them and contribute to the transferability of the findings. The research questions regarding asynchronous online course withdrawal were addressed in the Zoom™ interviews. RQ1 through RQ4 framed the participant's experiences through the lens of the student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors of the composite model of student persistence (Rovai, 2003).

Rationale for a Qualitative Methodology

The appropriateness of the method through which research is approached depends on the goal of the study. The goal of the quantitative methodology is to test and either confirm or refute existing hypotheses in search of facts to generalize to large portions of the population (Dewey, 1910; Gibbs, 1979; Levitt et al., 2018). The quantitative methodology is concerned with deduction that rules out exceptions in data (Dewey, 1910), certainty, control, and laboratory precision (Gibbs, 1979). However, the goal of this study was not to generalize to large populations, rule out exceptions, or to seek certainty, control, and precision.

Additionally, a mixed methodology combines the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative methods of design, implementation, and reporting (Levitt et al., 2018). The mixed methodology includes the use of deductive theory, manipulation, control, and inductive holistic validity and discovery (Gibbs, 1979). However, the novice researcher was not equipped with the expertise and experience needed to conduct a mixed methodology study. Though it may present the best of both worlds, the mixed methodology was impractical for this study.

In contrast, the goals of the qualitative methodology differ from those of the aforementioned methods. Dewey (1910) claimed that the discovery of unknown information is possible through the qualitative methods. In agreement, Yin (2011) posited that the qualitative methodology is the only way to explain human behavior, especially behaviors that are not yet understood. This study focused on the discovery of unknown information regarding the experiences of community college SWD learning online. This phenomenon is not yet understood (Terras et al., 2020). Therefore, the qualitative methodology was best aligned to the goals of this study. Of the few studies regarding online SWD, none addressed the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Without a thorough understanding of this phenomenon, it was impossible to know how to decrease asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD. The current literature review repeatedly documented the need for qualitative research regarding the phenomena of online course withdrawal. McKinney et al. (2019) indicated a need for a qualitative study of the reasons for online course withdrawal. Additionally, Flink and Leonard (2019) proposed the need for a qualitative study regarding the experiences of community college SWD. Furthermore, Terras et al. (2020) offered that research regarding online experiences should include SWD. This study addressed these needs by qualitatively exploring the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD.

Results of qualitative inquiry often are used to form new hypotheses to be assessed quantitatively (Gibbs, 1979) and directly applied to practice with those affected by the phenomenon (Sandelowski, 1997). In this study, the results can be directly applied to the development of targeted interventions to decrease asynchronous online course

withdrawal of community college SWD. Decreased asynchronous online course withdrawal can positively affect graduation rates, the likelihood of full-time employment, and a higher quality of life for individuals with disabilities.

Rationale for Research Design

The qualitative descriptive design allowed the researcher to explore the overarching research question in this study that addresses the problem space described by McKinney et al. (2019), Flink and Leonard (2019), and Terras et al. (2020) regarding the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college students with disabilities (SWD). Sandelowski (2000) explained that the qualitative descriptive design focuses directly on the participant's experiences and stays close to the participant's language with low researcher inference. The basic descriptions in the qualitative descriptive design reach conclusions about social issues (Yin, 2011) and produce new knowledge of a phenomenon without the influence of theory (Neergaard et al., 2009). Additionally, the descriptions generated in qualitative descriptive studies can encourage discussion and changes to policy (Jiggins Colorafi & Evans, 2016), leading to future quantitative hypothesis testing (Jiggins Colorafi & Evans, 2016) and for intervention development (Kim et al., 2017; Neergaard et al., 2009). Hence, the qualitative descriptive design addressed the problem statement and research questions in this study by exploring the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD.

This study aimed to summarize the descriptions of the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of SWD from a community college in California. Other research designs were inappropriate for this goal. For instance, the narrative design focuses on the way people narrate or tell the story of their lives (Polkinghorne, 1988).

The goal of this study was not to tell a story of their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal but to gather and report their descriptions of their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Therefore, the narrative design was not appropriate.

This study sought to gather SWD' descriptions of their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. It considered their unique contexts but did not include data collected in the field. For this reason, the case study design was inappropriate. Like the descriptive design, the case study design values the phenomenon as a unique case or distinctive situation that typically entails some data collected in the field (Yin, 2011).

The ethnographical design uses profound interpretation and transformation of the data by the researcher to produce a narrative description of the experience (Kim et al., 2017). However, this study sought a summary of descriptions in the participant's language with little interpretation; therefore, the ethnological design was also inappropriate. The phenomenological design seeks the meaning of life events of the participant (Zeleeva, 2019). Nonetheless, this study sought a summary of the responses without further exploration into the meaning; therefore, the phenomenological design was inappropriate.

The grounded theory design seeks to generate a new theory of the experience (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) which was not the goal of this study; therefore, the grounded theory design was also inappropriate. The qualitative descriptive design uses induction to uncover and summarize basic descriptions of an event or experience (Sandelowski, 2000). This produces new knowledge regarding an understudied phenomenon (Yin, 2011). The experiences of SWD in online learning is an understudied phenomenon

(Terras et al., 2020); therefore, the qualitative descriptive approach was best suited for this study.

Population and Sample Selection

Qualitative Sample Size

The population of interest for this study was community college students with disabilities (SWD) defined as any student enrolled with a community college campus disability support office. The target population was SWD from a community college in California. The sample frame consisted of all students who:

- were over the age of 18 years.
- were an emancipated adult, able to make their own legal decisions.
- were enrolled with a community college disability support office in California.
- had at least one ‘W’ for withdrawal or ‘EW’ for excused withdrawal on their transcript for an asynchronous online course in at least one of the prior two semesters.
- were currently enrolled in at least one course at a community college in California.
- were willing to answer optional personal, identifiable, demographic questions related to age, number of dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type.

Murphy and Stewart (2017) explained that course attrition has two meanings. The first meaning is completing the course with a non-passing grade of D or F, and the second meaning is withdrawing from the course before completion. Including both meanings in one study can skew results. Therefore, researchers need to independently analyze unsuccessful course completion and course withdrawal (Murphy & Stewart, 2017). This study analyzed withdrawal from an asynchronous online course to address concerns

specific to those students who withdrew before the end of the term instead of those students who completed the course yet were unsuccessful.

The study sample will consist of 40 participants who will complete the online questionnaire, and of those, 12 participants will take part in 45- to 60-min Zoom™ interviews. Qualitative descriptive research utilizes smaller sample sizes than quantitative research designs (Kim et al., 2017). Yin (2011) claimed that sample sizes are irrelevant in qualitative studies when they are sufficient to obtain the necessary depth and breadth of information. The sample size of this study will be sufficient in depth and breadth to answer the research questions. Basic descriptions of experiences with the phenomenon make up the foundation for qualitative descriptive research (Jiggins Colorafi & Evans, 2016; Kim et al., 2017; Sandelowski, 2000). Accordingly, the researcher will explore the descriptions of their experiences with the phenomenon of asynchronous online course withdrawal, a topic of which they are experts and for which they can provide ample information.

Recruiting and Sampling Strategy

This study will utilize multiple recruitment strategies, including purposive, chain referral, snowball, and volunteer sampling. The researcher obtained authorization to conduct this study at a community college in California. Evidence of site authorization is offered in Appendix B. The college is in suburban Los Angeles County and had an annual student headcount of 15,826 for the 2020-21 academic year (California Community College Chancellor's Office Data Mart, 2021, December 22). The college's Office for Institutional Effectiveness, Research, and Planning (IERP) granted authorization for the researcher to collaborate with the Office for Students with

Disabilities in compiling a list of names and contact information of eligible students. In purposive sampling, participants are chosen for their shared characteristics relevant to the study (Andrade, 2021). By emailing all eligible students, purposive sampling will allow the researcher to access potential participants who have the shared experiences defined by the eligibility criteria. All participants must:

- be over the age of 18 years.
- be an emancipated adult, able to make their own legal decisions.
- be enrolled with a community college disability support office in California.
- have at least one 'W' for withdrawal or 'EW' for excused withdrawal on their transcript for an asynchronous online course in at least one of the prior two semesters.
- be currently enrolled in at least one course at a community college in California.
- be willing to answer optional personal, identifiable, demographic questions related to age, number of dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type.

Students who meet the eligibility criteria will have the relevant knowledge needed to offer basic descriptions of the phenomenon (Sandelowski, 2000) of the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college students with disabilities (SWD). Additionally, the IERP authorized the researcher to advertise the study by email to campus staff and faculty who can refer students to the study, also known as chain referral sampling. Chain referral sampling relies on others who know of potential participants to help in the recruitment process (Penrod et al., 2003). Faculty and staff at the college may be aware of students who fit the study criteria and could be referred to the study.

The sample frame for this study will include all students at the community college in California who meet the study criteria. Interested participants will access the

questionnaire through a direct link embedded in the researcher's recruitment material (see Appendix I) that will be sent with the study flier (see Appendix J). The researcher will conveniently sample the first 40 participants who complete the questionnaire, including their responses in analysis. Of the questionnaire participants who volunteer to be interviewed, the researcher will use a stratified purposive sampling technique to assure diversity of responses to RQ1 through RQ4. The researcher will contact by phone the 12 questionnaire participants with the most descriptive and diverse responses to RQ1 through RQ4 to volunteer to participate in the Zoom™ interviews. Moreover, the researcher will schedule appointments to participate in the interview and send confirmation emails containing the appointment date and time, the link for the Zoom™ interview, and interview questions if requested. If the researcher cannot generate 40 questionnaire participants or 12 interview participants using this approach, referred to as Plan A, the researcher will utilize snowball sampling, referred to as Plan B.

Snowball sampling requires the referral of others who may meet the study criteria if the sampling is purposeful instead of convenient (Yin, 2011). Access to potential participants is increased when participants help in the recruitment process (Etikan et al., 2016). The researcher will ask those who participate in the interviews to share study information with other community college SWD who are experienced with asynchronous online course withdrawal. Sharma (2017) claimed that snowball sampling limits generalizability because it does not represent the population. However, generalizability is not the goal of this study. Therefore, snowball sampling can still be considered appropriate. If after Plans A and B, the researcher is unable to generate an adequate

sample, the researcher will employ Plan C. Plan C includes volunteer and chain referral sampling through social media.

Social media allows the researcher to cast a wide net for recruitment (Ferrigno & Sade, 2019). Volunteer sampling, which utilizes broad advertising, relies on the self-identification of informants to participate and broadens the range of expected outcomes (Morse, 1991). Recruitment through social media sites such as Facebook allows interested individuals to access detailed study information before deciding to participate, making respondents more likely to be eligible (Frandsen et al., 2016). The researcher attained authorization to post the study flier and recruitment material that includes the link to the questionnaire in the Butte College and Chico State Book Exchange private Facebook group that currently has over 4,100 student members. Evidence of group administrator authorization appears in Appendix B. Additionally, the researcher will utilize public Facebook groups that allow members to post without administrator authorization to recruit study participants. The following list of public Facebook groups has a combined total of almost 50,000 student members from across California and will be used for participant recruitment:

- AVC Used Books.
- Fullerton College Books for Sale.
- Pasadena City College Book Sale.
- Cypress College Books and Supplies.
- Citrus College Students.
- Fresno City College Books Trade and Advice.
- Pierce Community College Group.
- Santa Monica College Housing, Rooms, Apartments.

- El Camino College Books for Sale.
- Rio Hondo College Book Exchange.
- New Porterville College Books Buy and Sell.
- Text Books for Sale @ Bakersfield College.
- SBCC Housing.
- Buy Sell or Trade Cuesta College Textbooks.
- Pasadena City College Marketplace.
- PCC Book Sale.

Moreover, the researcher will solicit the help of faculty and staff who collaborate with community college SWD to participate in chain referral sampling to distribute the flier and recruitment material that contains the questionnaire link to students they know who may be eligible. The researcher was granted authorization to post the study flier and recruitment material that contains the questionnaire link in six private Facebook groups designed for doctoral learners, graduate program alumni, and student affairs professionals. Evidence of private group administrator authorizations appears in Appendix B. With a combined total of almost 50,000 members, the list of private Facebook groups includes:

- CSUN CC/SS & Career Alumni.
- The Qualitative Study Group.
- #DoctoralMomLife.
- Student Affairs Professionals.
- California Community College Counselors.
- Community College Student Affairs Professionals.

Additionally, the researcher will use the following public Facebook groups, with a combined total of over 2,100 doctoral learners, graduate program alumni, and professionals in higher education to recruit study participants through chain referral:

- California College Personnel Association.
- SoSAP (SoCal Student Affairs Professionals).
- Disability Services in Higher Education.

The use of four sampling and recruitment strategies, the researcher will be able to attain the minimum sample size of 40 questionnaire participants and 12 interview participants.

Sources of Data

In this study, the researcher will collect primary research data using a researcher-developed online questionnaire and researcher-developed semi-structured interview protocol. Both instruments are presented in Appendix E. The data sources for the research questions are explained in Appendix K. The questionnaire will be used to answer the overarching research question of how community college students with disabilities (SWD) describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. The questionnaire participants will be asked this question without model or theory guidance.

Furthermore, the participants will be asked to volunteer for the ZoomTM interviews in the last question of the questionnaire. RQ1 through RQ4 are addressed in the interview questions, which ask the overarching research question according to the student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors of Rovai's (2003) composite model of student persistence. Supplemental data will include demographic data collected in the questionnaire.

Research Data

Research Data Source #1. Online questionnaires offer multiple benefits to the researcher and participant. The flexibility of question type, format, and categories, added to the speed, convenience, and ease of collection, makes online questionnaires ideal for first-time researchers (Evans & Mathur, 2018). Questionnaires also allow the participants to offer their perspectives without the in-person interaction that may invoke a feeling of discomfort for students with disabilities (SWD) (Peña et al., 2018). To encourage college student participation in online questionnaires, the researcher must ensure the topic is relevant to them and that participation is worthy of their time (Fosnacht et al., 2017).

Students who withdraw from asynchronous online courses may feel unheard and discouraged. Fetzner (2013) explained that their experiences are relevant to them, yet rarely acknowledged by the institution. Having their experiences acknowledged can increase the perception that their feelings and experiences are valid and participation in the study is worth their time (Fetzner, 2013). Participants rarely complete long in-depth questionnaires (Evans & Mathur, 2018). According to SurveyMonkey™, the online questionnaire including informed consent in this study should take no more than 22 mins to complete.

An expert panel review guided the development and supplied feedback regarding the questionnaire questions. The researcher incorporated all feedback into the preliminary version of the questionnaire before inputting the questions into SurveyMonkey™ for field testing. The researcher conducted a hybrid-type panel which included the aim of incorporating both methodological and accessibility review. Due to the specificity of the population, community college SWD, the panel included a professional with not only a

doctoral degree in education but with 32 years of experience in the field of higher education disability support.

Additionally, the panel included a professional with a doctoral degree in philosophy and over 20 years of experience in government report writing, social research, and qualitative instrument development. The help of both panelists ensured that the final questionnaire questions addressed the research questions from a qualitative standpoint and considered the specificity of the population of community college SWD. Results from the expert panel review appear in Appendix E.

Field testing with three students meeting all study criteria but not included in the study was completed after incorporating the expert panel feedback into the questionnaire. Results of the field tests indicated the questionnaire was easy to access, the questions were easy to understand, and the length of time to complete it was appropriate and not excessive. The field test responses to QQ28, which addresses the overarching research question, were adequate to answer the research question. While the students indicated no issues with question clarity or length of time to complete the questionnaire, an issue reported by all three students was an uncomfortable feeling when asked to speak about their financial situation. The researcher chose not to reword or remove the question in the final version of the questionnaire as financial factors are repeatedly proposed in the literature to affect the experiences of nontraditional students (American Association of Community Colleges, 2019; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Fox, 2017; Sorensen & Donovan, 2017). The final version of the questionnaire included the expert panel review and field test results.

The questionnaire opened with a statement and question of informed consent. The researcher used open- and closed-ended questions, grounded in the literature and Rovai's model, to assess aspects of the student's life and experience in the asynchronous online course that could have led to their withdrawal from the course. Additionally, students may have more than one reason for course withdrawal. Therefore, QQ28 addressed the overarching research question without theory or model guidance, allowing participants to rank order their most significant reasons for withdrawal to elicit a thorough description of their reasons. Moreover, the researcher included an 'other' option that allowed participants to offer reasons not listed by the researcher as an exhaustive list is impossible for the researcher to describe. Recruitment for the second data source, the semi-structured interviews, occurred after QQ28. Participants were offered a link to a separate questionnaire in which they could offer their contact information if they were interested in participating in the ZoomTM interviews.

The researcher developed QQ2, QQ7, QQ23, and QQ24 with inspiration from the study conducted by Fetzner (2013), who conducted telephone surveys with community college students who had withdrawn from an online course. Factors that could influence the withdrawal of participants are addressed, including online accommodation use in QQ19 through QQ21, amount of online course experience in QQ8 (Gering et al., 2018), online course type in QQ3 (Wladis et al., 2017), online disability disclosure in QQ18 (Lee et al., 2021), online self-efficacy in QQ22 and QQ25 (Joosten & Cusatis, 2020), external factors in QQ26 (Bean & Metzner, 1985), and online interaction with faculty and peers in QQ27 (Tanis, 2020). Additionally, feedback from the site's disability support office director, with 32 years of higher education experience and a doctoral degree in

education, indicated a need to define communicative disabilities in QQ17. Moreover, feedback from the dean of the site's Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Research, and Planning (IERP) indicated a need to reword QQ17. The dean suggested that providing all the optional answers and allowing participants to select all that apply may be less confusing. Feedback from the expert panel and the dean of the IERP ensured the clarity and trustworthiness of the questions.

Research Data Source #2. The use of semi-structured interviews offers multiple benefits to the researcher. First, semi-structured interviews require less time and effort to administer than focus groups and are better suited for gathering a broad range of information (Guest et al., 2017). Additionally, the researcher will have the opportunity to delve deeper with probing questions to understand better their unique perspectives (Almeida et al., 2017). This study aims to gather descriptions and understand the unique perspectives and experiences of community college SWD who withdrew from an asynchronous online course. Semi-structured interviews, therefore, are one of the best sources of data for achieving these goals.

The researcher developed a semi-structured interview protocol addressing the research question framed by the student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors of Rovai's (2003) composite model of persistence. Interview questions addressed many individual factors that Rovai considered influential to online student persistence. To ensure this, the researcher employed the same two expert panel members and three student field testers to provide feedback about the development of interview questions. Field testing results will not be included in the final study. All three field test participants were interviewed by the researcher through Zoom™. The mean

duration of interviews was 38 minutes, the mean number of transcript pages produced was 8 pages, and the mean number of initial codes identified was 30 codes. Table 2 summarizes the results of the field test.

Table 2

Field Test Results

Field Test Participant Number	Test Setting	Interview Duration	Number of Transcript Pages	Number of Codes Identified
FTP 1	Zoom TM	18 mins	5 pages	21 codes
FTP 2	Zoom TM	21 mins	5 pages	18 codes
FTP 3	Zoom TM	74 mins	13 pages	52 codes
Mean		38 mins	8 pages	30 codes
Total		113 mins	23 pages	91 codes

Conducting field testing interviews with the field test participants allowed the researcher to practice and gain experience with interviewing, analyzing, and transcript coding. It also allowed for assessment of whether the protocol was realistic, did not contain problematic wording, and provided enough quality data to be able to answer the research questions. The revised documents containing revisions proposed after field testing appear in Appendix E. In addition, a sample interview field test transcript appears in Appendix L.

The final interview protocol consists of 10 interview questions, each with additional probing questions. The interview questions address factors from each of the four subsections of Rovai's model according to what was found pertinent in the current literature. The interviews will last 45 to 60 mins, audio and video recorded through ZoomTM, and sufficient in-depth and breadth to answer the research questions.

The interview questions IQ5 and IQ10 address Rovai's student characteristics, answering RQ1. Questions addressing the student characteristics subsection were inspired

by the work of Williams (2017) regarding intellectual development and disability accommodations, by Chadha (2018) regarding gender, by Fleming et al. (2017) regarding the effect of age and ethnicity on the performance of SWD.

Interview question IQ7 addresses Rovai's student skills, answering RQ2.

Questions addressing the student skills subsection were inspired by the work of Alamri and Tyler-Wood (2017) regarding computer-based interactions, by Gering et al. (2018) regarding study habits, by Kinney and Eakman (2017) regarding academic performance, by Massengale and Vasquez (2016) regarding information literacy, by Murphy et al. (2019) regarding time management, by MacGregor et al. (2017) regarding reading and writing skills, and by Sorensen and Donovan (2017) regarding computer literacy.

Interview question IQ9 addresses Rovai's external factors, answering RQ3. Questions addressing the external factors subsection were inspired by Sorensen and Donovan (2017) regarding the effects of employment, family responsibilities, and finances, by Fetzner (2103) regarding personal problems, and by Fleming et al. (2018) regarding outside encouragement.

Interview questions IQ1, IQ3, IQ4, IQ6, and IQ8 address Rovai's internal factors, answering RQ4. Questions addressing the external factors subsection were inspired by Athens (2018) regarding social integration and learning community, by Zilvinskis (2021) regarding the use of support services, by Culp et al. (2017) regarding interpersonal relationships, by Bettencourt et al. (2018) regarding sense of belonging, and by Quinn et al. (2019) regarding classroom participation. Questions were also inspired by Schwartz and Tinto (1987) regarding goal commitment, by Bogart et al. (2018) regarding interaction with peers, by Alamri and Tyler-Wood (2017) regarding interaction with

faculty. Additional questions were inspired by Showers and Kinsman (2017) regarding academic preparation, by Murphy and Stewart (2017) regarding the clarity of programs, by Cutsinger et al. (2018) regarding teaching style, by Rios (2019) regarding stress, by Ghaffari (2018) regarding learning style, and by Yang et al. (2017) regarding program fit.

Additional Data

Demographic information will be collected through the online questionnaire to establish a profile of the sample. The eight questions collecting demographic data, QQ9 through QQ16, were developed with inspiration from several literary sources (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Briggs et al., 2020; Chadha, 2018; Sandoval, 2018; Sorensen & Donovan, 2017). Participants are offered the option to decline to state answers to QQ9 through QQ21 as they may not feel comfortable sharing their age, number of dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type.

The American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021) and the United States Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020) inspired the wording for QQ11, QQ12, QQ15, and QQ16. Feedback from the expert panel included a recommendation for modeling questions after these two sources to ensure valid and reliable wording. This panel expert has over 20 years of social research experience, including qualitative instrument development.

Access to demographic information will allow the researcher to create a profile of, gain basic knowledge of, and describe the sample. The goal of qualitative research is to represent the contexts that make everyone's experience unique (Yin, 2011). By collecting demographic data, the researcher will enhance the transferability of the study by making it possible for the reader to decide whether the results transfer to other

situations or populations (Shenton, 2004). Moreover, gaining this perspective can help the researcher consider inconsistencies, contradictions, and diversity among participants, creating what Shenton (2004) called contextual strength.

Trustworthiness

As defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness is the amalgamation of four aspects of qualitative research that enable the reader to decipher its worth. These four aspects consist of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability and are addressed as follows. Each subsection contains specific strategies that allow appraisal of the value of the qualitative research (Morse et al., 2002). This study will ensure the inherent trustworthiness by proactively managing threats from development, to implementation, to conclusion instead of evaluating for them after the fact. Assessing the trustworthiness of a study only at the conclusion makes mitigation of threats impossible (Morse et al., 2002).

The researcher employed both an expert panel review and field testing to develop the study instruments. Both instruments were given to the director of the site's disability support office who has 32 years of experience and a doctoral degree in education. Moreover, the instruments were given to an expert with a doctoral degree in philosophy and 20 years of experience in social research, qualitative instrument, and government report development. The expert panel was vital to developing high-quality instruments and protocols for this study. The expert panel ensured the researcher asked questions the target population could understand and answer. It also confirmed the quality of question- wording, ensuring the rigor of the data collected.

Field testing allowed the researcher to assess the ease of questionnaire access, quality and clarity of the questions, the amount of data produced from the number and depth of interview questions, and the interviewing techniques that will be employed in the final study. Additionally, field testing of the expert panel reviewed instrument and protocol was conducted with students who met the study criteria but were not included in the study. The field testing revealed areas of improvement needed in both instruments.

Feedback regarding the questionnaire was primarily positive with all three students indicating ease of access and question clarity. However, all three students indicated an uneasy feeling when asked to speak of their financial situation and one questioned if doing so was imperative to the study. After some consideration, the researcher chose not to omit the question regarding finances as financial situation is heavily stressed in the literature as impactful to the persistence of nontraditional students (American Association of Community Colleges, 2019; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Fox, 2017; Sorensen & Donovan, 2017).

Field testing of the interview protocol indicated that specific questions produced short answers while others were overly wordy and needed revision. The researcher also lost opportunities to dig deeper into participant responses by sticking too closely to the interview protocol. As a result, the researcher spent considerable time reviewing semi-structured interviewing techniques to become more flexible using individualized probing questions.

Using both an expert panel and field test was integral to developing quality research instruments. Moreover, the field test interviews produced answers that were short of data. Questions that the researcher had initially removed from the interview for

fear of producing too lengthy responses were needed to reach an acceptable interview length and amount of data collected. The researcher added multiple questions and revised probing questions accordingly.

Credibility

Credibility, equivalent to the concept of internal validity in quantitative research, is a measure of the ability of the researcher to accurately describe the phenomenon as the participant intended it (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Threats to study credibility could include researcher unfamiliarity with the contexts and experiences of the participants that could lead to an inability to decipher between relevant and irrelevant data (Warren & Schwitzer, 2018). This threat is mitigated by the fact that the researcher is a community college counselor and familiar with student contexts and experiences. In addition, input from the director of the site's disability support office helped ensure that wording would not interfere with their ability to comprehend the questions.

Inaccuracy of results could be problematic in qualitative research. Member checking will mitigate the threat of misunderstanding participant responses. In member checking, the researcher allows the participant the opportunity to review and confirm that their responses are complete and accurately describe what they intended to describe (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Since the qualitative descriptive design employs little to no researcher interpretation (Sandelowski, 2000), codes and themes will consist of the participants' words whenever possible. Subjective judgment will not play a part in this study. Moreover, alignment of the research questions, methodology, design, data collection, and analysis ensure what Morse et al. (2002) coined methodological coherence. The input of

the expert in qualitative research, instrument, and report development helped to safeguard against methodological errors in the interview question wording. It helped ensure that all study aspects align to establish accurate research instruments and sufficiently answer the research questions.

Dependability

Dependability demonstrates the consistency of procedures undertaken in the study so that another researcher could replicate it and obtain comparable results and conclusions (Jiggins Colorafi & Evans, 2016). Ghaffari (2018) adds that clear documentation and the use of an audit trail can add to a study's dependability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that high levels of credibility will help to ensure dependability. Threats to dependability in this study will be mitigated using an audit trail in which the researcher will clearly describe each step of the process, ensuring that other researchers could easily replicate the study and arrive at the same results (Shenton, 2004). The qualitative descriptive nature of this study will show how their words guide the data collection and analysis, allowing for the establishment of meaning independent of the researcher (Yin, 2011).

Transferability

Transferability refers to the measure of how well results could apply to other situations (Jiggins Colorafi & Evans, 2016; Shenton, 2004). The contextual nature of the qualitative methodology makes generalizability difficult. However, sufficient description of the phenomenon (Shenton, 2004), participant characteristics, potential threats, and sampling strategy make it possible for the reader to assess the transferability of findings to other situations (Jiggins Colorafi & Evans, 2016). In this study, the researcher will use

the participants' words whenever possible to describe how the student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influenced their asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Generalizability is not the goal of this study. The goal of qualitative descriptive research is to transform understanding by describing participants' experiences and perceptions, creating a new understanding of the phenomena (Sandelowski, 1997). To accomplish this, the researcher will gather demographic data from the participants in the questionnaire. Combined with the member checking of transcribed interview data, the researcher will thoroughly and accurately include their contexts in the development of a thorough and complete understanding of their experiences and perceptions. Then, the reader can decide whether the study results could be transferred to other populations of students or other contexts.

Bracketing will mitigate the threat of researcher bias. Bracketing allows the researcher to set aside their own firsthand experiences and beliefs to not influence findings (Shenton, 2004). In this study, the researcher will discuss her position as a community college counselor working with SWD and online students, how her predispositions could influence the study outcomes, and how she will guard against such influence.

Confirmability

Confirmability is a measure of assessing the data analysis and interpretation quality in a qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the qualitative descriptive method, the researcher ensures confirmability by thoroughly describing the descriptions and keeping them in the participant's language whenever possible with little to no

researcher inference (Sandelowski, 2000). Furthermore, the researcher will minimize threats to confirmability by remaining neutral (Jiggins Colorafi & Evans, 2016) ensuring through member checking that the findings of this study are a result of their ideas and beliefs, not the ideas and beliefs of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). Creating an audit trail, clearly showing each step of the process taken from procedure description, perception bracketing, data collection, analysis, and representation of findings will show the neutrality of the researcher and allow the findings to represent the ideas and beliefs of the participants (Shenton, 2004).

Data Collection and Management

The minimum sample size for the online questionnaire is 40 participants. The minimum sample size for the interviews is 12 participants from the questionnaire sample. The researcher will request interview volunteers at the end of the questionnaire. The first 12 participants to volunteer by following the link provided to a separate questionnaire in which they offer their name and contact information will be contacted by the researcher to participate in the interview and will make up the interview sample. Eligibility for the study will be described in the recruitment email sent to students from the community college, in the Facebook group posts and the attached recruitment flier, and will be proposed in the first question of the questionnaire that addresses informed consent. Any student who indicates their consent to participate by inserting their name and date in the signature and date textboxes confirms their eligibility for the study. In addition, the following steps will be or were completed to conduct this study:

1. **Site Authorization:** The researcher obtained authorization to recruit participants from the community college in California and the administrators of private Facebook groups popular with community college students, doctoral students, college alumni, and higher education professionals.

2. IRB Approval: Institutional Review Board approval from Grand Canyon University will be obtained.
3. Expert Panel Review: Peer scrutiny of a study increases credibility (Shenton, 2004). For this reason, the researcher utilized an expert panel of professionals in the field of higher education and qualitative methodology to review and offer suggestions regarding how to fine-tune the questionnaire and interview questions. The panel included the director of the site's disability support office with 32 years of higher education experience and a doctoral degree in education. This expert indicated a need to revise wording on the employment and disability questions on the questionnaire to be more understandable to SWD. Additionally, he suggested rank ordering of the options in the question regarding students' reason for withdrawal. Moreover, the panel included an expert in qualitative research, instrument, and report development with 20 years of experience and a doctoral degree in philosophy. This expert's feedback indicated a need to reword the interview protocol to include more open-ended questions, use the U. S. Census and Department of Education surveys as a guide for valid wording, a reminder to assign code names before beginning the interview, to begin the interview with a broad question regarding their educational goals, and to add questions regarding accommodation use and effectiveness to the questionnaire. Furthermore, though not initially part of the expert panel, the dean of the site's Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Research, and Planning requested, as a condition of site authorization, allowing participants to rank order or choose all that apply on the questionnaire question regarding their reasons for withdrawal. All three experts provided valuable feedback that guided the development of the questionnaire and interview questions, ensuring they would solicit the information sought, be understandable by community college students with disabilities, and provide enough data to answer the research questions.
4. Field Testing: Field testing was conducted with three students who fit the criteria but are not included in the study to ensure the comprehensibility of questions and quality of the resulting data. The participants offered feedback that indicated the questionnaire was easy to access, the questions were easily comprehensible, and the time to complete it was not excessive. All three participants indicated they did not feel comfortable when asked about their financial situation; however, as noted in the literature, finances affect a student's ability to persist in an online course (American Association of Community Colleges, 2019; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Fox, 2017; Sorensen & Donovan, 2017). Therefore, the financial question was kept in the final version of both instruments. By field testing the interview protocol, the researcher gained important insights regarding the questions and her interviewing skills. All three field test participants indicated lengthy, multi-part questions that were difficult to follow. One participant felt uneasy regarding the financial question, while two indicated issues with the researcher's interviewing techniques. One suggested the researcher refrain from nodding her head as it made him feel as though she understood and he did not need to elaborate on his responses. The other suggested allowing more time for a response as she noted the researcher began asking the next question before she finished responding.

Interview field testing feedback, combined with the experience of the procedural walk-through of data collection, allowed the researcher to adjust the protocol by adding questions previously omitted to avoid significantly lengthy responses. Additionally, the researcher realized the need to improve semi-structured interviewing techniques before data collection.

5. Questionnaire Sampling: The researcher will use purposive sampling by emailing the flier and recruitment material containing the link to the questionnaire to all eligible students identified by the staff of the disability support office at the community college in California. The same flier and recruitment material will be emailed to faculty and staff from the college as a method of chain referral sampling, requesting they refer students they know who may be eligible for the study by forwarding the email. Additionally, the researcher will use volunteer sampling by posting the study flier and recruitment material containing the link to the questionnaire in private and public Facebook groups popular among community college students in California. The researcher will, again, employ chain referral sampling to ensure that enough participants are generated for the study by posting the recruitment post and study flier in private and public Facebook groups popular with student affairs professionals, graduate program alumni, and doctoral learners. The researcher will request members pass along the questionnaire link to students they know who may be qualified for the study. Additional snowball sampling will be employed by the researcher by asking participants who complete the interviews to refer other students to the study who may be eligible. The target population will include all community college students enrolled with the disability support office at community colleges in California, of which the California Community College Chancellor's Office states there were over 93,000 in the 2020-21 academic year (California Community College Chancellor's Office Data Mart, 2022a, February 7). The sample frame will consist of all students enrolled with the disability support office at one community college in California. The college's unduplicated headcount of students enrolled with the disability support office for the 2020-21 academic year was reported to be 848 (California Community College Chancellor's Office Data Mart, 2022b, February 7). Additionally, the sample frame will include all community college student members of the private and public Facebook groups accessed in the study, which, at the time of the study proposal, totaled over 54,000. The researcher will employ convenience sampling to make up the questionnaire sample by collecting the first 40 responses. All participants must (a) be over the age of 18 years; (b) an emancipated adult, able to make their own legal decisions; (c) be enrolled with a community college disability support office in California; (d) have at least one 'W' for withdrawal or 'EW' for excused withdrawal listed on their transcript for an asynchronous online course in at least one of the prior two semesters at the college; (e) be enrolled in at least one course at a community college in California; and (f) be willing to answer optional personal, identifiable, demographic questions related to age, number of dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type.

6. Recruitment Email and Facebook Post With Flier: The researcher will email all eligible students identified by the Office for Students with Disabilities and to faculty and staff from the community college in California. The researcher will post the same information in a recruitment post in each private and public Facebook group popular with community college students, student affairs professionals, graduate program alumni, and doctoral learners. This email and post will introduce the study and solicit participation. The email and post will explain the title, purpose, and importance of the study, the inclusion and exclusion criteria, and the study activities. Additionally, the researcher will protect data and identity, use of data, the voluntary nature of participation, compensation, benefits of participation, and length of time to complete the questionnaire. The email and post will conclude with the link to the SurveyMonkey™ questionnaire, researcher contact information, and the study flier (see Appendix J). The first 40 questionnaire responses will be included in the sample. A copy of the recruitment email and Facebook™ post is provided in Appendix I.
7. Questionnaire: SurveyMonkey™ estimated the questionnaire to take approximately 22 mins to complete. It consists of questions that include informed consent, open- and closed-ended questions, demographic and academic profile questions, and a rank-order type question to understand their three most significant reasons for withdrawing from the asynchronous online course. After the final question, participants will be offered a link to follow if they are interested in volunteering for the interviews. The separate questionnaire will gather their name, email address, and phone number that the researcher will use to contact them and schedule the interview.
8. The questionnaire opens with a statement of informed consent that explains the title, purpose, and conditions to participate in the study. Inclusion and exclusion criteria and participant activities are explained. Access to data, risks, and benefits of participation, compensation, and data and identity protection are described. Additionally, the presentation of collected data, privacy and data security, and the possibility of data used in future research are described. Finally, participant rights are explained. The participant is asked to indicate their consent to participate in the study by clicking the 'I Agree' button. If the participant clicks the 'I Agree' button, the questionnaire will begin. If the participant clicks the 'I Do Not Agree' button, indicating they do not consent, they will be taken to a disqualification page and exited from the questionnaire.
9. Interview Sampling: The interview sample will be gathered through stratified purposive sampling. Twelve of those questionnaire participants who volunteer for the interview, who provide the most descriptive and diverse perspectives, will constitute the interview sample. The researcher will contact all respondents in the sample by phone and email to schedule and confirm the interview date and time. Moreover, the researcher will send confirmation emails confirming the appointment date, time, access information for the Zoom™ interviews, and interview questions, if requested. Lastly, the researcher will send reminder emails on the day of the scheduled interviews.

10. Interview: Neergaard et al. (2009) suggested that semi-structured interviews are the standard data collection method in qualitative descriptive studies. In this study, the researcher will conduct individual 45- to 60-min audio- and video-recorded interviews administered through Zoom™ video conferencing. Informed consent for the interviews will be emailed to and collected by email from each participant with DocuSign™ before the start of the interview. If the participant does not give the researcher written consent, the interview will not proceed. The researcher will conduct 12 Zoom™ interviews.
11. Member Checking: Of all strategies, member checking has the most critical influence on credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking increases credibility by allowing participants to ensure accuracy and comprehensiveness of their interview responses and offer any information they may wish to add. For this reason, the researcher will send an email to each participant after the interview containing the interview transcripts. Participants will have five days to respond with any information to change or add to the transcripts. After five days, all returned, and original transcripts will then be analyzed if not received back from the participant within five days. The use of an upgraded paid Zoom™ account includes the automatic transcription of all recorded interviews. Appendix G will include excerpts of deidentified transcripts.
12. Data Security: The researcher will protect participant confidentiality by assigning code names to all interview participants. Additionally, the researcher will use a password-protected Google email account and a password-protected personal computer kept at the researcher's residence to collect and store all questionnaire responses, recorded and transcribed interview data, participant names and their matching code names, contact information, and any notes taken during data collection and analysis. Any identifiable information from transcribed interviews will be removed. Members of the dissertation committee, IRB reviewers, and academic quality reviewers from Grand Canyon University will have full access to all study data ensuring quality and minimum quantity requirements. All electronic participant information, questionnaire data, interview transcripts, and email communications will be transferred to an external hard drive after study publication. The external hard drive will be kept in a locked drawer at the researcher's residence and the contents will be deleted three years from the date of study defense. These steps will maintain participant confidentiality, effectively manage the research materials, and secure the data.

Data Analysis Procedures

It was not known how community college students with disabilities in California describe how student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. The overarching research question is asked without the guidance of any theory or model in the online

questionnaire. RQ1 through RQ4 address the phenomenon through the lens of Rovai's (2003) composite model of student persistence in the interviews. Therefore, the overarching and research questions guiding this study are:

Overarching RQ: How do community college students with disabilities describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ1: How do community college students with disabilities describe how student characteristics influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ2: How do community college students with disabilities describe how student skills influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ3: How do community college students with disabilities describe how external factors influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ4: How do community college students with disabilities describe how internal factors influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

The researcher will know the point at which data collection can conclude as the themes will repeat across the data and no new themes will be evident (Guest et al., 2020). This point, coined data saturation, should be the goal of any qualitative study, not simply a large quantity of data (Guest et al., 2020). Guest et al. (2020) claimed that data saturation can occur as early as after just six to seven interviews. The minimum sample size of this study is 40 questionnaire participants and 12 interview participants from the 40 questionnaire participants, with a sample frame of nearly 55,000 community college SWD between the college site and Facebook groups. With saturation as the guiding

principle, the sample sizes should be sufficient to produce what Levitt et al. (2018) deemed a meaningful contribution to the analytic goals of the study.

Security measures to protect the data and the participant will include code names to protect interview participant confidentiality, a password-protected email account, a password-protected personal computer, and the removal of identifiable information from interview transcripts. All data will be accessible only by the researcher, the dissertation committee, IRB reviewers, and quality reviewers of Grand Canyon University. All study data, including questionnaire and interview data, email communications, and participant information, will be destroyed three years after the study is defended. Questionnaire and interview questions, and results of the expert panel review and field test, are offered in Appendix E.

Questionnaire Data Analysis

The questionnaire includes questions that address demographic information of the sample and answer the overarching research question of how do community college SWD describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. The question is addressed without model or theory guidance. Participants will select and rank order their three most important responses or provide their own in the 'other' option. The demographic and academic profile data will be used to describe the sample and to gain and present what Gibbs (1979) called a holistic view of the new knowledge.

According to Grand Canyon University, qualitative descriptive research should utilize at least 40 questionnaires to ensure the quantity of data collected are sufficient to answer the research question. This study will include 40 questionnaires; therefore, the quantity of data will be sufficient. Additionally, the researcher utilized an expert panel

review, field testing, and multiple questionnaire revisions to ensure the quality of questionnaire questions. Thus, the quantity and quality of data will be sufficient to answer the research questions.

The upgraded paid SurveyMonkey™ account used by the researcher includes features that will automatically organize the descriptive data and the qualitative data that answers the research questions and will account for any missing data. Qualitative analysis of the data from the open-ended questions and ‘other’ response in QQ28 will be conducted using the color-coded tags feature in SurveyMonkey™. Because researchers who employ the qualitative descriptive method allow the participant’s words to explain the findings (Sandelowski, 2000), color-coded tags, codes, and themes will utilize the participant’s words whenever possible with little to no researcher interpretation.

Creating a demographic and academic profile of the participants enhances the transferability of the study (Shenton, 2004). The researcher will use the demographic and academic profile to portray the shared and varied features within the population of community college SWD. Subsequently, the reader can decide the appropriateness of applying findings to other populations or in other situations (Shenton, 2004).

The researcher will present the demographic and academic profile data and descriptions that answer RQ1 in narrative, embedded extracts, table, and figure format in Chapter 4. The tables and figures will include graphs, charts, means, and percentages of participant responses. Codes and themes produced for the QQ6, QQ18, QQ22, QQ23, QQ25, and the ‘other’ response to QQ28 will be included in the codebook presented in Appendix F.

Interview Data Analysis

The upgraded paid Zoom™ account features an automatic transcription of interview data. The researcher will check all transcribed data for accuracy before employing member checking. Member checking is the most important technique to ensure credibility in a qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The transcribed interview data will be emailed to participants as a form of member checking. Participants will have five days to correct and add anything they feel has been left out. Once all transcripts have been returned or the five days have passed, the researcher will import all transcripts into MAXQDA™ (VERBI Software, 2019) qualitative data analysis software for thematic analysis.

The researcher will use thematic analysis to analyze interview data to answer the overarching research question and RQ1 through RQ4 systematically. The researcher developed the interview questions in a deductive manner, using Rovai's (2003) composite model of student persistence as a guide. By gathering participant input and watching for the formation of patterns in the data, the researcher's use of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis will produce an understanding of how Rovai's four factors influenced the participants' decisions to withdraw from an asynchronous online course. This new knowledge answers the overarching research question and RQ1 through RQ4.

Codes will be defined in their own words whenever possible and recorded in a codebook offered in Appendix F. The researcher will code all interview data using the six phases of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006):

- Familiarizing self with the data.

- Generating initial codes.
- Searching for themes.
- Reviewing themes.
- Defining and naming themes.
- Producing the report.

The goals of the thematic analysis are a thorough description of data that emphasizes similarities as well as differences and offers insightful analyses appropriate for use in policy development (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how community college students with disabilities (SWD) in California describe how student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. In addition, the descriptions can be used as a knowledge base upon which online course withdrawal interventions for community college SWD could potentially be developed (Neergaard et al., 2009). Thus, Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis is appropriate for the interview data analysis in this study.

The researcher will become familiarized with the data in the first step of the analysis process, checking for accuracy between the recorded raw data and the transcribed data, reading the entire transcript multiple times, and taking note of preliminary codes in specific data extracts. Braun and Clarke (2006) called this phase the bedrock of the analysis upon which everything else is built. The authors explained that coding is the process of tagging and naming specific data extracts that are collated into initial codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher will generate initial codes by paying attention to every data item and noting as many patterns as possible with the MAXQDA function of highlight coding. Sandelowski (2000) explained that the qualitative

descriptive method uses little researcher interpretation and relies on the participant's language to explain and portray the findings.

Once the researcher is familiar with the data, the researcher will engage in the second step of analysis, or coding. While employing inductive coding, the researcher will identify possible patterns in the data at both the sentence and paragraph levels, and color-code them, placing them in as many initial codes as needed, including a miscellaneous code to hold all pieces of data that do not fit anywhere else (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A list of initial codes will be organized into a table of participant code names, assigned codes, and code definitions.

Step three, or searching for themes, will include the researcher creating categories of codes which will help visualize the larger themes and shift the focus from the narrow codes to broader themes. Themes are categories of combined codes that allow the researcher to look more broadly at the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher will utilize tables to organize identified themes, the definitions, and examples of each theme. Care will be used to ensure that the surrounding context is not lost when arranging these data extracts. Then, the researcher will identify relationships between codes, themes, and levels of themes, including initial themes, subthemes, and final themes.

Step four includes reviewing the themes and refining them or deconstructing them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Coherence within themes and clear distinction between themes will be examined at the code level and again at the entire data set level as the process of coding is ongoing (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher will evaluate the appropriateness of codes with care to notice any data that may not fit or has been missed. Themes will be offered in table format illustrating themes, definitions, the RQs they

address, and quotes. Once alignment exists between the themes at this point and the codes in step two, the researcher can move on to step five, defining and naming the themes.

Each theme must be easily defined so that what is not included in the theme is apparent (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A detailed analysis of each theme, the definition, any refinements, and specific extracts will be offered so that the entire set of themes can tell the story of the data. Once this is completed, the final step, producing a report, will begin.

A written comprehensive analysis for each theme and how it fits within the entire dataset will be devised to present the results. The researcher will provide a concise and logical narrative report regarding the overall story of the data across all research questions. Descriptive data will be woven into the narrative to help the reader understand the shared and varied features within the sample. The narrative will include embedded extracts and will help the researcher illustrate and make an argument for the research questions in the participants' own words whenever possible. The narrative will also incorporate reference to the concepts defined in the theory underlying the study, Rovai's (2003) composite model of student persistence, and in the prior empirical literature on the topic. By combining the narrative, tables, and figures with descriptive data regarding the sample, the researcher will definitively address the overarching research question of how community college students with disabilities describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher will adhere to and uphold the basic ethical principles described by the Belmont Report of the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1979). The Belmont Report identified respect,

beneficence, and justice as relevant to behavioral research. Grand Canyon University (2018) insists upon researcher adherence to these three principles.

The first principle, respect for persons, refers to both the autonomy and protection of those who lack autonomy. The second, beneficence, refers to the obligation to uphold the participants' sense of wellbeing. The third, justice, refers to distributing benefits and burdens of behavioral research (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). In this study, the researcher will abide by these principles and commit to each participant's uncompromised rights, integrity, and values.

Approval from the administrators of the private Facebook groups was granted before collecting any data. Copies of group administrator authorizations appear in Appendix B, and IRB approval will appear in Appendix C. Researcher adherence to all IRB guidelines ensures procedures will be followed.

The researcher will ensure that the potential participants do not feel pressured to participate by either the researcher, their disability support office, or their college. Participation will not impact the students' grades, standing with their school, or enrollment with their disability support office. The researcher will use multiple means to manage risks for harm. For example, code names such as Participant 1 or P1, will be assigned to all interview participants to protect their confidentiality. Participants are assured that if they decide to end participation in the study, they may do so for any reason and at any time.

The recruitment email and Facebook post containing the study flier explain the research's title, importance, purpose, inclusion and exclusion criteria, study activities, and

the potential risks and benefits of participation. The email and Facebook post will also explain the protection of data and identity, use of data, voluntary nature of participation, strategies to end participation, compensation, researcher's contact information, and length of time expected to complete the questionnaire. It will also provide a link to the SurveyMonkey™ questionnaire.

An explanation of the terms of informed consent for participation in the questionnaire is electronically presented at the beginning of the questionnaire. The questionnaire ends with a statement recruiting participants for the interviews. If a participant wishes to continue, they will select to exit the questionnaire and enter a second questionnaire used to gather names and contact information. If they do not wish to continue, they will be instructed to exit the questionnaire. Once in the second questionnaire, participants will be offered textboxes in which the participant will enter their name, email, and phone number which the researcher will use to contact them. If a participant chooses not to offer their contact information, they will be instructed to exit the questionnaire and no contact information will be recorded or used in the study.

Before each interview, written consent for participation will be obtained through email using DocuSign™. The researcher will email an informed consent document to the participant at the start of the Zoom™ meeting. If the participant does not return the signed consent form to the researcher, the interview will not occur. All consent forms will appear in Appendix D. Interviews will be recorded through Zoom™. The researcher will ask the participant for consent to record before beginning the interview. The interview will not take place if consent is not indicated.

Withdrawal from a college course can be a sensitive topic for students. There may be unintended consequences for participants who discuss it. If distress or discomfort is displayed, the researcher will stop the interview and ask if the participant would like to decline to answer the question or end the interview. Doing so will be of no negative consequence to the participant. If participation is ended early by either participant or researcher, the researcher will offer the participant online resource information where they can seek counsel (see Appendix L). All documentation of participation will be physically destroyed or electronically deleted in the case of study withdrawal.

Interview participants will be offered the opportunity by follow-up email to read and validate their transcribed responses, ensuring credibility in participant input. The researcher will keep all questionnaire results, transcribed interviews, and participant contact information on a password-protected laptop computer in a locked drawer at the researcher's residence to which only the researcher has access. Additionally, the researcher will transfer all electronic data to an external hard drive after study publication and keep it in a locked drawer at her residence. All study-related hard copies and electronic materials will be kept for three years after defense and will be physically destroyed and electronically deleted thereafter. They will be accessible only by the researcher, committee members, IRB reviewers, and academic quality reviewers of Grand Canyon University, ensuring quality and minimum quantity requirements.

Assumptions, and Delimitations

In research, assumptions, or the decisions made about reality, knowledge, theory, approach, and the role of the researcher inform how a study is constructed (Braun & Clarke, 2019). An adept researcher must reflect on the processes that informed the design

and even desire to conduct their study to understand and anticipate assumptions (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Assumptions are a part of this study and are examined herein.

Assumptions

It is assumed that participants in this study will answer the researcher's questions honestly. Their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal are impossible to verify and potentially influenced by a myriad of factors. Therefore, the researcher assumes that participants will respond with non-deceptive answers and to the best of their ability.

Furthermore, the researcher assumes that participants will want to participate in the study and appreciate having their voices heard. Community colleges typically do not ask why students withdrew from a course. Students may feel invalidated once they withdraw and that the college does not value their experiences or opinions. For these reasons, seeking the input of students who withdrew from a course can help to validate and give voice to their experiences and opinions (Fetzner, 2013). Moreover, students with disabilities (SWD) are marginalized on college campuses. Therefore, seeking their input enhances the inclusiveness of the college (Peña et al., 2018).

The researcher assumes that the findings of this study will provide an accurate representation of the current phenomenon of community college SWD's reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Furthermore, the researcher assumes that enough detail will be provided to allow for study replicability. Therefore, the researcher will ensure that enough explanation of the methodology and design of the study is provided. Additionally, the researcher will utilize enough participants to ensure response saturation so that others may replicate the study in the future. Doing so will provide a meaningful

contribution to understanding the phenomenon (Levitt et al., 2018) of the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD.

Delimitations

This study includes delimitations or the decisions in the development of the study over which the researcher has control inherent to the makeup of the research plan (Simon & Goes, 2013). Only community college students with disabilities (SWD) from California were included, which is a delimitation. Participants from this area may have views and experiences that differ from those in other regions.

Additionally, students under the age of 18 years, not emancipated adults who can make their own legal decisions, not enrolled with a community college disability support office in California, those without at least one 'W' for withdrawal or 'EW' for excused withdrawal on their transcript for an asynchronous online course in at least one of the prior two semesters, those not currently enrolled in at least one course at a community college in California, and not willing to answer optional personal, identifiable, demographic questions related to age, number of dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type are excluded from the study. The applicability of study findings is not extended to students in these groups. Data collection from those younger than 18 would be too problematic for a novice doctoral researcher as the recruitment of minors requires separate authorization. Moreover, data collected from individuals not enrolled at a community college in California or a community college disability support office in California was not directly relevant to the purpose of this study.

Moreover, only community college SWD who attend the community college in California or belong to the Facebook groups accessed in this study will be included. Those who do not attend the community college in California, do not use Facebook, or do not belong to the Facebook groups accessed in the study will not be included. While this poses barriers to participation, social media recruitment allows easy and widespread access to potential participants while facilitating viral sharing of information (Marks et al., 2017).

Another delimitation of the study is that only the input of community college SWD who withdrew from an asynchronous online course will be included. Often colleges and researchers seek student input at the end of a course to assess its effectiveness and the students' satisfaction with it. In this manner, students who withdrew from an asynchronous online course are excluded from participating in offering their opinions regarding the effectiveness of the course or their satisfaction with it. The opinions and experiences of students who withdrew from the course should be analyzed separately from those who finished the course (Murphy & Stewart, 2017).

Summary

In summary, as the number of college students with disabilities (SWD) in online learning increases, so does the need for research regarding the population (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020; Terras et al., 2020). The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how community college SWD in California describe how student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. The composite model of student persistence (Rovai, 2003) will guide RQ1 through RQ4 in this study, addressing the

recommendations of McKinney et al. (2019), Flink and Leonard (2019), and Terras et al. (2020). The research questions for this study are:

Overarching RQ (ORQ): How do community college students with disabilities describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ1: How do community college students with disabilities describe how student characteristics influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ2: How do community college students with disabilities describe how student skills influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ3: How do community college students with disabilities describe how external factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ4: How do community college students with disabilities describe how internal factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

This study sought to understand human behavior and discover unknown information regarding online SWD. Terras et al. (2020) described online SWD as an understudied population. The qualitative methodology can use both an inductive and a deductive approach to explain human behavior (Yin, 2011) while appreciating all details and contexts, even those that are nonconforming (Hyde, 2000). When the goals of the research are to obtain basic descriptions of their experiences to serve as the basis for future policy changes, quantitative hypothesis testing, and development of targeted interventions, the qualitative descriptive design is best suited (Jiggins Colorafi & Evans, 2016; Kim et al., 2017; Neergaard et al., 2009; Sandelowski, 2000). This study will employ the qualitative methodology, descriptive design, a deductive approach to the

development of research questions, and an inductive approach to data analysis to explore and understand the descriptions of community college SWD's reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

This study will utilize purposive sampling to recruit participants at the site through emails sent by the researcher to all eligible students. Chain referral sampling will be conducted by sending the same email to faculty and staff at the site requesting their help in forwarding the email to eligible students. Volunteer sampling in private and public Facebook groups popular with community college students in California will broaden access to eligible students to include all community college students in California. Chain referral sampling will be conducted by requesting the help of members of private and public Facebook groups popular with student affairs professionals, college alumni, and doctoral learners in the recruitment of participants. Students who are over the age of 18 years, emancipated adults, who can make their own legal decisions, enrolled with a community college disability support office in California, have at least one 'W' for withdrawal or 'EW' for excused withdrawal on their transcript for an asynchronous online course in at least one of the prior two semesters, are currently enrolled in at least one course at a community college in California, and are willing to answer optional personal, identifiable, demographic questions related to age, number of dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type will be asked to complete the online questionnaire. The first 40 eligible students will be conveniently selected as the questionnaire sample. The first 12 of the initial 40 participants who volunteer to participate in the ZoomTM interviews will be conveniently selected as the interview sample.

A researcher-developed online questionnaire and researcher-developed semi-structured interview protocol serve as the sources of data for this study. The online questionnaire will be administered through SurveyMonkey™. It will consist of open- and closed-ended questions and Likert-type questions that will collect demographic and academic profile data and answer the overarching research question without theory or model guidance. The individual interview protocol will address RQ1 through RQ4 guided by the student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors of the composite model of persistence (Rovai, 2003). Additional data will include names, phone numbers, and email addresses of participant volunteers and demographic and academic profile data to establish a profile of the participants.

The trustworthiness of this study was discussed, including proactive measures taken to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability from inception to completion to mitigate possible threats. The steps taken to conduct the study were examined, including gaining site authorization at the community college in California, private Facebook group administrator authorization, and approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Grand Canyon University. An expert panel review and field test was conducted. Potential participants will access the questionnaire through the link provided in the recruitment material and study flier sent by email and posted in Facebook groups. Interviews will be conducted through Zoom™. The participants will be solicited for optional participation in the Zoom™ interviews at the end of the questionnaire. Credibility will be enhanced through member checking. Data security was also discussed to maintain questionnaire participant anonymity and interview participant confidentiality.

Data saturation will be the goal of the sample size. The qualitative analytical software MAXQDA™ will be used to analyze individual interview data thematically. The researcher will use the upgraded paid SurveyMonkey™ account features to generate summary views, create charts, account for missing data, produce tags to categorize text responses, and analyze the demographic data. The online questionnaires address the overarching research question, while RQ1 through RQ4 are addressed in the Zoom™ interviews. Recorded interview data will be transcribed and offered to the participants for member checking.

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis will guide the data analysis in this study. First, data will be sorted into initial codes, codes sorted into themes, and a thematic map of initial themes will be created. Next, relationships between themes will be identified, creating candidate themes and a candidate thematic map. Data will be defined and refined with a detailed written analysis offered for each theme. A narrative report with embedded extracts will tell the complete data story.

Respect, beneficence, and justice as defined by the Belmont Report will be upheld throughout this study. Site authorization at the community college in California, private Facebook group administrator authorization, and IRB approval will be obtained before data collection. Informed consent will be collected for both the questionnaire and interviews. Participants will have all study details explained to them in the recruitment email and Facebook group posts, the statement of informed consent presented at the beginning of the questionnaire, and the email sent to the participant before the beginning of the interview. If the participant does not consent, the participant will be disqualified from participation in the questionnaire and or interview. Code names will protect

interview participant confidentiality. Zoom™ will be used to conduct, record, and transcribe all interviews.

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. The participant will have control to end participation for any reason and at any time. Participants can validate their transcribed responses through email before analysis begins. The researcher will keep all study materials guarded and only allow access to the committee members, IRB reviewers, and Grand Canyon University quality reviewers until destruction three years from the defense date. Finally, an explanation of assumptions and delimitations for the study was discussed. Assumptions included participant honesty, willingness to participate, and accuracy of findings. Delimitations included the eligibility of only a limited group of students and the ineligibility of other groups of students.

Chapter 4 will focus on the data analysis and results of this study. Preparation measures for analysis will be described for both the raw qualitative and descriptive data. Data analysis procedures will be explained, including the reflexivity protocol and the phases of data analysis. Finally, the data and limitations will be presented and discussed.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how community college students with disabilities in California describe how student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. The literature has explored the topics of students with disabilities (SWD) in community college (Flink & Leonard, 2019), SWD who study online (Terras et al., 2020), and online course withdrawal (McKinney et al., 2019); however, the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD are still not understood. To address this dearth of knowledge, the researcher employed a qualitative descriptive design and utilized two data sources: an online questionnaire and individual interviews. These data sources allowed the researcher to gather and explore the descriptions of asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD.

Twenty-five community college SWD participated in the questionnaire and a separate 12 community college SWD participated in individual interviews for a total of 37 ($n=37$) study participants. The questions in both data sources addressed the research questions. The research questions focused on the problem space identified by the researcher, that from their perspective, the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal (McKinney et al., 2019) of community college SWD were still unknown (Flink & Leonard, 2019; Terras et al., 2020). The research questions were constructed to align with Rovai's (2003) composite model of student persistence and are as follows:

Overarching RQ (ORQ): How do community college students with disabilities describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ1: How do community college students with disabilities describe how student characteristics influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ2: How do community college students with disabilities describe how student skills influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ3: How do community college students with disabilities describe how external factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ4: How do community college students with disabilities describe how internal factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

These research questions allowed the researcher to explore the phenomenon of asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD in the study. Chapter 4 includes descriptions of how the raw data was prepared for analysis, the descriptive data of the participants, and reflexivity protocols. The chapter also includes a thorough account of the phases of data analysis outlined in Chapter 3. Lastly, the results of the study are presented in Chapter 4 in narrative, figure, and tabular formats.

Important Changes and Updates to Information in Chapters 1-3

Changes to the plans outlined in the study proposal occurred while conducting the study. The first change concerned data collection. The researcher encountered initial challenges with garnering enough interest in the questionnaire and interviews. Chapter 3 explained that the researcher would employ the following four methods to recruit study participants: (a) purposive sampling at a California community college from which site

authorization had been granted; (b) volunteer sampling by posting the recruitment material in private and public Facebook™ groups popular among community college students; (c) chain referral sampling by posting the same recruitment material in Facebook™ groups popular with student affairs professionals, graduate program alumni, and doctoral learners; and (d) snowball sampling by requesting interview participants refer others they know who may be eligible to the study. After weeks of recruitment and only nine eligible participants, the researcher sought and was granted GCU IRB approval (see Appendix C) to modify the study by increasing the number of Facebook™ groups used for recruitment from 25 to 55, increasing the total number of group members who had potential access to the recruitment material to over 200,000. Also, the researcher was authorized by GCU IRB (see Appendix C) to modify the study by offering an incentive for interview participation in the form of a \$20 Amazon™ electronic gift card.

When only 25 questionnaire and zero interview participants were garnered after several additional weeks of recruitment and upon the advice of the committee and an independent GCU IRB reviewer, the researcher sought and was granted GCU IRB approval (see Appendix C) to modify the study by expanding the target population to a national level and using a third-party recruitment service to identify eligible participants. As was agreed upon by the committee and independent GCU IRB reviewer, the total of 25 questionnaire participants was deemed sufficient enough to proceed with interview recruitment as the interviews took precedence. The researcher hired UserInterviews™, a facilitator of online consumer research studies, to locate and provide access to vetted participants. Participants were quickly garnered. All participants met the study eligibility requirements by completing a screener survey (see Appendix M). The researcher

completed the 12 required interviews with participants who were (a) over the age of 18 years; (b) emancipated adults, able to make their own legal decisions; (c) enrolled with a community college disability support office in the United States; (d) had at least one ‘W’ for withdrawal or ‘EW’ for excused withdrawal listed on their transcript for an asynchronous online course in at least one of the prior two semesters at the college; (e) enrolled in at least one course at a community college in the United States; and (f) willing to answer optional personal, identifiable, demographic questions related to age, number of dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type. The 12 interviews allowed the researcher to complete data collection for the study and answer the updated overarching research question (ORQ). For the remainder of Chapters 4 and 5, the updated ORQ is: How do community college students with disabilities in the United States describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal? The updated purpose of this study was to explore the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college students with disabilities in the United States.

Secondly, while conducting the first interviews of the study, the researcher realized that some participants had misunderstood the eligibility criterion of having to have withdrawn from an asynchronous course, not a synchronous course. Because of the possibility of participants being confused by the terminology, the researcher made a minor change to the opening portion of the interview protocol to ensure the difference between synchronous and asynchronous courses was clearly understood before the interview began. This proved effective as more than one participant was deemed

ineligible upon the realization that they had misunderstood the differences between the synchronous and asynchronous formats of online courses.

Lastly, due to employment and Zoom™ account changes, the researcher was unable to utilize transcription services through Zoom™ as indicated in Chapter 3 and on the interview informed consent. Instead, the researcher used Otter™ for all transcription services. This change to analysis procedures required the researcher to gain study modification approval, once more. The researcher sought and was approved GCU IRB (see Appendix C) to modify the study upon the condition that the interview participants sign amended informed consent forms indicating this change in procedures. The researcher emailed amended consent forms to all 12 interview participants and nine of the original 12 interview participants responded with signed amended informed consent forms. After multiple failed attempts by phone and email to reach the other three participants, the researcher once again recruited through UserInterviews™ and completed three additional interviews using the amended informed consent form, the same screening questions, and the same interview protocol. The total number of study participants was 37 ($n=37$), including 25 questionnaire participants and 12 interview participants.

Preparation of Raw Data for Analysis and Descriptive Data

Preparation of Raw Data for Analysis

The two qualitative data sources in this study were questionnaires and individual interviews (see Appendix E). The researcher collected 25 SurveyMonkey™ questionnaires and conducted 12 individual Zoom™ interviews. The 12 interview participants were recruited through UserInterviews™. The participants scheduled their interview appointment and received automatic confirmation through UserInterviews™.

UserInterviews™ collects demographic, professional, and technical data from all of its platform users. Additionally, all UserInterviews™ users are over the age of 18 years. The researcher downloaded and saved all the UserInterviews™ demographic, professional, and technical data for each participant in the participant's folder. Such data was titled by interview participant number, from IP1 UserInterviews Characteristics to IP12 UserInterviews Characteristics. See Appendix N for types of user information gathered by UserInterviews™.

All interview participants shared similar demographic and academic characteristics with the questionnaire participants; however, none of the questionnaire participants participated in the interviews and none of the interview participants participated in the questionnaire. The researcher used the screener survey through UserInterviews™ (see Appendix M) to keep ineligible participants from proceeding with the recruitment process. Each study eligibility item from the informed consent was asked of potential participants in the screening process and those who offered unacceptable responses were automatically rejected. Informed consent was agreed to before participants gained access to the questionnaire in SurveyMonkey™ and through DocuSign™ before the interviews. Signed interview informed consents were saved to the participant's folder on the researcher's password-protected computer titled by participant number from IP1 DocuSign Informed Consent to IP12 DocuSign Informed Consent (template offered in Appendix D).

Questionnaire participants accessed the questionnaire through links provided by the researcher in recruitment fliers, emails, Facebook™ posts, and by chain referral sampling. See Appendices I and J for recruitment materials. Because the questionnaire

participants were not required to provide their names or identifying information to access the questionnaire, the researcher could not know how participants learned of and gained access to the study.

Questionnaire data was downloaded from SurveyMonkey™ in two forms. First, the researcher downloaded each questionnaire participant's individual responses to her password-protected computer and saved them in a folder titled Individual Responses. Responses for each participant were saved and titled QP1 Individual Response through QP25 Individual Response. Doing so allowed the researcher to scroll through each participant's responses individually. Figure 1 provides an example of a sample portion of one participant's responses to QQ13 through QQ17.

Figure 1

Sample of a SurveyMonkey™ Individual Response

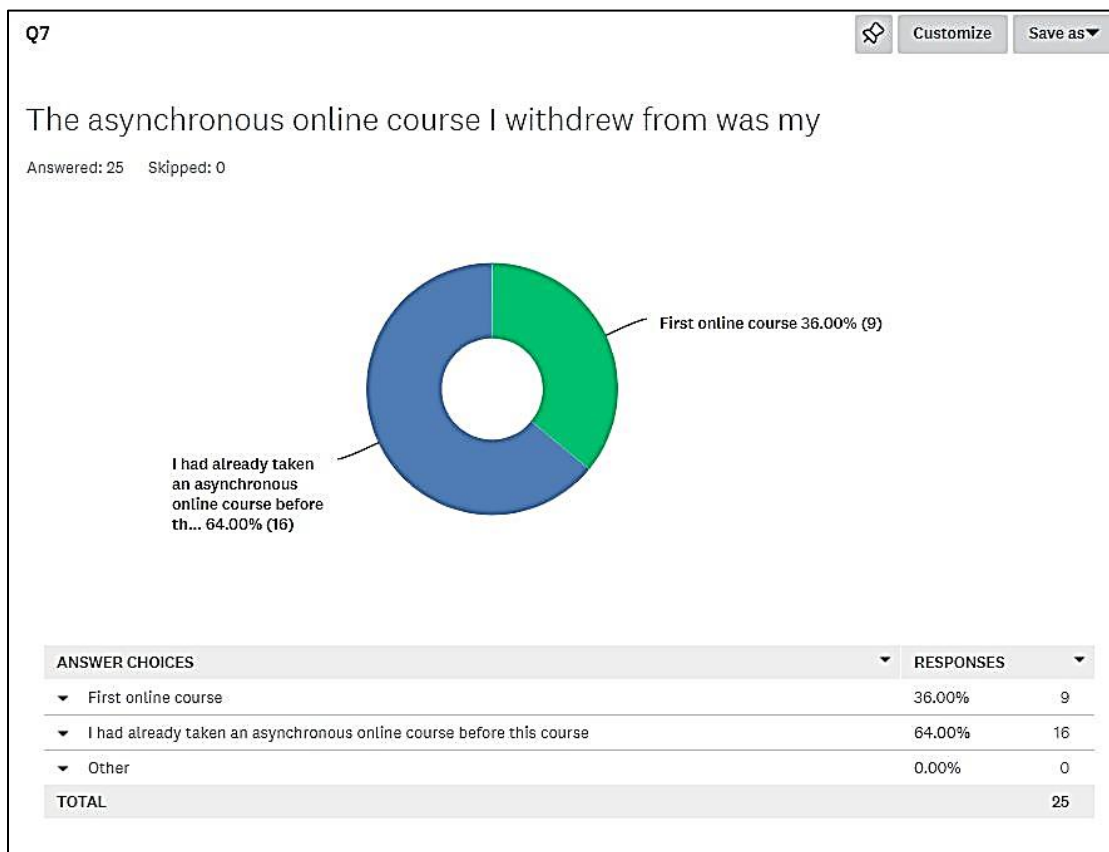
The Reasons for Asynchronous Online Course Withdrawal of Community College Students With Disabilities	
Q17	Learning disability
Please describe your disability or disabilities. Select all answers that apply.	
<hr/>	
Q18	
How did your disability influence your withdrawal from this asynchronous online course?	
I wasn't being given my accommodations that the professor agreed to, so I couldn't stay afloat	
<hr/>	
Q19	Yes
Did you use disability accommodations in the asynchronous online course you withdrew from?	
<hr/>	
Page 5	
Q20	No
Do you believe the disability accommodations you used helped you in the asynchronous online course you withdrew from?	
<hr/>	
Page 6	
Q21	Respondent skipped this question
Why did you not use disability accommodations in the asynchronous online course you withdrew from?	
<hr/>	
Page 7	
Q22	
When you started this asynchronous online course, how did you feel about your ability to complete it successfully?	
I thought it would be an easy-ish class	

Second, the researcher utilized the question summaries in SurveyMonkey™ to understand how each question was answered by the sample. SurveyMonkey™ allows the responses to each question to be customized and displayed in a variety of visual organizers such as bar graphs and pie charts to help the researcher visualize the sample's response to each question. Each summary provides the question, the number of responses

provided and skipped, the answer choices, and the percentage and absolute number of responses of each choice. Figure 2 provides a sample of a question summary of QQ7.

Figure 2

Sample of a SurveyMonkey™ Question Summary



The researcher downloaded the question summaries for each question to her password-protected computer, saved in a folder titled Question Summaries. Summaries for each question were saved and titled QQ1 Question Summary through QQ28 Question Summary. Question summaries for the open-ended questions contained data tables that showed participants' open-ended responses. Appendices S through W contain the results of the open-ended questions and are referred to throughout the Presenting the Results

section as appropriate. Figure 3 shows a sample portion of an open-ended question summary.

Figure 3

Sample of a SurveyMonkey™ Open-Ended Question Summary

The Reasons for Asynchronous Online Course Withdrawal of Community College Students With Disabilities		
Q18 How did your disability influence your withdrawal from this asynchronous online course?		
Answered: 23 Skipped: 2		
#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Lack of internet/ homeless	10/1/2022 11:14 AM
2	It was very difficult to teach myself	9/20/2022 3:45 PM
3	sdrtsert	9/3/2022 9:28 AM
4	it did not cause it	8/25/2022 3:37 PM
5	Because I was not getting the help I needed	8/25/2022 11:45 AM
6	It did not.	8/11/2022 5:21 PM
7	Was unable to stay focused.	8/7/2022 2:03 AM
8	I could not focus or find motivation to continue	8/7/2022 12:31 AM
9	had trouble focusing	8/7/2022 12:20 AM
10	Well with having dyscalculia I had a hard time remembering basic formulas especially when negative numbers were involved it made it difficult because tests scores were pretty low because I couldnt do a few things.	8/7/2022 12:05 AM
11	Not interested in the course any more	8/5/2022 7:39 PM
12	I learn at a slow pace and the teacher's teaching strategies did not mix well with my learning strategies.	8/5/2022 12:41 PM
13	I was unable to focus and set time aside to study this unknown topic	8/4/2022 8:37 PM
14	I usually do fine with asynchronous, but during this time I had lost a close family member. Because of this loss, I was during terribly and my psychological state had worsened.	8/2/2022 10:32 PM
15	decided it was not best for me	7/29/2022 12:16 AM
16	Prefer not to answer	7/28/2022 4:36 PM
17	Did not	7/21/2022 12:24 AM
18	I have ADHD and I struggled with time management issues in noth my household and school work.	7/8/2022 5:36 AM

Once all individual responses and question summaries were downloaded and titled, each individual response was uploaded into MAXQDA™ for thematic analysis. Each individual response was saved in a folder within the MAXQDA™ document system titled the same as on the researcher's personal computer. Question summaries were not

uploaded or coded, rather saved and accessed by the researcher separately when the ability to access all responses to one question was needed. Each individual response was coded for thematic analysis in MAXQDA. Figure 4 shows a sampled portion of a coded questionnaire participant's individual response.

Figure 4

Sample of a MAXQDA™ Coded Individual Response

The Reasons for Asynchronous Online Course Withdrawal of Community College Students With Disabilities	
	<p>Q17 Psychological disability</p> <p>Please describe your disability or disabilities. Select all answers that apply.</p>
.Disability-Related Hr	<p>Q18</p> <p>How did your disability influence your withdrawal from this asynchronous online course?</p> <p>My mo. Couldnt help me in everything</p>
	<p>Q19 No</p> <p>Did you use disability accommodations in the asynchronous online course you withdrew from?</p>
	<p>Page 5</p> <p>Q20 Respondent skipped this question</p> <p>Do you believe the disability accommodations you used helped you in the asynchronous online course you withdrew from?</p>
.Disability-Related Hr	<p>Page 6</p> <p>Q21 Other (please specify):</p> <p>Why did you not use disability accommodations in the asynchronous online course you withdrew from?</p> <p>My mom did everything for me</p>
	<p>Page 7</p> <p>Q22</p> <p>When you started this asynchronous online course, how did you feel about your ability to complete it successfully?</p> <p>I had no choice there was no in person classes available for me since I had to have the vaccine and I'm terrified of needles</p>
.No other choice of c	<p>Q23</p> <p>Will you take or have you taken another asynchronous online course since you withdrew from this asynchronous online course?</p> <p>Yes or no? Yes</p> <p>Why? My mom can help me better</p>
.Disability-Related Hr	

The interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom™. After each interview, the researcher emailed the \$20 Amazon™ electronic gift card to each participant with a note of thanks for their participation. The researcher then downloaded the transcript and audio file from Zoom™ to her password-protected computer and uploaded them to Otter™ for transcription. Once notified of the readiness of the transcript, the researcher downloaded

it to her password-protected computer, also. The researcher watched and re-watched each interview while cleaning the transcript. Cleaning the transcript included redaction of any names or identifying information offered by the participant and correcting any inconsistencies or inaccuracies in the Otter™ transcription. Then the researcher emailed the cleaned transcript to each participant for member checking, asking them to review their transcript for accuracy and confirm that what they stated was what they intended to convey. The researcher offered the participants five days to respond by email with any changes they wanted to include in the final analysis. Two participants responded that their transcript was accurate and ready for analysis. No other participants responded.

To secure confirmation from the participants that they had been heard correctly, the researcher compiled a summary of familiarization with the data set, approximately eight to 10 sentences in length, for each non-responsive participant. The summaries were emailed to the 10 non-responsive participants with a request to confirm or deny whether the researcher had heard them correctly within five days. If no response was received, the researcher would proceed with the analysis of the cleaned transcript. Eight of the 10 non-responsive participants responded and confirmed that they were indeed heard correctly. None of the participants indicated they had not been heard correctly nor indicated they wanted the transcript altered. Once again, two participants were non-responsive. Five days after sending the summaries to the participants the researcher uploaded all the cleaned transcripts, including those of the two non-responsive participants, to MAXQDA™ for analysis. All participant names, contact information, and associated code names were saved in a separate document.

Each transcript was saved individually in a folder titled by interview participant number on the researcher's password-protected computer and in MAXQDA™ by participant number for ease of reference. The transcripts were titled Interview Participant 1 (IP1) through Interview Participant 12 (IP12). Each video and audio file, signed informed consent, notes made in the interviewing and cleaning processes, summaries of familiarization, and reflexive journal entries for each were also saved to the participant's folder on the researcher's password-protected computer. Lastly, the researcher backed up all data to a password-protected external hard drive for extra security. A copy of all raw and coded data was uploaded to the LDP for Level 5 Peer Review.

Descriptive Data

Descriptive data were collected through the questionnaire in SurveyMonkey™, the screener survey administered by UserInterviews™, and verbally by the researcher in each interview. The sample consisted of 37 ($n=37$) participants including 25 questionnaire participants and 12 separate interview participants. All participants fit the purposive sample criteria which included being (a) over the age of 18 years, (b) emancipated adults, able to make their own legal decisions, (c) enrolled with a community college disability support office in the United States, (d) having at least one 'W' for withdrawal or 'EW' for excused withdrawal listed on their transcript for an asynchronous online course in at least one of the prior two semesters, (e) enrolled in at least one course at a community college in the United States, and (f) willing to answer optional personal, identifiable, demographic questions related to age, number of dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type.

Questionnaire participants were gathered through the three proposed recruitment plans known as Plan A, Plan B, and Plan C. As a result of recruitment challenges, the researcher added a fourth plan known as Plan D which is described herein. Initially, Plan A was utilized and students were recruited from the site-authorized campus through emails sent either by the researcher or forwarded from campus faculty or staff. Plan B was utilized later in the recruitment process by the researcher when she asked interview participants to refer other students they knew who may be eligible to the study. Plan C was also utilized and participants were recruited through Facebook™ group posts made by the researcher. Plan D was added when Plans A and C produced only 25 questionnaire responses and no interview volunteers; therefore, the researcher had no opportunity to implement Plan B in the initial recruitment attempts. A GCU IRB request for study modification was approved (see Appendix C) and Plan D utilized UserInterviews™ for nationwide recruitment.

SurveyMonkey™ predicted the questionnaire would not take participants longer than 22 mins to complete. When all questionnaires were completed, SurveyMonkey™ reported the average time to complete the questionnaire was 8 min and 32 s. The eight demographic questions, administered through SurveyMonkey™, UserInterviews™, and verbally by the researcher in the interviews allowed the researcher to create a profile of, gain basic knowledge of, and describe the sample. This made what Gibbs (1979) called a “holistic view” of the sample possible.

Twelve of the questionnaire participants were between the ages of 18 and 24 years, 10 participants were between the ages of 25 and 34, and three participants were between the ages of 35 and 44. No participants were younger than 18 years, between 45

and 54 years, or 55 years and older. Sixteen participants had no dependent children, four participants had one dependent child, three participants had two dependent children, one participant had three dependent children, and one had four or more dependent children living with them at the time they withdrew from the course. Thirteen participants were employed, 10 were unemployed, and two participants declined to state whether they were employed at the time they withdrew from the course. Of the 13 employed participants, five participants worked 40 or more hours per week, three participants worked 20–39 hours per week, and five participants worked less than 20 hours per week.

Eighteen participants reported they were of low-income level, two participants were of middle-income level, three participants declined to state their income level, and two skipped the question. Thirteen of the participants lived with a parent or parents; one participant was homeless; three participants lived with non-family others; five participants lived with a spouse and/or a child; one participant lived with a parent, spouse, and two children; and two participants declined to describe their living situation at the time they withdrew from the course. Fifteen participants identified as female, seven participants identified as male, one participant declined to state their gender, and two participants skipped the question. Ten of the participants identified as Hispanic, three participants were White or Native American, one participant was Hmong, seven participants were Black or African American, two participants declined to state their ethnicity, and two skipped the question. Appendix O details the complete array of questionnaire participant demographic data.

Interview participants were recruited through UserInterviewsTM. The platform employs its own set of demographic questions asked of all research participants as a

condition of accessing their services. The types of demographic data collected by UserInterviews™ varied slightly from the questionnaire demographic data collected by the researcher through SurveyMonkey™. For example, UserInterviews™ asked participants if they had children and their age ranges whereas the researcher asked how many dependent children they had. UserInterviews™ asked participants for their income range, whereas the researcher asked for income levels including low, medium, and high levels. Therefore, to gather as similar demographic data as possible from the questionnaire participants and the interview participants, the researcher asked interview participants about the varied demographic data, though not all demographic questions were asked of all interview participants. To account for any variation, the researcher provides in Table 3 the demographic data supplied by UserInterviews™. All data regarding dependent children, gender, and ethnicity is provided by UserInterviews™.

Two interview participants offered their approximate ages when they took and the asynchronous course from which they withdrew. One reported being 20 or 21 and the other reported being either 44 or 45 years of age. The other 10 participants' ages are reported as their age at the time of the interview. Five interview participants were between 18 and 24 years of age at the time of the interview. Three were between 25 and 34 years of age at the interview. Two were between the ages of 45 and 54 years at the interview. No participants were between 35 and 44 years or 55 years or over at the time of the interview.

Ten participants had no children at the time of their withdrawal. One participant had school-aged and adult children, and one participant had two school-aged children. Seven participants were employed or freelancing. Of the seven participants who were

employed or freelancing, one worked part-time hours, two reported varied hours between part time and full time, one worked five hours per week, two worked between 15 and 20 hours per week, and one worked 20 hours per week. Income data for the seven employed participants are listed as the income ranges collected by UserInterviews™. Income ranges varied from one participant between \$20,000–\$29,999, two participants between \$60,000–\$69,999, one participant between \$70,000–\$79,999, one participant between \$100,000–\$124,999, one participant between \$125,000–\$149,999, and one participant between \$150,000–\$174,999.

Four participants lived with a parent or parents, three participants lived with roommates, one participant lived with a spouse, one participant lived with children, one lived alone, one participant lived in a sober living home, and one participant stated none of the above. Ten interview participants were female. One participant stated they were male and one participant stated they were non-binary. Two participants identified as Hispanic or Latino, five participants identified as white, one participant identified as Asian, two participants identified as Black/African American, one participant identified as mixed ethnicity, and one participant identified as other. All interview data were collected through UserInterviews™ and individual Zoom™ interviews. Table 3 provides all interview participant demographic data.

Table 3*Interview Participant Demographic Data*

Interview participant number	Age	Number of dependent children	Employment status	Hours worked per week	Income level	Lived with	Gender	Ethnicity
IP1	20 or 21	0	Unemployed	0	\$0.	Parents	F	Hispanic, Latino
IP2	44 or 45	0	Unemployed	0	\$0.	Sober living facility	M	White
IP3	49 at the interview	2	Employed	15-20	\$60,000–\$69,999	None of the above	F	Other
IP4	19 at the interview	0	Unemployed	0	\$0.	Parents	F	White
IP5	19 at the interview	0	Unemployed	0	\$0.	Parents	F	Mixed
IP6	22 at the interview	0	Unemployed	0	\$0.	Roommates	F	White
IP7	45 at the interview	0	Employed	15-20	\$70,000–\$79,999	Roommates then ill mother	F	White
IP8	27 at the interview	0	Freelancing	5	\$100,000–\$124,999	Roommates	F	White
IP9	29 at the interview	2	Employed	Varied, part time to full time	\$20,000–\$29,999	Children	F	Black / African American
IP10	19 at the interview	0	Employed	Part time	\$60,000–\$69,999	Alone	Non-binary	Black / African American
IP11	32 at the interview	0	Employed	Varied, part time to full time	\$150,000–\$174,999	Husband	F	Hispanic, Latino
IP12	22 at the interview	0	Freelancing	20	\$125,000–\$149,999	Parents	F	Asian

The questionnaire participants indicated their informed consent through SurveyMonkey™ before beginning the questionnaire. The interview participants indicated their informed consent through DocuSign™ before beginning the interview. All signed DocuSign™ consent forms were saved to the researcher's password-protected personal computer.

The questionnaire and interview protocol focused on the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college students with disabilities (SWD). All

participants were community college SWD. All participants described their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal which allowed the researcher to answer the research questions.

The researcher used the same semi-structured interview protocol for all interviews but had the flexibility to vary the order of the main questions and follow-up questions per the flow of the conversation. The first two interviews the researcher conducted revealed that the participants may not have understood the difference between synchronous and asynchronous online courses. The first participant was disqualified within the first few minutes of the interview as she indicated the course from which she withdrew involved live Zoom™ class meetings. This indicates a synchronous format. Interview Participant 1 (IP1) also spoke of her withdrawal from a synchronous course. When the researcher stopped and questioned her about the format of the course, she indicated that she had misunderstood the difference but could continue speaking of a different course that was asynchronous as she had withdrawn from several courses of different format types. For this reason, the researcher expanded and clarified the explanation of the eligibility requirements for the study at the beginning of the interview protocol to avoid any misunderstandings. This proved effective as the researcher later discovered that another potential participant had also misunderstood the requirements and was able to deem that participant disqualified before commencing with the interview questions. The limited data gathered from ineligible participants was destroyed and not analyzed.

The researcher's opening and closing remarks were not counted in the length of each interview. The interview durations included everything from the beginning of the first interview question asked by the researcher to the end of the interviewee's last

response to the interview questions. The range of interview lengths was 38–84 mins. The mean interview length was 56.2 mins ($M=56.2$), well over the required minimum of 45 mins for a qualitative descriptive study. The interviews were conducted through Zoom™. The researcher listened to each audio file multiple times while reading and correcting any inconsistencies that resulted from the transcription service provided by Otter™. The researcher properly formatted each transcript. The mean transcript length was 11.89 pages of single-spaced Times New Roman 12-point font ($M=11.89$), and the total length was 143 pages. Even the shortest interview of 38 mins produced 9.5 pages of single-spaced Times New Roman 12-point font transcript. Table 4 provides all interview data for the study.

Table 4

Interview Data

Interview participant number	Setting	Date	Interview duration	Number of formatted transcript pages (Times New Roman, font size 12, single-spaced)	Number of initial codes generated
IP1	Zoom™	10/8/2022	51 mins	11.75	111
IP2	Zoom™	10/11/2022	55 mins	12	107
IP3	Zoom™	10/12/2022	83 mins	13	115
IP4	Zoom™	10/17/2022	56 mins	13	93
IP5	Zoom™	10/20/2022	55 mins	14	68
IP6	Zoom™	10/21/2022	54 mins	10.5	82
IP7	Zoom™	12/29/2022	57 mins	14.5	74
IP8	Zoom™	1/11/2022	53 mins	8.5	51
IP9	Zoom™	2/25/2023	60 mins	15	77
IP10	Zoom™	2/27/2023	38 mins	9.5	70
IP11	Zoom™	3/13/2023	53 mins	11.5	93
IP12	Zoom™	4/24/2023	57 mins	9.5	62
TOTAL			673 mins	142.7	1,003
MEAN			56 mins	11.89	83.6

Each corrected and formatted transcript was sent to the participant for member checking. Only two of the participants responded. Though both participants indicated the transcript accurately conveyed what they intended to convey and needed no alteration, 10 other participants did not respond. For this reason, the researcher developed and emailed summaries of familiarization with the dataset, approximately eight to 10 sentences in length, to the 10 non-responsive participants. The researcher requested they confirm or deny that what they intended to say had been understood by the researcher. Eight of the 10 non-responsive participants responded positively indicating that the summary was accurate and needed no alteration. After multiple follow-up email requests without a response from the other two participants, the researcher commenced uploading all transcripts to MAXQDA™ for qualitative analysis as was indicated in the informed consent.

Data Analysis Procedures

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how community college students with disabilities in the United States describe how student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. To analyze the data gathered from participants through questionnaires and interviews and to explore the participants' experiences, the researcher utilized Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis. The authors described their process as a method of generating patterns or themes from qualitative data. Generating patterns and themes was necessary to answer the research questions. This allowed the researcher to address the problem space in the literature regarding the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal (McKinney et

al., 2019) of community college students with disabilities (Flink & Leonard, 2019; Terras et al., 2020). Therefore, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis was appropriate for this study.

The researcher gathered descriptions of participant experiences to better understand why they withdrew from asynchronous online courses. Sandelowski (2000) purported that the qualitative descriptive design is especially effective at achieving this goal because the design focuses on participant experiences, stays close to the participant's language, and utilizes minimal inference. The researcher stayed close to the participants' language by using their words and/or phrases for codes and themes whenever possible. This approach allowed the researcher to refrain from heavy inference and rely on the participants' responses to describe their experiences. Also, the approach allowed the researcher to identify similar codes, develop categories once patterns of codes were recognized in the data, identify relationships between codes, and develop themes from the categories that had enough support and best portrayed what the participants were intending to portray about their experiences. Staying close to the data allowed the researcher to effectively understand and explore the descriptions offered by participants of their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. A detailed examination of each analysis phase is addressed later in this section.

Reflexivity Protocol

Levitt et al. (2018) claimed that contextualization is the goal in qualitative research as opposed to the goal of confirmation or refutation of natural laws in quantitative research. They explained that findings in qualitative research should be context bound. This contextualization helps to define the situatedness of the

phenomenon. In this study, the phenomenon of asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD was influenced by the context of the researcher, within the phenomenon itself, and by the contexts of the participants. Awareness of these unique contexts is vital to a thorough understanding of their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

BRACKETING. The researcher was a community college counselor for almost a decade and worked with students with disabilities among other student groups. The researcher is not a part of the disabled student community and does not represent the community. Rather, the researcher is what Peña et al. (2018) called an advocate for the community who values the notion that all knowledge should be embraced, especially the knowledge of groups often excluded from the literature. Flink and Leonard (2019) proposed that the current literature often excludes community college SWD. Consequently, the researcher's relationship to the phenomenon as well as any beliefs built on professional and personal experiences could have influenced the analysis and results of this study.

To mitigate this bias, the researcher thoroughly described in a reflective journal and meditated upon her positionality before, while, and after collecting and analyzing all data (see Appendix P). The researcher could have made assumptions based on professional history about the participants' experiences that could introduce bias and affect the outcome of the study. Recognizing this, the researcher was intentional about documenting any presumptions at the onset of each interview, any feelings and perceptions that arose as the interviews progressed, and any views toward the participants and the data after each interview.

The researcher approached each interview and the analysis process as though there had been no prior experience with the population and each response was new and unique. By taking detailed notes and identifying predispositions in the journal before and after each interview, the researcher bracketed any bias that her professional experience could potentially have on the results of the study. Also, intentionally staying close to the participants' language and keeping additional data surrounding the codes to help preserve the unique context of the participant's responses whenever possible further ensured the data informed the results, not the researcher.

Moreover, the phenomenon focused on a group of students often marginalized in the literature. SWD are typically excluded from higher education research (Peña et al., 2018) as are community college students, in general (Flink & Leonard, 2019). Subsequently, their views and experiences are not well known. Recognition of their experiences, opinions, and perceptions enhances the inclusivity of this study (Peña et al., 2018). However, to achieve this, the researcher needed to address their unique contexts such as their disability type, use of academic accommodations, age, and other demographic factors that were assessed. The researcher ensured that demographic data were integrated into the narrative whenever possible to allow for a thorough understanding of their unique experiences and contexts. The strategies employed, which included member checking and bracketing, tracked and managed researcher biases and maintained the trustworthiness of the study.

Member Checking. Lastly, the researcher used member checking to ensure that participant responses were understood and accurate. In qualitative descriptive research, the researcher avoids interpretation of the participant's responses (Sandelowski, 2000).

Member checking offered the participants the opportunity to confirm and clarify their responses, minimizing the researcher's subjective interpretation. Though it took multiple emailed attempts to attain responses, in the end, 10 of the 12 interview participants responded affirmatively that the researcher understood what they said and what they intended to say. None of the respondents indicated they wished to change or add any data to the transcript or summary of familiarization.

First, the researcher emailed each participant their corrected and formatted interview transcript to review for accuracy and ensure that the researcher understood their ideas and experiences. Only two of the 12 participants responded that they did not feel the need to change anything within the transcript. The other 10 participants did not respond. Therefore, the researcher compiled and emailed the non-responsive participants a summary of familiarization with each dataset that was approximately eight to 10 sentences in length. Eight of the initially non-responsive participants responded to the summaries, indicating that the researcher had correctly understood what they intended to say. The other two participants did not respond. The two non-responsive participants' transcripts were kept and used in the analysis because the researcher had previously explained to all participants that if no response to member checking was received, the original transcript would be used in the analysis. The researcher's use of member checking upheld the credibility of the study by confirming that the participants said what they meant to say and ensured the researcher understood what they said and meant.

Researcher bias or excessive interpretation that may have been introduced due to misunderstanding the participant's point of view was addressed through member checking. In addition to the expert panel review, field testing, and member checking the

researcher ensured the trustworthiness of the study by focusing on the contexts within the study that were generated by the demographic data collected for all participants.

Bracketing biases based on the researcher's own professional experience with students in this population through the use of a reflective journal was conducted (see Appendix P).

Data Analysis Steps

The researcher analyzed all questionnaire and interview data using the six phases of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). By thoroughly describing the data gathered from the participants, the researcher emphasized both similarities and differences while underscoring the participants' contexts. Braun and Clarke (2006) asserted that this goal is achievable through thematic analysis. In this manner, the researcher achieved the goal of the study which was to answer the research questions regarding the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD. The researcher's use of the thematic analysis approach allowed for the exploration of the problem space defined in the literature regarding the lack of knowledge of the phenomenon. Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis consists of six phases:

- Familiarizing Self with the Data.
- Generating Initial Codes.
- Searching for Themes.
- Reviewing Themes.
- Defining and Naming Themes.
- Producing the Report.

Phase 1: Familiarizing Self with the Data. Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019) asserted that the process of thematic analysis is active, immersive, and iterative. This means that the researcher must steer the process and become intimately familiar with the

data while acknowledging that through the process, everything can change. In this study, the researcher became immersed in the data as the authors recommended. For the questionnaire data, the researcher read through and took notes of patterns identified in the open- and closed-ended responses to the questionnaire. With the help of the customization options in the Analyze Results tab in SurveyMonkey™, the researcher created tables of open-ended responses as well as bar graphs and pie charts of closed-ended responses listing and depicting the data for each question. Doing so allowed her to become familiar with participant responses to each questionnaire question. These question summaries were saved on the researcher's computer in addition to the individual responses to all questions from each participant.

For the interview data, this was done by listening to the interviews multiple times while taking broad notes on preliminary codes and patterns discovered while examining the interview data and referring back to the questionnaire data when patterns were discovered. Immediately after each interview, the researcher's responses to those notes were recorded in the reflective journal including mention of the participant's gestures and mannerisms. Braun and Clarke (2019) explained that when a researcher embraces and employs a reflexive stance in thematic analysis, they engage in an ongoing process of questioning their personal and professional experiences and any associated assumptions. The reflexive researcher evaluates how those experiences and assumptions impact what they see and how they process the data. This reflexivity encourages the researcher's appreciation of subjectivity and incorporates partiality into the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The researcher also read and reread each interview transcript while listening to the audio and watching the video. Each transcript was edited to ensure the accuracy of

transcription, to remove any identifying data, and to properly format the document. An edited and formatted transcript is provided in Appendix Q. The researcher uploaded all questionnaire individual responses and interview transcripts to MAXQDA™ for coding. The use of MAXQDA™ helped the researcher organize the data, name codes, accurately count codes, move between transcripts, revise code names, and combine codes as needed. No automatic coding features were used within MAXQDA. All codes, potential themes, and final themes were generated by the researcher.

Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes. Braun and Clarke (2019) described this phase as one that must be addressed systematically across all data sources as well as within each dataset. In this study, codes were singular pieces of data that were either words, phrases, or entire paragraphs taken directly from the data whenever possible. At the onset of the initial coding phase, the researcher coded everything throughout each transcript as it was impossible to predict what would be important in the latter phases of coding. However, after coding three transcripts this way, the researcher realized that all coded information did not pertain to answering the research questions. Often, a participant would discuss incidents that occurred in other college courses but did not pertain to their reasons for withdrawal from the asynchronous online course under study. The researcher decided to discontinue coding such information as it did not pertain to the research questions. Only when the participant compared the circumstances or incidents that occurred in other courses to the circumstances or incidents that occurred in the asynchronous online course under study and they pertained to withdrawal from the course under study, were those codes identified.

Braun and Clarke (2006) explained that semantic codes are descriptive, typically indicating a superficial meaning as in this quote from Interview Participant 4: “I was just completely at a loss. I felt like I needed a lot more guidance than I was probably getting.” This extract was assigned the code “More guidance needed” as the words “more”, “guidance”, and “needed” were specifically stated in the quote. As Sandelowski (2000) suggested, the researcher stayed close to the participant’s language to understand the participant’s experiences and refrain from excessive interpretation of the meaning of those experiences. Whenever possible, and especially in the early phases of coding, the researcher used semantic codes.

The researcher coded all insights in both the questionnaire and interview data that would provide an understanding of the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD. In this phase, the researcher coded all questionnaire and interview data inductively, meaning without a list of presupposed codes. This initial coding included as many codes as the researcher identified without censorship upholding the inductive nature of qualitative descriptive analysis.

Coding began with the questionnaire data. The researcher exported the individual responses for all 25 participants from SurveyMonkey™, labeling and saving each participant’s response in a folder labeled “SurveyMonkey™ Responses”. Each response listed all questionnaire questions and responses offered by that participant. Responses were not forced so not all participants addressed all the questions. When a question was not addressed, SurveyMonkey™ listed “Respondent skipped this question” in the place of a response.

The researcher then uploaded each individual response into MAXQDA™ and coded the qualitative responses in the order in which each was submitted. The qualitative questionnaire data gathered via SurveyMonkey™ was coded before the interview transcripts were coded. This was due to the challenges encountered in the data collection process and the interviews taking place after the questionnaires were collected. The qualitative questionnaire responses to QQ6, QQ18, QQ22, QQ23, and QQ25 and the non-demographic, open-ended responses that participants offered instead of choosing a multiple-choice response in QQ21 and QQ28 solicited only short answers. Thus, minimal coding was required. See Figure 4 for a sample coded individual response from MAXQDA™.

After the initial coding of the questionnaire responses, the number of coded extracts was recorded and totaled. There were 15 new codes used to identify 48 extracts or individual pieces of data across the questionnaire open-ended responses. Table 5 provides the entire summary of initial and new codes identified in the questionnaire data.

Table 5

Number of Initial Codes Identified in the Questionnaire Data

Questionnaire participant number	Initial coded extracts	New codes
QP1	4	2
QP2	3	2
QP3	4	1
QP4	1	1
QP5	4	1
QP6	2	0
QP7	0	0
QP8	1	1
QP9	0	0
QP10	1	1
QP11	4	1
QP12	3	2

QP13	0	0
QP14	1	0
QP15	8	1
QP16	2	0
QP17	3	0
QP18	3	0
QP19	0	0
QP20	1	0
QP21	0	0
QP22	0	0
QP23	0	0
QP24	2	1
QP25	1	1
TOTAL	48	15

The interview transcripts were coded individually and in the order in which the interviews occurred. The researcher kept some of the data surrounding each code whenever possible, including some coded extracts that were entire paragraphs. This helped ensure context was not lost.

The researcher's coding process was iterative. As coding progressed and the researcher identified new patterns in the data, the need to go back through previously coded interview transcripts and questionnaire responses to locate the previously non-coded data extracts became evident. Regularly, the researcher stopped mid-transcript to go back and search for a newly discovered pattern in previous transcripts or listen to the audio file once again to get a better understanding of the participant's words and meaning. The researcher's use of the MAXQDATM software aided in this process by making quick movement between questionnaire responses and transcripts possible without getting lost in the entirety of the data. Even with quick movement through documents, the process of coding took a considerable amount of time and effort that included many passes through each document to ensure all codes and patterns were

identified accordingly. As Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested, after the initial rounds of interview transcript coding, the researcher compiled a summary of all coded extracts and new codes identified. There were 1,003 extracts or individual pieces of data across the 12 interview transcripts that were coded with 72 new codes. Table 6 provides a summary of initially coded extracts and new codes identified in the interview data.

Table 6

Number of Initial Codes Identified in the Interview Data

Interview participant number	Initial coded extracts	New codes
IP1	111	15
IP2	107	12
IP3	115	6
IP4	93	19
IP5	68	7
IP6	82	0
IP7	74	10
IP8	51	0
IP9	77	3
IP10	70	0
IP11	93	0
IP12	62	0
TOTAL	1,003	72

Between the initial questionnaire coding and initial interview coding, a total of 94 codes were identified, 15 in the questionnaire responses and 72 in the interview transcripts.

These 87 codes were identified across a total of 1,051 coded extracts or pieces of data.

Phase 3: Searching for Themes. In prior versions of their work on thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006) titled this phase Searching for Themes. In more recent publications, the authors steered away from the idea of searching as it implies the themes exist naturally in the data and need only be found. Instead, they chose to focus on the

subjective nature of this phase and how the researcher actively creates themes as they see them in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

To create themes, the researcher began by categorizing similar initial codes into potential themes through the use of the Creative Coding function in MAXQDA™. Creative Coding allowed the researcher to arrange codes as one would on a pin board, helping to visualize relationships between codes and the shared meaning of codes. This was an ongoing process that occurred frequently, as repeated immersion in the data revealed relationships the researcher had not previously recognized. The researcher then labeled those categories of codes according to their shared values, creating potential themes.

An example of the codes that the researcher combined to create potential themes is the combining of the codes handing out information and teaching myself. The handing out information code was used to code these pieces of data offered by IP2 and IP10. IP2 stated, “You know, it's like, we were teaching the class. Like, he was just giving us the curriculum.” Similarly, IP7 explained: “I just felt like I was, had some robot, you know, giving me information. That was about it.” Those two coded segments were grouped with this similar segment that was coded as teaching myself, from QP24 who responded to QQ18 with “It was very difficult to teach myself.” These coded segments and others were categorized in a potential theme entitled lack of teaching because of the shared characteristics that were repeated throughout the data related to instructors handing out information and expecting students to teach themselves instead of teaching the material. At this point in the analysis, a total of 10 potential themes were created. Table 7 provides a view of how the researcher categorized codes to create potential themes.

Table 7*How Codes Were Categorized to Create Potential Themes*

Categorized codes	Potential themes created
Financial problems; <i>COVID-19</i> -related loss of income	Financial concerns
Disability-related help needed; Disability influences motivation	Disabilities
Lack of routine online; Procrastination at home; Health-related distractibility; ADHD and time management; Lack of authority figure or pressure online; Lack of set schedule	Time management issues
Peers are a learning resource; Lack of interaction with peers; No sense of belonging in class; Forced, impersonal interactions; Difficulty of interacting with peers online; Feelings of loneliness and isolation	Lack of connection with peers
Flare up of illness; Ill health makes keeping up harder; ill health of others; mental health issues magnified	Health issues
Handing out information; Teaching myself; In-person is better for me; Lack of resources	Lack of teaching
Subject matter; Accelerated courses; Too much work; Too difficult work	The type of course
Lack of interaction with instructor; Emailed response to questions; The instructor's teaching style; Lack of feedback; Difficulty of interacting with the instructor online; Instructors don't see or talk to you online; Confusion and unanswered questions	Poor student-instructor interactions
Homelessness; alcohol addiction and recovery; Unstable living situations	Living situation
Employment; Care of dependent children; Loss of important people	Other external crises and commitments

The researcher found repetition of ideas and experiences across the data; however, not all codes were categorized into potential themes. Some codes such as didn't use accommodations, community through Discord™ app, and those about motivation and inexperience with college and asynchronous courses contained coded segments that, while repeated throughout the data, did not directly relate to answering the RQs. Participants did not indicate those factors influenced their withdrawal. These codes were

added to the miscellaneous: not applicable elsewhere code and some were used later in analysis as support for other themes.

Some potential themes such as time management issues contained coded segments that were repeatedly described by a significant number of questionnaire and interview participants. Participants described these potential themes as influential to their withdrawal, albeit, often in conjunction with other influences. Other potential themes such as health issues contained coded segments that were mentioned by fewer participants but were described as being highly influential to or the only influence upon their withdrawal.

Often, the researcher coded extracts with multiple codes because it became apparent that the extract was applicable to multiple potential themes. An example is this extract offered by QP24 in response to QQ18 regarding how students' disabilities influence their withdrawal: "It was very difficult to teach myself." This extract was coded with both the disability-related help needed code because it provided an understanding of how the student's disability influences his course withdrawal and the teaching myself code because it provided an understanding of how the instructor's teaching style influences his course withdrawal. Therefore, this extract was included in both the disability and the lack of teaching potential themes. An example of a coded transcript from MAXQDA™ is offered in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Sample of a MAXQDA™ Coded Transcript

for me to take. Yeah.

22 **Researcher** 11:13 And what made you decide to take that course asynchronously online in the first place?

23 **IP11** It was, there weren't a lot of courses that were being offered on, on campus. But because I, I actually did not know that it was an asynchronous. I thought it was going to be synchronous. And for the first time ever, the quarter before that, I was like getting all A's in my synchronous classes. And I was like, right, I can absolutely do this, like, I feel confident. And then when it was asynchronous and I was a little bit hesitant and a little worried. And I, I was totally my fault, just like assumed that there would have, the start date of the course that I read was like the Zoom log on. And I, but there was zoom recordings of a previous year that the instructor had taught. And I just assumed that we were going to be doing zoom classes together. So I started off that course on like, a really difficult foot. And so I kind of just drowned from there. Yeah.

24 **Researcher** 12:50 So you didn't know it was going to be asynchronous?

25 **IP11** Yeah.

26 **Researcher** Had you ever taken an asynchronous class before?

27 **IP11** 12:57 Um, I had, yes, I had taken one, two quarters before that. And it was, I'm not gonna say it was easy, it was definitely not easy for me. But I made it through. The course was usually they're like three to four units that you get per course. This one was a only two. It was like an information research course. So already the type of course that it was, was a lot of independent work. It was just a course that taught you like, you know, how to research properly, which, you know, that's not that's a very, that's pretty an independent thing on its own. So yeah, I wasn't too worried about that. But the course was, was definitely more difficult for me than I had anticipated.

28 **Researcher** 13:57 So what kind of problems were you coming upon in that psychology class?

29 **IP11** 14:01 Um, the psychology class was, I, I know it was a lot of just like mental, already feeling like I was kind of drowning and like, you know, like, low key panicking about it. And then there was an issue with how I was emailing my instructor. And the issue still happens, which is odd, but we, we used the program called Desire 2 Learn and we logged on through our course there and then we could email our instructor through that D2L is what they call it, that portal. And for whatever reason she wasn't getting my emails when I was like explaining what was going on. And so I decided to email her like through the Gmail, like log on through Gmail for my school and do it there. And she was like, oh, no, I haven't got anything. And I kind of knew that that was going to be the issue because I had had this problem before. Um, and yeah, so I just kind of knew that maybe there, it's the fluke was like still existent. Um, so yeah, that was an issue because the due dates, I was just, each day that went by, I was just drawing more and more. And so when she didn't get my email the first day, or I didn't get a response the second day, on the third day, I'm like, this is very unlike a remote like teacher to not respond, at least, you know, 24 hours, sure. But like, the next day, I'm like, that's very odd. So after I was falling more behind and the amount of reading that we were given and then we had a paper due at the end of each module, which was a week at that point, like, I just felt like, there is no way that I'm going to be able to like finish this class with a strong B or an A. So and that, I needed those grades to be good qua, like, considered for a nursing program. So I looked up when the, when my school would give us like the withdrawal deadline, and I was like, I'm really going to try and give it my all up until this date. But if I am not quite there, then I just need to withdraw and try again. And because it was a it, the course was during the summer, already, it was really condensed. So it's a very difficult course and already very condensed, so yeah, I just, it's difficult.

30 **Researcher** Sounds like it.

31 **IP11** Yeah.

Phase 4: Reviewing Themes. Next came Phase 4 in which the researcher reviewed the 10 potential themes that were generated in Phase 3 to assess which were sufficiently supported enough and accurately answered the RQs to be considered final themes. Braun and Clarke (2019) attested that it is important to regularly assess whether the data fits not only the individual themes but the entire dataset. To do this, the researcher re-read all data for each potential theme multiple times determining whether each potential theme was a theme, if the data was sufficient enough to support a theme, whether the data required additional refinement, whether it fit the individual themes as well as the overall dataset, and which RQs were answered by each potential theme. The

researcher assumed that Braun and Clarke (2019) were correct in their assertion that everything can change. Accordingly, several changes were made.

The first change made in this phase included the researcher's recombining of potential themes and the creation of subthemes. Braun and Clarke (2006) stated that upon the scrutiny employed in this phase, potential themes may need to be renamed or subthemes created to accurately account for the varied data that make up a broader theme. The researcher determined that there was an abundance of data within the poor student-instructor interaction potential theme and the lack of teaching potential theme that was not well defined. After careful analysis, the researcher noted that students have varying opinions of what constitutes an instructor's teaching style. The data showed that there were fine lines between what the students describe as the instructor's teaching style and other aspects of the asynchronous class experience such as a lack of interaction with the instructor and a lack of personal connection with the instructor. The researcher found it was vital to determine and separate the differing aspects and to refer to each separated aspect more accurately instead of simply referring to the mass of their descriptions as a lack of teaching or a lack of student-instructor interaction. For this reason, the poor student-instructor interaction, lack of teaching, and lack of connection with peers potential themes were combined to create the lack of classroom community theme. Students indicate that each of these aspects contributes to the lack of classroom community online.

The researcher decided that at this phase in analysis, the new lack of classroom community theme encompassed four subthemes that not only contribute to the theme but focus the attention to specific aspects of the lack of classroom community that students

describe. This decision meant the researcher needed to recategorize the codes within the potential themes. The first example of this recategorization includes the coded extracts about handing out information, teaching myself, the instructor's teaching style, and the lack of resources. All of these codes describe the instructor's teaching style which is only one aspect of the classroom community that students claim is lacking online and influences their withdrawal. At this point, the researcher felt the subtheme of the instructor's teaching style better portrays how the actions taken by the instructor related to the course material contribute to the overall lack of classroom community.

The researcher also recategorized the coded extracts about the lack of interaction with the instructor, the difficulty of interacting with the instructor online, instructors don't see or talk to you online, and confusion and unanswered questions. These codes describe the lack of interaction with the instructor, an additional aspect of the greater lack of classroom community. The subtheme of lack of interaction with the instructor better explains that in the asynchronous format, a lack of interaction with the instructor not only exists but propagates confusion for students. This further contributes to the overall lack of classroom community.

Similarly, the researcher promoted the coded extracts of instructors' emailed response to questions to a subtheme of the theme of lack of classroom community. The subtheme was then broken down to include the codes no response to emailed questions, untimely response to emailed questions, and unhelpful response to emailed questions. These three codes more accurately describe participants' descriptions of the instructors' responses to emailed questions, another aspect participants describe of the greater lack of classroom community.

The fourth subtheme and separate aspect of the classroom community, a lack of peer connection, includes the codes peers are a learning resource, lack of interaction with peers, no sense of belonging in class, forced and impersonal interactions, difficulty of interacting with peers online, and feelings of loneliness and isolation. The four subthemes of the theme of lack of classroom community defined at this point in the analysis included (a) the instructor's teaching style, (b) instructor emailed response to questions, (c) a lack of interaction with the instructor, and (d) a lack of peer connection. At this point in the analysis, these subthemes were better able to describe what the students report as a lack of classroom community instead of bundling the mass of data together and referring to it as a lack of classroom community. The lack of classroom community theme and all four of its subthemes answered the ORQ and all four of the RQs.

The second change made was when the researcher created the potential theme of external crises and commitments to encompass the health issues, living situations, and financial concern potential themes in addition to adding coded extracts relating to employment, care of dependent children, world stressors such as the *COVID-19* pandemic, and the loss of important people. The factors included in this potential theme did not have sufficient support to warrant promoting any one of them to a theme. However, when considering these factors as a whole, as crises and commitments external to school that influence students' asynchronous course withdrawal, this potential theme better fits the data and more accurately answers the ORQ and RQ3. This brought the total number of themes to five and subthemes of one theme in particular to four. These changes to potential themes and subthemes, the theme definitions that Braun and Clarke

(2006) recommended creating, the recategorized codes within each potential theme, and the RQs that each potential theme addressed are detailed in Table 8.

Table 8

Potential Themes, Definitions, Subthemes, Recategorized Codes, and RQs Addressed

Potential themes	Theme definitions	Subthemes	Recategorized codes	RQs addressed
Disabilities	Students describe how their disabilities influence their reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal.		Disability influences success; Disability as an external factor; Course-related factors; Format-related factors	ORQ, RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4
Time management issues	Students describe how their time management issues influence their reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal.		Attention span or focus; Lack of routine, schedule, or structure; Time management and procrastination; Lack of authority figure or pressure	ORQ, RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4
External life crises and commitments	Students describe how external life crises and commitments influence their reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal.		Loss of important people; Living situation; Employment; Financial issues; Care of dependent children; Illnesses; Other external commitments	ORQ and RQ3
The type of course	Students describe how the type of course influences their reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal.		Subject matter; Amount of work required; Type of work required; Accelerated courses	ORQ, RQ1, RQ2, and RQ4
A lack of classroom community	Students describe how a lack of classroom community influences their reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal.	The instructor's teaching style	Handing out information; Teaching myself; The instructor's teaching style; Lack of resources	ORQ, RQ2, and RQ4
		Instructor emailed response to questions	No response to emailed questions; untimely response to emailed questions; unhelpful response to emailed questions	ORQ, RQ2, and RQ4
		A lack of interaction with the instructor	Lack of interaction with instructor; Difficulty of interacting with the instructor online; Instructors don't see or talk to you online; Confusion and unanswered questions	ORQ, RQ2, and RQ4
		A lack of peer connection	Peers are a learning resource; Lack of interaction with peers; No sense of belonging in class; Forced, impersonal interactions; Difficulty of interacting with peers online; Feelings of loneliness and isolation	ORQ, RQ2, and RQ4

Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes. The fifth phase of the thematic analysis entails examining the labels given to the potential themes and reviewing them for accuracy. Braun and Clarke (2006) postulated there may be other ways to group the data that would better answer the research questions and make better sense of the story the researcher is trying to tell. This phase required much thought and work for the researcher as once again, themes changed.

The researcher revisited the potential theme of lack of classroom community, still unsettled on its title, definition, and subthemes. Through additional scrutiny, the researcher decided that the theme lack of classroom community lacked clarity. To ensure that the theme did not encompass too many objectives, the researcher removed the only data not centered on the instructor—the lack of peer connection data. The researcher elevated the lack of peer connection data to a final theme and titled it a lack of personal connection with peers as it was the only data centered on students' lack of interactions and connection with their online peers.

The lack of interaction with the instructor data was also removed, combined with the instructor's emailed response to questions data, was elevated to final theme status, and titled lack of personal connection with the instructor. This new final theme focused on the lack of personal connections between students and their instructors including through email interactions, as opposed to how the instructor teaches the course. The remaining data from lack of classroom community was titled the instructor's teaching style. This data better describes the specific ways in which the instructor teaches the course and how this teaching style influences students' reasons for asynchronous course

withdrawal. Appendix F provides the codebook of final codes, definitions, and excerpts from the questionnaire and interview data.

Most of the final themes addressed multiple RQs in addition to the ORQ. For example, the time management issues final theme addressed not only the ORQ, but also RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4. Through the course of the study, the researcher realized that students who describe time management issues attribute them to different causes and experience the effects of those issues in several aspects of their lives. The changes made in Phase 5 brought the count of final themes to seven and eliminated the subthemes. Appendix R provides a list of the seven final themes, the RQs they addressed, and quotes from each final theme. Table 9 details the final themes, their definitions, recategorized codes, and RQs addressed.

Table 9*Final Themes, Definitions, Recategorized Codes, and RQs Addressed*

Final themes	Theme definitions	Recategorized codes	RQs addressed
Community college students with disabilities in the U.S. describe how their disabilities influence their reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal.	Students describe how their disabilities influence their reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal.	Disability influences success; Disability as an external factor; Course-related factors; Format-related factors	ORQ, RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4
Community college students with disabilities in the U.S. describe how time management issues influence their reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal.	Students describe how their time management issues influence their reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal.	Attention span or focus; Lack of routine, schedule, structure; Time management and procrastination; Lack of authority figure or pressure	ORQ, RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4
Community college students with disabilities in the U.S. describe how external life crises and commitments influence their reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal.	Students describe how external life crises and commitments influence their reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal.	Loss of important people; Living situation; Employment; Financial issues; Care of dependent children; Illnesses; Other external commitments	ORQ and RQ3
Community college students with disabilities in the U.S. describe how the type of course influences their reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal.	Students describe how the type of course influences their reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal.	Subject matter; Amount of work required; Type of work required; Accelerated courses	ORQ, RQ1, RQ2, and RQ4
Community college students with disabilities in the U.S. describe how the instructor's teaching style influences their reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal.	Students describe how the instructor's teaching style influences their reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal.	Teaching style; Lack of resources; Feedback needed; No response to emailed questions; Late response to emailed questions; Unhelpful response to emailed questions	ORQ RQ2, and RQ4
Community college students with disabilities in the U.S. describe how the lack of personal connection with the instructor influences their reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal.	Students describe how the lack of personal connection with the instructor influences their reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal.	Impersonal; Instructors don't see or talk to you; Lack of interaction with the instructor	ORQ and RQ4
Community college students with disabilities in the U.S. describe how the lack of personal connection with peers influences their reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal.	Students describe how the lack of personal connection with peers influences their reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal.	Forced, impersonal, material-based interaction; Community through Discord™ app; Lonely, isolating, independent without peer connection; Peer communication is easier on campus	ORQ and RQ4

Phase 6: Producing the Report. The final phase of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis allows the researcher to tell the final story of the data as the participants describe it and to demonstrate with examples that the analysis is valid. The researcher describes Phase 6 in the Results section of Chapter 4 and illustrates its connection to the theoretical foundation and the established literature on the topics in Chapter 5. The examples explain how the researcher answered the research questions throughout the study.

The analytic units of the study were participants' descriptions of their reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal. Braun and Clarke (2006) claimed that the use of their six phases of thematic analysis allows the researcher to emphasize both similarities and differences in the data. Participants' words describe their context-bound thoughts and perceptions about their withdrawal from an asynchronous course. The researcher analyzed the data according to Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis. Furthermore, the researcher analyzed not only their descriptions but their multiple realities and tremendously varied contexts in which they exist. These descriptions were then identified as codes, similar codes were grouped into potential themes, and potential themes with enough support to accurately answer the research questions were promoted to final themes. In this manner, thematic analysis aligned with the researcher's goals and the steps taken to achieve them. Additionally, the thematic analysis allowed the researcher to address the RQs, draw conclusions, and provide evidence to support the conclusions.

This study addressed one overarching research question and four sub-questions:

Overarching RQ (ORQ): How do community college students with disabilities

describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ1: How do community college students with disabilities describe how student

characteristics influence their reasons for asynchronous online course

withdrawal?

RQ2: How do community college students with disabilities describe how student

skills influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ3: How do community college students with disabilities describe how external

factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ4: How do community college students with disabilities describe how internal

factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

The researcher employed the qualitative methodology and the descriptive design to address these RQs. Next, the researcher used thematic analysis to analyze the qualitative data. Then, the researcher developed seven themes to answer the RQs (see Table 9). The Results section highlights each theme and explains how the researcher used the themes to address the research questions. The seven themes are:

1. Community college students with disabilities describe how their disabilities influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.
2. Community college students with disabilities describe how time management issues influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.
3. Community college students with disabilities describe how external crises and commitments influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.
4. Community college students with disabilities describe how the type of course influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

5. Community college students with disabilities describe how the instructor's teaching style influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal,
6. Community college students with disabilities describe how the lack of personal connection with their instructor influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.
7. Community college students with disabilities describe how the lack of personal connection with their peers influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Results

Presenting the Results

The following section provides the results of the study in narrative, tabular, and figure format. The seven themes developed from the 25 questionnaire responses and 12 interviews with community college SWD are discussed. To help mitigate the threat of researcher bias, the researcher conducted bracketing before each interview and before and during the data analysis phase. Shenton (2004) stated that bracketing allows the researcher to set aside their personal experience and beliefs about the phenomenon and the participants. Doing this helps to ensure that the results are not influenced by those experiences and beliefs. This was an important step in helping to ensure the researcher's biases did not taint the results.

The researcher is a community college counselor who has worked for almost a decade with community college students with disabilities (SWD) as well as online students and nontraditional students. Moreover, the researcher once was a nontraditional community college student. While preparing for the study, the researcher assumed that the study's results would mirror the situations personally experienced or observed through professional experience. Also, the researcher assumed that the participants'

persistence in college would be heavily based on external circumstances typical of nontraditional students such as family and work obligations.

As data collection and analysis transpired, the data showed that the researcher's personal and professional experience may have followed what the literature claimed was typical of nontraditional community college students. However, the experiences of the participants were generally atypical. While external circumstances played a part in some participants' withdrawal, most did not pinpoint the reason for their course withdrawal to a single external factor. Many more were significantly influenced by their disabilities as well as the negative in-class experiences and the seemingly stark mismatch between their individual learning needs and preferences and either the instructor's teaching style or the asynchronous learning format.

The 25 questionnaire participants and 12 interview participants provided rich data that when compared to the researcher's bracketing journal, was often in opposition to the researcher's personal and professional experiences and beliefs. Repeatedly recording in and referencing the bracketing journal throughout the process, from before each interview to before the start of data analysis, and at various points throughout the analysis helped the researcher decipher what were personally held beliefs about experiences and what was participant data. The consistent use of participant words helped keep the focus on their experiences and their descriptions instead of allowing the researcher's experiences and beliefs to taint the outcome. Finally, the researcher believes the story told through the participants' descriptions defined the phenomenon of asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD, not the researcher.

As well, the researcher employed member-checking procedures to ensure comprehension of the participants' words and intentions. When the first attempt to member check virtually failed with only two responses out of 12 participants, the researcher did not stop there. Summaries of the researcher's familiarization with the dataset, approximately eight to 10 sentences in length were compiled and emailed to each of the non-responsive participants. These short summaries appear to have been better received than the entire transcripts of the interviews. Eight of the 10 non-responsive participants emailed confirmations that the researcher had indeed understood what they said and meant to say. No participants indicated they wanted to add or change any aspect of the summary. These responses provided additional confirmation that the researcher understood what they said and was not adding to or detracting from their thoughts and experiences. This confirmation allowed the researcher to accurately create the codes, initial themes, and final themes that ultimately tell the story of their withdrawal from asynchronous online courses.

The seven themes developed in this study addressed the following research questions:

Overarching RQ (ORQ): How do community college students with disabilities

describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ1: How do community college students with disabilities describe how student

characteristics influence their reasons for asynchronous online course

withdrawal?

RQ2: How do community college students with disabilities describe how student

skills influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ3: How do community college students with disabilities describe how external factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ4: How do community college students with disabilities describe how internal factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

The questionnaire and interview participants in this study were assigned code names to protect their identities. The questionnaire participants were named Questionnaire Participant 1 (QP1) through Questionnaire Participant 25 (QP25). Interview participants were named Interview Participant 1 (IP1) through Interview Participant 12 (IP12). After the ninth interview, the researcher noted data saturation, or as Guest et al. (2020) proposed, the point at which no new themes relevant to the RQs were generated. The researcher completed a total of 12 required interviews.

The following results section is presented in narrative, tabular, and figure format by theme. Seven themes were developed from the data. At the end of each theme, the research questions that were addressed are stated. A detailed explanation of how themes addressed multiple RQs is offered in Chapter 5.

The theoretical foundation upon which the study is built, Rovai's (2003) composite model of student persistence, is by definition a composite of several models, skills, needs, and requirements identified in the literature regarding online student persistence. The data in this study consistently showed that many of the factors that influence college persistence, as suggested by the authors who contributed to the theoretical foundation, are unique to the student and their individual experiences. Two students who described the influence of the same factor upon their withdrawal may describe differing perceptions of that factor's influence as well as differing relationships

between that factor and other factors. Each student is an individual with unique experiences and perceptions. The researcher sought, through this study, to maintain respect for each student's individuality and uniqueness.

Relatedly, relationships between factors exist and can influence student persistence. The themes presented in this section consistently addressed multiple research questions. For example, the disabilities theme addressed not only the ORQ but also all four of the RQs. According to the data, disabilities affect numerous parts of students' lives, from their health to their academic success in college, to their ability to perform a specific task, and even their development and preparation for college-level work. Therefore, the themes often addressed more than one RQ.

All themes addressed the ORQ as it is broad in its focus on all reasons for students' withdrawal from an asynchronous online course. The progression of themes through this section begins with Theme 1 which addressed the ORQ, RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4. Theme 2 addressed the ORQ, RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4. Theme 3 addressed the ORQ and RQ3. Theme 4 addressed the ORQ, RQ1, RQ2, and RQ4. Theme 5 addressed the ORQ, RQ2, and RQ4. Themes 6 and 7 addressed the ORQ and RQ4. See Table 9 for a list of the themes developed in this study and the research questions they addressed.

Themes

Theme 1: Community College Students with Disabilities Describe How Disabilities Influence Their Asynchronous Course Withdrawal. Theme 1 centers on how disabilities influence their asynchronous course withdrawal. Community college SWD describe how disabilities influence their reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal. In total, 28 out of 37 participants describe how disabilities influence their

reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal including 17 out of 25 questionnaire participants and 11 out of 12 interview participants. The most frequently identified codes that illustrate Theme 1 include (a) lack of motivation or interest, (b) health disability makes school harder, (c) disability-related focus, time management issues, (d) increased distractibility online, (e) I will forget without reminders, and (f) disability-related help needed. Table 10 presents the most frequent codes in Theme 1.

Table 10

Frequency of Codes for Theme 1

Theme	Code	Frequency of codes
Theme 1: Community college students with disabilities describe how disabilities influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	Lack of motivation or interest	28
	Health disability makes school harder	24
	Disability-related focus, time management issues	17
	Increased distractibility online	11
	I will forget without reminders	15
	Disability-related help needed	8

QQ28 asked questionnaire participants to rank their three most important reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal. As enrollment with a campus disability support office is an inclusion criterion for the study, all eligible participants have at least one disability. Five questionnaire participants indicated their disability is one of their three most important reasons for withdrawal. QP1 listed her learning disability and QP3 listed his psychological disability as their third most important reason for withdrawal. QP12 indicated her learning disability is the second most important reason. QP6 and QP20 indicated their learning disability is the most important reason for their withdrawal. See Appendix S for a complete list of participants' responses to QQ28. This questionnaire data regarding students' perception that their disabilities influence withdrawal supports

Theme 1 and answers RQ1 regarding how the student characteristic of students' intellectual development influences students' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Of the five questionnaire participants who ranked their disability as one of their three most important reasons for withdrawal, three specified in QQ18 how their disability causes them to need help in their courses. QP1 responded by saying that when she is not given the approved accommodations "that the professor agreed to", her disability influences her withdrawal. Also, QP3 and QP20 indicated their disability causes them to need help in their courses. When they do not receive that help, their disability causes them to withdraw.

In total, 17 questionnaire participants affirmed and explained how their disability influences their withdrawal in QQ18. The most prevalent codes within the data from QQ18, evidenced by seven of the 17 affirming students, show how disabilities cause students to have time management and focus issues that influence asynchronous course withdrawal. QP17 described an inability to "focus or find motivation to continue." Another participant, QP6, described how her struggle with "time management issues" with both "household and school work" influences her withdrawal.

Still, others offered different explanations in QQ18. For example, QP5 stated that in addition to her psychological disability causing an inability to focus, she "lost interest" in the asynchronous history course. QP12 indicated that her "slow pace" of learning was not compatible with her instructor's "teaching strategies" and that this influences her withdrawal. See Appendix T for a list of the open-ended responses to QQ18. The questionnaire data from QQ18 regarding how students' disabilities influence their

withdrawal provides evidence for how Theme 1 answers RQ2 regarding how the student skill of online time management and RQ4 regarding how the internal factors of students' study habits, commitment to educational goals, and compatibility between learning and teaching styles influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Likewise, the data shows that interview participants described many of the same influences upon their withdrawal as the questionnaire participants. Eleven of the 12 interview participants offered in-depth descriptions of how their disabilities influence their withdrawal. For some students, their disability causes them to be physically incapable of participating in college courses, influencing their withdrawal. Two examples, IP6 and IP8, described how illnesses and hospitalizations hinder their course success as they physically are unable to keep up with their coursework. IP6 experiences flare-ups of an autoimmune disorder that can cause hospitalization and require weeks of intravenous (IV) therapy, thereafter. Despite her attempts to keep up after one of these flare-ups, IP6 found that she was unable to "move as easily" as she "would have hoped for" with an IV in her arm. She laments, the situation just "snowballed", causing her to withdraw.

Similarly, IP8 recalls how her declining mental health disabilities cause her to be "susceptible to diseases" and experience successive illnesses that can hospitalize her. She described a "train wreck" of a semester and how each setback is "making it harder to go back [to school] because it just feels very discouraging." She describes herself, in this phase of her life, as "struggling. I'm a struggling student. But I'm trying." Both these participants show how their physical and mental health disabilities affect their ability to succeed in their asynchronous courses. Data from IP6 and IP8 regarding their health

conditions that influence withdrawal explains how Theme 1 answers RQ3 which focuses on how students' health influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Still, other participants described how the online format exacerbates their mental health symptoms. IP1's Irritable Bowel Syndrome or IBS and the anxiety that it causes her leads to an increase in procrastination in the asynchronous format. She described the difficulty she experiences in getting herself back on track in a format with no authority figure present. IP1 recalls thinking "They can't see me ... I'm doing this at home and ... I can do whatever." IP1's disability causes increased procrastination which causes her to fall behind and eventually, leads to withdrawal.

For others, experiences within the course exacerbate the symptoms of their disability, influencing their withdrawal. IP4 and IP11 described how negative course experiences including confusion, unanswered questions, and unfortunate misunderstandings between the student and instructor lead to increased mental health symptoms and withdrawal. IP4 stated that these negative experiences cause her "overthinking to spiral out of control." Likewise, IP11 said they cause her to feel "too panicky about it [her performance in the course]." The data from IP4 and IP11 regarding students' physical and mental health influences on their withdrawal provides evidence of how Theme 1 answers RQ3 regarding how the external factor of students' mental and physical health and RQ4 regarding how the internal factors of study habits and incompatible teaching and learning styles influence students' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

IP10's experience is similar in that they described disability-induced time management and motivation issues in their asynchronous history course. With no physical meetings, IP10 forgets about and misses assignments because there are no reminders of upcoming coursework due dates. Another student, IP3 described how her ADHD causes her an "inability to perform" or "execute" in courses that do not hold her interest or are "boring." The disability-related distractibility, procrastination, and lack of motivation these participants experience in the online format influence their reasons for withdrawal. This interview data regarding how students' disabilities influence their withdrawal explains how Theme 1 answers RQ2 regarding how the student skill of time management needed in the online format and RQ4 regarding students' commitment to educational goals and study habits influence students' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Taken together, the disability-related data throughout Theme 1, reported by 28 out of 37 participants, helps to answer the ORQ regarding how community college SWD describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. It also answers RQ1 regarding how intellectual development, RQ2 regarding how online time management, RQ3 regarding how students' health, and RQ4 regarding how study habits and incompatibility of teaching and learning styles influence students' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Theme 2: Community College Students with Disabilities Describe How Time Management Issues Influence Their Reasons for Asynchronous Online Course Withdrawal. Theme 2 centers on how students' time management issues influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Community college SWD describe how time management issues influence their reasons for asynchronous online course

withdrawal. A total of 13 out of 37 participants describe how time management issues influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal including eight out of 25 questionnaire participants and five out of 12 interview participants. The codes that provide support for Theme 2 are (a) falling behind from procrastination or prioritization, (b) attention span or focus issues; (c) lack of routine, schedule, or structure; (d) intimidation, insecurity, low confidence, and discouragement; and (e) lack of authority figure or pressure. Table 11 provides the frequency of codes for Theme 2.

Table 11

Frequency of Codes for Theme 2

Theme	Code	Frequency of Codes
Theme 2: Community college students with disabilities describe how time management issues influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	Falling behind from procrastination or prioritization	8
	Attention span or focus issues	14
	Lack of routine, schedule, or structure	16
	Intimidation, insecurity, low confidence, and discouragement	9
	Lack of authority figure or pressure	9

When discussing how time management issues influence their asynchronous online course withdrawal, students frequently describe problems with attention, focus, distractions, and procrastination. In QQ18, which asked questionnaire participants how their disabilities influence their withdrawal (see Appendix T), seven participants out of 25 describe issues with time management or a lack of focus when learning from home. For example, QP11 stated that she is “unable to focus and set time aside to study this unknown topic.” Another participant, QP5, indicated that she lacks focus and “lost interest” in the course. These questionnaire participants’ responses support Theme 2 in that the data answers RQ2 regarding how the student skill of time management and RQ4 regarding how the internal factors of study skills and commitment to educational goals

influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. In the same vein, QP15 explained in the other response option for QQ28 (see Appendix S) that she feels distracted by the recent loss of people from her life and that this distraction is a main influence on her asynchronous online course withdrawal. This participant provided data that supports Theme 2 in that it also answers RQ3 regarding how external factors such as the loss of important people can cause time management issues that influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Between the responses to QQ18 and QQ28, a total of eight out of 25 questionnaire participants describe issues with attention span, distractibility, and lack of focus that support Theme 2.

Time management issues emerged in the interview data, too. Five out of 12 interview participants describe time management issues that influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. IP5 described distractions she encounters while trying to write for her English course at home. She claimed she has “so many thoughts about everything else. And then in between, it's like, I'll write.” She added that even when she tries to plan to avoid those distractions, she ends up wasting just as much time as if she had not tried to avoid the distractions in the first place. IP5 admitted, “I sometimes don't get the assignments done.” Distractibility is also an issue for IP11 who stated she began her asynchronous psychology course on “a really difficult foot.” She insisted that discouragement with the course grows and she becomes more “susceptible to distractions” as time goes by. This data regarding students' inability to focus and avoid distractions supports Theme 2 which answers RQ2 regarding how the student skill of time management and RQ4 regarding how the internal factors of study habits influence students' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Although several students claimed that taking courses asynchronously presents distractions they do not find in on-campus courses, others discussed the loss of the routine, schedule, or structure that on-campus courses provide. IP12 stated that, she experiences “a total lack of structure” in asynchronous courses such as her psychology course. She explained that while on campus, her time is structured by whether she is in class or out of class. Further, she explained how she has places to go on campus where she can concentrate and study while she is out of class. IP12 maintained, “At home, it’s very, whatever goes.” She recalled that during that course, she “was still getting used to figuring out how to divide up my time.”

IP1 compared the routine or schedule of high school to the freedom she finds taking asynchronous courses in college. She says that in high school, it “was like school all day, and then homework, and then sleep well, and kind of repeat that. So it was easier, you know?” She stated that in college, she has so much unstructured time that she ends up procrastinating and letting the work “pile up.” She attributes this pileup of work to her inability to complete the asynchronous anthropology course. IP1 continued, stating “It’s easier to like, let go of my routine at this point, which is hard.” The routine or schedule of on-campus courses helps keep IP1 on track. Though she enjoys asynchronous college courses, learning to create her routine is a challenge for her.

Likewise, the loss of the routine or schedule of high school is a problem for IP10 in asynchronous college courses. They indicated that although the idea of having their days free and not going to campus for their history class is attractive, the realization that they have to be responsible for not only more work than in high school but also for structuring their time, shocked them. They described frequently forgetting they have

assignments due and remembering only hours before the deadline. IP10 noted that even when they remember, they find they lack the motivation to begin and attribute this to feeling overwhelmed. Additionally, IP10 noted that this feeling of overwhelm is an issue that appears only in college because high school presented “less [*sic*] opportunities for the problem to arise.”

Additionally, the lack of a physical authority figure in asynchronous courses causes procrastination issues for students. IP1 purported that with all that time on her hands at home, she finds herself rationalizing “Well, like I can do my work, but also like, I don't have to because there's no one telling me really, you know?” The structure and routine of on-campus courses keep students not only on track but accountable for their time and work. This supports Theme 2 which answers RQ2 regarding the student skill of online time management and RQ4 regarding the internal factors of students' study habits and commitment to educational goals that influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

The insights of 13 out of 37 participants including eight questionnaire participants and five interview participants, make up the data that supports Theme 2. Theme 2 helps to answer the ORQ regarding how community college SWD describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. It also answers RQ2 regarding the student skill of time management, RQ3 regarding how external factors such as the loss of loved ones can cause time management issues, and RQ4 regarding the internal factor of study habits and commitment to educational goals that influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Theme 3: Community College Students with disabilities Describe How External Crises and Commitments Influence Their Reasons for Asynchronous

Online Course Withdrawal. Theme 3 centers on how students' external crises and commitments influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Community college SWD describe how external crises and commitments influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. A total of 18 out of 37 participants, including 11 of the 25 questionnaire participants and seven of the 12 interview participants, describe how external life crises and commitments influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. The main codes that provide support for Theme 3 are (a) the loss of important people, (b) living situation, (c) employment, (d) care of dependent children, (e) financial issues, (f) illness, and (g) other external crises and commitments. Table 12 presents the frequency of codes for Theme 3.

Table 12

Frequency of Codes for Theme 3

Theme	Code	Frequency of Codes
Theme 3: Community college students with disabilities describe how external life crises and commitments influence their reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal.	Loss of important people	2
	Living situation	15
	Employment	9
	Financial issues	18
	Care of dependent children	11
	Illnesses	24
	Other external crises and commitments	9

The data shows that no single external crisis or commitment stands out when considering the influences upon asynchronous course withdrawal for community college SWD. However, several types of external crises and commitments are evident and consistent. This indicates that as a whole, life crises and commitments external to

students' college experiences, influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Two questionnaire participants described how the loss of important people in their lives influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. In QQ18 (see Appendix T), QP10 mentioned the loss of a close family member during her asynchronous communications course. She described how this loss affects her, noting that her psychological state "worsened" as a result. Similarly, QP15 offered a fourth reason for withdrawal in the other option of QQ28 (see Appendix S). He described how he suffered a similar loss of multiple people from his life that year, leaving him feeling distracted and "spacey." For both QP10 and QP15, the loss of important people from their lives influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal offering support for Theme 3. Theme 3 answers RQ3 regarding how the external factor of the loss of loved ones influences students' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Likewise, three questionnaire participants reported in QQ28 (see Appendix S) that their living situation is one of the three most important reasons for their asynchronous course withdrawal. QP14 and QP18 both listed their living situation as the second most important reason for withdrawal. Also, one participant, QP25, indicated her living situation is her third most important reason for withdrawal. In QQ18 (see Appendix T), QP25 offered more of an explanation, stating that during the asynchronous child and family education course, she was homeless. She asserted that her homelessness and lack of internet influences her withdrawal.

In addition, two interview participants indicated their living situations influence their withdrawal. IP2 described himself as a recovering alcoholic and stated that his

living situation at the time of the asynchronous art history course is an influence on his course withdrawal. IP2 described living in a sober-living home to facilitate his recovery from addiction. He described this home as one in which he was “working hard to stay sober every day and doing two meetings a day.” IP2 depicted the home as a “very structured place where you had to do your things or you had a chance of being kicked out on the street.” He insisted that he takes recovery seriously and wants to succeed in it. IP2’s living situation is a major influence on his withdrawal from the art history course. His living situation entails having less time available to devote to coursework in addition to the inherent difficulty of addiction recovery.

Another interview participant described her living situation as a main influence on her withdrawal. IP7 indicated her living situation influences her withdrawal from the asynchronous British literature course when she discussed moving in with and caring for her mother after her mother’s surgery and subsequent recovery from a brain tumor. The amount of time that caring for her mother entails detracts from the time available for her asynchronous course. She said, “I felt like doing schoolwork helped me in a way not to focus on those things. It was sort of an outlet but it also hindered my being able to do as much as I wanted to do in class.” IP7’s experience moving in with and caring for her mother shows how students’ living situations cause extra stress that influences their withdrawal. The data regarding participants’ living situations supports Theme 3, which answers RQ3 regarding how the external factor of students’ living situations influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Three questionnaire participants indicated their commitment to their employment is one of their three most important reasons for withdrawal (see Appendix S). QP5 and

QP25 indicated employment is their second most important reason for withdrawal.

Similarly, QP17 said employment is their most important reason for withdrawal.

Additionally, IP11 explained that her full-time employment as a salon manager causes her to “be multitasking all the time.” She explained that this only increases her already high stress level while taking full-time college courses. Financial issues cause further stress on students who work to support themselves and their families while taking asynchronous courses. The data shows this has a negative effect, increases stress and time commitments, and influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Likewise, three interview participants described encountering employment issues that influence their withdrawal. IP3 stated that being a new realtor during the *COVID-19* pandemic without a lengthy “track record of working with clients” creates challenges for her. A reduction in hours and an increase in financial stress during the pandemic only adds to her stressors, influencing her withdrawal from the asynchronous English course. The examples offered by the questionnaire and interview participants regarding how their employment influences their withdrawal provide evidence for Theme 3. Theme 3 answers RQ3 regarding how the external factor of students’ commitment to employment influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Financial difficulty was listed by QP6, QP7, and QP18 as their third most important reason for withdrawal, and by QP5 as the most important reason (see Appendix S). IP1 described a course-related financial concern in the cost of required supplemental apps or websites used in her course. She states that these supplemental costs occur quite often in her asynchronous courses.

In addition to the costs associated with running an AirBNB™ supplemental income rental and her husband's immigration process while taking the asynchronous psychology course, IP11 explained the struggles she faced concerning her upcoming application to nursing programs and her financial situation. IP11 stated she knew she was not doing well in the psychology course and would probably end the course without getting "as strong a grade" as she knew she was capable. However, a strong grade in the psychology course is a requirement for her nursing program applications. IP11 figured, "Well, I guess I could stay in and then you know, if I end up getting a C, then when I retake it, like, I have a higher potential of getting an A because I've taken this class before." But then she explained how her financial situation took precedence because withdrawal would allow her to "pick up more shifts" at work. IP11 insisted, improving her family's financial situation was "better for me and my husband."

Some students described financial concerns that were induced by the thought of withdrawal from their courses. IP4 described the emotional toll of withdrawal when she posited that the thought of it, "made me very anxious and upset because I was wasting my parents' money." Both IP7 and IP8 were concerned about their financial aid and grants when they withdrew from their asynchronous courses. IP8 stated that she thought she would have to "pay it all back." Likewise, IP7 said she was afraid withdrawal would cause her to lose her grant funding. In addition to being set back in their course progress, students are concerned about how withdrawal will affect them financially. The data regarding students' financial difficulties proves that additional stressors are incurred when taking and withdrawing from asynchronous courses. This data provides support for

Theme 3 which answers RQ3 regarding how the external factor of financial difficulty influences students' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Moreover, three interview participants describe significant illnesses that influence their withdrawal. First, IP4 stated she was hospitalized and stayed at an eating clinic for "extreme malnutrition" due to celiac disease that affects her ability to "think properly." Then, IP6 describes an approximately 10- to 14-day illness and hospitalization that incapacitates her physically and cognitively. Lastly, IP8 echoes the experience of IP6, describing consecutive illnesses that hospitalize her and make keeping up with coursework impossible. All three participants describe how illnesses and hospitalizations influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal, providing support for Theme 3 that answers RQ3 regarding how the external factors of students' illnesses and hospitalizations influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

The care of dependent children is another external commitment that students describe as influential to their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Five questionnaire participants listed this external factor as one of their three most important reasons for withdrawal (see Appendix S). Remarkably, QP21 listed his commitment to his dependent children as all three of the most important reasons for withdrawal indicating he considers this commitment the only influence on his withdrawal.

To the same extent, IP9 describes the main influence on her withdrawal from the asynchronous anatomy and physiology course as her lack of physical help in caring for her twin school-aged children. A single parent, IP9 describes online courses as "more fitting" to her current employment and parenting needs; yet, she admitted that some days she thinks "I don't want to do it." She continued that at times, she questions whether she

wants to finish school but adds, “then you look at your kids like, well, that’s not even a question anymore.” Parenthood is just one more external commitment that community college SWD face that influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal and provides support for Theme 3. Theme 3 answers RQ3 regarding how the external factor of students’ commitment to their dependent children influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Four questionnaire participants describe how other commitments outside of school are influential to their withdrawal. QP4, QP15, and QP19 said it is their third most important reason and QP7 stated it is the most important reason. IP3 agreed, describing how the crisis of the *COVID-19* pandemic and what she refers to as seemingly worldwide “chaos” and “social unrest”, causes significant stress and even loss of income. She insisted she needs to retake her asynchronous English course when “financially, I’m not stressed out about, how am I going to work?” or trying to survive a pandemic with unknown outcomes. This data proves that community college SWD encounter other types of commitments and crises external to their college courses that influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal and provide support for Theme 3. In sum, the loss of loved ones, living situations, employment, financial difficulties, illnesses, care of dependent children, and other crises and commitments influence students’ reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. The descriptions of 18 out of 37 participants who describe the influence of external life crises and commitments support Theme 3. Theme 3 answers the ORQ regarding how community college SWD describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal and RQ3 regarding the external factors that influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Theme 4: Community College Students with Disabilities Describe How the Type of Course Influences Their Reasons for Asynchronous Online Course

Withdrawal. Theme 4 centers on how the type of course influences students' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Community college SWD describe how the type of course influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. In total, 18 of 37 participants, including 9 out of 25 questionnaire participants and nine out of 12 interview participants, describe how the type of course influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. The main codes found in Theme 4 include (a) subject matter, (b) amount of work required, (c) type of work required, and (d) accelerated courses. Table 13 provides the frequency of codes for Theme 4.

Table 13

Frequency of Codes for Theme 4

Theme	Code	Frequency of Codes
Theme 4: Community college students with disabilities describe how the type of course influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	Subject matter	67
	Amount of work required	17
	Type of work required	14
	Accelerated courses	15

The code most often described by participants refers to how the subject matter of the course from which they withdrew influences their withdrawal from it. In QQ28 (see Appendix S), eight questionnaire participants indicated that one of the three most important reasons for their withdrawal is that the type of course from which they withdrew is too difficult to take online. QP9 and QP11 indicated their third most important reason, QP4 and QP15 stated their second most important reason, and QP1, QP8, QP12, and QP16 claimed the most important reason for their withdrawal is that the type of course is too difficult to take online. According to the data, students perceive

some subjects are simply too difficult to take online and are better taken on campus. Participants explained there are multiple reasons for this perception.

Some students explained they have a history of struggle with certain subjects and for that reason, need to take those courses on campus to succeed. In QQ18 (see Appendix T), QP15 described having a math learning disability called dyscalculia and that in his asynchronous math course, he “had a hard time remembering basic formulas especially [*sic*] when negative numbers were involved.” However, he also stated in response to QQ23 (See Appendix U) that he is willing to take other asynchronous courses despite his withdrawal experience. QP15 added he “really enjoyed” taking biology asynchronously because it allows him to be in class while at work. He insisted, only math is difficult asynchronously because of his math disability. Also, when asked in QQ25 (see Appendix V) how he would feel about his ability to complete the same math course asynchronously now, QP15 stated he still feels “low esteem for the math classes online.”

Similarly, QP18 responded to QQ22 (see Appendix W), which asked how students felt about their ability to complete the asynchronous course when they started it, that she was “nervous even before beginning the course because I’m not good at math.” If taking that course asynchronously again now, QP18 admitted in QQ25 (see Appendix V) that she would still feel “the same [nervous].” Nevertheless, QP18 stated in QQ23 (see Appendix U) that she is “willing to try things that’ll help me.” Like QP15, she has not let the withdrawal from her asynchronous math course deter her from taking other asynchronous courses. This questionnaire data about students’ struggles with certain subjects supports Theme 4 and helps to answer RQ1 regarding the student characteristics of academic preparation and intellectual development and RQ4 regarding the internal

factor of the psychological stress of dealing with learning disabilities that influences students' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Interview participants agreed regarding the subject matter of asynchronous courses. IP10 indicated they feel more comfortable taking STEM courses online than courses like history or English. They suggested, "the range of topics is broader so you have less of a chance of studying the wrong thing." According to IP10, they prefer to learn all the material as required in an online calculus course than the "certain bits and points" required in an online history or English course.

Interest in the subject matter plays a role in IP3's withdrawal from her asynchronous English course. She explained that she needs one of two things to be successful in a course: either, subject matter and assignments that naturally interest and "energize" her, or "interaction with the instructor" that sparks and holds her interest in subjects that do not interest her. Without finding either of those things in her asynchronous English course, IP3 is not "interested enough to maintain." The interview data about students' lack of interest in the subject supports Theme 4 and answers RQ4 regarding the internal factors of commitment, utility, and satisfaction that influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Additionally, certain courses require "extra initiative" from students, as IP4 indicated. She stated that she previously enjoyed writing but as it has become more "intense", she can not "jive with it anymore." She described her asynchronous English course as one in which she tries to "rise to the challenge but it still didn't work and that kind of sucks." Several interview participants indicated the amount of work and type of assignments required in their asynchronous courses are too much for them to bear.

In her asynchronous British literature course, IP7 feels overwhelmed by both the “amount of content” and “the difficulty of the class.” Also, IP7 shared that she was hesitant to begin the course after reviewing the syllabus. Still, she insisted, it “was literally the only one I could take.” IP2 explained that his asynchronous art history course requires too much work which he admitted is “kind of a cop-out.” However, he continued to describe assignments that are “overwhelming”, requiring 100 pages of reading and 300-word essays. Other participants agreed that they withdraw, at least in part, because their asynchronous courses include too much work.

Also, the type of work required in their courses is too difficult for some students. IP5 explained that she feels intimidated by the type of assignments required of “such a new student” in her asynchronous English course. Having never been assigned a case study assignment, IP5 described her thoughts as “College is this? Like, we do case studies and stuff? This is crazy. I don’t even know what this is. I don’t know where to begin.” Similarly, IP10 described feeling “slightly overwhelmed” by the “bigger assignments” in their asynchronous history course. They added that overwhelm decreases motivation and increases procrastination, leading to withdrawal.

Another interview participant, IP6 fell behind due to her ill health in the past but had always been able to catch up. However, the cumulative course project assigned in IP6’s asynchronous English course makes catching up after illness impossible. She stated, “When it’s all building upon each other it’s like, I can’t do this work until I do all of that.” IP6 insisted that the cumulative nature of the course project makes it impossible for her to catch up. This interview data showed that the difficulty level, amount of work, and cumulative nature of coursework influences students’ withdrawal and supports

Theme 4. Theme 4 answers RQ1 regarding the student characteristic of academic preparation, RQ2 regarding the student skill of increased amounts of reading and writing online, and RQ4 regarding the internal factors of stress, self-esteem, commitment, incompatibility of teaching and learning styles, satisfaction, utility, and course availability that influence students' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Likewise, interview participants indicated the length of courses makes a difference in their withdrawal. IP2, IP3, IP9, and IP11 agreed that accelerated courses, for example, those offered in the shorter summer term or that begin several weeks after the start of the semester make their experience more difficult and influence their withdrawal. IP2 described himself as “overconfident”, taking three courses in the shortened summer term. After the negative experience and withdrawal from his asynchronous art course, IP2 conceded, “I should’ve done one.”

IP3 explained her decision to enroll in asynchronous English in the accelerated summer term. IP3 suggested that because she has trouble maintaining interest and motivation in certain courses like English, she figured “I can just take this really fast and then it won't be as difficult to try to last a full semester, right?” However, she continued that she finds the shorter term is “too much, too fast.” IP3 insisted she will only retake that English course in a “normal semester period.”

IP9 described her withdrawal from an accelerated asynchronous anatomy and physiology course and how the accelerated schedule makes a difficult course more difficult for her. She insisted, “that month can make a difference.” In the future, like IP3, IP9 will only take that course again in a full semester. Similarly, IP11 described the asynchronous psychology course from which she withdrew as a “very difficult course” in

addition to being “condensed” in the shortened summer term. Interview participants agreed, the accelerated nature of their asynchronous courses influences their withdrawal. The data about taking too many or too difficult short-term courses supports Theme 4 in that it answers RQ4 regarding the internal factors of stress, commitment, incompatibility of teaching and learning styles, satisfaction, and utility that influence students’ reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Taken together, these 18 of 37 participants elucidate how the course, including the subject matter, the amount and type of work, and the length of term can influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. The data helped answer the ORQ regarding how community college SWD describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. The data addresses RQ1 regarding the student characteristics of intellectual development and academic preparation, RQ2 regarding the student skills of increased amounts of reading and writing online, and RQ4 regarding the internal factors of stress, commitment, incompatibility of teaching and learning styles, satisfaction, utility, and self-esteem that influence students’ reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Theme 5: Community College Students with Disabilities Describe How the Instructor’s Teaching Style Influences Their reasons for Asynchronous Online Course Withdrawal. Theme 5 centers on how the instructor’s teaching style influences students’ reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Community college SWD describe how the instructor’s teaching style influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. In total, 12 out of 37 participants indicate the instructor’s teaching style influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal

including seven out of 25 questionnaire participants and five out of 12 interview participants. The main codes that support this theme are (a) teaching style, (b) lack of resources, (c) no response to emailed questions, (d) late response to emailed questions, and (e) unhelpful response to emailed questions. Table 14 presents the frequency of codes for Theme 5.

Table 14

Frequency of Codes for Theme 5

Theme	Code	Frequency of Codes
Theme 5: Community college students with disabilities describe how the instructor's teaching style influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	Teaching style	40
	Lack of resources	25
	No response to emailed questions	8
	Late response to emailed questions	7
	Unhelpful response to emailed questions	2

In QQ28 (see Appendix S), four questionnaire participants selected I did not like the instructor's teaching style as one of their three most important reasons for withdrawal. QP3 and QP19 indicated that the instructor's teaching style is their second most important reason for withdrawal, whereas QP16 and QP20 indicated it is their third most important reason. The multiple-choice nature of the question limited questionnaire participants' ability to explain why they chose that response. Furthermore, QP12 suggested in QQ18 (Appendix T) that she learns at a "slow pace and the teacher's teaching strategies did not mix well with my learning strategies."

Interview participants agreed that their learning styles or needs are not compatible with the instructor's teaching style. Participants contend their online instructors simply do not teach. IP5 insisted that in language arts courses, "lectures are essential." She continued, "he did not provide any lectures. We never saw his face. He didn't provide any notes from him, no content from him, just from the program itself." IP2 explained

that his art history instructor conducted the course from another country where he was too busy with art shows to teach. He stated, “It's like we were teaching the class. Like, he was just giving us the curriculum.” IP2 added that the instructor’s typical weekly CanvasTM announcement would sound like this: “Boom. Here's the assignments. Bam. There's the curriculum. I'm off to an art show. See you next week.” Without any help or guidance from the instructor, IP2 was adamant, “The weight of the whole class was on students’ shoulders.”

Likewise, IP7 agreed that her British literature instructor did not teach by stating that “he gave us a lot of information but he didn't tell us what to do with the information.” She concluded that it felt as though instead of a teacher, she has a “robot” handing out information. That sentiment was mirrored in QQ18 (see Appendix T) when QP24 described how his disability influences his withdrawal. He stated, “It was very difficult to teach myself.” IP7 offered her thoughts on having to teach herself, stating, “I feel like it's not really a college experience. You know, I mean, I guess it is, but it's not the one that I would prefer.” IP2 summed up his experience with an art history instructor he feels did not teach by stating, “That's the way he teaches his curriculum. I wasn't ready for it.” The data about the participants’ instructors’ incompatible pace of teaching, lack of lectures, and expecting students to teach themselves supports Theme 5 in that it answers RQ4 regarding the internal factor of incompatible instructor teaching and student learning styles that influences students’ reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Moreover, participants agreed that their instructors do not offer enough resources for them to succeed. In QQ18 (see Appendix T), when asked how their disability influences their withdrawal, QP1 insisted that the reason she can not “stay afloat” is that

she is not given the “accommodations that the professor agreed to.” QP1 pointed out that when the instructor fails to provide approved accommodations, SWD do not have the resources they need to succeed. QP1 specified in the other option of QQ28 (see Appendix S) that the lack of “approved accommodations” is one of the most important reasons for her withdrawal from the asynchronous history course. QP20 agreed, stating “I was not getting the help I needed.” Likewise, IP7 needed help and stated that had she gotten help from the instructor, she feels she “could have maybe worked through it.”

IP4 suggested that having recently graduated from high school, she is unsure of the expectations of college-level writing. For that reason, IP4 wishes the instructor would provide “more example papers and more resources, so they [students] could figure it out on their own.” IP5 expressed the same desire for templates or examples, explaining that “the only resources they gave us were like, a database to look at case studies, but not like, help for like, writing, you know?”

Moreover, students described the resources in the online classrooms as not easy to navigate or useful when utilized. IP7 noted that her online British literature classroom in Blackboard™ is a “jumbled mess” that has no organization to it and confuses her since the instructor does not post assignment due dates. Furthermore, IP12 described how the “lack of diversity of resources” offered in her asynchronous psychology course is the reason for her withdrawal. She explained that it is difficult for her to learn when only reading text. She continued that she “needed a different method of intaking [*sic*] the information” such as YouTube™ videos, TED talks™, or Kahn Academy™ videos. IP12’s online classroom has only text-based resources with no other types of resources available. The data about the students’ need for their instructor’s help and for a variety of

resources to learn and succeed supports Theme 4. Theme 4 answers RQ4 regarding the internal factors of incompatible teaching and learning styles and the need for self-esteem that influence students' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Other students suggested that instructors' feedback on assignments and grading systems are resources that they use to determine where they stand and how they need to prepare for the future. IP4 stated that her asynchronous English instructor's grading system, in which he only posts elementary-type grades, leaves her unable to decipher where she stands academically. Receiving feedback such as "this was satisfactory; this wasn't" only confuses IP4 more. She insisted that if her instructor had given out real grades, she would know "that if I did bad on a final paper I was going to fail or I was going to be okay." The inability to determine her progress influences IP4's withdrawal.

Also, instructor feedback on assignments is identified as a needed resource as students attempt to improve their grades. IP7 protested that she is never given feedback on the content of her writing in her asynchronous British literature course, and she feels like she "was talking to a chatbot or something." She wishes her instructor would "help me understand things a little bit better. Give me some sort of feedback on like, things I was writing." Another interview participant agreed. Although they were not indicating the instructor's teaching style influences their withdrawal, IP10 described how their history instructor gives them unhelpful assignment feedback such as "You did a good job or something like, ... next time I want to see like, a little more from you." When asked if the instructor offers ideas on how to improve their writing, IP10 repeated their response, saying "No. No. No. Absolutely not." Interview and questionnaire participants describe numerous resources that are needed but not offered by their instructors. They insisted this

lack of resources influences their withdrawal. The data about the need for helpful instructor feedback supports Theme 4 in that it answers RQ4 regarding the internal factors of incompatible teaching and learning styles and the need for self-esteem that influence students' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Communication with asynchronous instructors is described repeatedly as more difficult than with on-campus instructors. IP10 declared that in on-campus courses, "it's easier to respond, like, in the spur of the moment." IP4 noted that on campus, instructors ask, "Does anyone have questions?" and students have the opportunity to get answers to their questions. However, asynchronously online, instructors only answer questions through email. IP4 noted that "all teachers will have like, a slightly different schedule. So, it's like, hard to remember, like, who's going to answer when." But, as some students explained, they never receive responses at all.

IP2 reported that with his asynchronous art history instructor, "There was no, no, email me and I'll get back to you later that day. No. Email me and if and when I find my time, 48 to 72 hours, I'll get back to you, if I can." IP2's frustration with the instructor is clear when he proclaimed, "*Who cares if you're in XXX* [emphasis added]?" He continued,

You don't have an hour of the day? I know there's a time ... change, but I mean, I don't care if it's three in the morning and we're sleeping and then you at least try to get back to us and write back to us. In the morning, we could see when we get on that you answered the question or something. Never. Never.

To IP2, any response from the instructor would have been helpful. He insisted communication could have helped him avoid withdrawal from the course.

Similarly, IP4 expressed frustration over receiving no response from the instructor when she discussed how she submitted numerous questions in addition to her rough draft for a writing workshop. She explained how she hoped her instructor would recognize her needs when she said:

I feel like maybe that should have kind of implied that I didn't know what was going on and I could maybe use like, a walkthrough of the assignment or just, like, expectations for the assignment that were like, just a little bit more clear. He also does get notified every time you go to like, a writing workshop. So I thought maybe like, he would realize that I've been going to them a lot recently. Like, maybe he would know that I'm really struggling with this assignment, but I don't think he did.

Unanswered questions are a major influence on IP4's withdrawal from the course.

Several interview participants described frustration with the amount of time it takes to receive emailed responses. IP5 summed up her frustration with the instructor's email responsiveness when she said:

I have to wait for a response. Especially if you have a question while doing an assignment, like for an assignment. You have to put that assignment on hold until you get the response from the professor. I hate that.

IP4 quoted her instructor's directives regarding their email response time as "It'll take two to three days to get a response. If it's not in two, three days, email me again."

IP7 offered that instead of asking the instructor when she knows his response will be untimely, she either GooglesTM the answer, asks a classmate, or asks a friend who is an

English professor. The data shows that when students' repeated attempts to communicate with instructors fail, they stop trying and withdraw.

Instructor responses to questions were also repeatedly described as unhelpful. IP12 explained how the emailed responses from her asynchronous psychology instructor have a "50/50 chance" of providing her with any help. To learn, IP12 explained that she needs to get different perspectives, hear the same information explained by different people, watch videos, or even just hear the text read out loud. However, her instructor responded with the same text-based information, time after time. Had her instructor responded with alternative resources for her to learn the information, IP12 insists she may not have withdrawn.

Similarly, IP7 stated that her instructor avoids answering her direct questions and instead, refers her back to the same article. This reference back to the same information is not helpful to either student. IP7 concluded, "If the workload was the way it was, but I was also getting help from the professor I feel like, ... I feel like I could have maybe worked through it, I guess." The data about the need for helpful and timely feedback and support from the instructor supports Theme 4. Theme 4 answers RQ2 regarding the difficulties of computer-based communication online and RQ4 regarding the internal factors of incompatibility of teaching and learning styles and self-esteem that influence students' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

These frustrations demonstrate the patterns students describe of incompatibility with their instructor's teaching style, lack of resources, unresponsiveness, and untimely and unhelpful email responses that students report are common in asynchronous online courses. For 12 of out 37 participants, these patterns influence their reasons for

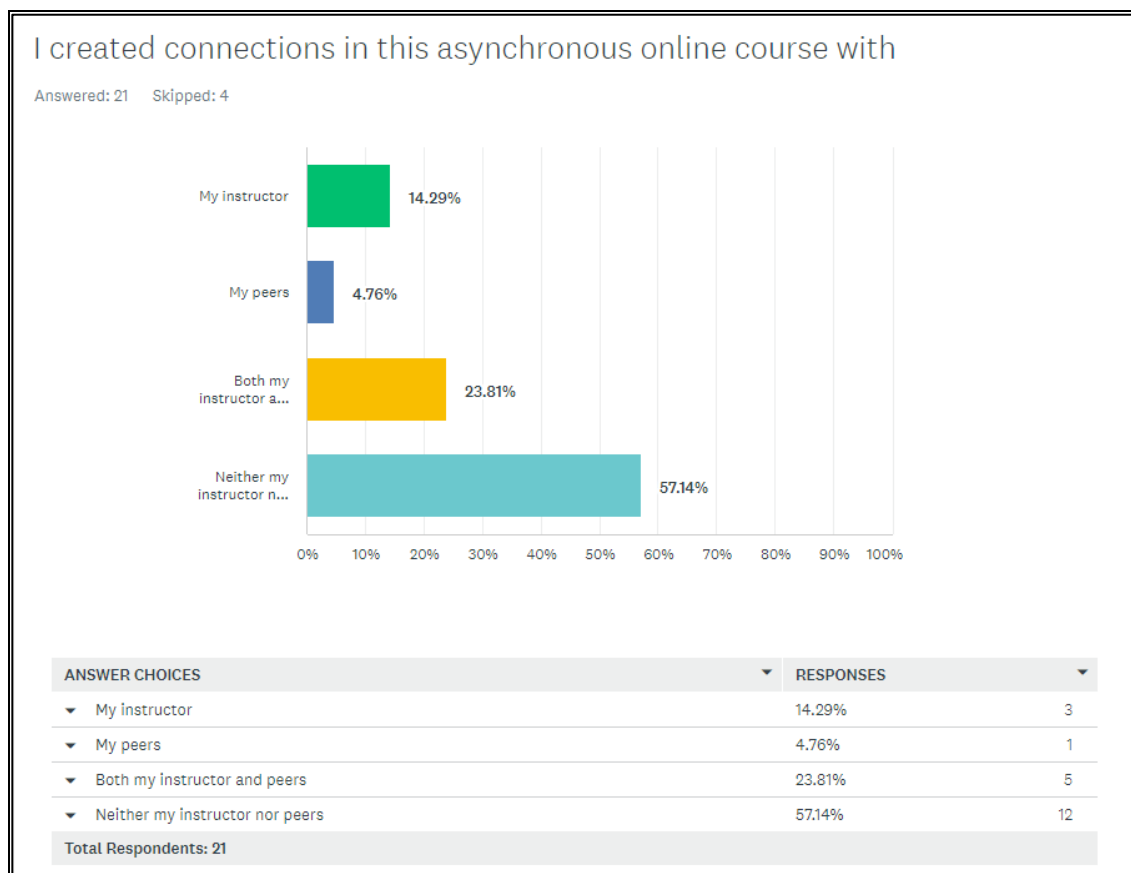
asynchronous online course withdrawal. The data indicates that when students do not trust that their instructor will answer their questions effectively and promptly, they choose to withdraw. These descriptions of students' incompatibility with their instructors' teaching style, the lack of resources offered, the lack of constructive feedback, and difficulties with online communication support Theme 5. Theme 5 helps to answer the ORQ that asks how community college SWD describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal and RQ2 that focuses on the student skill of computer-based interaction online and RQ4 that centers on the internal factors of incompatibility of teaching and learning styles and students' need for self-esteem that influence students' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Theme 6: Community College Students with Disabilities Describe How the Lack of Personal Connection with the instructor Influences Their Reasons for Asynchronous Online Course Withdrawal. Theme 6 centers on how the lack of personal connection with the instructor influences students' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Community college SWD describe how the lack of personal connection with the instructor influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Altogether, 18 of 37 participants, including 13 of 25 questionnaire participants and five of 12 interview participants, describe how the lack of personal connection with the instructor influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. The codes for Theme 6 are (a) impersonal, (b) instructors don't see or talk to you, and (c) lack of interaction with the instructor. Table 15 presents the frequency of codes for Theme 6.

Table 15*Frequency of Codes for Theme 6*

Theme	Code	Frequency of Codes
Theme 6: Community college students with disabilities describe how the lack of personal connection with the instructor influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	Impersonal	14
	Instructors don't see or talk to you	5
	Lack of interaction with the instructor	36

Questionnaire participants indicated in QQ27 whether they created connections with their instructor and/or peers in the asynchronous course from which they withdrew. Three questionnaire participants reported they created connections with their instructor, one said they created connections with their peers, five stated they created connections with both their instructor and peers, and 12 asserted they created connections with neither their instructor nor their peers. Figure 2 displays the results of QQ27.

Figure 6*Connections Created in the Asynchronous Course*

The majority of participants indicated they did not create connections with their instructors. Between the participants who reported creating a connection with neither their instructor nor their peers and those who reported creating a connection with their peers only, 13 participants, or 61.9% reported they did not create connections with their instructors. Three of the participants who reported they made connections with neither expounded upon their experience with their instructor in their responses to other questions.

Not only did she fail to create connections with her instructor in the course, but QP20 also noted in QQ18 (see Appendix T) that she does not get the help she needs and

in QQ28 (see Appendix S), stated her most important reasons for withdrawal are her disability, the feeling of isolation in the course, and she did not like the instructor's teaching style. Taken together, QP20's responses indicate she needs disability-related help in the art course, feels isolated online, and does not receive the help she needs from the instructor. For QP20, these types of experiences lead to withdrawal. Similarly, QP24 reported not creating a connection with either his instructor or his peers. In QQ18, he stated it is "difficult to teach myself" in the computer applications/physics course, helping to depict the type of experiences he had. The data from questionnaire participants regarding their lack of connection with instructors supports Theme 6 and answers RQ4 which centers on the internal factors such as stress, incompatibility of teaching and learning styles, and students' need for self-esteem that influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Interview participants expressed the same types of experiences and offered details regarding those experiences. IP5 recalled having no opportunity to learn anything about the instructor or offer any information about herself in the asynchronous English course. As a self-proclaimed student who loves and excels in the language arts, IP5 proposed that withdrawal from that "disconnected" course is not a difficult decision for her. She insisted "That's how bad of a course it was that it wasn't like, much of a contest for me." Similarly, without indicating that a lack of personal connection with the instructor was an influence on their withdrawal, IP10 suggested that things could have been different in the asynchronous history course. They stated that they would have been more "reluctant to withdraw" if they had felt any sense of connection in it.

Likewise, IP4 described the content of her instructor's emailed responses as impersonal. IP4 explained her instructor's responses were "brief" and "blunt" when asked for clarification on an upcoming assignment. She offered that simply adding "more words" would help. IP4 explained what she meant when she gave a few examples, stating, "Like, I can see that you're struggling with this. Or I'd like to help you with this. Or, just something that kind of shows that they care a little bit, other than just answering my question and then being like, go do it." IP4 recalled with fondness the online sense of belonging she felt in high school when the *COVID-19* pandemic forced students into distance learning. Yet, she insisted that a sense of belonging does not exist in her asynchronous college courses.

Interview participants also agreed that since the instructors cannot see the students in asynchronous courses, they do not realize their needs. IP1 explained that on campus, "the teachers will talk to you a little more usually because they like, they see you. And it's easier for them to like, know when you're missing." IP8 declared that she understands that asynchronous college courses require more student independence. Nevertheless, she countered that "sometimes an olive branch would be nice." IP5 concurred when she gave her opinion of whether her personal characteristics like age, race, or gender influenced her experience in the course by stating "The teachers didn't really talk to us that much" so there was no opportunity for any discrimination to take place. IP5 added, "They were very not personal like that."

While discussing the perceived lack of community in her asynchronous British literature course, IP7 offered that one way the instructor could increase it is to participate, ask questions, get feedback, and "get the conversation going." IP3 recalled how the

complete lack of interaction with her instructor in her asynchronous English course makes it impossible for her to overcome the effect of her ADHD on her course success. She claimed that in high school, “the participation [with the instructor] brought in that fun element, which was maybe the tool that I used when I was in high school to be successful. And so not having that, right, makes it more difficult for me.” IP2 described the lack of community he felt with the instructor and the community he felt with his peers in his art history course when he asserted, “It's a shame that that's the way the class had to communicate without any, any input from the professor.” The consensus among 5 interview participants was that their instructors simply do not seem to care about them and do not interact or communicate with them in their courses. This results in a lack of personal connection and withdrawal from their courses. The data in this section about the perceived lack of personal connection with their instructor, the impersonal nature of the course, the perception that instructors do not care about or see students, and the lack of a sense of community in their asynchronous courses combined with the data from the questionnaire participants regarding their lack of connection with their instructors provides support for Theme 6. Theme 6 answers the ORQ regarding how community college SWD describe the reasons for their asynchronous online course withdrawal and RQ4 which pertains to the internal factors of incompatibility of teaching and learning style, stress, and students’ need for self-esteem online that influences students’ reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Theme 7: Community College Students with Disabilities Describe How the Lack of Personal Connection with Peers Influences Their Reasons for Asynchronous Online Course Withdrawal. Theme 7 centers on how the lack of personal connection

with peers influences students' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Community college SWD describe how the lack of personal connection with peers influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Altogether, 18 of 37 participants, including 15 of 25 questionnaire participants and three of 12 interview participants, describe how the lack of personal connection with peers influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. The codes for Theme 7 are (a) forced, impersonal, material-based interaction; (b) community through the Discord™ app; (c) lonely, isolated, independent without peer connection; and (d) peer communication is easier on campus. Table 16 presents the frequency of codes for Theme 7.

Table 16

Frequency of Codes for Theme 7

Theme	Code	Frequency of Codes
Theme 7: Community college students with disabilities describe how the lack of personal connection with peers influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	Forced, impersonal, material-based interaction	19
	Community through Discord™ app	5
	Lonely, isolated, independent without peer connection	9
	Peer communication is easier on campus	23

In QQ27, (See Figure 2) questionnaire participants noted whether they created connections with their peers in their asynchronous courses. Combining the results of those who indicated they made connections with neither their instructor nor their peers with the results of those who indicated they made connections with their instructor only, a total of 15 questionnaire participants did not create connections with their peers in the asynchronous course from which they withdrew. Moreover, three of the 15 participants also indicated in QQ28 (see Appendix S) that the feeling of isolation in the course influences their withdrawal. This questionnaire data regarding students' lack of

connection with peers supports Theme 7 in that it answers RQ4 regarding how the internal factors of students' need for interpersonal relationships and self-esteem influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Interview participants agreed. Three participants offered detailed descriptions of having no personal interaction with peers, feeling no sense of classroom community or belonging, or having no opportunity to make a friend in their asynchronous courses. These three interview participants indicated that these factors are the main influences upon their withdrawal. IP4 takes all her college courses asynchronously and stated the asynchronous format works well with her social anxiety as she lacks the motivation to go to campus. She explained that in her asynchronous English course, the only interaction between students is in the class discussion posts to which she added "I don't really view that as interaction." IP4 suggested, "I might as well be talking to a bot because it's very formal, very stilted. We're all just trying to meet a word count and get a good grade." She reminisced that in high school there was always interaction during class, during lunch, and "even when we weren't supposed to be talking, we would have a little chat feature in our Gmails™." When asked about peer interaction in her asynchronous college courses, IP4 said, "There is next to none." She continued, "I have no new friends because of this [taking all asynchronous courses]", and that her high school friends who go to college in person have "new friend groups" and "relationships." IP4 described herself during that asynchronous English course as "lonely," "sad," and needing "human interaction." She indicated these feelings directly influence her withdrawal.

Similarly, IP5 compared how in other asynchronous courses she experiences "partnerships" with other students but in her asynchronous English course there is

“nothing.” It is possible, according to IP5, that classmates of hers from high school are in the same class but because there is no peer interaction, the only way she can know is by looking for familiar names in the class list. She stated, “I went through and maybe recognized one or two people but we never interacted, ever.” IP5 shared that she enjoys interacting with peers and doing group work saying that it can motivate and help students avoid procrastination because others in the group depend on them. But, IP5 insists she “never had that in the online English course. There was no interaction with other students.” She said she feels “alone” and that it feels “isolating” in her asynchronous course. This lack of peer interaction is directly influential to her withdrawal.

Likewise, IP7 portrayed peer interaction in her asynchronous British literature course as “forced” and “rote”, saying “nobody was communicating besides responding to the essay a little bit. That was it.” IP7 explained that the responses to peer discussion posts are “always part of an assignment and not just personal.” She stated that she feels “lonely” taking asynchronous courses and that online, she can’t “bounce things off other students” as she does in on-campus courses. IP7 indicated this lack of classroom community is one of the main reasons for her withdrawal. This interview data regarding the lack of personal interaction or sense of community with their peers, and the lonely and isolating feelings they experience in their asynchronous courses supports Theme 7. Theme 7 answers RQ4 regarding how the internal factors of students’ need for self-esteem and interpersonal relationships influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Though not indicating a lack of peer connection or interaction is influential in their withdrawal, other interview participants had much to say about the lack of peer

interaction online. Three participants who indicated feeling no sense of belonging in their online course recounted that they find other ways to connect with peers and create a sense of belonging. All three reported the use of an external app that allows students to get to know their peers. Both IP1 and IP8 reported accepting invitations from peers to join the Discord™ in the asynchronous online courses from which they withdrew. IP8 suggested Discord™ is an app in which “all the students could talk to each other, ask for help, talk about homework, study together.” She reported that she likes the idea but due to her social anxiety, IP8 admits, “I don't know why I didn't utilize it. I probably was afraid to talk. I ... don't know how to interact with people. So, I don't usually talk to the other students.” IP8 pointed out that even without engaging, she still feels a sense of community in the Discord™ “second hand, I guess since I didn't speak. But it felt like we were all in it together.” IP1's experience mirrored that of IP8. She mentioned the class Discord™ in her asynchronous anthropology course. IP1 explained that the app allows her to feel connected, while in the online classroom, she does not.

Class Discords™ were discussed a third time by IP12 when she explained that an additional bonus of class Discords™ is that because the instructor is not involved, reading, or grading it, students can be “incredibly casual with each other.” She asserted that when posting in Canvas™, she feels as though she is saying, “I've submitted like this chat post that is incredibly more formal than I would ever talk to any of you in real life.” However, IP12 countered that communicating in Discord™ is “similar to just chatting freely like in a classroom.” IP12 reported that just as there is no sense of belonging or connectedness in her asynchronous psychology course, there is no Discord™ in it, either. Although they did not report the lack of peer interaction as an influence upon their

withdrawal, all three students, IP1, IP8, and IP12 agree that peer-initiated Discords™ are the only outlet in which they find true, personal communication with their peers in asynchronous courses. This data also supports Theme 7 in that it answers RQ4 regarding how students' need for interpersonal relationships and self-esteem influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

The questionnaire and interview participants agreed; asynchronous courses lack opportunities for true peer interaction and connection. However, asynchronous students report they both want and need this true peer interaction and connection. Both questionnaire and interview participants provided insights regarding the lack of peer interaction and connection, the impersonal nature of online interaction, feeling lonely and isolated without peer interaction, and how peer interaction is easier on campus which provide support for Theme 7. Theme 7 answers the ORQ regarding how community college SWD describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal as well as RQ4 regarding how the internal factors of interpersonal relationships and self-esteem influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

The results of this qualitative descriptive study shed light on the multiple and varied reasons for community college SWD' asynchronous online course withdrawal. The themes explained how their disabilities and time management issues, external life crises and commitments, and course-related factors such as the type of course, the instructor's teaching style, and the lack of connection with the instructor and their peers can either alone or when combined influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. The participants' descriptions provide a baseline understanding of the phenomenon of the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community

college SWD that, until this qualitative descriptive study, did not exist. This new knowledge can serve as guidance in understanding community college SWD' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal and how the goal of reducing their asynchronous online course withdrawal could be approached.

Limitations

Limitations are factors outside of the control of the researcher that can potentially affect study results and conclusions (Simon & Goes, 2013). Limitations were a part of this study. In Chapter 1, the researcher discussed the anticipated limitations of the sampling strategy and data sources. Limitations were encountered in both of these areas and also, in recruitment procedures and the use of the qualitative methodology.

Some SWD may not want others to know they have a disability; therefore, they may be reluctant to participate in a study based on something they wish to keep confidential. Though the reasons why students may have been reluctant to participate in the study are unknown, the researcher can only postulate that the initial sampling strategy was insufficient to accomplish the goal. Months of recruitment through social media and direct email to eligible participants at the IRB-approved campus resulted in only minimal questionnaire participation and no offers to participate in the interview. The novice researcher was unaware of how challenging this task would be and determined a different strategy was needed. The approval of a GCU IRB modification was sought and approved to advance the study from recruiting only participants in California to nationwide and to use a national recruiting platform, UserInterviewsTM, for recruitment. These modifications resulted in quick access to vetted and eligible participants which made data collection possible.

Additionally, a limitation of the data source was the length of the questionnaire. As Evans and Mathur (2018) attest, participants rarely complete long in-depth questionnaires. SurveyMonkey™ estimated the length of time to complete the questionnaire would be no more than 22 mins. As summarized by SurveyMonkey™, the average time taken to complete the questionnaire by the participants was 8 minutes, 32 seconds. The ratio of questionnaires submitted through SurveyMonkey™ with no questions answered to those who participated was two to one. Again, the researcher can only speculate that those who did not participate after consent considered the length of the questionnaire or the content of the questions and chose to exit without participation. This too, made data collection a challenging process. Still, these limitations of sampling strategy and data source should not induce adverse consequences for the transferability or applicability of findings.

However, a third limitation may do so. The researcher assumed that by not limiting participants by age (other than over the age of 18 years), gender, disability type, or any other demographic variables the purposive sampling strategy would ensure participant diversity. However, once eligible participants were interviewed and the researcher began analysis, it became apparent that the sample was not as diverse as expected.

The sample was young, with half of all participants, or 18 out of 37 between the ages of 18 and 24 years. Since community college students tend to be non-traditionally aged (Bean & Metzner, 1985) the sample was not as representative of the population as the researcher had anticipated. Furthermore, the sample was heavily female, with a total of 25 out of 37 participants or two-thirds of the participants identifying as female. Hence,

as the qualitative methodology dictates, the results should only be transferable to similar populations of students or contexts, as determined by the reader (Gergen, 2014). The results may not apply to students with disabilities at four-year institutions where students must meet specific academic qualifications or to SWD who withdrew from synchronous courses. The experiences and contexts of these students could be highly unlike those of the participants in this sample.

Lastly, the method of qualitative analysis employed in the study Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis places decision-making regarding the data that is included and excluded in the hands of the researcher producing another limitation. The researcher only coded data that pertained to answering the research questions. However, the researcher alone decided what constituted pertinent data and what was interpreted to be meaningful to the participant. The researcher used the reflective journal, member checking, bracketing, and consistent reflection upon their preconceived, bracketed assumptions about the population and phenomenon to avoid the introduction of bias to the results.

Summary

Chapter 4 included how the results of the study were obtained, the results of the study, the limitations that resulted from the data collection and analysis of the study, and the consequences of those limitations. The researcher used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis which included:

1. Familiarizing Self with the Data.
2. Generating Initial Codes.
3. Searching for Themes.
4. Reviewing Themes.

5. Defining and Naming Themes.
6. Producing the Report.

To do this, the researcher became familiar with the data by reading each questionnaire participant's responses and each interview transcript and watching each interview several times while correcting any transcription errors and properly formatting each transcript. Next, the researcher coded both questionnaire qualitative data and interview transcripts using participants' words and phrases whenever possible. Both semantic and latent codes were utilized as appropriate. After coding, the researcher grouped categories of codes and promoted the categories with sufficient and meaningful enough support to themes. Next, the researcher defined and named each theme. The researcher then described the themes in detail to produce a report that tells the final story of the data.

Through the use of Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis, the researcher developed seven themes detailed in Chapter 4. The themes addressed both the overarching research question (ORQ) and the four sub-questions (RQs). The seven themes were:

1. Community college students with disabilities describe how disabilities influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.
2. Community college students with disabilities describe how time management issues influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.
3. Community college students with disabilities describe how external crises and commitments influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.
4. Community college students with disabilities describe how the type of course influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.
5. Community college students with disabilities describe how the instructor's teaching style influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

6. Community college students with disabilities describe how a lack of personal connection with the instructor influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.
7. Community college students with disabilities describe how a lack of personal connection with peers influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

All seven themes addressed the ORQ. The first theme addressed all four RQs; Theme 2 addressed RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4; Theme 3 addressed RQ3; Theme 4 addressed RQ1, RQ2, and RQ4; Theme 5 addressed RQ2 and RQ4; and Themes 6 and 7 addressed RQ4.

As was anticipated in Chapter 1, limitations emerged in the data collection and analysis phases that included limitations in sampling strategy and data sources. In addition, the sample was not as representative as anticipated in Chapter 1. The sample was young and heavily gender weighted, with half of all participants traditionally aged between 18 and 24 years and over two-thirds (68%) indicating they were female. Furthermore, these results do not apply to university students or students who withdrew from synchronous courses.

The qualitative analysis method employed, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis engages the researcher as the sole decision maker of the study. Therefore, the researcher's decision of what was included in the data could have been biased. To avoid this bias, the researcher kept a reflective journal, and used member checking, bracketing, and consistent reflection upon those preconceived, bracketed assumptions to keep biases separate from the analysis and results of the study. The researcher believes these reflexivity protocols mitigated the introduction of bias.

The next and last chapter, Chapter 5 will discuss the importance of the study, how it was designed, and will definitively address the problem space in the literature regarding the asynchronous online course withdrawal (McKinney et al., 2019) of community college SWD (Flink & Leonard, 2019; Terras et al., 2020). The results of the study will be summarized, conclusions offered, and implications of the data and data analysis relative to the RQs will be discussed. Chapter 5 will conclude with recommendations for future research and practice and a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the study.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction and Summary of Study

As described in Chapters 1 and 2, individuals with disabilities are attending college in numbers never seen before (De Los Santos et al., 2019; Fowler et al., 2018). SWD constitute up to 20% of all American college students (NCES, 2019a, 2019c). College degrees increase the likelihood of full-time employment (USBLS, 2020) and consequently, a higher quality of life (Ressa, 2021) for individuals with disabilities. Online learning normalizes higher education for SWD (Terras et al., 2020). However, online learning is plagued with withdrawal rates that are higher than those of on-campus learners (Chatman et al., 2019; Christensen & Spackman, 2017; Gregory & Lampley, 2016; Seaman et al., 2018).

Previous research explored the topics of SWD and online learning but infrequently focused on SWD in online learning (Flink & Leonard, 2019; Terras et al., 2020). The research regarding SWD tended to focus on SWD at universities (Flink & Leonard, 2019) and did not include those who studied online (Terras et al., 2020). The research regarding online learning tended to be quantitative and focused on those who completed the online course (McKinney et al., 2019). Until now, the topic of community college SWD' withdrawal from online courses was unaddressed. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore the problem space identified in the literature regarding how community college students with disabilities (SWD) (Flink & Leonard, 2019; Terras et al., 2020) in the United States describe how student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal (McKinney et al., 2019).

The theoretical framework on which the study was built, Rovai's (2003) composite model of student persistence, was discussed in detail in Chapter 2. The framework offered four different lenses through which online student persistence can be explored: student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors. Each empirically-based lens offered a different approach to address student withdrawal from asynchronous online courses. The framework appreciates the nontraditional nature of community college students, the unique needs of online students, and the myriad factors that can influence their withdrawal from online courses.

The problem space indicated that it was not known how community college SWD (Flink & Leonard, 2019; Terras et al., 2020) describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal (McKinney et al., 2019). To address this problem space, the researcher developed these research questions:

Overarching RQ (ORQ): How do community college students with disabilities describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ1: How do community college students with disabilities describe how student characteristics influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ2: How do community college students with disabilities describe how student skills influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ3: How do community college students with disabilities describe how external factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ4: How do community college students with disabilities describe how internal factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

The qualitative methodology, outlined in Chapter 3, was utilized to gain an understanding of what McKinney et al. (2019) were unable to address, the reasons for students' asynchronous online course withdrawal. Furthermore, the study focused on the population of community college SWD who were identified by Flink and Leonard (2019) as often omitted from the literature. The qualitative methodology and descriptive design ensured that the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal were understood from the perspectives of the students instead of the researcher.

Data was collected through online questionnaires and individual interviews conducted by the researcher. Twenty-five students from the target population participated in the 28-question SurveyMonkey™ questionnaire and 12 separate students participated in the interviews. The questionnaire questions and interview protocol were described in Chapter 3 and are provided in Appendix E.

Chapter 4 detailed how data collection was conducted through purposive, chain referral, volunteer, and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling took place through emails sent to all eligible students at the GCU IRB-approved site, a community college in southern California. Chain referral sampling was conducted through emails sent to faculty and staff at the same approved site that asked for their help in the recruitment of their students. Volunteer sampling occurred in private and public Facebook™ groups popular with community college students in California. Additional chain referral sampling occurred through posts in private and public Facebook™ groups popular with student affairs professionals, college alumni, and doctoral learners.

As a result of interview participant recruiting challenges, the researcher applied for and was granted GCU IRB approval to (a) add a \$20 Amazon™ electronic gift card

incentive for interview participants, (b) increase the number of Facebook™ groups accessed, and (c) switch from California only to national recruitment and hire the UserInterviews™ recruiting platform. Twenty-five participants completed the online SurveyMonkey™ questionnaire and 12 separate participants completed the individual Zoom™ interviews with the researcher for a total of 37 study participants. All interview data and the questionnaire qualitative data were analyzed through Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis with the use of MAXQDA™. Doing so allowed the researcher to address the phenomenon of asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD and answer the research questions. Seven themes were identified in the data and discussed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 5 discusses every finding of the study as well as how the seven themes relate to the problem space identified in Chapter 1, the literature discussed in Chapter 2, and the research questions outlined in Chapter 3. A reflection of the researcher's dissertation process is also provided in Chapter 5 in addition to implications for theory, practice, and future research. Strengths and weaknesses are addressed, as well. Chapter 5 concludes with recommendations for future research and practice and a holistic reflection on how the study addressed the problem space identified in the literature of the need for a qualitative understanding of the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal (McKinney et al., 2019) of community college SWD (Flink & Leonard, 2019; Terras et al., 2020).

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how community college students with disabilities (SWD) in the United States describe how student

characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Seven themes were developed through data collection, demographic data gathering, and thematic analysis. These themes helped to establish an understanding of the phenomenon of asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD.

The following section discusses the summary of the themes identified in the data and how they answer the research questions. The research questions are answered as they related to the theoretical foundation as well as the problem space identified in the literature. The section concludes with a reflection on the researcher's dissertation process and a discussion of the theoretical, practical, and future research implications. The study's identified strengths and weaknesses are discussed and recommendations for future study and practice are proposed. In addition, a holistic reflection on the problem space and how the study contributed to new knowledge on the topic of asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD is presented.

Overall Organization

In the following section of Chapter 5, the researcher discusses the conclusions made based on the data analysis and findings of the study, theme by theme. The researcher will show how each theme answers the research questions as well as how the themes support or challenge the current literature and advance the research on the topic of asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD. The transferability of the results will be discussed to highlight how the findings relate to the problem space identified in Chapters 1 and 2. The research questions for the study were:

Overarching RQ (ORQ): How do community college students with disabilities describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ1: How do community college students with disabilities describe how student characteristics influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ2: How do community college students with disabilities describe how student skills influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ3: How do community college students with disabilities describe how external factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ4: How do community college students with disabilities describe how internal factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

The seven themes answer the ORQ by explaining how community college SWD describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Theme 1 answers the ORQ and RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4. Theme 2 answers the ORQ and RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4. Theme 3 answers the ORQ and RQ3. Theme 4 answers the ORQ and RQ1, RQ2, and RQ4. Theme 5 answers the ORQ, RQ2, and RQ4. Themes 6 and 7 answer the ORQ and RQ4. Each theme is described herein.

Theme 1: Community College Students with Disabilities Describe How Disabilities Influence Their Reasons for Asynchronous Online Course Withdrawal.

The first theme indicates that disabilities influence their asynchronous online course withdrawal. As enrollment with the campus disability support office was an eligibility criterion for the study, all participants have a disability. Questionnaire participants describe their disabilities as influential to their withdrawal with the majority of

participants describing how disability-related time management and focus issues influence their withdrawal. If and how students' disabilities affect them varies significantly. As Ressa (2021) pointed out, SWD lose learning time due to their disabilities, affecting and delaying the achievement of their educational goals.

This was apparent for almost all interview participants who describe the influence of their disability on their withdrawal. Most students indicate they either had taken or still needed to retake the course from which they withdrew. Few said they would not need to repeat that same course. Withdrawal from a required course sets students back in their educational plans (Chatman et al., 2019). Not only have they lost the time and energy spent in the course due to their disability, but they must wait to attempt that course again in the following semesters, frequently delaying subsequent required courses and goal completion.

Rosenbaum (2018) stated that individuals with health impairments, specifically having been hospitalized within the previous six months, had a lower likelihood of enrolling in college to begin with. Therefore, the fact that students in this study were in college and persevering despite their chronic health impairments is a statement of their determination and commitment, as well as their self-advocacy which Fleming et al. (2017) said makes a difference in the academic performance of SWD. Students who describe hospitalizations and illnesses that prevent them from completing their asynchronous courses also describe how disappointing and upsetting their withdrawal is for them. As one student put it, "Each setback is making it harder to go back because it just feels very discouraging." Yet, all students are still taking college courses and moving forward with their educational plans despite the findings of Rosenbaum (2018) who said

students with health impairments were less likely to matriculate and graduate with their degree.

Several students indicate their disability causes them to need extra help in their courses that they did not receive in the asynchronous course from which they withdrew. Whether it was a matter of instructors' refusal to grant approved accommodations or the lack of assistance they normally receive from tutors or others, students describe a disability-related need for help and that the help is not always received. This agrees with the findings of Herbert et al. (2020) who posited that SWD face a fight for accommodations with their instructors. The authors acknowledged that this fight is a major difference found when comparing disability support services in high school and college.

Like the questionnaire participants, interview participants describe how their disability makes attending class and completing coursework at home more difficult for them. The most often cited impact of disability on students' withdrawal is attention span issues and the inability to focus. Dahlstrom-Hakki et al. (2020) found that students with learning disabilities, ADHD, and autism prefer and report more engagement, motivation, and comprehension after synchronous discussions than after asynchronous discussions. Additionally, Terras et al. (2020) said that students with ADHD were the most impacted by their disability online. Students repeatedly describe themselves as needing more time than others (Alamri & Tyler-Wood, 2017) to learn or complete assignments especially when they are learning and completing assignments at home without the routine and structure found on campus (Murphy et al., 2019). This need for more time is frustrating and discouraging for them as the asynchronous format inherently lacks the structure of

time (Murphy et al., 2019). Several students indicate that online time management is a skill they either developed over time or were still developing.

While many students mention having been diagnosed with ADHD, some describe attention and focus issues they attribute to other diagnoses such as depression and other mental health issues (Warren & Schwitzer, 2018). Students diagnosed with ADHD experience differing symptoms such as an “inability to execute” or “perform” in uninteresting courses or lack interaction to stimulate interest. Still, others describe a lack of motivation to do the assignments, especially those assignments they anticipate will be more challenging. Regardless, most students claim that had it not been for their disability, they would have completed the course.

Fleming et al. (2018) stated that when compared to their peers without disabilities, SWD more often sought university counseling center treatment for depression, anxiety, and stress caused by academic difficulty. That makes sense in light of the results of this study as numerous students indicate an impact of asynchronous coursework on their mental health. Students describe negative experiences in the course that impact their mental health. Similar to Dahlstrom-Hakki et al. (2020) and Fox (2017), students in this study enroll in asynchronous courses, in part, due to the social difficulties they encounter with in-person courses. However, in their asynchronous courses, impactful and pervasive misunderstandings (Fetzner, 2013), communication issues with the instructor and unanswered questions (Alqurashi, 2019; Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2018), and feelings of isolation and intimidation (Tanis, 2020) increase their anxiety about their performance and induce or worsen their symptoms of anxiety and depression. As one student put it, [depression] “coats everything in negativity and frustration.” For many, though their

mental health may not have been the only influence upon their withdrawal, it worsens their entire course experience. As Terras et al. (2020) attested, students with invisible disabilities such as learning disabilities, ADHD, or psychological or psychiatric disabilities require a level of self-advocacy higher than that required by students without an invisible disability to be successful in asynchronous online courses. Attention to students' mental health, and social, and emotional development should be increased and ongoing (Francis, Duke, et al., 2019; Warren & Schwitzer, 2018).

Theme 1 answers the ORQ which pertains to how community college SWD describe the reasons for their asynchronous online course withdrawal as well as all four research questions. Theme 1 answers RQ1 in that it relates to how students' level of intellectual and emotional development influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Theme 1 answers RQ2 regarding how students' disability-related poor time management skills in a format that lacks structure and routine influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Theme 1 answers RQ3 regarding how external life crises such as illnesses and hospitalizations influence students' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal and RQ4 regarding how their lack of self-esteem or advocacy, inadequate study habits, increased psychological stress, or feelings of isolation influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. How students' disabilities affect them varies significantly and indicates that students attribute their disability-related withdrawal to student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors.

Theme 2: Community College Students with Disabilities Describe How Time Management Issues Influence Their Reasons for Asynchronous Online Course

Withdrawal. Theme 2 indicates that issues with time management influence students' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Though discussed in Theme 1 as a result of disability, not all students' disabilities include issues with time management. Alamri and Tyler-Wood (2017) reported that SWD typically find the online format convenient and compatible with their learning needs. However, in this study, questionnaire participants repeatedly describe problems with attention, focus, distractions, and procrastination when learning from home, supporting Terras et al.'s (2020) claim that students with attention disorders are the most negatively affected by the online format. One questionnaire participant added that her distraction is caused by the recent loss of loved ones and that this distraction influences her withdrawal.

Although students describe enjoying the freedom that comes with taking online courses, interview participants describe more time management-related problems than they anticipated before starting the course (Fetzner, 2013; Murphy & Stewart, 2017; Su & Waugh, 2018). Joosten and Cusatis (2020) claimed that when compared to their peers without disabilities, SWD have significantly lower perceptions of their organizational skills and self-directedness. This is true for the students in this study as many of them describe challenges with focus such as writing lengthy papers and distractions that interrupt their concentration. Some even state that as a result of losing focus, they experience decreased motivation to continue and decide to withdraw. Many describe needing more time to complete assignments (Alamri & Tyler-Wood, 2017). They also state the accommodation of extra time for assignments or tests is very helpful, in conflict with the results of De Los Santos et al. (2019) who claimed most students reported ineffectiveness of online accommodations. Others offer tips and tricks for managing time

even though they indicate their lack of time management is influential to their withdrawal.

Students are surprised by how much responsibility they have to assume for creating and maintaining their schedule when taking courses asynchronously and how they are not prepared for that responsibility (Gering et al., 2018; Ghaffari, 2018; Peck et al., 2018; Schommer-Aikins & Easter, 2018; Su & Waugh, 2018). Multiple students describe disliking asynchronous courses for this reason and even acknowledge they learn better on campus; yet, most continue to take asynchronous courses. The increased accountability required of successful online students helps them stay organized and move forward (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020). Yet, several students acknowledge they have trouble remembering that they have assignments due or tests approaching without the verbal and visual reminders offered by instructors in on-campus courses.

Described as an “object permanence issue” by one student, several students with mental health disabilities agree they need the consistency, repetition, and routine they find in on-campus courses to remember they have assignments and when they are due. This supports the claim by Murphy et al. (2019) who reported that online students with psychiatric disabilities found frequent challenges with time management and concentration. The students explain, the online classroom usually contains the information but it is their responsibility to look for upcoming assignment due dates and keep themselves on track (Gering et al., 2018; Ghaffari, 2018; Peck et al., 2018; Schommer-Aikins & Easter, 2018; Su & Waugh, 2018).

Successful online students begin assignments earlier (Dvorak & Jia, 2016), are better able to regulate their effort (Peck et al., 2018), less inclined to procrastinate

(Schommer-Aikins & Easter, 2018), and spend more time completing their assignments (Su & Waugh, 2018) than those who are not successful. In this study, several students report knowing they have assignments but lacking the motivation to even begin them. Keeping themselves on track and beginning assignments early enough to ensure they have a reasonable amount of time to complete them before the deadline are tasks these students have yet to master. Theme 2 answers the ORQ which focuses on how community college SWD describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Additionally, Theme 2 answers RQ2 which focuses on how the student skills needed by online students such as online time management influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal, RQ3 which focuses on how the effect of external factors such as their disability and personal losses on their ability to maintain attention influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal, and RQ4 which focuses on how internal factors such as study skills and commitment to educational goals influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Theme 3: Community College Students with Disabilities Describe How External Crises and Commitments Influence Their Reasons for Asynchronous Online Course Withdrawal. Theme 3 indicates that external life crises and commitments influence students' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Both questionnaire and interview participants describe several types of crises and commitments that are external to college and influence their withdrawal (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Rovai, 2003; Sorensen & Donovan, 2017). Little variance exists between the number of students who describe specific external crises and commitments to indicate one is more common than another. However, when viewed as a whole, external crises

and commitments are frequently reported. Several questionnaire and interview participants indicate the commitment to the care of their dependent children influences their withdrawal with one questionnaire participant selecting this factor for all three of the most important reasons for his withdrawal. It was clear to see by this student's response, that the care of his children takes precedence over everything else including completion of the asynchronous course. Nontraditional students are more likely to have family commitments than younger, traditionally-aged students (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Rovai, 2003; Sorensen & Donovan, 2017) and this is apparent in the data.

Likewise, numerous students indicate that employment and financial concerns as well as concerns regarding their living situations often take precedence over the completion of their courses even with the convenience and flexibility offered by the asynchronous format. This is evident as several students indicate the influence of more than one of these factors as most influential to their withdrawal. These results confirm what Tinto (1993) reported, that the role of a college student is often only one of multiple roles a student will have. Interestingly, numerous students who report the primary influences on their withdrawal as course or format-centered also indicate that external factors such as employment and financial concerns play a part in their decision to withdraw, even if only secondarily. No matter the level of commitment exhibited by a student, if they are unable to provide for their basic needs or those of their family, they place priority on physical survival rather than persistence in a college course.

Additionally, health crises and even deaths play a role in students' asynchronous course withdrawal. Rosenbaum (2018) posited that community college students with health impairments and recent hospitalizations have lower rates of community college

graduation, matriculation to university, and graduation from university than those without health impairments and recent hospitalizations. Students in this study indicate their physical health is an influence upon their withdrawal. In addition, a family member's health is a significant influence on students' withdrawal. Some even report the loss of loved ones that affects their ability to persist in their courses. These results confirm what Rovai (2003) claimed, that nontraditional students often have external situational demands on their college persistence. Both questionnaire and interview participants provide evidence that indeed, the asynchronous course they enrolled in and withdrew from is only one aspect of their lives. Students must juggle coursework and class schedules in addition to numerous external factors that affect their ability to persist. This third theme addresses the ORQ which considers how community college SWD describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal and RQ3 which considers how external factors such as the loss of loved ones, living situations, employment, financial difficulty, illness, dependent children, and other crises and commitments influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Theme 4: Community College Students with Disabilities Describe How the Type of Course Influences Their Reasons for Asynchronous Online Course

Withdrawal. Theme 4 provides evidence that a student's withdrawal from an asynchronous course is often influenced by the subject matter of the course, the amount and type of assignments required, and the length of the term in which the course is taken. Many students indicate in both the questionnaire and interviews that part of the reason they withdrew was the course itself. Students perceive certain courses to be more difficult

to complete online than other courses (Hart et al., 2018; Huntington-Klein et al., 2017; Wladis et al., 2017).

Several students indicate they knew when they began the course that they have a history of struggle with the course subject matter. Cole (2000) identified a need for proficient reading and writing skills when taking courses asynchronously, as asynchronous courses tend to rely on writing assignments to indicate mastery of course objectives. Many students described struggles with writing and expound on how asynchronous courses make writing even harder for them. For some of these students, struggles with focus and attention span play a role in their difficulty with writing. Those struggles are intensified by the fact that the asynchronous format dictates that the student complete writing assignments independently and remotely. The lack of ability to discuss their comprehension of the topic as well as the lack of immediate feedback from the instructor on their writing (Berg et al., 2019; Buelow et al., 2019) only magnifies their struggles and results in their withdrawal from the course. Others include the amount of reading in the descriptions of their struggles with the course. Both of these descriptions support Cole's (2000) recommendation that students be proficient at both reading and writing when they choose to take asynchronous courses.

In addition to writing courses, other students report that courses such as science and math (Hart et al., 2018) are too difficult to take online. This coincides with the findings of McKinney et al. (2019) who investigated the types of courses most often withdrawn from. In McKinney et al.'s (2019) study, the courses that proved to be most often withdrawn from were math, science, and writing. Similarly, Flink and Leonard (2019) claimed that students with learning disabilities reported more impact of their

disability on their success in math courses. It makes sense then, when students report trouble with asynchronous courses such as math, anatomy and physiology, history, English composition, and literature. Despite the online flexibility of learning at their preferred pace in their own time, as one student notes, “I can have all the time in the world but if I don’t understand the information, it’s not going to help.” Several students indicate they need to be in person to fully comprehend these difficult subjects.

Still, other students focus on the type of assignments required for the course. Whether it is cumulative projects or assignments students consider extraneous or beyond their level of experience, students describe how the type of assignments required in their asynchronous courses make success too difficult to achieve. Students explain that cumulative projects make keeping up impossible while experiencing health complications. This idea corresponds with what Rowntree (1995) claimed, that despite the asynchronous format, which allows a student greater flexibility and control over their work, students who fall behind find catching up to be difficult. Others explain that some subjects require a broader understanding of the entire subject such as math, whereas other subjects such as history or English require more knowledge of specific topics that leave room for studying the wrong information. Similar to the results of Hart et al. (2018), multiple students suggest that after their experience in these courses, they will not take that type of course again. Some still, even semesters later, feel a lack of confidence in their ability to complete that type of course asynchronously in the future.

Students also indicate that taking difficult subjects online in the shorter terms such as summer or late start courses is a bad idea. A few students mention not realizing how condensed the short-term courses are and how having more time to learn all the

information helps them avoid withdrawal. The data included in Theme 4 helps to answer the ORQ regarding how community college SWD describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Theme 4 also answers RQ1 including the student characteristics of academic preparation and intellectual development, RQ2 that includes the student skills such as online time management and increased need for proficiency in reading and writing, and RQ4 that includes the internal factors such as commitment to educational goals, satisfaction, utility, psychological stress, course availability, and incompatibility of teaching and learning styles that influence students' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Theme 5: Community College Students with Disabilities Describe How the Instructor's Teaching Style Influences Their Reasons for Asynchronous Online Course Withdrawal. Theme 5 indicates that the instructor's teaching style influences students' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Though students' descriptions indicate differing interpretations of what constitutes a teaching style, many students describe in the questionnaire and the interviews an incompatibility with the way their asynchronous course instructor teaches and that this incompatibility influences their withdrawal. Students often mention that their instructors do not teach but rather, hand out information for them to determine how to use effectively (Gering et al., 2018) and grade assignments (Athens, 2018). Frustration and even anger are emotions students repeatedly describe when discussing their experiences with instructors who, in their opinion, either do not have the time or willingness to teach.

Discussion of the material, the ability to ask questions and receive immediate answers, and the perceived support that is created in on-campus classroom interactions

with instructors are missing from the students' asynchronous courses (Alqurashi, 2019; Berg et al., 2019; Buelow et al., 2019; Tanis, 2020). The interviews conducted in this study made the exploration of the students' feelings about the absence of these typical in-person learning experiences possible. Students repeatedly discuss their need for more one-on-one attention from the instructor, aligned with Grow (1996) who theorized students with low levels of self-direction expect the instructor to teach them what is needed. Numerous authors agreed that online learning requires more responsibility on the students' part than in-person learning (Gering et al., 2018; Ghaffari, 2018; Peck et al., 2018; Schommer-Aikins & Easter, 2018; Su & Waugh, 2018). Not all students describe these types of expectations. Some students indicate they enjoy and appreciate the independent learning required in asynchronous courses (Athens, 2018; Buelow et al., 2019). Still, one student phrased it well as she stated, "Sometimes an olive branch would be nice."

However, those who expect the instructor to do more to teach them what is needed illustrate what Rowntree (1995) posited, that each student exhibits a different level of development and that some adult students desire to be told what to do and how to do it. These students often expect to be taught and seem dependent on the instructor's ability to explain the material and provide individualized attention, indicative of low levels of self-direction in learning (Grow, 1996). When these parameters are not provided in their asynchronous courses, these students report an incompatibility between their learning needs and the instructor's teaching style.

Online SWD benefit from prerecorded lectures (Lee et al., 2021) and synchronized online discussions (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020). However, students in

this study rarely report the use of prerecorded lectures and do not experience synchronized discussions, as synchronization of discussions indicates ineligibility for the study. As Workman and Stenard (1996) claimed, online students need opportunities to develop their self-confidence and quell their fear of failure. Conversely, students clearly describe needing help from their instructors to comprehend the material and understand course and assignment expectations but rarely receiving the support they need.

Other students discuss as influential to their withdrawal the availability of resources for them to learn and complete assignments in the absence of what they consider teaching. Students describe a lack of exemplars and templates as well as a lack of variety of learning resources for students to better understand the content and assignment requirements (Alamri & Tyler-Wood, 2017; Herbert et al., 2020; Tanis, 2020). Similar to the results of Athens (2018), students in this study desire feedback from the instructor regarding the quality of their work and their overall standing in the course. Helpful feedback is central to their success and allows them to determine their progress and ability to complete the course (Alqurashi, 2019; Berg et al., 2019; Buelow et al., 2019; Tanis, 2020). They desire varying modes of content delivery such as videos like TEDTM talks, KahnAcademyTM, and YouTubeTM that break up the monotony of reading standard text, in agreement with Alqurashi (2019), Athens (2018), Herbert et al. (2020), and Martin and Bolliger (2018) who recommended faculty incorporate learning resources and assessment in various formats to help SWD of all learning styles succeed. Without these resources, students cannot gauge their progress or adequately comprehend the material. These issues often combine with low levels of self-confidence and high fear of failure (Workman & Stenard, 1996), leading to withdrawal.

Additionally, students describe something they consider to be part of their instructor's teaching style—the instructor's responsiveness to student inquiries (Alqurashi, 2019; Berg et al., 2019; Buelow et al., 2019; Tanis, 2020). With email as the only method of interaction with their instructors, students repeatedly describe slow responses that are unhelpful as the assignment with which they are confused, is due before the instructor's response is received. As Athens (2018) pointed out, timely feedback can make or break a student's course progress. The slow pace of instructor response made improving students' work before the assignment deadline impossible, inducing what one student describes as "momentary panic." While describing the wait for their instructor's response, another student adds, "I hate that" as it halts her ability to move forward with the assignment (Alqurashi, 2019).

Others describe receiving no response from their instructor and how that lack of perceived support influences their withdrawal. As Workman and Stenard (1996) explained, students who increase their online self-confidence will find greater success online. Yet, students in this study frequently reported receiving no emailed response to their requests for guidance or clarification. This complete lack of instructor acknowledgment of their questions and concerns leads students to report greater intimidation, decreased motivation, and lower perceived levels of support. These results confirm what Rios (2019) claimed, that students with high levels of anxiety and stress experience lower levels of course satisfaction and decreased learning outcomes online. Without this needed support, students fear failure. To avoid failure, students withdraw from their courses. Theme 5 helps to answer the ORQ regarding how community college SWD describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. It also answers

RQ2 regarding the student skill of computer-based communication, and RQ4 regarding how internal factors such as a student's self-confidence, learning needs, feelings of mattering, and incompatibility of teaching and learning styles influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Theme 6: Community College Students with Disabilities Describe How the Lack of Personal Connection with the Instructor Influences Their Reasons for Asynchronous Online Course Withdrawal. Theme 6 illustrates how a lack of personal connection with the instructor influences students' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. In the questionnaire, students repeatedly describe an inability to connect with their asynchronous instructor. In the interviews, students explained that this inability is often due to the impersonality of the instructor and the course, overall. Alamri and Tyler-Wood (2017) suggested student participation and interaction with the instructor in the online classroom produce better course outcomes. The authors also indicated that participation depends on how the instructor conducts the course. The opportunities for interaction, the methods of communication, and the opportunity to create a feeling of belonging in the course are cultivated by the instructor who designs and carries out the course (Alamri & Tyler-Wood, 2017; Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2018; Rovai, 2003).

Institutions of higher learning must create communities and classrooms in which students are engaged and their voices valued (Tinto, 1993) even when learning asynchronously (Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2018; Rovai, 2003; Tanis, 2020). Increased personal contact with others combats the isolation commonly reported online (Tanis, 2020; Workman & Stenard, 1996). However, in this study, students continually describe

feelings of isolation, loneliness, seclusion, and disconnectedness in their asynchronous courses.

In general, students describe interaction with the instructor as motivating and important to their success (Alqurashi, 2019; Athens, 2018; Berg et al., 2019; Buelow et al., 2019; Tanis, 2020). However, in the courses under study from which they withdrew, they report little to no interaction with their instructors and describe this lack of interaction as influential in their withdrawal. Students describe having no personal knowledge about their instructor and the instructor knowing nothing about them. As Workman and Stenard (1996) pointed out, when students' needs are addressed and met online, instructors assist in the student's development of self-confidence, efficacy, and effectiveness. Nonetheless, students suggest that because instructors do not visually see the student, they cannot assess their needs. As a result, students in this study feel that their needs do not matter.

Some students describe setbacks in which they receive no support from the instructor. Others report "brief and blunt" interactions with their instructor that show how little the instructor cares about them. Berg et al. (2019) pointed out that the instructor feedback students desire is substantive, not canned, rote, or pre-drafted. Students desire feedback that is meant for them, not the entire class, and relates to and shows that the instructor reads their messages and values their input (Berg et al., 2019; Buelow et al., 2019). Students perceive they have no encouragement, support, or guidance from their instructors. These perceptions, when experienced by students with lower self-efficacy and greater intimidation, lead students to view their withdrawal as a personal failure. This result supports the conclusions made by Terras et al. (2020) and Dahlstrom-Hakki et al.

(2020) who said that SWD have unique learning and emotional needs and require extra support when studying online. The data about the lack of interaction with their instructors and how it makes students feel supports Theme 6. Theme 6 answers the ORQ regarding how community college SWD describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. It also answers RQ4 regarding how the external factors of incompatibility of teaching and learning styles, the need for interpersonal relationships and self-esteem online, and stress influence students' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Theme 7: Community College Students with Disabilities Describe How the Lack of Personal Connection with Peers Influences Their Reasons for Asynchronous Online Course Withdrawal. In this study, students describe a lack of opportunity to interact and create connections with their peers online. Few students report in the questionnaire having made a connection with their peers. Unlike the results of Alqurashi (2019), Athens (2018), and Berg et al. (2019), the interview participants in this study explained that they value and desire connection with their peers in their courses (Warren & Schwitzer, 2018). Again, opportunities to connect with peers are created by the instructor who designs and conducts the course (Rovai, 2003). However, when the only opportunities for peer communication are within graded discussion boards, students report communication is content-related, formal, stilted, rote, and intended to secure a good grade (Alqurashi, 2019; Athens, 2018). Rowntree (1995) claimed that inexperienced online students unnecessarily fear that perfection in discussions is needed to do well in the course. This is made clear by multiple students as they explain how their anxiety and sense of perfectionism affect their online course experiences.

Several students recall on-campus courses or their experiences in high school when they had consistent peer interaction. They claim this peer interaction allows them to not only feel like they belong, but it reassures them they are not alone in their struggles and are sufficiently progressing even when it feels as though they are not (Workman & Stenard, 1996). As Aquino and Bittinger (2019) stated, SWD experience increased social stigma and feel a decreased sense of belonging throughout their college experiences. This is demonstrated by multiple students who describe enrollment in asynchronous courses due to their social anxiety or difficulties. Yet, these same students also describe their desire to make new friends and have more interaction with peers (Warren & Schwitzer, 2018).

Athens (2018) suggested underrepresented populations including SWD do not experience greater success online as a result of interaction with their peers. However, Alqurashi (2019) said that the reason peer interaction was not important to the online students in their study was that the type of peer interaction did not benefit the students. In this study, students' descriptions of peer interaction show that peer interactions are forced, impersonal, and content-related only, clearly supporting both Athens' (2018) and Alqurashi's (2019) claims. In conjunction with their descriptions of a desire to create more personal connections with their peers online (Warren & Schwitzer, 2018), students in this study indicate that if personal peer connection had been a possibility in their courses, they may have been able to stave off withdrawal.

While not described by any student as the sole influence upon their withdrawal, the lack of peer connection or interaction only exacerbates the problems and negative experiences the students in this study encounter online and, in that manner, influences

their withdrawal. This conclusion indicates students place a high value on personal, high-quality, and authentic peer interaction and desire more opportunities to cultivate it than are offered in their asynchronous courses. The data about a lack of personal connection with their peers supports Theme 7. Theme 7 answers both the ORQ which pertains to how community college SWD describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal and RQ4 which centers on how the internal factors including the feelings of connectedness, belonging, and the ability to relate to and interact with their peers influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Summary of Overall Organization

Chapter 1 explained the challenges experienced by community college students with disabilities (SWD; Varkula et al., 2017) and the benefits afforded them with the attainment of a postsecondary education (Ressa, 2021). Accordingly, SWD are enrolling in higher education in numbers never seen before (De Los Santos et al., 2019; Fowler et al., 2018) and specifically in online higher education courses (Alamri & Tyler-Wood, 2017; Terras et al., 2020). However, online community college courses are plagued with higher withdrawal rates than on-campus courses (Chatman et al., 2019; Christensen & Spackman, 2017; Gregory & Lampley, 2016; McKinney et al., 2019; Seaman et al., 2018) and the research typically focuses on university SWD (Flink & Leonard, 2019). Before this study, it was not known how community college SWD describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Recommendations have been made for future research on the topics of the reasons for online course withdrawal (McKinney et al., 2019), a qualitative inquiry into the experiences of community college SWD (Flink &

Leonard, 2019), and a focus on SWD who study online (Terras et al., 2020). This study addressed those recommendations.

In Chapter 2, a review of the literature highlighted the problem space regarding the lack of knowledge that focused on the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal (McKinney et al., 2019) of community college SWD (Flink & Leonard, 2019; Terras et al., 2020). Theories have been proposed as to the reasons for the withdrawal of traditional university students (Tinto, 1975, 1993) and nontraditional students (Bean & Metzner, 1985). However, until the work of Rovai (2003), the reasons for the withdrawal of online students had not been thoroughly investigated. Rovai (2003) developed a composite model that proposed four types of factors that influence the course withdrawal of online students including student characteristics, student skills, and external, and internal factors. Rovai's (2003) model had previously been applied to studies regarding the online retention of students from massive open online courses (Kizilcec & Halawa, 2015) and the withdrawal of online graduate students (Su & Waugh, 2018). Until this study, Rovai's (2003) composite model of online student persistence had not been applied to the population of community college SWD. This study was conducted to explore how community college SWD in the United States describe how the student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Chapter 3 detailed how the researcher would utilize a qualitative methodology and a descriptive design to explore how community college SWD in the United States describe the student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors that influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. This was

accomplished with community college SWD who participated in an online questionnaire or individual Zoom™ interviews. Data collected through the questionnaire and the interviews were analyzed with Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis and the use of MAXQDA™ qualitative data analysis software. The initial use of inductive coding and the subsequent use of deductive coding according to Rovai's (2003) four factors allowed the researcher to identify codes and themes that were discovered in and generated from the data.

Seven themes were generated that answer the following questions.

The overarching research question (ORQ): How do community college SWD describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ1: How do community college SWD describe how student characteristics influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ2: How do community college SWD describe how student skills influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ3: How do community college SWD describe how external factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

RQ4: How do community college SWD describe how internal factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?

Chapter 4 discusses the results of the questionnaire and interview data analysis which included seven themes. All seven themes addressed the ORQ regarding how community college SWD describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. The first theme states that community college SWD describe how disabilities influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal, answering the ORQ

and all four of the RQs. Next, the second theme states that community college SWD describe how time management issues influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal, answering the ORQ and RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4. Then, the third theme states that community college SWD describe how external crises and commitments influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal, answering the ORQ and RQ3. The fourth theme states community college SWD describe how the type of course influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal, answering the ORQ and RQ1, RQ2, and RQ4. Next, the fifth theme states that community college SWD describe how the instructor's teaching style influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal, answering the ORQ, RQ2, and RQ4. The sixth theme states that community college SWD describe how a lack of personal connection with the instructor influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal, answering the ORQ and RQ4. Finally, the seventh theme states that community college SWD describe how a lack of personal connection with peers influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal, answering the ORQ and RQ4.

The results of this study add to the previous literature that defined the need for qualitative research regarding the reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal (McKinney et al., 2019) of community college SWD (Flink & Leonard, 2019; Terras et al., 2020). The results also provide knowledge of the types of factors that affect community college SWD and influence their ability to complete asynchronous courses. Community college SWD describe how disabilities, time management issues, external crises and commitments, the type of course, the instructor's teaching style, a lack of personal connection with the instructor, and a lack of personal connection with peers

influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. All participants are current community college SWD so their input directly answers the research questions. Some students describe factors within themselves such as their disabilities or time management issues as their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Other students describe factors related to the course, the instructor, or the online format as their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Some students describe factors unrelated to their college courses as their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Still, others describe combinations of all factors. This variation in influences upon their asynchronous online course withdrawal illustrates the variation in the students themselves, their experiences, and their perceptions and beliefs about college, asynchronous learning, and their own abilities and life priorities.

The findings of this study provide a glimpse from the student's point of view (Gergen, 2014) into the lives of community college SWD who withdrew from asynchronous online courses. These findings are a step toward addressing the pervasive and widespread problem of asynchronous online course withdrawal (McKinney et al., 2019; Seaman et al., 2018) as well as the dearth of knowledge that exists regarding community college SWD (Flink & Leonard, 2019) who study online (Terras et al., 2020). An understanding of the factors that influence the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD is an important foundation upon which college administrators, faculty, and student support professionals can develop data-driven support interventions (Neergaard et al., 2009) that target and decrease the asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD. A decrease in asynchronous course withdrawal holds the potential to positively affect the lives of community college SWD

by improving their likelihood of graduation, future employability, lifetime financial stability, and overall quality of life (Ressa, 2021).

Reflection on the Dissertation Process

Through designing, conducting, and interpreting the findings of this original research, the novice researcher acquired a greater understanding of the value of and the processes involved in qualitative descriptive research. Challenges were encountered and lessons were learned as this study progressed. These lessons provided the researcher the opportunity to acknowledge and reflect upon the importance of the processes of designing, conducting, and interpreting the findings of qualitative descriptive research as well as what can be applied to future research endeavors.

During the study development phase, the researcher was offered feedback by more knowledgeable researchers regarding the scope of the study, indicating the inclusion of students with all disability types would make the outcomes overly broad. The novice researcher considered and appreciated all feedback. However, the goal was to explore the understudied phenomenon of the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal (McKinney et al., 2019) of community college SWD (Flink & Leonard, 2019; Terras et al., 2020), not community college students with a certain type of disability. This phenomenon had not been addressed in the current literature. The goal of exploring understudied phenomena was something Neergaard et al. (2009) and Turale (2020) agreed is best accomplished through the qualitative descriptive design. Also, Gibbs (1979) pointed out that qualitative inquiry produces results that can be expanded upon in the future with the formation of new hypotheses regarding specific aspects of the results.

Therefore, the researcher thoughtfully chose to continue with the plan to include students with all types of disabilities.

Indeed, the results of the study could be considered broad. Nonetheless, these broad results help to establish the knowledge base regarding the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD and allow for the possibility of further expansion into more narrowly focused research in the future. The researcher believes this goal was accomplished.

Additionally, the researcher reflected upon the experience of collecting interview data and the value of the semi-structured interview protocol that allows for a more personalized participant experience. Several interview participants described their disdain for the impersonal nature of their asynchronous courses. The researcher believes the participants valued the free exploration of their experiences in the moment that the semi-structured interview protocol allowed. Several participants offered comments during the interviews and later in emailed correspondence with the researcher stating their appreciation for the ability to express their thoughts and feelings about their experiences. This free exploration led to rich data and often emotional participant reactions to the recollection of their impersonal course experiences. Had the researcher adhered to a rigid interview protocol that did not allow for this free exploration, the study instrument could have ironically, although unintentionally, recreated the impersonality they so clearly disliked within their courses. The participants' comments indicated they noticed and appreciated the value the researcher placed on their unique experiences which, in turn, made the researcher's experience even more gratifying.

Regarding the process of thematic analysis, the researcher realized through inductive data analysis the importance of refraining from allowing her personal and professional experience to influence the meaning and meaningfulness assigned to participant data. As explained by Sandelowski (2000), the qualitative descriptive approach employs minimal researcher inference or interpretation. The level of interpretation or inference applied to the data in this study was something the researcher realized had to be kept at the forefront throughout the six phases of analysis.

With years of experience working with community college students including those with disabilities and who study online, and as a former community college and online student herself, the novice researcher noted the ease with which quick inference could be made. Intentional focus on the fact that the data belongs to the participant instead of the researcher was crucial to maintaining the integrity of the researcher's claim to employ only limited interpretation in this study. It was important for the researcher to remember that her role during analysis and in presenting and summarizing the results was to present the data as the participants communicated it, assigning meaning and meaningfulness as they described it (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This included paying attention to the participant's gestures and physical and emotional reactions to their recollection of their asynchronous course withdrawal experiences. The amount of focus needed to ensure this claim surprised the researcher and reinforced the importance of a thorough understanding and commitment to the goals of qualitative descriptive research.

The researcher collected data through questionnaires and interviews with participants. The data described the reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal from the view of community college SWD. These students demonstrated growth between the time

they withdrew from the course and participated in the study which was apparent in their ability to identify their learning needs and recognize when their needs were not met (Fowler et al., 2018). They willingly pointed out their shortcomings and what they learned about themselves through the often negative asynchronous course withdrawal experiences they endured. Students described numerous and significant external impacts on their ability to complete college courses (Bean & Metzner, 1985). However, since an eligibility criterion for the study was that participants must be currently enrolled in community college, these students also described a resiliency (Cotton et al., 2017) that has allowed them to continue in the pursuit of their educational and career goals despite setbacks (Squires et al., 2018) and ongoing challenges that students without disabilities do not face (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020; Terras et al., 2020). These students have experienced and overcome tribulations that could have led to giving up on their dreams. Still, they press on.

Implications

The researcher identified several theoretical, practical, and future research implications that became apparent in the process of designing, conducting, and analyzing the data in this study. These implications have the potential to impact real-world issues regarding the lives and success of community college SWD. Chapter 4 provided the results of the thematic analysis of data and Chapter 5 discussed them. The researcher also related the results to the literature review and theoretical foundation found in Chapter 2. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how community college SWD in the United States describe how student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course

withdrawal. This section provides a discussion of the theoretical, practical, and future research implications of the study as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the study. The researcher examines the credibility of the findings and provides a critical reflection on the dissertation process.

Theoretical Implications

This study employed the composite model of student persistence proposed by Rovai (2003) as the theoretical foundation. Online students are typically distinct from their traditionally-aged, resident university student counterparts and encounter significantly different challenges (Zimmerman, 2017). Therefore, as Rovai (2003) explained, when attempting to apply models of college student attrition and persistence to the population of online students, one must appreciate and address those differences. Rovai (2003) sought to combine the established theories and models of college student persistence with research regarding the characteristics and needs of nontraditional students who typically enroll online.

The composite model incorporates the seminal college student persistence research of Tinto (1975, 1993), Bean and Metzner's (1985) model of nontraditional student attrition, the results of research regarding the skills required of online learners conducted by Cole (2000) and Rowntree (1995), the needs of online students of Workman and Stenard (1996), and the pedagogical learning and teaching styles of Grow (1996). As Rovai (2003) proposed, four factors affect an online student's persistence in college including the characteristics and online skills the student brings with them into college and the external and internal factors that can influence their persistence while in college. The results of this qualitative descriptive study supported Rovai's (2003) model

and incorporated factors specific to the population of community college SWD, a population not incorporated into the model.

Rovai's (2003) model defined the first factor under study, student characteristics, as factors inherent to the student even before they enter college. These factors include their age, ethnicity, gender, level of intellectual development, academic performance, and academic preparation (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Rovai, 2003; Tinto, 1975, 1993). Study findings revealed community college SWD attribute their asynchronous online course withdrawal at least in part to the impact of their disability on their levels of intellectual development, academic performance, and preparation. Students repeatedly describe the impact of distractibility, poor mood, low motivation and interest levels, and high levels of intimidation that make success in their asynchronous courses challenging. Some describe these limitations as something they have struggled with for as long as they can remember. Others describe their limitations as more impactful and pervasive in college than in the past. SWD' educational history plays a factor in how they approach college-level work, their perceptions about their ability to handle college-level work, and their decisions to either continue or withdraw when their experience in the asynchronous online course is not what they expect.

Students' age is discussed in the literature as a factor in students' persistence through the lens that older nontraditional students who tend to take online courses have more external responsibilities that can impact their persistence than their younger traditionally-aged peers (Bean & Metzner, 1985). While this proved true for some students, it is interesting to note that the results of this study indicate students also view the impact of their age through the lens of decreased intellectual and emotional

development. Some students have had less personal experience with and have less perceived readiness for college-level work and the independent asynchronous coursework required in the online format. As opposed to Bean and Metzner's (1985) claim of the effect of increased age on nontraditional student attrition, many of this study's participants are young, within the confines of traditional college student age. Their young age, combined with the influences of their disabilities, offers a different view on the impact of age on community college SWD' asynchronous online course withdrawal.

The influence of Rovai's (2003) second factor, the online student skills defined by Cole (2000) and Rowntree (1995), are discussed by students as influential to their withdrawal. Students describe difficulty with time management and the amount of independent reading and writing required in the online format. It is important to note that not all students describe their struggles with these factors as an influence of their disability. Time management issues are not necessarily indicative of disability. Nevertheless, students in this study repeatedly recount that increased time management skills (Rowntree, 1995) and increased independent reading and writing capabilities (Cole, 2000) are needed when taking asynchronous online courses. The frequency of and impact of students' challenges with these factors indicate the need for increased time management and independent reading and writing skills may be especially important for community college SWD to consider before enrolling in asynchronous online courses.

Third, the results of this study indicate support for both Rovai's (2003) and Bean and Metzner's (1985) assertions that external factors influence the persistence of nontraditional students as are many community college SWD. The increased responsibilities and commitments of older students including family and child care,

employment, finances, living situations, and mental and physical health emergencies cause them to withdraw from their courses. Whether it is hospitalizations, ongoing struggles with physical and mental health, employment or financial concerns, or living situations, the results of this study support Rovai's (2003) and Bean and Metzner's (1985) claims that external factors influence students' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Lastly, internal factors such as a student's perceptions of their abilities and opportunities to connect with and form supportive relationships with instructors and peers (Workman & Stenard, 1996), study habits and levels of stress (Bean & Metzner, 1985), and compatibility with the asynchronous format (Rowntree, 1995) and the instructor's teaching style (Grow, 1996) are influential to their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal supporting Rovai's (2003) model. This study's findings show that the perceived fit or compatibility with the instructor, their personality, and the manner in which they set up and conduct the course are highly influential in students' asynchronous online course experiences and withdrawal. Negative experiences with the instructor have significant impacts on students' motivation to continue or withdraw from the course. Several students discuss that they perceive it is the responsibility of the instructor to design and conduct the course in a manner that helps them feel welcome and supported (Grow, 1996). They often compare experiences in other asynchronous courses in which they succeeded to the experiences in the course from which they withdrew, perceiving that the other instructor did it right and the instructor of the course from which they withdrew, did not. They express a desire to personally connect with their instructor and

peers to be able to gauge their progress, find social support, and build their confidence (Workman & Stenard, 1996).

Grow (1996) posited that students with lower levels of self-directedness will expect the instructor to be responsible for their learning, provide individualized attention, and coach and encourage them. Conversely, Rowntree (1995) stated that the asynchronous format requires students to work and learn independently, taking responsibility for their learning, and mastering and exhibiting patience with the limited text-based interaction. Hence, the impact of the impersonal feeling, the lack of timely, helpful, and supportive feedback, and the perceived need to interact with the instructor to better comprehend the material that so many students discuss supports Rovai's (2003) assertion that students with lower levels of self-directedness in learning may find more challenges in the online format. As Rovai (2003) indicated, persistence of adult learners in asynchronous learning is complicated and cannot be pinpointed to a single issue. This, too, is true for the participants in this study. Students describe a myriad combination of issues that stem from all four of the factors in the model, with unique, varying levels of impact assigned to each factor. The phenomenon of asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD is indeed multifaceted.

Practical Implications

The researcher identified several practical implications during the course of and as a result of conducting this study that apply to asynchronous course instructors, disability support staff, campus counselors, and administrators. Implications are aimed at increasing awareness of SWD' preparedness for and potential challenges with studying online, increasing support offered to SWD while they are studying online, and online

teaching faculty' awareness of the specific challenges experienced by asynchronous community college SWD and the role they play in SWD' asynchronous online course success. These implications have the potential to help community college SWD persist in asynchronous learning, achieve their educational goals, and increase their overall quality of life (Ressa, 2021).

First, disability support staff can educate and prepare SWD for the rigors and realities of online learning. Students in this study indicate they are not properly prepared before they begin asynchronous learning (Fetzner, 2013). Disability support staff can help SWD reflect upon their learning strengths, needs, and tendencies and educate them on the realities of learning asynchronously. Students could then critically and proactively evaluate whether asynchronous learning would be right for them before they enroll online.

Second, asynchronous instructors can improve the asynchronous experience of community college SWD by developing opportunities to connect with students. In this study, students agree that their asynchronous courses feel impersonal. Also, they perceive their instructors are not interested in them and do not support them. Instructors could make concerted efforts to connect with their students through synchronous ZoomTM office hours and regular progress check-ins. These synchronous interactions would allow the student to address concerns and make the desired connections with their instructor as well as their peers. Both types of connections would help to create a feeling of personalness about the course and increase their perceptions of instructor and peer support.

Another way asynchronous instructors can help SWD succeed in their courses is by offering learning materials in formats other than black-and-white text. Students in this study describe the difficulty they have with attention span issues and completing lengthy reading assignments. Offering various types of learning resources breaks up the monotony of reading black-and-white text (Alqurashi, 2019; Athens, 2018; Herbert et al., 2020; Martin & Bolliger, 2018) and helps SWD more easily grasp the material.

Fourth, the disability support office and counseling center staff can collaborate with asynchronous instructors to increase awareness of the disability support office and counseling services available to all students. Disability support and counseling center staff could embed advertisements for the support services available to all students within instructors' online classrooms. These advertisements would encourage the use of their services, which would be especially helpful to first-time online students (Fetzner, 2013). It would also help students who think they may have a disability connect with resources. The use of disability support services could help to decrease the impact of mental health disabilities and symptoms that are frequently described by the students in this study.

Lastly, campus administrators can offer and require professional development opportunities to asynchronous instructors regarding the needs of SWD (Bettencourt et al., 2018; De Los Santos et al., 2019; Flink & Leonard, 2019; Herbert et al., 2020; Thurston et al., 2017) and the influences upon their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Educating instructors can increase awareness of how their role and connection with their students can impact the asynchronous online course experiences of SWD. It could also help stimulate the formulation of ideas of how they can increase their

support for SWD in their asynchronous online courses, helping SWD achieve their educational goals and improve their future quality of life (Ressa, 2021).

Future Research Implications

The results of this study hold the potential to impact future research. In this study, all four of Rovai's (2003) factors are found to be influential in community college SWD's reasons for withdrawal from asynchronous online courses. Interested researchers can approach the question of how college administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals can decrease community college SWD's asynchronous online course withdrawal by addressing the influence of students' disabilities, time management issues, external crises and commitments, issues specific to the type of courses taken online, the instructor's teaching style, and the lack of personal connection with the instructor and their peers on their asynchronous online course withdrawal (Rovai, 2003). Future research that centers on these seven themes can increase the knowledge of the influence of each factor on the asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD. The results of such studies could guide practitioners on ways to reduce the influence of these factors on community college SWD, improving their asynchronous online course experiences and decreasing their asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Students describe challenges related to their characteristics and skills, their external life crises and commitments, the types of courses from which they withdrew, and the lack of personal connection with instructors and peers online. Though they withdrew from their asynchronous courses, all participants are still enrolled in college and working toward their educational goals. Participants express the depth of impact that these factors have on their lives and offer suggestions from a student's perspective as to how their

withdrawal could have been avoided. The student participants in this study contribute to an increased understanding of the withdrawal and overall experiences of community college SWD who study online.

WHAT THE STUDY DID AND FOUND. This study explored the descriptions of the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD. The study explored the student participants' descriptions of the student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors that influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Results of this study found that community college SWD are influenced by all factors, most indicating several rather than one or even two factors that contribute to their reasons for withdrawal, lending to the notion that asynchronous online course withdrawal is a multifaceted issue. The influence of their disability on their withdrawal is evidenced in multiple ways, indicating the prevalent and varied effects that physical, learning, and psychological disabilities have on their daily lives.

What the Study Did Not Do or Find. This study did not explore the descriptions of the reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal of university SWD or students without disabilities. This study also did not explore the descriptions of synchronous or on-campus course withdrawal of SWD. Descriptions were not obtained from students who completed all their asynchronous online courses. As the study was conducted qualitatively and employed the descriptive design, the results are not generalizable to university SWD, students without disabilities, students who withdrew from synchronous online or on-campus courses, or those who completed their asynchronous online courses. This study did not use other types of qualitative or quantitative research designs;

however, a quantitative inquiry into the prevalence of asynchronous online course withdrawal among community college SWD would provide a broader perspective of the scope of the problem of asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Study

Study Strengths. First, the study successfully answered the research questions. The four research sub-questions each addressed one factor of Rovai's (2003) composite model of student persistence. The descriptions offered by study participants included in-depth glimpses into the multiple realities (Creswell & Miller, 2000) and tremendously varied contexts (Yin, 2011) of asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD.

To achieve the balance proposed by Hyde (2000), the researcher used both inductive and deductive inquiry. Through the use of Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis, the researcher inductively transformed these descriptions into seven themes, answering the ORQ and accomplishing the goal of the qualitative descriptive design proposed by Sandelowski (1997). These seven themes were then deductively assessed according to Rovai's (2003) model and answered the four research sub-questions. The seven themes describe students' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal according to Rovai's (2003) four factors of student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors.

Secondly, the data produced in this study addressed the problem space identified in the literature. The problem space is that it was not known how community college SWD (Flink & Leonard, 2019; Terras et al., 2020) in the United States describe their reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal (McKinney et al., 2019). Chapter 2

addressed the literature that exposed the problem space. The study produced new knowledge of the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal as applied to the population of community college SWD, a population to which this model had not previously been applied. The study's findings illustrated the importance of addressing all four of Rovai's (2003) factors of persistence when considering the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. All four factors influence participants' withdrawal.

The third strength of the study was the effectiveness of purposive sampling to identify participants who met the eligibility criteria for the study (Andrade, 2021). The population of interest was all community college students in the U.S. The study sample came from the target population of all community college SWD in the U.S. and included all community college SWD in the U.S. who were (a) over the age of 18 years and emancipated adults able to make their own legal decisions, (b) enrolled with a community college disability support office, (c) had at least one 'W' for withdrawal or 'EW' for excused withdrawal on their transcript for an asynchronous online course in at least one of the prior two semesters, (d) currently enrolled in or registered for at least one course at a community college in the U.S., and (e) willing to answer optional personal, identifiable, demographic questions related to age, number of dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type. These community college SWD offered rich, context-bound (Gergen, 2014; Levitt et al., 2018; Shenton, 2004) detailed descriptions of their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Study findings should guide community college administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals

in developing targeted interventions (Neergaard et al., 2009) to decrease community college SWD' asynchronous online course withdrawal.

Finally, the use of the qualitative methodology proved to be a strength of this study. The qualitative approach was expressed as necessary by Flink and Leonard (2019) to better understand the experiences of online community college SWD and McKinney et al. (2019) to uncover the reasons for students' asynchronous online course withdrawal. The detailed descriptions offered by the students in this study provided the researcher with data that addressed these necessities.

SWD are a marginalized population whose voices often go unheard in the literature (House-Peters et al., 2017). The use of the qualitative methodology and semi-structured interview protocol in this study allowed students' voices to be heard and the researcher to employ flexibility in gathering their descriptions. Seeking SWD' input enhances inclusiveness (Peña et al., 2018). It also validates their withdrawal experiences as colleges typically do not seek the input of students who withdrew from courses regarding their reasons for withdrawal (Fetzner, 2013). The interview participants in this study appreciate the opportunity to offer their input and make that clear in the data.

Study Weaknesses. The researcher identified weaknesses in this study that pertained to the smaller-than-anticipated sample size, the inability to generalize to other student groups, and the length of the questionnaire. First, the anticipated sample size of the study was not achieved through the proposed recruitment methods. The population of community college SWD is narrow. The inclusion of more eligibility criteria increases the purposiveness of the sample (Andrade, 2021). However, as the researcher learned through this study, it can pose a recruitment challenge to novice researchers. The

researcher's initial plan to recruit from only one community college in California and through social media groups solely focused on community college students from California was shortsighted. Gaining IRB approval to recruit from multiple community college campuses, entire community college districts, or recruiting through social media groups that are popular among students nationwide could partially mitigate this weakness. Similarly, the use of social media for recruitment was a weakness in that only students who participated in the Facebook™ groups utilized had access to the recruitment materials (Marks et al., 2017). As was the case in this study, the subsequent use of a national recruitment platform such as UserInterviews™ helped to partially mitigate this weakness.

If conducting this study again in the future, the researcher would address the study on a national level and plan to hire a recruitment platform such as UserInterviews™ from the onset of the study proposal. Certainly, the cost of such a service is a consideration. However, with this new-found perspective, the researcher believes the monetary cost of recruitment through such a service significantly outweighs the psychological cost of lost time due to delays in recruitment, IRB modification applications and approvals, and added frustration as a result of perceptions of lost momentum.

Second, due to the qualitative methodology of the study, the inability to generalize to other groups is a study weakness. Study findings cannot be applied to student groups such as community college students without disabilities, university SWD who study online, or community college SWD who withdrew from on-campus or synchronous courses. These students will have varied perspectives from the students in this study. Qualitative research seeks to understand the context-bound (Levitt et al., 2018)

multiple realities (Yin, 2011) of students such as the community college SWD who withdrew from an asynchronous course. Any application to other groups is left to the discretion of the reader after consideration of the demographic information offered in this study (Shenton, 2004).

Third, the questionnaire's length was a study weakness. The time anticipated by SurveyMonkey™ to complete the questionnaire that was included in the informed consent was described as not more than 22 mins. In fact, according to SurveyMonkey™ the average time participants took to complete the questionnaire was only 8 mins and 32 seconds. The actual time to complete the questionnaire was considerably less than what had been anticipated. However, participants rarely complete long in-depth questionnaires (Evans & Mathur, 2018). Therefore, being alerted in the informed consent that the questionnaire may take up to 22 mins to complete may have been a deterrent for some potential participants. Additionally, had participants consented to participate, opened the questionnaire, and noted 28 questions, the number of questions could have been a deterrent to participation. Decreasing the number of questions in the questionnaire could mitigate this weakness (Evans & Mathur, 2018). If conducting this study again in the future, the researcher would create a questionnaire with a more realistic number of questions. A more realistic number of questions (Evans & Mathur, 2018) could decrease the number of potential participants who either chose not to consent after noting the prediction of up to 22 mins to complete in the informed consent, who consented but did not respond to any questions, or who ended participation prematurely.

Credibility. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how community college SWD in the United States describe the student characteristics, student

skills, external factors, and internal factors that influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. The researcher established credibility for this study through careful consideration and adherence to several credibility-increasing methods. These proactive methods included basing the need for and methods to be used in the study on current empirical literature (Morse et al., 2002). The questionnaire and interview questions were devised from the existing literature on the topic and incorporated the guidance of experts in the fields of qualitative research and community college disability support services. Field testing gauged the quality, comprehensibility, and appropriateness of the questions for the population. The questions produced in-depth descriptions of participants' reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal which was the goal of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Additionally, the researcher connected with the interview participants to establish a rapport that encouraged participants to answer questions honestly and openly about their asynchronous course experiences that led to their withdrawal from the course. Probing questions were used to establish a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding their asynchronous online course withdrawal. To ensure the researcher understood their words, the researcher not only employed member checking by sending each participant their interview transcript to verify the accuracy but when responses were sparse, sent summaries of familiarization with the dataset to the unresponsive participants. Almost all participants responded and all responses indicated the researcher indeed understood their words (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Once participants responded to the summaries, the researcher conducted the six phases of thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke (2006). This analysis produced seven

themes that addressed the research questions and described the phenomenon of asynchronous online course withdrawal (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus, credibility was established for this qualitative descriptive study.

Recommendations

The review of the literature made clear that as individuals with disabilities continue to enroll in college (Fowler et al., 2018) and especially online college courses (Terras et al., 2020), they continue to encounter unique disability-related challenges (Alamri & Tyler-Wood, 2017; Murphy et al., 2019; Varkula et al., 2017). Additionally, online courses are plagued with higher withdrawal rates (Chatman et al., 2019; Christensen & Spackman, 2017; Gregory & Lampley, 2016; Seaman et al., 2018). In particular, community college students often enroll in online courses only to withdraw before course completion (McKinney et al., 2019). Though up to 20% of community college students report having a disability (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2019a), the literature seldom focuses on them (Madaus et al., 2018), approaches the exploration of their online experiences qualitatively (Flink & Leonard, 2019), or investigates how to help them persist in online courses (Seery et al., 2021; Shaw et al., 2016).

Before this study, research had not been conducted to explore how community college SWD in the United States describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Without an established understanding of the phenomenon of asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD, it was impossible to know how community college SWD' reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal concurred with and differed from those of their peers without disabilities. The purpose of this qualitative

descriptive study was to explore how community college SWD in the United States describe how student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. The study results guided the formation of the following recommendations for future research and practice as well as the proposed next steps.

Recommendations for Future Research

Students with disabilities (SWD) face unique challenges in college (Varkula et al., 2017). However, the literature to date has not focused on the unique challenges of community college SWD (Flink & Leonard, 2019; Madaus et al., 2018) or the challenges of SWD who study online (Terras et al., 2020). Likewise, the online learning withdrawal rates are significantly higher than the withdrawal rates of on-campus learning (Seaman et al., 2018). Online course withdrawal of community college students is widespread and problematic (McKinney et al., 2019). The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore the problem space identified in the literature regarding how community college students with disabilities (SWD) in the United States describe how student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals who seek to address the challenges of community college SWD to increase their graduation rates and improve their overall quality of life (Ressa, 2021) should focus their efforts on the seven themes that resulted from this study regarding what influences the asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD.

Recommendations for future research are offered in the following discussion.

The current study was broadly focused. It explored all descriptions of students' influences upon their asynchronous course withdrawal and included community college students with all types of disabilities. As a foundation has now been laid for understanding the influences upon community college SWD' asynchronous course withdrawal, future research should narrow the focus in two ways.

The first would be to replicate the study to explore the influence of Rovai's (2003) four factors on the asynchronous course withdrawal of students with specific types of disabilities. By focusing on students with a specific disability, researchers could measure whether students with that disability are impacted more by one factor than others (De Los Santos et al., 2019). An example could include students with autism spectrum disorders, ADHD, or specific learning disabilities who need extra support online (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020).

The second would be to explore the influence of one theme that resulted from this study on the broad population of community college students with all types of disabilities. An example could be a specific, in-depth exploration of how the lack of personal connection with the online instructor (Alamri & Tyler-Wood, 2017) influences the asynchronous course withdrawal (Workman & Stenard, 1996) of community college SWD. Narrowing the focus in these two ways could produce focused, in-depth responses that would provide a more nuanced view of how Rovai's (2003) factors influence students with a specific disability or how one resulting theme influences students with all types of disabilities.

The current study included SWD who were currently enrolled in or registered for at least one course at a community college. This means that the challenges these students

encounter that influence their withdrawal from their asynchronous online course do not stop them from pursuing their educational goals. This indicates resiliency (Cotton et al., 2017). Future research should involve community college SWD who withdrew from an asynchronous online course and did not re-enroll in college courses thereafter. Students who encounter challenges in their asynchronous courses and as a result stop pursuing their educational goals may have different perspectives about their online experiences and the influences on their asynchronous online course withdrawal and subsequent decision to stop pursuing their educational goals. Exploring their experiences could shed light on differences between those whose withdrawal impacts them temporarily but does not stop them from pursuing their educational goals and those whose withdrawal leads them to stop pursuing their educational goals altogether.

The current study asked one question that produced a significant amount of meaningful data the researcher had not anticipated. Students were asked about the difficulty of deciding to withdraw from their asynchronous online courses and how it impacted them. The responses varied from hardly impactful at all to so impactful that it caused a months-long depression. The students in this study do not take asynchronous course withdrawal lightly. Some indicate asynchronous course withdrawal causes them to question their online learning efficacy (Joosten & Cusatis, 2020; Lee et al., 2021). Another indicates that withdrawal causes them to question their ability to participate in society altogether. The results of this study show that the psychological impact of asynchronous online course withdrawal can cause significant emotional distress for SWD who often experience higher levels of distress (Fleming et al., 2018) and need more psychiatric support than their peers without disabilities (Sarrett, 2018; Warren &

Schwitzer, 2018). Future research should focus on the psychological impact of asynchronous online course withdrawal on community college SWD. As indicated in this study, students' psychological reaction to asynchronous online course withdrawal spans the spectrum. Results of future research could contribute to the knowledge regarding the mental health challenges (Fleming et al., 2018; Murphy et al., 2019; Warren & Schwitzer, 2018) facing community college SWD and how asynchronous online course withdrawal contributes to those mental health challenges.

Lastly, future quantitative research could investigate the pervasiveness of asynchronous online course withdrawal among community college SWD. Some literature already exists regarding community college asynchronous course withdrawal rates (Huntington-Klein et al., 2017) and the misunderstanding or misuse of the withdrawal option (McKinney et al., 2019). Additional focus that specifically targets community college SWD could help to define the support needed to avoid asynchronous online course withdrawal which could be different from the support needed by their peers without disabilities. This specialized focus could help to improve not only the graduation prospects but the overall quality of life (Ressa, 2021) for community college SWD.

Recommendations for Future Practice

The results of this study illustrate the numerous influences upon the asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD. Moreover, results support previous research that indicated SWD experience challenges related to their disability (Terras et al., 2020), time management issues (Rowntree, 1995; Terras et al., 2020), external life crises and commitments (Bean & Metzner, 1985), certain types of courses (Rowntree, 1995), the instructor's teaching style (Grow, 1996), and a lack of personal

connection with their instructors and peers (Grow, 1996) that can influence their asynchronous online course withdrawal. To improve the asynchronous online course withdrawal rates of community college SWD, administrators, faculty, and student support professionals could implement interventions (Neergaard et al., 2009) based on the results of this study. The researcher provides several recommendations for future practice.

First, the community college SWD in this study said that they did not know what to expect or whether asynchronous learning was appropriate for them when they enrolled (Fetzner, 2013). Campus disability support advisors and staff can prepare SWD for the realities of asynchronous learning. This would include helping SWD identify potential challenges they may encounter in the online format and arrange for appropriate support to mitigate those challenges before they enroll in an asynchronous course. The students in this study show significant self-awareness of their learning preferences and needs (Fowler et al., 2018; Terras et al., 2020). Multiple students describe how simply participating in the interview process for this study with the researcher helped them think critically about their withdrawal experiences, gain new perspectives on their withdrawal, and better understand themselves. However, to assume all SWD possess this skill and knowledge would be unwise.

Disability support staff can make discussion of asynchronous learning options on their campus a regular topic as they discuss students' educational planning. Students in this study describe a history of struggle with certain subjects and an awareness of their tendencies such as procrastination or lack of motivation. However, they did not understand how their struggles with certain subjects and tendencies could be detrimental to them when learning asynchronously until they began their first asynchronous online

course and experienced the detriment firsthand. Results of this study indicate that, for students who only discover this link as a result of struggling in an asynchronous online course, it may be too late to avoid negative consequences. Increasing awareness of the realities of asynchronous learning (Fetzner, 2013) can help SWD critically and proactively evaluate whether the asynchronous format is right for them. Additionally, this study's results indicate that incorporating discussion of students' history with challenges in certain types of courses such as writing (Cole, 2000) and the pace and intensity of condensed or accelerated courses in comparison to full-term courses can help SWD consider all the factors that could influence their ability to complete asynchronous online courses. Targeted support could then be implemented to mitigate those challenges and help them complete the course.

Another practical recommendation applies to asynchronous course instructors as they develop and conduct their courses. Students in this study agreed that their asynchronous courses feel impersonal and they perceive they lack support from their instructors. While asynchronous course instructors' time may be limited, many report that the required office hours they provide are unused by students (Li & Pitts, 2009). Although the course may be asynchronous, instructors could offer synchronous office hours at varying times throughout the semester to accommodate students' availability needs. Students could join a Zoom™ meeting and ask questions, discuss concerns, and simply put a face to the instructor (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020). The results of this study indicate the ability to make personal connections and establish the feeling of instructor support in an asynchronous online course makes a significant, positive difference to community college SWD. Additionally, conducting office hours that are

open to all students simultaneously instead of individually would allow students to put a face to some of their peers as well, increasing the feeling of personalness and potentially making initial connections with their peers (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020).

Next, students in this study repeatedly describe a need for learning resources in the online classroom. Since online students are expected to work autonomously (Rowntree, 1995) and all students learn differently, instructors should provide resources such as links to videos, websites, or apps that allow students multiple ways to learn the material (Alqurashi, 2019; Athens, 2018; Herbert et al., 2020; Martin & Bolliger, 2018). This is especially helpful to SWD who struggle with symptoms of ADHD such as distraction, lack of motivation, and procrastination and are most impacted by their disability online (Terras et al., 2020). These issues could be allayed with the incorporation of multiple learning formats that promote comprehension of the material through various means.

Also, community college SWD repeatedly describe their need for accountability in the asynchronous learning format that lacks it (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020). Online students are expected to maintain the motivation needed to finish the course successfully even when faced with various challenges. However, in this study, students repeatedly describe their tendency to procrastinate with no instructor present to ensure they stay on track. Regular progress check-ins help students with these struggles to be accountable for their work. Check-ins with the instructor could increase students' impressions of the personalness of the course and their perceptions of support by showing that instructors are invested in their students and are willing to address challenges before the student decides to withdraw. If conducted by disability office support staff who tend to know

their students more personally than instructors, they can offer more individualized disability-related support to avoid course withdrawal.

Lastly, disability support staff could make short videos that instructors embed in their online classrooms increasing awareness of disability support services available to students learning asynchronously. These videos could not only remind SWD already enrolled in support services that disability-related help is available but also introduce students with no disability office experience to the services provided and the benefits of enrollment. As one student in this study pointed out, asynchronous students can be unaware of the many campus opportunities and services available to them simply because they do not physically attend campus. Short, embedded videos can act as advertisements that inform students about the array of support offered to them. By proactively increasing SWD' understanding of asynchronous learning before choosing to enroll in it, increasing connection and perceptions of support from their instructor and peers, and increasing awareness of support services available to them once they are enrolled, strides can be made to decrease community college SWD' rate of asynchronous online course withdrawal. Doing this could increase their graduation and employment rates leading to more lucrative financial trajectories and improved quality of life for SWD (Ressa, 2021).

Next Steps. The researcher identified several next steps in forwarding research inspired by the results of this study. These next steps are supported by the current literature outlined in Chapter 2 and the identified problem space that stated that there is a dearth of knowledge regarding the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal (McKinney et al., 2019) of community college SWD (Flink & Leonard, 2019; Terras et al., 2020). First, additional knowledge is needed regarding the challenges to

asynchronous course completion of SWD (Seery et al., 2021; Shaw et al., 2016) that would expand upon the limited and broad knowledge base established by the results of this study. By focusing on the asynchronous online course withdrawal of students with specific disability types such as students with physical or mental health disabilities and specific themes described by the students in this study such as the lack of personal connection with peers, these future studies could help to establish persistence interventions (Herbert et al., 2020) based on specific populations (Madaus et al., 2018) and specific challenges.

Second, research is needed to investigate the psychological impact of asynchronous online course withdrawal on SWD. Results of future research could potentially contribute to a better understanding of the mental health challenges (Fleming et al., 2018; Murphy et al., 2019; Warren & Schwitzer, 2018) facing community college SWD and targeted interventions to decrease not only their asynchronous online course withdrawal but their levels of emotional and psychological distress. Also, further research should be conducted into the differences between community college SWD who persisted in pursuing their educational goals after asynchronous course withdrawal and those who stopped pursuing their educational goals after asynchronous course withdrawal. The results of this research could uncover potential red flags that should be identified early and addressed to avoid asynchronous online course withdrawal (McKinney et al., 2019).

In conclusion, future research in these areas will enhance the understanding of the phenomenon of asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD. Research of these types would benefit all students including SWD by providing insights into targeted approaches to decrease asynchronous online course withdrawal. Future

research could help elucidate potential differences in support strategies to avoid asynchronous online course withdrawal between SWD and their peers without disabilities. Increasing successful asynchronous online course completion will increase graduation rates, employment rates, lifelong financial stability, and better quality of life for individuals with disabilities (Ressa, 2021).

Holistic Reflection on the Problem Space

This qualitative descriptive study addressed the problem space found in the literature that highlighted the fact that it was not known how community college students with disabilities (SWD) in the United States describe how student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. This problem space was defined by several authors across multiple fields (Flink & Leonard, 2019; McKinney et al., 2019; Terras et al., 2020).

Notably, SWD are a growing population on college campuses in the U.S. (Fowler et al., 2018) with up to 20% of community college students reporting a disability (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2019a). College degrees improve financial opportunities (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics [USBLS], 2020) and overall quality of life (Ressa, 2021) for individuals with disabilities. Nonetheless, unique disability-related challenges are encountered by SWD seeking college degrees (Varkula et al., 2017). Often these challenges lead SWD to choose asynchronous online college courses in the pursuit of flexibility (Terras et al., 2020) and minimization of the effects of disabilities (Dahlstrom-Hakki et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2021).

Still, higher withdrawal rates are prevalent in asynchronous online courses (Chatman et al., 2019; Christensen & Spackman, 2017; Gregory & Lampley, 2016;

Seaman et al., 2018). Too often, community college students withdraw from asynchronous courses, hindering their momentum and decreasing their graduation chances (McKinney et al., 2019). Additionally, SWD are met with unique disability-related challenges in the asynchronous format (Alamri & Tyler-Wood, 2017; Murphy et al., 2019). The experiences of community college SWD are seldom included in the literature (Madaus et al., 2018) and what exists often excludes qualitative inquiry (Flink & Leonard, 2019). The experiences of community college SWD who study in the asynchronous format have only recently begun to be explored (Terras et al., 2020). Therefore, effective retention strategies for this unique population have not yet been uncovered (Seery et al., 2021; Shaw et al., 2016). This study was conducted to address this problem space.

This qualitative descriptive study was conducted to explore how community college SWD describe how student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. It gathered students' in-depth descriptions of their reasons for asynchronous course withdrawal and contributed to an understanding of the unique experiences, challenges, and needs of the population. It also contributed to an understanding, from the students' perspective (Gergen, 2014), of what could have helped them avoid asynchronous online course withdrawal. The results of this study could serve as the basis for targeted retention strategies to decrease the asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD and increase their successful asynchronous online course completion. Doing so could increase graduation rates for community college SWD and improve their lifetime financial stability (USBLS, 2020) and overall quality of life (Ressa, 2021).

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Appendix A.

Ten Strategic Points

Strategic Points Descriptor		Learner Strategic Points for the Study
1.	Dissertation Topic- Provides a broad research topic area/title.	Asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college students with disabilities (SWD)
2.	Literature Review - Lists primary points for four sections in the Literature Review: (a) Background of the problem and the need for the study based on citations from the literature; (b) Theoretical foundations (theories, models, and concepts) and if appropriate the conceptual framework to provide the foundation for study); (c) Review of literature topics with key themes for each one; (d) Summary.	<p>Background to the problem:</p> <p>SWD are going to college in numbers never before seen (Fowler et al., 2018).</p> <p>College degrees improve the financial outlook for individual with disabilities (USBLS, 2020).</p> <p>Online learning normalizes higher education for SWD (Terras et al., 2020); however, it is plagued with higher-than-normal withdrawal rates (Seaman et al., 2018) .</p> <p>Research regarding SWD in online learning is scant even though SWD make up 20% of all college students.</p> <p>Research is needed to understand the reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD.</p> <p>Knowledge of their reasons for withdrawal could help administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals understand the needs of the population, could serve as the basis for targeted interventions to decrease withdrawal, and could increase graduation rates for SWD.</p> <p>Theoretical foundation:</p> <p>The composite model of student persistence (Rovai, 2003), built upon Schwartz and Tinto (1987); Bean and Metzner (1985); Rowntree (1995); Cole (2000); Workman and Stenard (1996); Grow (1996)</p> <p>Review of the literature themes:</p> <p>Students with disabilities Online learning Students with disabilities in online learning</p>

Strategic Points Descriptor		Learner Strategic Points for the Study
3.	Problem Statement - Describes the problem to address through the study based on defined needs or problem space supported by the literature	It was not known how community college students with disabilities in California describe how student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.
4.	Sample and Location – Identifies sample, needed sample size, and location (study phenomenon with small numbers).	Over the age of 18 years, an emancipated adult able to make your own legal decisions, enrolled with a community college disability support office in the United States, have at least one ‘W’ for withdrawal or ‘EW’ for excused withdrawal on their transcript for an asynchronous online course in at least one of the prior two semesters, currently enrolled in or registered for at least one course at a community college in the United States, and are willing to answer optional personal, identifiable, demographic questions related to age, number of dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type. 25 online questionnaire participants 12 individual interview participants
5.	Research Questions – Provides research questions to collect data to address the problem statement.	Overarching RQ: How do community college students with disabilities (SWD) describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal? RQ1: How do community college SWD describe how student characteristics influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal? RQ2: How do community college SWD describe how student skills influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal? RQ3: How do community college SWD describe how external factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal? RQ4: How do community college SWD describe how internal factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?
6.	Phenomenon - Describes the phenomenon to be better understood (qualitative).	Asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD
7.	Methodology and Design - Describes the selected methodology and specific research	Qualitative methodology and descriptive design

Strategic Points Descriptor		Learner Strategic Points for the Study
	design to address the problem statement and research questions.	
8.	Purpose Statement – Provides one sentence statement of purpose including the problem statement, methodology, design, target population, and location.	The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how community college students with disabilities in the United States describe how student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.
9.	Data Collection – Describes primary instruments and sources of data to answer research questions.	<p>Data sources:</p> <p>Researcher-developed online questionnaire through SurveyMonkey™ with demographic, open- and closed-ended questions (not more than 22 mins to complete)</p> <p>Researcher-developed Zoom™ semi-structured interviews (45- to 60-minutes each, audio- and video-recorded)</p> <p>Permissions needed:</p> <p>Permission to access names and contact information of eligible students from a community college in California</p> <p>Permission to advertise the study by email to eligible students and college faculty and staff for student referral</p> <p>Permission to interview 12 participants</p> <p>Permission to post advertisements for the study in Facebook™ groups popular with community college students, student affairs professionals, college alumni, and doctoral learners</p> <p>IRB approval from GCU</p> <p>Sample size:</p> <p>25 online questionnaire participants</p> <p>12 Zoom™ interview participants</p> <p>Sampling approaches:</p> <p>Questionnaire: Plan A: Purposive sampling through an email advertising the study to eligible students at an IRB approved campus; chain referral sampling through</p>

Strategic Points Descriptor	Learner Strategic Points for the Study
	<p>the same email sent to faculty and staff at the site to distribute to students; Plan B, snowball sampling, asking interview participants to refer other students they know who may qualify; Plan C, volunteer sampling through posts to public and private Facebook™ groups that are popular with community college students; chain referral sampling through posts to public and private Facebook™ groups popular with student affairs professionals, college alumni, and doctoral learners asking members to refer others they know who may be eligible for the study, and Plan D, purposive sampling through UserInterviews™.</p> <p>Interview: purposive sampling to recruit participants who can answer the RQs</p> <p>Eligibility criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over the age of 18 years, An emancipated adult, able to make your own legal decisions, Enrolled with a community college disability support office in the United States, Have at least one ‘W’ for withdrawal or ‘EW’ for excused withdrawal on their transcript for an asynchronous online course in at least one of the prior two semesters, Currently enrolled in at least one course at a community college in the United States, and Are willing to answer optional personal, identifiable, demographic questions related to age, number of dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type. <p>Recruitment occurred through: (a) email sent to eligible students at a community college in California, (b) by the posting of a study flier with the questionnaire link in public and private Facebook™ groups that are popular with community college students, student affairs professionals, college alumni, and doctoral learners, (c) asking interview</p>

	Strategic Points Descriptor	Learner Strategic Points for the Study
		<p>volunteers to forward study information to others they know who may qualify, (d) through the use of UserInterviews™ recruitment platform. The first 25 respondents who completed the online questionnaire were conveniently sampled. Participation in the Zoom™ interviews was solicited through the recruitment platform, UserInterviews™.</p> <p>Data collection</p> <p>Online SurveyMonkey™ questionnaire</p> <p>Audio- and video-recorded interviews conducted through Zoom™</p> <p>Audio transcription through Otter™</p> <p>Member checking- researcher emailed transcribed interviews to participants to review for accuracy and completeness; participants had 5 days to return transcripts; only 2 of 12 responded; the researcher followed up with nonresponsive participants by emailing a summary of familiarization to each; all but 10 of 12 interview participants responded; the 2 nonresponsive participants' transcripts were used in analysis as was explained in informed consent.</p> <p>Use of code names, password protected Google™ account and personal computer, identifiable information removed, only accessible to researcher, committee, IRB reviewers, Grand Canyon University quality reviewers; all materials to be destroyed three years from date of defense.</p>
10.	Data Analysis – Describes the specific data analysis approaches to be used to address research questions.	<p>Descriptive statistics of demographic profile and closed-ended questions from questionnaire organized by SurveyMonkey™;</p> <p>Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis of questionnaire open-ended questions and interview data with the use of MAXQDA™ software;</p> <p>Tables of initial themes, potential themes, and final themes with definitions, codes, and RQs addressed, and a narrative report with embedded extracts.</p>

Appendix B.**Site Authorizations**

Site Authorizations on file with Grand Canyon University.

Appendix C.

IRB Approvals



GRAND CANYON
UNIVERSITY™

3300 West Camelback Road, Phoenix Arizona 85017 602.639.7500 Toll Free 800.800.9776 www.gcu.edu

DATE: June 13, 2022

TO: Stephanie Mattila
FROM: Grand Canyon University Institutional Review Board

STUDY TITLE: The reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college students with disabilities.

IRB REFERENCE #: IRB-2022-4626

SUBMISSION TYPE: Submission Response for Initial Review Submission Packet

ACTION: Determination of Exempt Status

REVIEW CATEGORY: Category 2

Thank you for your submission of study materials.

Grand Canyon University Institutional Review Board has determined this study to be EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations. You now have GCU IRB approval to collect data.

If applicable, please use the approved recruitment script and informed consent that are included in your published documents.

We will put a copy of this correspondence on file in our office.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at irb@gu.edu or 602-639-7804. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.



GRAND CANYON UNIVERSITY™

3300 West Camelback Road, Phoenix Arizona 85017 602.639.7500 Toll-Free 800.800.9776 www.gcu.edu

DATE: September 07, 2022
 TO: Stephanie Mattila
 FROM: Grand Canyon University Institutional Review Board
 STUDY TITLE: The reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college students with disabilities.
 IRB REFERENCE #: IRB-2022-4626
 SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: ACKNOWLEDGED

Thank you for submitting the Amendment/Modification materials for the above research study.

The Grand Canyon University Institutional Review Board has ACKNOWLEDGED the following items in this submission:

Submission Components

Form Name	Version	Outcome
GCU - IRB Modification Form	Version 2.0	Acknowledged

Study Document

Title	Version #	Version Date	Outcome
Questionnaire Informed Consent w Incentive	Version 1.0	09/01/2022	Approved
Interview-Informed Consent w Incentive	Version 1.0	09/01/2022	Approved

You are now approved to collect data.

No further action on submission IRB-2022-4626 is required at this time. If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at irb@gcu.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

Please note: Doctoral Learners are required to include a copy of this letter in the appropriate IRB appendix of the dissertation manuscript.

Dr. Cynthia Bainbridge

Associate Dean, Research and Dissertations
 Director, Institutional Review Board
 College of Doctoral Studies



GRAND CANYON UNIVERSITY™

3300 West Camelback Road, Phoenix, Arizona 85017 602.639.7500 Toll-Free 800.800.9776 www.gcu.edu

DATE: September 16, 2022
 TO: Stephanie Mattila
 FROM: Grand Canyon University Institutional Review Board
 STUDY TITLE: The reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college students with disabilities.
 IRB REFERENCE #: IRB-2022-4626
 SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: ACKNOWLEDGED

Thank you for submitting the Amendment/Modification materials for the above research study.

The Grand Canyon University Institutional Review Board has ACKNOWLEDGED the following items in this submission:

Submission Components

Form Name	Version	Outcome
GCU - IRB Modification Form	Version 3.0	Acknowledged

You are now approved to collect data.

No further action on submission IRB-2022-4626 is required at this time. If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at irb@gcu.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

Please note: Doctoral Learners are required to include a copy of this letter in the appropriate IRB appendix of the dissertation manuscript.

Dr. Cynthia Bainbridge

Associate Dean, Research and Dissertations
 Director, Institutional Review Board
 College of Doctoral Studies



GRAND CANYON UNIVERSITY™

3300 West Camelback Road, Phoenix Arizona 85017 602.639.7500 Toll-Free 800.800.9776 www.gcu.edu

DATE: October 06, 2022
 TO: Stephanie Mattila
 FROM: Grand Canyon University Institutional Review Board
 STUDY TITLE: The reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college students with disabilities.
 IRB REFERENCE #: IRB-2022-4626
 SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: ACKNOWLEDGED

Thank you for submitting the Amendment/Modification materials for the above research study.

The Grand Canyon University Institutional Review Board has ACKNOWLEDGED the following items in this submission:

Submission Components

Form Name	Version	Outcome
GCU - IRB Modification Form	Version 4.0	Acknowledged

Study Document

Title	Version #	Version Date	Outcome
Updated Recruitment- National and Third Party	Version 1.0	10/04/2022	Approved
Updated Informed Consent- Interview	Version 1.0	10/04/2022	Approved

You are now approved to collect data.

No further action on submission IRB-2022-4626 is required at this time. If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at irb@gcu.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

Please note: Doctoral Learners are required to include a copy of this letter in the appropriate IRB appendix of the dissertation manuscript.

Dr. Cynthia Bainbridge

Associate Dean, Research and Dissertations
 Director, Institutional Review Board
 College of Doctoral Studies



GRAND CANYON UNIVERSITY™

3300 West Camelback Road, Phoenix Arizona 85017 602.639.7500 Toll-Free 800.800.9776 www.gcu.edu

DATE: January 27, 2023
 TO: Stephanie Mattila
 FROM: Grand Canyon University Institutional Review Board
 STUDY TITLE: The reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college students with disabilities.
 IRB REFERENCE #: IRB-2022-4626
 SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: ACKNOWLEDGED

Thank you for submitting the Amendment/Modification materials for the above research study.

The Grand Canyon University Institutional Review Board has ACKNOWLEDGED the following items in this submission:

Submission Components

Form Name	Version	Outcome
GCU - IRB Modification Form	Version 5.0	Acknowledged

Study Consent Form

Title	Version #	Version Date	Outcome
Interview Informed Consent	Version 1.3	05/02/2022	Approved
Consent_15328	Version 1.0	01/23/2023	Approved

You are now approved to collect data.

No further action on submission IRB-2022-4626 is required at this time. If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at irb@gcu.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

Please note: Doctoral Learners are required to include a copy of this letter in the appropriate IRB appendix of the dissertation manuscript.

Dr. Cynthia Bainbridge

Associate Dean, Research and Dissertations
 Director, Institutional Review Board
 College of Doctoral Studies

Appendix D.

Informed Consents



Grand Canyon University
 College of Doctoral Studies
 3300 W. Camelback Road
 Phoenix, AZ 85017
 Phone: 602-639-7804
 Email: irb@ecu.edu

QUESTIONNAIRE INFORMED CONSENT FORM

INTRODUCTION

The title of this research study is, "The reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college students with disabilities". I am Stephanie Mattila, a doctoral student under the supervision of Dr. Danielle Hedegard in the College of Doctoral Studies at Grand Canyon University. The purpose of this study is to explore how community college students with disabilities in California describe how student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

KEY INFORMATION

This document defines the terms for agreeing to take part in this research study.

- **How do I know if I can be in this study?**

You can participate in this study if you:

- are over the age of 18 years.
- are an emancipated adult. This means you can make your own legal decisions.
- are enrolled with a disability support office at a California community college.
- have on your transcript from the prior two semesters at least one 'W' for withdrawal or 'EW' for excused withdrawal from an asynchronous online course.
- are enrolled in at least one course at a California community college.
- are willing to answer optional basic personal questions. These questions are related to age, number of dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type.

You cannot participate in this study if you:

- are under the age of 18 years.
- are not an emancipated adult. This means you cannot make your own legal decisions.
- do not have on your transcript from the prior two semesters at least one 'W' for withdrawal or 'EW' for excused withdrawal from an asynchronous online course.
- are not enrolled with a disability support office at a California community college.
- are not enrolled in at least one course at a California community college.
- are not willing to answer optional basic personal questions. These questions are related to age, number of dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type.



IRB APPROVED
 IRB NUMBER: IRB-2022-4626
 IRB APPROVAL DATE: 06/12/2022

What am I being asked to do? If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- **What?**
 - Complete an online questionnaire that should not take longer than 21 minutes. You may access the questionnaire via the link at the end of this document.
 - The questionnaire consists of three academic profile questions. You will be asked fifteen questions about your online course experiences. You will be asked one question about your reasons for withdrawal from an online course. You will be asked eight optional demographic questions. These questions include your age, number of dependents, employment status, and income level. You will also be asked about your housing, gender, race, and disability type.
 - Complete an optional 45-to-60-minute Zoom interview that will be video- and audio-recorded. You may choose not to volunteer for the interview.
 - **When?**
 - At the time of your choosing. The questionnaire will be available until enough participants for the study have completed it.
 - **Where?**
 - The questionnaire will be accessed through the link at the end of this document. The link will take you to SurveyMonkey.com.
 - **How?**
 - By selecting the I Agree button at the end of this document, you give your consent.
- **Who will have access to my data?**
My dissertation chair, committee members, and all College of Doctoral Studies' reviewers may view your data and your answers.
Participation is voluntary. However, you can leave the study at any time, even if you have not finished. You can leave without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to stop participation, you may do so by exiting out and not submitting the questionnaire. If so, I will not use the information that I gathered from you before you chose to stop.
 - **Any possible risks or discomforts?**
There are no likely risks or discomforts related to this study. You will be asked to respond to some optional demographic questions about your age, number of dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type.
 - **Any direct benefits for me?**
There are no direct benefits for you to take part in this study. An indirect benefit may be that your reasons for withdrawing from the online course will be made known. This could be used to understand how to help students with disabilities avoid withdrawing from their online courses.
 - **Any paid compensation or incentives for my time?**
No. You will not be paid for taking part in this questionnaire.



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- **How will my data and/or identity be protected?**
All questionnaire data in this study is anonymous. All interview data in this study is confidential. Anonymity and confidentiality in this study will be maintained unless disclosure is required by law. I will protect your data and/or identity with these steps:
 - I will not ask you to answer questions that could identify you.
 - All data will be saved on my personal computer. The computer is protected with a password at my residence.
 - Code names will be used instead of real names in the interviews. This will protect interview participant identity.
 - Any data you might offer that could identify you will be removed.
 - After study publication, I will delete all data from my personal computer. All data will be put on an external hard drive. This hard drive will be kept in a locked drawer at my residence.
 - I will delete all data from the external hard drive three years from the date of my study defense.
 - All paper data will be kept in a locked drawer in my residence. Paper data will be shredded three years from the date of my study defense.
- **Will researchers be able to link participant data back to them?**
Any data you offer that could identify you will be removed. A list of interview participant names and matching code names will be kept at my residence on my personal computer that is protected with a password. Only my committee, IRB reviewers, academic quality reviewers of Grand Canyon University, and I will have access to your contact information, if you offer it.
- **How will the data be secured and where?** All questionnaire data will be saved to my personal computer kept at my residence that is protected with a password.
- **How long will the data be kept and secured?**
Data will be kept and secured for three years from the date of study defense.
- **Who will have access to the secured data?**
My committee, IRB reviewers, academic quality reviewers of Grand Canyon University, and I are the only people who will have access to your data.

PRESENTATION OF INFORMATION COLLECTED

The data from this study will be presented in a dissertation defense to Grand Canyon University's College of Doctoral Studies. It will be published by ProQuest. No real names will be used in the interviews. Any data you might offer that could identify you will be removed.

PRIVACY AND DATA SECURITY

- **Will researchers ever be able to link my data/responses back to me?**
No. The questionnaire will be anonymous. If you volunteer and offer your name and contact information to participate in the interviews, only code names will be used in the interviews. My committee, IRB reviewers, academic quality reviewers of Grand Canyon University, and I are the only people who will have access to your data. Any data you might offer that could identify you will be removed. All data will be saved to my personal computer that is protected



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by a password at my residence. All data will be destroyed three years from the date of my study defense.

- Will my data include information that can identify me (names, addresses, etc)?
No. Code names will be used instead of real names for all interview participants. Any data you might offer that could identify you will be removed.
- Will researchers assign my data/responses a research ID code to use instead of my name?
Yes.
- If yes, will researchers create a list to link names with their research ID codes?
Yes.
- If yes, how will researchers secure the link of names and research ID codes? How long will the link be kept? Who has access? Approximate destroy date?
A list of names and matching code names for those who volunteer and complete the interview will be kept at my residence on my personal computer that is protected with a password. Only my committee, IRB reviewers, academic quality reviewers of Grand Canyon University, and I will have access to your contact data if you offer it. All data will be destroyed three years from the date of my study defense.
- How will my data be protected (electronic and hardcopy)?
All electronic questionnaire data will be downloaded from the Survey Monkey website. The Survey Monkey account and all its contents will be deleted three years from the date of study defense. Any hardcopy or electronic data that is transformed into hardcopy will be kept in a locked file cabinet at my residence.
- List the data that will be protected (Ex. video files, electronic survey responses, informed consents, demographic information, interview transcripts, etc.).
Electronic questionnaire responses that include informed consents and demographic data; a list of names and research ID codes for interview participants; interview video files; interview transcripts; notes produced by me during the data collection and analysis processes.
- Where will the data be protected?
All questionnaire and interview data will be saved to my personal computer kept at my residence that is protected with a password.
- How long will the data be kept in the protected space?
All data will be kept protected for three years from the date of study defense.
- Who will have access to the protected data?
Only my committee, IRB reviewers, academic quality reviewers of Grand Canyon University, and I will have access to your contact data.
- Approximate destroy or de-identification date?
All electronic and hardcopy data will be destroyed three years from the date of my study defense.
- What is the privacy policy for any recording software, or transcription software companies?

Zoom: <https://explore.zoom.us/en/privacy/>

Survey Monkey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/legal/privacy/>



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CA Supplemental Privacy Notice: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/legal/region-specific-privacy-statement/>

- ***Where and how will the signed informed consent forms be secured?***
Signed consent forms for the interviews will be gathered before the start of the interview via email using DocuSign. Electronic copies of the consent forms will be kept in a separate file from the other interview and questionnaire data. Electronic copies of the consent forms will be kept at my residence on my personal computer that is protected with a password.
- *******For California Residents ONLY:*** For the state of California, participants have additional rights through the State: The right to know about the personal information a business collects about them and how it is used and shared; The right to delete personal information collected from them (with some exceptions); The right to opt-out of the sale of their personal information; and The right to non-discrimination for exercising their CCPA rights.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Once identifiers such as participant, school, or instructor names are removed from the data collected for this study, the de-identified information could be used for future research studies or given to other researchers for future research studies. This will be conducted without additional informed consent from you or your legally authorized representative.

STUDY CONTACTS

Any questions you have concerning the research study or your participation in the study, before or after your informed consent, will be answered by Stephanie Mattila. She can be reached through email at SMattila2@my.gcu.edu or by phone at [REDACTED]

If you have questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the College of Doctoral Studies at IRB@gcu.edu; (602) 639-7804.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

- You have been given an opportunity to read and discuss the informed consent and ask questions about this study;
- You have been given enough time to consider whether or not you want to participate;
- You have read and understand the terms and conditions and agree to take part in this research study;
- You understand your participation is voluntary and that you may stop participation at any time without penalty.

CALIFORNIA CONSUMER PRIVACY ACT (CCPA)



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If you are a California resident, you have the right to:

- Ask me to disclose what personal information they have about you and what they do with that information.
- Ask me to delete your personal information and not to sell your personal information.
- Be notified, before or at the point I collect your personal information, of the types of personal information I am collecting and what I will do with that information.
- I cannot discriminate against you for exercising your rights under the CCPA and cannot make you waive these rights. Any contract provision that says you waive these rights is unenforceable. For more information, please visit <https://www.oag.ca.gov/privacy/ccpa>

Do you agree to consent to participate in this questionnaire?

I agree

I do not agree



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Grand Canyon University

College of Doctoral Studies
3300 W. Camelback Road
Phoenix, AZ 85017
Phone: 602-639-7804
Email: ids@scu.edu

INTERVIEW INFORMED CONSENT FORM

INTRODUCTION

The title of this research study is, "The reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college students with disabilities." I am Stephanie Mattila, a doctoral student under the supervision of Dr. Danielle Hedegard in the College of Doctoral Studies at Grand Canyon University. The purpose of this study is to explore how community college students with disabilities in California describe how student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

KEY INFORMATION

This document defines the terms for agreeing to take part in this research study.

- **How do I know if I can be in this study?**

You can participate in this study if you:

- are over the age of 18 years and able to make your own legal decisions.
- are enrolled with a disability support office at a California community college.
- have on your transcript from the prior two semesters at least one 'W' for withdrawal or 'EW' for excused withdrawal from an asynchronous online course.
- are enrolled in at least one course at a California community college.
- are willing to answer optional basic personal questions. These questions are related to age, number of dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type.

You cannot participate in this study if you:

- are under the age of 18 years and you cannot make your own legal decisions.
- do not have on your transcript from the prior two semesters at least one 'W' for withdrawal or 'EW' for excused withdrawal from an asynchronous online course.
- are not enrolled with a disability support office at a California community college.
- are not enrolled in at least one course at a California community college.
- are not willing to answer optional basic personal questions. These questions are related to age, number of dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type.

What am I being asked to do? If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- **What?**
 - Complete a 45-to-60-minute Zoom interview with me.



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- Read through the transcript of your interview that I will email to you. Correct anything you feel needs correction. Return corrected transcript to me via email within five days of receiving the transcript.
- **When?**
 - At the time of your choosing, between June 21, 2022 and January 30, 2023.
- **Where?**
 - The interviews will take place virtually using Zoom.
- **How?**
 - By accessing Zoom on your personal internet capable device.

Audio Recording and Videorecording:

I would like to audio and video record your responses in Zoom. You cannot participate if you do not wish to be recorded. I will use Otter.ai to transcribe audio recorded data. Because this recording will show who are you, these extra steps will be taken:

- All data will be saved on my personal computer that is protected by a password and kept at my residence.
- A code name will be used instead of your name. This will protect your identity. The list of names and matching code names will be kept separate from the rest of the study data.
- Any data you offer that could identify you will be removed.

I will upload all electronic data to an external hard drive after my study defense. All electronic data will be destroyed three years from the date of my study defense. I will shred all paper data three years from the date of my study defense.

- **Who will have access to my data?**

My dissertation chair, committee members, IRB reviewers, and all College of Doctoral Studies' reviewers may view your data and your answers.

Participation in the interview is voluntary. You can leave the study at any time, even if we have not finished the interview. You may do so without any penalty. If you decide to stop participation, you may do so by telling me you no longer wish to complete the interview. If so, I will only have and use the data collected until that point.

- **Any possible risks or discomforts?**

There are no likely risks or discomforts related to this study. You will be asked to respond to optional questions regarding your age, number of dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type.

- **Any direct benefits for me?**

There are no direct benefits for you to take part in this study. An indirect benefit may be that your reasons for withdrawing from the online course will be made known. This could be used to understand how to help students with disabilities avoid withdrawing from their online courses.

- **Any paid compensation or incentives for my time?**

No. You will not be paid for taking part in this interview.

- **How will my data and/or identity be protected?**

- All interview data in this study is confidential unless disclosure is required by law. I will protect your data and/or identity with these steps: I will not ask you to answer questions that could identify you.
- All data will be saved on my personal computer. The computer is protected with a password at my residence.



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- Code names will be used instead of real names in the interviews. This will protect interview participant identity. The list of names and matching code names will be kept in a separate file.
- Any data you might offer that could identify you will be removed.
- After study publication, I will delete all data from my personal computer. All data will be uploaded to an external hard drive. This hard drive will be kept in a locked drawer at my residence.
- I will delete all data from the external hard drive three years from the date of my study defense.
- All paper data will be kept in a locked drawer in my residence. Paper data will be shredded three years from the date of my study defense.
- **Will researchers be able to link participant data back to them?**
I will use code names instead of real names in this study. Any data you offer that could identify you will be removed. A list of names and code names for interview participants will be kept separate from the study data at my residence on my personal computer that is protected with a password. Only my committee, IRB reviewers, academic quality reviewers of Grand Canyon University, and I will have access to your data.
- **How will the data be secured and where?**
All interview data will be saved to my personal computer kept at my residence that is protected with a password. After study publication, I will delete all data from my personal computer. All data will be uploaded to an external hard drive. This hard drive will be kept in a locked drawer at my residence.
- **How long will the data be kept and secured?**
I will delete all electronic data from the external hard drive three years from the date of my study defense.
- **Who will have access to the secured data?**
My committee, IRB reviewers, academic quality reviewers of Grand Canyon University, and I are the only people who will have access to your data.

PRESENTATION OF INFORMATION COLLECTED

The data from this study will be presented in a dissertation defense to Grand Canyon University's College of Doctoral Studies. It will be published by ProQuest. No real names will be used. Any data you might offer that could identify you will be removed.

PRIVACY AND DATA SECURITY

- **Will researchers ever be able to link my data/responses back to me?**
No. In the interviews, only code names will be used. The list of names and matching code names will be kept in a separate file from the rest of the study data. My committee, IRB reviewers, academic quality reviewers of Grand Canyon University, and I are the only people who will have access to your data. Any data you might offer that could identify you will be removed. All data will be saved to my personal computer that is protected by a password at my residence. After study publication, I will delete all data from my personal computer. All data will be uploaded to an external hard drive. This hard drive will be kept in a locked drawer at my residence.
All data will be destroyed three years from the date of my study defense.
- **Will my data include information that can identify me (names, addresses, etc)?**
No. Code names will be used instead of real names for all interview participants. The list of names and matching code names will be kept in a separate file from the study data. Any data you might offer that could identify you will be removed.



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- **Will researchers assign my data/responses a research ID code to use instead of my name?**
Yes.
- **If yes, will researchers create a list to link names with their research ID codes?**
Yes.
- **If yes, how will researchers secure the list of names and research ID codes? How long will the link be kept? Who has access? Approximate destroy date?**
I will protect the list of names and matching code names for all interview participants by keeping it in a separate file from the rest of the study data. This list will be kept at my residence on my personal computer. That computer is protected with a password. After study publication, I will delete all data from my personal computer. All data will be uploaded to an external hard drive. This hard drive will be kept in a locked drawer at my residence. Only my committee, IRB reviewers, academic quality reviewers of Grand Canyon University, and I will have access to your contact data. All data will be destroyed three years from the date of my study defense.
- **How will my data be protected (electronic and hardcopy)?**
All electronic interview data will be downloaded from the Zoom website. The recorded transcript from Zoom will be deleted from the Zoom account once downloaded to my personal computer. After study publication, I will upload all study data to an external hard drive that will be kept in a locked drawer. Three years from the date of study defense I will delete all electronic data from the external hard drive. Any hardcopy data will be kept in a locked drawer at my residence and shredded three years from the date of study defense.
- **List the data that will be protected.**
 - All names and contact information offered to volunteer in the interview
 - All email communication with the interview participants;
 - The list of names and matching code names for interview participants;
 - Interview video files;
 - Interview transcripts;
 - Interview informed consent forms;
 - Any notes I produce during the data collection and analysis processes.
- **Where will the data be protected?**
All interview data will be saved to my personal computer kept at my residence that is protected with a password. After study publication, all electronic data will be moved to an external hard drive. The hard drive will be kept in a locked drawer at my residence.
- **How long will the data be kept in the protected space?**
All data will be kept protected for three years from the date of study defense.
- **Who will have access to the protected data?**
Only my committee, IRB reviewers, academic quality reviewers of Grand Canyon University, and I will have access to your data.
- **Approximate destroy or de-identification date?**
All electronic and hardcopy data will be destroyed three years from the date of my study defense.
- **What is the privacy policy for any recording software, or transcription software companies?**



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Zoom: <https://explore.zoom.us/en/privacy/>

DocuSign: <https://www.docusign.com/company/privacy-policy>

CA Supplemental Privacy Notice: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/legal/region-specific-privacy-statement/>

Otter.ai: <https://otter.ai/privacy-policy>

CA Supplemental Privacy Notice: <https://otter.ai/ccpa-notice>

- **Where and how will the signed informed consent forms be secured?**
Signed consent forms for the interviews will be gathered before the start of the interview via email using DocuSign. Electronic copies of the consent forms will be kept in a separate file from the other interview and questionnaire data. Electronic copies of the consent forms will be kept at my residence on my personal computer that is protected with a password.
- ******For California Residents ONLY:** For the state of California, participants have additional rights through the State: The right to know about the personal information a business collects about them and how it is used and shared; The right to delete personal information collected from them (with some exceptions); The right to opt-out of the sale of their personal information; and The right to non-discrimination for exercising their CCPA rights.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Once identifying data such as participant, school, or instructor names are removed from the data collected for this study, the de-identified information could be used for future research studies or given to other researchers for future research studies. This is conducted without additional informed consent from you or your legally authorized representative.

STUDY CONTACTS

Any questions you have concerning the research study or your participation in the study, before or after your informed consent, will be answered by Stephanie Mattila. Stephanie Mattila can be reached through email at SMattila2@my.gcu.edu or by phone at [REDACTED]. If you have questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the College of Doctoral Studies at IRB@gcu.edu; (602) 639-7804.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

- You have been given an opportunity to read and discuss the informed consent and ask questions about this study;
- You have been given enough time to consider whether or not you want to participate;
- You have read and understand the terms and conditions and agree to take part in this research study;

You understand your participation is voluntary and that you may stop participation at any time without penalty.

CALIFORNIA CONSUMER PRIVACY ACT (CCPA)



IRB APPROVED
IRB NUMBER: IRB-2022-4626
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 01/27/2023

If you are a California resident, you have the right to:

- ask me to disclose what personal information they have about you and what they do with that information.
- ask me to delete your personal information and not to sell your personal information.
- be notified, before or at the point I collect your personal information, of the types of personal information I am collecting and what I will do with that information.

I cannot discriminate against you for exercising your rights under the CCPA and cannot make you waive these rights. Any contract provision that says you waive these rights is unenforceable. For more information, please visit <https://www.oag.ca.gov/privacy/ccpa>

Your signature means that you understand your rights listed above and agree to participate in this study.

Signature of Participant or Legally Authorized Representative

Date

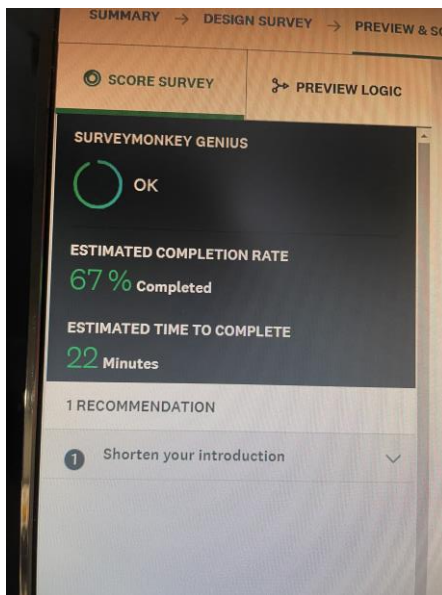


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Appendix E.

Copy of Instruments

SurveyMonkey™ estimates the questionnaire time to complete as 2 mins. Field test participants reported the questionnaire was not excessively lengthy and easy to complete.



1. Participant Invitation Process: The following is the process of the informed consent for the questionnaire and the interview:

(1) Participants will click on the link from the Facebook post/flier or the email and will be directed to the informed consent online at SurveyMonkey.com. Once they agree to the informed consent, they will be allowed to begin the questionnaire. If they disagree with the informed consent, they will be disqualified from the questionnaire and will be exited. (2) The informed consent will include inclusion and exclusion criteria, the participant's role in the study, information about protection and use of data, risks, and benefits of participation, including compensation, withdrawing from the study at any time, and information on how the rights and well-being of the study sample participants will be protected. (3) The last question on the questionnaire will ask for optional participation in an individual interview conducted via Zoom. If not interested, participants will exit the questionnaire. If interested, participants will click a link to exit the questionnaire and enter a separate questionnaire where they will list their names and contact information. (4) The interested participants will be contacted by phone and email by the researcher to arrange the Zoom interview. The researcher will send an appointment confirmation email. (5) The day of the interview before the appointment, the participant will receive an online informed consent form that acknowledges the terms and conditions of consenting to participate in the research. Inclusion and exclusion criteria, the

participant's role, audio and video recording of the interview, recording transcription, transcript validation, access to and protection of data, risks, and benefits of participation, removal of names, and use of code names will be explained. Participants will electronically sign the consent form using DocuSign Accessibility Cloud and email it to the researcher. If the researcher does not receive the signed email consent form, the interview will not take place. The questionnaire can be accessed at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TYZS7RQ>

2. Questionnaire Setup and Location:

Questionnaire Location: The questionnaire will be completed online at SurveyMonkey.com from the participant's internet accessible device.

Instructions: Please answer all questions regarding one asynchronous online course you withdrew from, even if you have withdrawn from more than one course.

Please note: This questionnaire pertains only to asynchronously taught courses. In asynchronous online courses, there are no live class meetings. All interactions and submissions occur in the online learning platform (Canvas, Blackboard, etc.) or by email. This questionnaire does not pertain to remotely taught, synchronous online courses that you accessed live in Zoom.

Questions for Questionnaire:

Research Question:	Questionnaire Question:	Theoretical Foundation:
Informed Consent	QQ1: Statement and question of informed consent.	N/A
RQ4	QQ2: The asynchronous online course I withdrew from was:	Rovai's Composite Model of Student Persistence
RQ4	QQ3: Was this asynchronous online course required for your degree, Certificate, or educational goal?	Rovai's Composite Model of Student Persistence
Academic Profile Question	QQ4: Have you retaken and passed this course since you withdrew from it?	N/A
Academic Profile Question	QQ5: Did you retake this course asynchronously online or on campus?	N/A
Academic Profile Question	QQ6: Why did you retake this course in this format?	N/A
RQ1	QQ7: The asynchronous online course I withdrew from was my:	Rovai's Composite Model of Student Persistence
RQ1	QQ8: How long had you attended any college, including any previous colleges, at the time you withdrew from the asynchronous online course?	Rovai's Composite Model of Student Persistence
Demographic questions	QQ9: What was your age at the time you withdrew from the asynchronous online course?	Rovai's Composite Model of Student Persistence

Research Question:	Questionnaire Question:	Theoretical Foundation:
Demographic questions	QQ10: How many dependent children were living with you at the time you withdrew from the asynchronous online course?	Rovai's Composite Model of Student Persistence
Demographic questions	QQ11: Did you work for pay at the time you withdrew from the asynchronous online course?	Rovai's Composite Model of Student Persistence
Demographic questions	QQ12: How many hours per week did you work for pay at the time you withdrew from the asynchronous online course?	Rovai's Composite Model of Student Persistence
Demographic questions	QQ13: What was your income level at the time you withdrew from the asynchronous online course?	Rovai's Composite Model of Student Persistence
Demographic questions	QQ14: Where did you live at the time you withdrew from the asynchronous online course? Select all answers that apply.	Rovai's Composite Model of Student Persistence
Demographic questions	QQ15: What is your gender/sex?	Rovai's Composite Model of Student Persistence
Demographic questions	QQ16: What is your race or ethnicity? Select all answers that apply.	Rovai's Composite Model of Student Persistence
RQ1	QQ17: Please describe your disability or disabilities. Select all answers that apply.	Rovai's Composite Model of Student Persistence
RQ1	QQ18: How did your disability influence your withdrawal from this asynchronous online course?	Rovai's Composite Model of Student Persistence
RQ4	QQ19: Did you use disability accommodations in the asynchronous online course you withdrew from?	Rovai's Composite Model of Student Persistence
RQ4	QQ20: Do you believe the disability accommodations you used helped you in the asynchronous online course you withdrew from?	Rovai's Composite Model of Student Persistence
RQ4	QQ21: Why did you not use disability accommodations in the asynchronous online course you withdrew from?	Rovai's Composite Model of Student Persistence
RQ4	QQ22: When you started this asynchronous online course, how did you feel about your ability to complete it successfully?	Rovai's Composite Model of Student Persistence
RQ1	QQ23: Will you take or have you taken another asynchronous online course since you withdrew from this asynchronous online course? And why?	Rovai's Composite Model of Student Persistence
RQ2	QQ24: I lacked the technology, internet, and computer skills needed to	Rovai's Composite Model of Student Persistence

Research Question:	Questionnaire Question:	Theoretical Foundation:
	do well in this asynchronous online course.	
RQ1	QQ25: If you had to take this same asynchronous online course now, how would you feel about your ability to complete it successfully?	Rovai's Composite Model of Student Persistence
RQ3	QQ26: My withdrawal from this asynchronous online course was influenced by my life outside of school.	Rovai's Composite Model of Student Persistence
RQ2	QQ27: I created connections in this asynchronous online course with:	Rovai's Composite Model of Student Persistence
Overarching RQ	QQ28: Please select the three most important reasons you withdrew from the asynchronous online course.	N/A
N/A	Recruitment statement for interviews and link to offer contact information.	N/A

3. Interview Setup and Location:

Interview Location: The interview will be conducted online through Zoom.

Materials: Hard copy of interview questions for researcher, pen, and notebook for notes.

Interviewer: Stephanie Mattila– primary researcher

4. Interview Overview:

The researcher will begin the recording via Zoom now.

Script: I want to begin by acknowledging and thanking you for your time. I realize your time is valuable, and I appreciate your willingness to participate in this study. The information you supply today could help other community college students with disabilities like yourself avoid withdrawal from asynchronous online courses. Asynchronous online courses are conducted entirely online with no in-person meetings and no real-time online class meetings. Your input could help college administrators, faculty, and student support professionals to understand your experiences and hopefully improve the withdrawal rate of community college students with disabilities from asynchronous online courses. This could help more students reach graduation and accomplish their educational goals. Before I begin with the interview questions, I would like to review the informed consent that was emailed to you and that you signed and returned.

- The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study is to explore how community college students with disabilities in California describe how student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influenced their

reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal. Eligibility to participate in this study includes these criteria. To participate, you must: (a) be over the age of 18 years, (b) an emancipated adult, able to make your own legal decisions, (c) be enrolled with a community college disability support office in California, (d) have at least one 'W' for withdrawal or 'EW' for excused withdrawal listed on your transcript for an asynchronous online course in at least one of the prior two semesters, (e) be currently enrolled in or registered for at least one course at a community college in California, and (f) be willing to answer optional personal, identifiable, demographic questions related to age, number of dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type. Today's interview will last 45 to 60 mins and is being audio- and video-recorded. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you can choose not to answer any question you do not want to answer. You can also end participation at any time and for any reason by simply telling me you would like to end the interview. Participation in this study is voluntary. It will have no impact on your grades, standing with your community college, or the disability support office.

After the interview, you will be emailed a copy of the interview transcript. I encourage you to correct any errors and/or provide any clarifications you feel are needed. You will have five days from the date the email is sent to make changes and email it back to me. After five days, I will begin analysis of the original transcript if no response is received from you, or of the updated transcript if a response is received from you. If you are interested in the results of this study, I will be more than happy to share them with you after publication.

Today's interview will focus on your reasons for withdrawing from an asynchronous online course. There are 10 questions, and some additional follow up questions depending on your responses. Everything you share today is confidential. Any mention of your name or identifying information will be removed or deleted from the record, except for your signature on the informed consent form. From this point forward, you will be known and referred to as Participant 1 or P1. No one will know that you participated in this study. No one, including your school, your instructor, or any other campus staff will have access to any of this information. The audio and video recording and transcript of this interview will be saved on my private password-protected computer at my residence. Any hardcopies or notes will be kept in a locked drawer at my residence. All information you provide will be destroyed three years from the date I defended my study. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin?

5. Interview Questions:

Opening Question: Do I have your consent to be audio- and video-recorded? Do you have any questions for me before we begin the interview?

(Addressing RQ4: Internal Factors, Goal Commitment)

IQ1: To begin, can you tell me about your educational goals in college?

- How about your career goals?
- What inspired you to pursue those goals?
- How committed are you to those goals?
- What makes you so committed?

(Addressing RQ2: Student Skills)

IQ2: How would you describe the kind of student you are?

- In general, how well do you typically manage your time?
- How well were you able to manage your time in that online (TYPE) course?
- How is time management different between on campus and asynchronous online courses?
- Describe for me what you did to learn the material for that online (TYPE) course?
- What study habits do you think are necessary to do well in an online course?
- Describe for me your level of reading and writing skills when you took that course?
- How much reading and writing was required in that course compared to on-campus courses?
- How prepared for college were you when you started?
- How internet and computer savvy were you when you started that online (TYPE) course?
- How did technology issues in that course effect your experience?

(Addressing RQ4: Internal Factors, Learning and Teaching Styles)

IQ3: How would you describe your learning style, or how you learn best?

- Knowing this about yourself, how good a fit was that online (TYPE) course for you, and why?
- How easily does schooling come to you, and why?
- How different is learning online compared to learning on-campus for you?
- What are some pros and cons of learning asynchronously online?
- In that online (TYPE) course specifically, how well did the instructor's teaching style fit with your specific learning style?
- What could the instructor have done differently to make your experience in that class better?
- If you taught that course, how would you teach it differently?

(Addressing RQ4: Internal Factors, Clarity of Programs)

IQ4: As you know, what I'd like to talk with you about today is your withdrawal from the online course. I'm curious, what made you decide to take that course online in the first place?

- How much did you know about what to expect in that online (TYPE) course when it began?
- Can you walk me through how you began that course?
- How did you feel going into it?
- What kind of problems did you encounter taking it online?

(Addressing RQ1 through RQ4)

IQ5: Can you tell me what happened that made you withdraw from that online (TYPE) course?

- How easy or difficult a decision was that for you to make?
- Had you ever withdrawn from an online course before?
- What did withdrawal from the course allow you to do?
- How did you feel about the decision once you made it?

(Addressing RQ1: Student Characteristics, Disability)

IQ6: How would you say your disability influences the way you learn in general?

- And specifically, in that online (TYPE) course?
- Which accommodations did you use in that course?
- If none, tell me about why you didn't use accommodations in that course?

(Addressing RQ4: Internal Factors, Support Services)

IQ7: While you were in that online (TYPE) course, what are some campus services you used for support?

- How satisfied were you with availability of services while you were in that online course?
- Why didn't you use campus support services?
- Would you have used services if you took that course on campus?

(Addressing RQ4: Internal Factors, Participation and Socialization)

IQ8: Can you describe how participation and interaction worked in that course?

- How much did you participate in that (TYPE) course and why is that?
- Compare how much you participate when you're in a physical classroom with how much you participated in that online (TYPE) course?
- Tell me about any sense of belonging to a classroom community you felt in that course?
- Is there anything the instructor could have done to increase a sense of belonging?
- How did being asynchronous online affect your ability to make friends in the course?
- Tell me about interactions you had with peers in that course?
- What about interactions with the instructor?
- How does that compare to the way you interact in on-campus courses?
- What did you do when you had questions in the online course?
- Now, compare that to getting your questions answered in on-campus courses.

(Addressing RQ3: External Factors)

IQ9: What other commitments outside of school did you have while you were in that course?

- How stressful was it for you to deal with that on top of school?
- What kind of outside encouragement or support did you have while you were in that course?

- (Or if no support) What kind of outside encouragement and support did you need in that online course?
- Can you tell me about a time when your financial situation caused problems for you in the online (TYPE) course?
- What kinds of interruptions did you experience doing your classwork or homework at home as opposed to in a classroom?

(Addressing RQ1: Student Characteristics)

IQ10: Some have said personal characteristics like age, ethnicity, and gender affect your experience in an online course.

- How did age effect you in that online (TYPE) course?
- Can you think of any benefits to being older/younger than the other students in that course?
- How did being (ETHNICITY) affect you in that course?
- How did being (MALE/FEMALE/NON-BINARY) affect you in that course?
- Are there ways you think gender could be a pro or a con in an online course? If so, how?

Closing Questions

In the online questionnaire, you indicated that the three main reasons you withdrew from the online course are (THIS, THIS and THIS).

- Is there anything you would like to add or change about your decision to withdraw from that course?
- What advice would you give to other community college students with disabilities who are considering taking an online course?
- What do you think is important for students to know before they try an asynchronous online course?
- Are there any questions you have for me?
- Is there anything I missed or should have asked?

Closing Script-- Thank you so much for your time and for sharing your story with me. I'm trying to understand students' reasons for withdrawing from online courses and you're the expert because you're the one who withdrew from an online course. If you know of anyone who has also been through online course withdrawal, would you please pass my information on to them so that they could possibly participate too? I would really appreciate your help with that. I'll send you an email with my contact information for you to pass on, if you can. I will also be sending you the written transcript of our interview today so that you can correct anything or add anything you didn't get to say. You'll have 5 days to make any changes and email it back to me. If I don't receive anything back from you by that point, I'll go ahead and begin my analysis. Remember, your name and identifying information will be redacted or withdrawn from my final dissertation, so there will not be any way for anyone to know who you are or what college you go to. Thank you again for your time. Have a great day.

Rovai, A. P. (2003). In search of higher persistence rates in distance education online programs. *Internet and Higher Education*, 6, 1–16. doi:10.1016/s1096-7516(02)00158-6

7. **Reviewing Interview Guide/Questions with Experts:** It is important to get feedback on your interview guide before using it for research. Identify 2-4 people to review it. This can include: Your content expert, faculty who are experts in the area, authors of articles on this topic, professionals or people in the field you are studying, etc. Send the complete guide to them so they can see that the Interview Questions are to come out of the Theoretical Foundation and Research Question.

Who: Identify who you will ask to review and their expertise and role?

Individual to Do the Review of this Questionnaire /Interview Protocol	Individual's Role (faculty, author in this area, professional in this field)	Identify the reason you selected them	Revisions they suggested making based on their review.
Expert Panel Member 1	This panel member is a professional in the field of community college disability support. He is the director of a disability support office at a community college and has 32 years of experience working in higher education.	He has a lengthy career in higher education that has contributed to his ability to assess whether students would understand qualitative questions of this sort. He has witnessed student success and failure depending on course content delivery method and understands the population of community college students with disabilities (SWD).	<p>Questionnaire:</p> <p>Question on employment status: Wording of answer options seems awkward. Consider revising for better flow.</p> <p>What is your rationale for listing age options this way? Allowing participants to write in their age would be more accurate and give you a clearer picture of their age and range.</p> <p>Communicative disability is speech, language, or hearing impairment. Students may not know precisely what communicative disability is. I would spell it out on any disability related questions.</p> <p>Question on reason for online course withdrawal: Do you want them to pick all that apply? Or rank order the choices?</p> <p>Interviews:</p> <p>Looks great</p>
Expert Panel Member 2	This panel member's scholarly expertise is in government report writing with more than 20 years of social research experience including qualitative instrument development. She is also an approved GCU content expert.	This panel member has a lengthy career in teaching, including online teaching, at the community college and university levels. She has conducted qualitative analysis and developed data analysis reports on financial institutions and webinar evaluation surveys. She can provide a	<p>Questionnaire:</p> <p>Use U.S. Census and Department of Education questions as a guide to valid and reliable question wording.</p> <p>Include questions on disability accommodations and whether they were helpful.</p> <p>Interviews:</p> <p>Reword to include open-ended questions: Do you know your grade point average? Did you have technology issues?</p> <p>Assign ID#s at the beginning of the interview.</p> <p>Move question on educational goals to the beginning- good way to open the interview.</p> <p>If applicable, will you be including students with intellectual disabilities?</p>

Individual to Do the Review of this Questionnaire /Interview Protocol	Individual's Role (faculty, author in this area, professional in this field)	Identify the reason you selected them	Revisions they suggested making based on their review.
		perspective on both qualitative methods and higher education that will help me develop reliable and valid questions to illicit the data I seek in my study.	

Field Test Participants

Individual interviewed	How they are representative of the final participants	Why they were selected	Revisions suggested during and after the interview
Field Test Participant 1 (FTP1)	This participant meets all the criteria for this study: over the age of 18 years, an emancipated adult, able to make their own legal decisions, enrolled with a community college disability support office in California, has at least one 'W' for withdrawal or 'EW' for excused withdrawal on his transcript for an asynchronous online course in at least one of the prior two semesters, is currently enrolled in or registered for at least one course at a community college in California, and is willing to answer optional personal, identifiable, demographic questions related to age, number of	He was able to provide insights into the phenomenon of asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college students with disabilities (SWD).	In the interview, nodding my head made him feel as though I understood what he was saying, therefore he did not feel a need to continue offering more detail. A couple of the questions were long and had multiple parts to them. It was hard for him to remember all the parts.

Individual interviewed	How they are representative of the final participants	Why they were selected	Revisions suggested during and after the interview
	dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type.		
Field Test Participant 2 (FTP2)	This participant meets all the criteria for this study: over the age of 18 years, an emancipated adult, able to make their own legal decisions, enrolled with a community college disability support office in California, has at least one 'W' for withdrawal or 'EW' for excused withdrawal on her transcript for an asynchronous online course in at least one of the prior two semesters, is currently enrolled in or registered for at least one course at a community college in California, and is willing to answer optional personal, identifiable, demographic questions related to age, number of dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type.	She was able to provide insights into the phenomenon of asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD.	Some questions were long so consider revising wording to not have multiple parts. She felt a little uncomfortable being asked about money problems.
Field Test Participant 3 (FTP3)	This participant meets all the criteria for this study: over the age of 18 years, an emancipated adult, able to make their own legal decisions, enrolled	She was able to provide insights into the phenomenon of asynchronous online course withdrawal of community college SWD.	A couple of the questions were too wordy. She suggested I wait until I mentally count to 10 after a participant stops speaking. I began to ask another

Individual interviewed	How they are representative of the final participants	Why they were selected	Revisions suggested during and after the interview
	<p>with a community college disability support office in California, has at least one 'W' for withdrawal or 'EW' for excused withdrawal on her transcript for an asynchronous online course in at least one of the prior two semesters, is currently enrolled in or registered for at least one course at a community college in California, and is willing to answer optional personal, identifiable, demographic questions related to age, number of dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type.</p>		<p>question while she continued to speak on a couple of occasions.</p>

Appendix F.

Codebook

Code	Code definition	Excerpts from data
Lack of interest or motivation	Students describe how their lack of interest in the course or assignment causes them to lose motivation in their courses and influences their asynchronous online course withdrawal.	“Could not focus and lost interest.” “And I just wasn't interested enough to maintain.” “But um the the ask or the task or the assignment to you know write an essay analyzing this stuff was not interesting to me so. Um, it's really just about executing the the task to get it done. So it's, it's, I don't think it falls in the teacher or even the content. Like I think the content was perfectly fine. I just think that I am, it's more difficult for me to do things that are boring.” “But um the the ask or the task or the assignment to you know write an essay analyzing this stuff was not interesting to me so.” “Be very like discipline because like once you fall behind everything just really builds up and you just feel really like less motivated to keep up with anything.”
Health disability makes school harder	Students describe how their physical and mental health disabilities cause them to struggle more in their courses and influences their asynchronous online course withdrawal.	“It got very hard to keep up with everything. Yeah. I had the flu. I had the stomach flu. And then I had multiple infections and I don't even remember. So much stuff is back to back and it was horrendous.” “Um, I had a really bad, like, I think like, week or two just like with my illness. It, you can have like flare ups. And so I had one of those. And I missed like, I couldn't really do anything for like that week and a half, two weeks, because my illness like also does impact you like mentally, with like that um brain fog and concentration, communication and everything.” “I think that um, when, like, your disability, like you get sick or something, and it makes it hard to turn in like an assignment or something and you're late, um you use that time, like trying to catch up instead of working on the stuff that's happening like then. And so it sort of snowballs into a bigger issue, till you can't really keep up with it or handle it.”
Disability-related focus, time management issues	Students describe how their disability causes them focus and time management issues in their courses and influences their asynchronous online course withdrawal.	“I get anxious, it's hard for me to sit down and like really want to focus like on my schoolwork because I'm like, Well, I'm more worried about myself right now. You know, and I was like, well, that's more important to me than you know, like turning in like a quiz or something. And so yeah, it does have like a big impact on how I learn now.” “I would just just be focused on that all day, or like setting up appointments or kind of keeping track of my symptoms, like, during that time, I would have kind of like, put my focus on that all day.” “I have ADHD and I struggled with time management issues in noth my household and school work.”

Code	Code definition	Excerpts from data
Increased distractibility online	Students describe how their increased distractibility when trying to study or work at home as opposed to in the classroom influences their asynchronous online course withdrawal.	“I'm very good with the work itself, it's just sitting down starting to do it that I have trouble with, especially depending on the environment, which is why I had trouble online classes because doing it at home is difficult.” “But now I can't really sit still. Um, so that can also be a problem with online courses that have no meetings because I, there's nobody, there's nothing that's like keeping me sitting here. I am free to get up and procrastinate. Yeah, the distractibility just got worse.” “So much like, it's already so hard for me to focus at home. But the fact was that when I when I'm writing, when you're writing an essay, it's like, you'll write like, a good few lines, get your thoughts out. And then you're sitting there thinking about the next thing to write and then you think about, I'm kind of hungry. What do I want for dinner? Um, oh, well, my friend told me about this, and I should hang out with that friend again. And you know, it's just, you end up, I will sit there and write an essay for hours. I still won't be done with that.”
I will forget without reminders	Students describe how their need for reminders of upcoming assignments or tests in the online format influences their asynchronous online course withdrawal.	“Um, Because there's nothing that I, besides like, assignment deadlines, there's nothing I have to make sure that I show up for. So it's just not in my head, like at all and so I need visual reminders like around me um to remind me that I have things to do. Otherwise, I just, it's gone in my head.” “But it was just like forgetting the assignments that I didn't want that drop on my record.” “No, because the resources are right in front of me. Um, and professors are always reminding you as well. So it's like in my face. I can't not know. Um, and most of my classes are usually daily, or like three times a week so I'm hearing, I'm hearing that often. Repetition and consistency.”
Negative course experiences impact mental health	Students describe how negative course experiences lead to increased mental health struggles and influence their asynchronous online course withdrawal.	“But I just had to submit the assignment like not knowing, and I didn't get like a bad grade or anything. It was just like, it just caused me like momentary panic.” “But my anxiety kicked in, and then the depression, and the ADHD. And it was, nah, I couldn't do it. I couldn't do it. Panicked.” “It just never really occurred to me. I knew, like, I've struggled with my moods, or like regulation and processing but I just never made the connection and never realized how much it affected school until it really affected school.” “I'm a perfectionist, and I did not want to get a lower grade and I felt like I was gonna fail the class.”
Learning pace, more time needed	Students describe how their slow pace of learning or doing schoolwork influences their asynchronous online course withdrawal.	“I learn at a slow pace and the teacher's teaching strategies did not mix well with my learning strategies.” “Like I was beating myself the other day, up the other day, because I realized it took me an hour to write a single paragraph. Because I don't know it was just really hard for me at that time. But yeah, I just, I'm not that good.” “But already with me, I feel like I just take a longer time, or I know that I take a longer time. Like I get really good grades, but I have to spend a lot more time than like the average student does on something. So it's just, I knew that by the time that withdrawal date was going to come up that I didn't, you know, that I wasn't going to make it.”

Code	Code definition	Excerpts from data
Disability-related help needed	Students describe how their disability-related need for help from the instructor, others, or accommodations influences their asynchronous online course withdrawal.	"Well with having dyscalculia I had a hard time remembering basic formulas especially [sic] when negative numbers were involved it made it difficult because tests scores were pretty low because I couldn't [sic] do a few things." "Because I was not getting the help I needed." "Wasn't being given my DSS approved accommodations that the professor agreed to." "My mom. Couldn't help me in everything."
COVID-19 related mental health issues	Students describe how the COVID-19 pandemic impacts their mental health and influences their asynchronous online course withdrawal.	"And um there was a lot going on in 2020 with the election and there was social unrest. There was there was just a lot. It was, it was a lot going on. So I do feel that that added additional stress on top of what I was already dealing with as far as you know, I have taken this class. Because, you know, some of that can bring in depression. So there were days where I was just like, uh I can't do anything." "I mean on top of, you know, that, with everything going on at that time, just the other, you know, the increase in anxiety, the increase in depression, and things of that sort."
Alcohol addiction and recovery	Students describe how alcohol addiction and recovery influences their asynchronous online course withdrawal.	"Sure, sure. ADHD, and, you know, I, I had substance abuse problems all my life. So it caused a lot of issues with ah patience, confidence, depression." "And, and I was in a very structured place where you had to do your things, or you had a chance of being kicked out on the street, and that, and I wanted to succeed in my recovery. And, you know, so I think it was the combination of everything."
Math disability issues	Students describe how their math disability influences their asynchronous online course withdrawal.	"Well with having dyscalculia I had a hard time remembering basic formulas especially when negative numbers were involved it made it difficult because tests scores were pretty low because I couldn't do a few things." "I didn't think I was able to do it the first time especially with work so I decided that I was better off dropping MATH102 for the third time and take it again next semester with more planning."
Intimidation	Students describe how feelings of intimidation influence their asynchronous online course withdrawal.	"And the reason I dropped it, like withdrew from the class was because of like one, the final paper, which I just felt like I was not smart enough to do. And like I was too intimidated. I got way too in my head, and I couldn't do it. So I just dropped it." "I was feeling pretty, like discouraged with that class. And the more discouraged that I felt towards it, the more susceptible to distractions that I am, because it's like I like, low key, like, in the subconscious really don't want to be doing it because it's not something that makes me feel good. And like my confidence with that class is kind of shot."

Code	Code definition	Excerpts from data
Procrastinate at home	Students describe how their procrastination while learning from home influences their asynchronous online course withdrawal.	<p>“I think my time used to be better managed, because once I kind of, like, toward the end of like, my high school years, I kind of didn't know how to manage my time better. Because, like, in like high school, and like middle school, you know, lower grades, it was easier because like, you had a schedule, like everyday, like a routine. So it was like school all day, and then homework, and then sleep and then kind of repeat that. So it was easier, you know, but now I kind of have all this time. And so it's like, I'm like, Well, like I can do my work. But also like, I don't have to because there's no one telling me really, you know, so I'm just like, it's easier to like, let go of my routine at this point, which is hard.” “Probably on campus because I feel like actually being there and interacting with a teacher would kind of like push me to do better because I do like learning by myself and I do do things on my own pace, which I like, but I know I kind of get off track and kind of don't have a routine anymore.”</p>
Fell behind from procrastination or prioritization	Students describe how falling behind from procrastination or prioritization of other things influences their asynchronous online course withdrawal.	<p>“So I had all this time to kind of procrastinate. And so that's kind of like what I did at some time, because I would work one day, and then kind of like, well, I did enough, like, I can wait a few more days.” “But like at home, it's very, whatever goes especially like, the first few semesters just understanding how like remote learning works. And uh I think how my time was structured at that point was simply, it wasn't. But, I kind of went to whatever class I was struggling the most in I ended up putting in more time to that where yes, that makes more sense. If I'm struggling in it I should be putting in more time but also (unintelligible) away from the times putting in other classes I initially wasn't struggling in and I started struggling in those because I was putting all of my time into this one class where I should have just cut it off sooner.”</p>
Attention span or focus issues	Students describe how their attention span and focus issues influence their asynchronous online course withdrawal.	<p>“It's just incredibly flexible. So as like my mood changes throughout the day. And like, whatever things come up, I can just, like, find ways to like fit schoolwork in. I have a really poor attention span. So sitting in like, two, three hour classes would be pretty hard for me. And asynchronous learning just, I discovered I liked asynchronous learning from the pandemic. I was like this so much easier.” “I didn't realize how difficult it would be to take online, like, for people that already get distracted. I didn't realize at all. Um if I did, I probably I might have done things differently.” “So I guess like, uh I have like ADHD. So it's really hard for me to concentrate on things, especially for like long periods of time. So I've had to find a lot of different methods like what works, what doesn't. Um and like some things that have always been really hard has been like the studying and like time management because of like, the ADHD and all finding out which study methods work, because not every study method works for everybody.”</p>

Code	Code definition	Excerpts from data
Lack of routine, schedule, structure	Students describe how the lack of routine, schedule, and structure in the online format influences their asynchronous online course withdrawal.	"And internally, you kind of calibrate well, I have this much in class time. So I should spend this much time out of class working on the assignments. Where you have none of that in a completely asynchronous class." "Yeah, cuz it was, there were due dates, but they were like really spaced out really far apart. So I had all this time to kind of procrastinate. And so that's kind of like what I did at some time, because I would work one day, and then kind of like, well, I did enough, like, I can wait a few more days." "Um, Because there's nothing that I, besides like, assignment deadlines, there's nothing I have to make sure that I show up for. So it's just not in my head, like at all and so I need visual reminders like around me um to remind me that I have things to do. Otherwise, I just, it's gone in my head."
Intimidation, insecurity, low confidence, discouragement	Students describe how feelings of intimidation, insecurity, low confidence, and discouragement influence their asynchronous online course withdrawal.	"Say like with some of the bigger assignments, feeling slightly like overwhelmed and I think I'll keep putting it off due to being like overwhelmed with all of it and so that also like affected my grades." "So over the fact that I was overwhelmed with everything, yeah, it was, I felt very overwhelmed back then. And there was a lot going on." "And the more flustered, I feel, um and I guess the more like, I was feeling pretty, like discouraged with that class. And the more discouraged that I felt towards it, the more susceptible to distractions that I am, because it's like I like, low key, like, in the subconscious really don't want to be doing it because it's not something that makes me feel good. And like my confidence with that class is kind of shot. And so it's much easier to put it off, so." "And the reason I dropped it, like withdrew from the class was because of like one, the final paper, which I just felt like I was not smart enough to do. And like I was too intimidated. I got way too in my head, and I couldn't do it. So I just dropped it."
Lack of authority figure or pressure	Students describe how the lack of authority figure or pressure of being in person influences their asynchronous online course withdrawal.	"But now I kind of have all this time. And so it's like, I'm like, Well, like I can do my work. But also like, I don't have to because there's no one telling me really, you know." "But now I can't really sit still. Um, so that can also be a problem with online courses that have no meetings because I, there's nobody, there's nothing that's like keeping me sitting here. I am free to get up and procrastinate." "And then because it was online, like I didn't have to like kind of face the teacher, it was easier for me to like, oh, like, forget about it at that point."
Loss of important people	Students describe how the loss of important people influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	"I usually do fine with asynchronous, but during this time I had lost a close family member. Because of this loss, I was during terribly and my psychological state had worsened." "I loss a few people this year so it distracted me at times left me spacey."

Code	Code definition	Excerpts from data
Living situation	Students describe how their unstable living situation influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	"Um, during that semester, I moved to help, I moved in with my mother to help care for her." "And, and I was in a very structured place where you had to do your things, or you had a chance of being kicked out on the street, and that, and I wanted to succeed in my recovery." "Lack of internet/ homeless." "Oh, extremely. Extremely stressful. Yeah. So I was trying to manage that, work and, you know, taking care of her and, you know, that was and just the, the anxiety or the fear of, you know, she had a large tumor in her brain that was like, this size. So I was scared to death. Yeah, so that was that was a that was major factor, too. But it's, I mean, so it, like, I felt like doing schoolwork helped me in a way not to focus on those things. It was sort of an outlet, but it also hindered my being able to, to do as much as I wanted to do in class."
Employment	Students describe how their employment situations influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	"I think it contributed to my overall stress levels, which led to my decision to withdraw. Plus, it also didn't help that I would, um, I mainly work in the afternoons. So that would distract me from like remembering about assignments." "And then also, because of the position that I had, when there was an emergency, it was like I was the person who got to deal with it. So you didn't necessarily like have a set schedule. So in a way, it was like, it was great that that type of class accommodated that. But it was very, very difficult to maneuver both the things."
Financial issues	Students describe how financial issues influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	"Oh, actually, when I withdrew from the class, I thought I was going to have to forfeit the money I spent on the class or my parents spent and that made me very anxious and upset because I was wasting my parents' money. I felt terrible." "But I really just hated the idea of prolonging my situation, and especially the, like, just the consistent financial like strain that it has." "Um, I think it's mainly just for those online courses because they usually cost me like \$100 almost just for the online things and it's not like textbooks where you can like borrow or like ask someone else or like find it online."
Care of dependent children	Students describe how the care of their dependent children influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	"And it's kind of like you know, you get up, you go to school, you come home. Mom gotta still work. Or even days I didn't, I do homework. So she don't have a lot of time for us, you know, like we used to." "Um you know, you have to get kids to school and pick them up. In my case, I was in a city well a state where I didn't have family in that state. So everything was totally on me. So that's another load by itself. But I manage it."
Illnesses	Students describe how illnesses influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	"I think that um, when, like, your disability, like you get sick or something, and it makes it hard to turn in like an assignment or something and you're late, um you use that time, like trying to catch up instead of working on the stuff that's happening like then. And so it sort of snowballs into a bigger issue, till you can't really keep up with it or handle it." "It got very hard to keep up with everything. Yeah. I had the flu. I had the stomach flu. And then I had multiple infections and I don't even remember. So much stuff is back to back and it was horrendous."

Code	Code definition	Excerpts from data
Other external crises and commitments	Students describe how other crises and commitments outside of school influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	"Um, I think that COVID was happening at that time. So I would say that it may have been more difficult for me because of the extra anxiety and extra stress of, the world is in a pandemic that's never been experienced before in my lifetime." "How am I going to survive with this thing that's going on?"
Subject matter	Students describe how the subject matter of the course influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	"I seen the word art and I was like, yeah, this is gonna be a piece of cake." "Because I realized that this class was a harder class, and I wanted to like rise to the challenge. But it still didn't work and that kind of sucks." "I mean, reading, like old time, like ancient, you know, works like British literature works is difficult to understand." "And And I'm okay at writing. But like putting together an essay has always been hard for me. Like making it sound good. So that kind of like, docks me down a little bit. But definitely after I took the class, like, I rate my skills a lot lower, like, kind of pshh in confidence."
Amount of work required	Students describe how the amount of work required influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	"It's too much. There was too much to read from page 100 to page 350, and write a 600 word essay about this artist. And it's like, there was going to be a lot of that that semester." "And to hear that I have to write this about, like, where I have to do this, every week. I'm like, oh my god, I can't take it." "So he wanted us to do like this 15 page paper on, on what was it this? Beowulf, so Beowulf, and but he had read, he gave us so much information on how he wanted the paper formatted. He gave us this book that he had written. An instruction book on how to format a paper and how to use citations. Literally, it was 100 page book that he wrote, he wanted us to go through before we started the paper."
Type of work required	Students describe how the type of work required influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	"And I hate when professors like, like her, which she was very sweet, and I understand why professors do it, but I hate when an outline is required. I feel like that work is stupid. It shouldn't be required. If it's there to help the writer than the writer should, it should be optional for the writer to use." "Um I think the, one of the main issues was when we started doing a project that continued throughout the weeks, when it was like, here's the section for this week, and have it completed, that I felt like I did really good with. But then we started like a big project that rolled over, like throughout, like, multiple weeks. And I felt that was when things like started to become more difficult, was because it was like a build up. If you didn't finish this week, then you weren't prepared for the next week."
Accelerated courses	Students describe how taking accelerated courses influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	"Um I think that what I learned is that I really need to take it on a normal semester. A normal semester period because the short term it just was too much too fast." "If it wasn't accelerated you, assignments would be more spreaded out so it wouldn't be as many due in that week versus a regular semester." "And because it was a it, the course was during the summer, already, it was really condensed." "Let me show these people. Let me just jump in and take three classes right away in the summer semester and Bam. Reality."

Code	Code definition	Excerpts from data
Teaching Style	Students describe how the instructor's teaching style influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	"I learn at a slow pace and the teacher's teaching strategies did not mix well with my learning strategies." "The professor was kind of like, uh not, he expected us to do everything by ourselves, you know. And like, without any, like, communication of what he expected." "Well, there's there's no participation. So again, it goes back to that making it more difficult. Making it um, me having to find other ways to battle the ADHD." "So I think maybe just a little bit more one on one time, that that's the only thing that I could think that would help." "Um, he graded actually he graded by how well we did our search or citations. Yeah. Yeah, it wasn't any, I wasn't any content whatsoever. Really. I didn't get any. I didn't get any feedback about content." "But it was more like you did a good job, or something like, something like next time, something like, next time I want to see like a little more from you."
Lack of resources	Students describe how the lack of resources influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	"Uh, I think and I don't know if it's like, a possibility or not but if there was some way to get like even just audio, not even video, but just like audio of the textbook, that would have been significantly helpful." "The way he had his Blackboard set up was very difficult. It wasn't set up in in like, organized folders or anything like that." "And if I don't want them to come to me with questions, then maybe just be a little more clear or provide more example papers and more resources, so they could figure it out on their own."
No response to emailed questions	Students describe how receiving no response to emailed questions influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	"So yeah, and then when I we would ask questions, he wasn't there at all, you know, to respond to the questions, you know so." "So that was one of the hard parts of you know, and he didn't really answer any, you know, questions properly, either." "Who cares if you're in XX, I mean, you know, I mean, you're in XXX. You don't have an hour of the day? I know there's a time crunch and the time I mean, time change, but I mean, I don't care if it's three in the morning and we're sleeping and then you at least try to get back to us and write back to us. In the morning, we could see when we get on, that you answered the question or something. Never."
Late response to emailed questions	Students describe how receiving late response to emailed questions influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	"But with online stuff, asynchronous stuff, I've noticed all teachers have like, a little bit different of like, an email schedule, so they're usually will only answering emails. And then some days, they'll be like, I'm not answering emails on Thursdays, never on weekends, it'll take two to three days to get a response. If it's not in two, three days, email me again." "I like doing it in the moment too, because then I can make note of it and rather than over email, because I have to wait for a response. Especially if you have a question while doing an assignment, like for an assignment. You have to put that assignment on hold until you get the response from the professor. I hate that." "They were kind of slow to responding to emails which wasn't particularly helpful when I had a lot of questions because I was just struggling with a lot of the material."

Code	Code definition	Excerpts from data
Unhelpful response to emailed questions	Students describe how receiving unhelpful responses to emailed questions influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	“Some of it was helpful. Some of it wasn't. I think overall, for that ah I think it was because we're just keep, keep on going over the same like, resource.” “Um, he, like I said, he, it took him a while to answer back. And it was more so like, pointing me to the paperwork instead of like, ask, answering my questions. You know, so he would just direct me back to the article or, you know, whatever, instead of answering the question, like I needed it.”
Impersonal	Students describe how the perception that the instructor or course is impersonal influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	“And usually their replies and I know they don't mean it because they're busy people but they're very like brief like they're very brief and like blunt like, yeah.” “And I think I would have just been a little more open about communication and maybe, like made my replies a little less blunt, and like, just a little more welcoming, so that if like students feel that they do have questions like they can come to me.” “It was like, I didn't even I don't even remember like what that teacher's name was. They didn't really, they, it was very not personal.” “Because we didn't have like any kind of like introduction video from the professor.” “The summary of why I withdrew from that class? It was very, not personal. Didn't know the teacher.”
Instructors don't see or talk to you online	Students describe how the perception that instructors don't see or talk to you online influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	“So I thought maybe like, he would realize that I've been going to them a lot recently, like, maybe he would know that I'm really struggling with this assignment, but I don't think he did, yeah.” “Um, I mean, the teachers never discriminated against anything like that, especially because like we the teachers didn't really talk to us that much.” “I think it was, it's much easier to withdraw. Because in person, I can at least go in and be like, Well, yeah, like I should go and like the teachers will talk to you a little more usually, because they like they see you. And it's easier for them to like know, when you're missing. And I've had that before, but I think it was only once where my teacher noticed I wasn't going to like zoom meetings or anything. And so I do feel like it is much easier to like, drop out when it's just like, a completely online course.”
Lack of interaction with instructor	Students describe how the lack of interaction with the instructor influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	“Well, there's there's no participation. So again, it goes back to that making it more difficult. Making it um, me having to find other ways to battle the ADHD.” “And then also, I think, since you're not really interacting with anyone directly, I mean, there are, you can send an email to your professor, but it's not the same human interaction. So um it's just less stimulation I think, you know. It's it's kind of it's just all work. There's no other fun to it.” “Well we had some discussion posts, but he didn't respond to them. It was sort of like he would ask a question. He would put the question in the disc, he would put the question in the discussion post. And we would answer it and respond to two people, which sort of felt just like rote. It was just not, you know, it was busy work kind of. But he didn't like respond to anything.”

Code	Code definition	Excerpts from data
Forced, impersonal, material-based interaction	Students describe how the forced, impersonal, material-based nature of online peer interaction influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	<p>"It was very, you know, write your little essay thing, answer back to people. But it was sort of like, you felt like you were forced to do it. Not, you know, nobody was communicating besides, you know, responding to the essay a little bit." "And then for the rest of the course, your participation is just, you're replying to those classroom discussions. So you answer a question for the week, and then you respond to usually two people." "Because again, like the only way to, like, interact asynchronously, asynchronously is in the discussion board." "There was no interaction with other students." "But it's not it's, it's almost like I might as well be talking to a bot because it's very formal, very stilted. We're all just trying to meet a word count and get a good grade. So I don't really view that as interaction."</p>
Community through Discord app	Students describe how they found community through the Discord app when there was none in their courses.	<p>"Well, I can kind of like, ask everyone you know, on Discord, you know, on the app. And like, they'll get to me way faster because everyone's always like on their phone or on the computer." "We had a server where we could all, all the class, all the students could talk to each other, ask for help, talk about homework, study together. And I like that." "When it was purely just like on Canvas, or like, for, you know, where we where the modules like it put like our classroom online, I don't think so. Because the only time I interacted with them was like, during discussions, but like, once someone was like, oh, like, here's the discord where we can, like everyone can chat and kind of like send, you know, pictures. And I felt like a kind of more connected, because it was kind of like outside of school, like on this app, like a lot of people have nowadays. And so I think that's when I kind of felt more connected to everyone."</p>
Lonely, isolated, independent without peer connection	Students describe how feeling lonely, isolated, and independent without peer interaction influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	<p>"It felt like a connection and I just felt less lonely because like, and even sometimes I think that if I had a way to be like, connected like this with my classmates, it would help." "Like, I think that like companionship and that connection could have like really helped me." "Oh, I feel like it's a little lonely in a way because I'm doing things on my own. I like the classroom experience." "It's like drastically affected it. I have no new friends because of this. And I have friends from high school who are in college. Like, who are like in college in person, and they have like a new friend group, and they have like relationships and stuff like that. And I just I have no new friends." "No, it did feel very independent." "But again, with like that class that I withdrew from, I just felt so isolated and confused. Like it didn't work at all. So I had to withdraw."</p>

Code	Code definition	Excerpts from data
Peer communication is easier on campus	Students describe peer communication as easier on campus than online.	<p>“You can go up to a fellow student in a group the tell them hey, how do you want to tackle this group assignment this week? You want to work, this my schedule. This is what your schedule. We can meet after class. We can meet at the library. You don't do that on an online class.” “Interactions, it was just, oh, it was a lot easier. Because again, like the only way to, like, interact asynchronously, asynchronously is in the discussion board. Like I guess you could email someone, but it would be cool if we had like a chat feature or something like that. Because in high school, like, I would talk to people like during class to talk to people during lunch, and even when we weren't supposed to be talking, we would have a little chat feature in our Gmails. And we would just be like, talking to each other like on our Chromebooks and stuff like that. So yeah, there was like constantly interaction.”</p> <p>“And then asynchronously you don't get to talk to anyone. You don't get to know your peers.”</p>

Appendix G.**Field Test Participant 3 Transcript**

Field test transcripts are on file with Grand Canyon University.

Appendix H.

Feasibility and Benefits Checklist

The Feasibility and Benefits Checklist is on file at Grand Canyon University

Appendix I.

Recruitment Email and Facebook Questionnaire Recruitment Post



Grand Canyon University
College of Doctoral Studies
3300 W. Camelback Road
Phoenix, AZ 85017
Phone: 602-639-7804
Email: irb@qcu.edu

RECRUITMENT

Date: 5/20/2022

I am Stephanie Mattila, a doctoral student at Grand Canyon University. Dr. Danielle Hedegard in the College of Doctoral Studies is supervising this study. The purpose of this study is to explore how community college students with disabilities in California describe how student characteristics, student skills, external factors, and internal factors influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.

You can be in this study if you match the following study criteria:

- are over the age of 18 years.
- are an emancipated adult. This means you can make your own legal decisions.
- are enrolled with a disability support office at a California community college.
- have on your transcript from the prior two semesters at least one 'W' for withdrawal or 'EW' for excused withdrawal from an asynchronous online course.
- are enrolled in at least one course at a California community college.
- are willing to answer optional basic personal questions. These questions are related to age, number of dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type.

You cannot be in this study if you

- are under the age of 18 years.
- are not an emancipated adult. This means you cannot make your own legal decisions.
- do not have on your transcript from the prior two semesters at least one 'W' for withdrawal or 'EW' for excused withdrawal from an asynchronous online course.
- are not enrolled with a disability support office at a California community college.
- are not enrolled in at least one course at a California community college.
- are not willing to answer optional basic personal questions. These questions are related to age, number of dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type.

You will be asked to complete

- An online questionnaire that should not take longer than 22 mins. You may access the questionnaire via the link at the end of this document.
- An optional 45–60-min Zoom interview that will be video- and audio-recorded. You may choose not to volunteer for the interview. Simply do not click the link to offer your contact information.
- Three academic profile questions, 15 questions about your online course experiences, and one question about your reasons for withdrawal from an online course. You will be asked eight optional demographic questions about your age, number of dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type.

Your participation is voluntary.

I will protect your data with these steps. I will

- Save all data on a password-protected personal computer.
- Use code names instead of real names in the interview.
- Remove any data you might offer that could identify you. This will protect your identity.
- Destroy all data three years from my study defense date.
- Allow access to data by only my committee, IRB reviewers, and quality reviewers of Grand Canyon University.

If you have questions about this study, please contact me at [redacted] or by email at SMattila2@my.gcu.edu.

Link to Questionnaire

If interested, please click on the link to enter the questionnaire: [redacted]

Thank you,

Stephanie Mattila

Appendix J.

Recruitment Flier

Purpose: I am doing research to learn how community college students with disabilities in CA describe their reasons for withdrawal from asynchronous online courses.

Research Participants Needed

You can be in this study if you:

Are over the age of 18 years; Are an emancipated adult meaning you can make your own legal decisions; Are enrolled with a disability support office at a California community college; have on your transcript from the prior two semesters at least one 'W' for withdrawal or 'EW' for excused withdrawal from an asynchronous online course; are enrolled in at least one course at a California community college; and are willing to answer optional basic personal questions related to your age, number of dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type.



Stephanie Mattila
Doctoral Student,
Grand Canyon
University
SMattila2@my.gcu
.edu

If you or someone you know are interested in participating in this study, please click the link to Survey Monkey below to begin the questionnaire:



Research Activities

- (1) Complete an online questionnaire that should not take longer than 22 minutes. Link at the end of this flier.
- (2) Complete an optional 45- to 60-minute Zoom interview that will be audio- and video-recorded. You may choose not to volunteer for the interview.
- (3) Complete 3 academic profile questions, 15 questions about your online course experiences, and 1 question about your reasons for withdrawal from an online course. You will be asked 8 optional demographic questions about your age, number of dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type.

Appendix K.

Data Sources for the Research Questions

Overarching Research Question	Research Questions	Questionnaire	Interview	Question Numbers	
How do community college students with disabilities (SWD) describe their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?		X		QQ28	
	RQ1: How do community college SWD describe how student characteristics influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?		X	QQ7 QQ8 QQ17 QQ18 QQ23 QQ25 IQ5 IQ10	
	RQ2: How do community college SWD describe how student skills influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?			X	QQ24 QQ27 IQ7
	RQ3: How do community college SWD describe how external factors influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?			X	QQ26 IQ9
	RQ4: How do community college SWD describe how internal factors influenced their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal?			X	QQ2 QQ3 QQ19-QQ22 IQ1 IQ3 IQ4 IQ6 IQ8

Appendix L.

Resource Referral for Interview Participants

If you are:

Struggling with Anxiety: Create your own profile at Anxiety Social Net (anxietysocialnet.com) to connect with people dealing with everything from social anxiety to agoraphobia. Prefer to meet in person? Find a state-by-state list of support groups at the Anxiety and Depression Association of America's website (adaa.org).

Struggling with Depression or Bipolar Disorder: Locate an in-person or online group at the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance site (dbsalliance.org).

Struggling with Postpartum Depression: The Postpartum Progress site (postpartumprogress.com) lists support groups in nearly every state as well as in Canada and maintains an online forum.

Struggling with Schizophrenia: The Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America facilitates groups nationwide; find one on its site (sardaa.org). You can also dial into its phone groups (855-640-8271) at 7 P.M. ET Sunday, Thursday and Friday with the pass code 88286491#.

Plagued by Obsessive-Compulsive Thoughts and Behaviors: More than 200 groups are listed with the International OCD Foundation (iocdf.org), which aids those affected by the disorder and their families.

The Adult Child of an Alcoholic: The Adult Children of Alcoholics World Service Organization maintains numerous support groups and hosts call-in and online sessions (meetings.adultchildren.org).

Grieving Someone Who Died by Suicide: Join one of the many groups for survivors listed on the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention website (afsp.org).

A Survivor of Rape, Sexual Assault or Incest: After Silence (aftersilence.org) is a message board and chat room for victims of sexual violence.

Battling Anorexia, Bulimia, Bing Eating or Food Addiction: Eating Disorder Hope catalogs online support groups (eatingdisorderhope.com/recovery/support-groups/online); it also offers help and advice for those close to someone struggling to overcome an eating disorder.

Battling Sex Addiction: Sex Addicts Anonymous (saa-recovery.org), similar to Alcoholics Anonymous, offers a widespread network of in-person, online, and phone meetings.

Self-Harming: DailyStrength hosts a web forum where people dealing with self-injury can find encouragement, understanding, and a new way to cope (dailystrength.org/group/self-injury).



A Veteran Who Is Injured Or Has PTSD: The VA Combat Call Center—877-WAR-VETS (877-927-8387)—is staffed 24/7 by fellow combat veterans or spouses of disabled veterans who can offer immediate help; the Vet Center program site (vetcenter.va.gov) can direct visitors to both group and private counseling.

Oprah.com. (n.d.). *13 mental health resources that are absolutely free*. Retrieved October 18, 2021, from <https://www.oprah.com/omagazine/free-online-resources-for-mental-illness>

Appendix M.

UserInterviews™ Screener Survey

Page 1

⋮ Are you an emancipated adult? This means you are able to make your own legal decisions.*  

- Yes - *Accept*
- No - *Reject*

⋮ What type of college do you currently attend?*

- University (grants bachelor degrees and higher) - *Reject*
- State college (grants bachelor degrees and higher) - *Reject*
- Community or junior college (grants certificates and associate degrees only) - *Accept*
- Vocational school- (does not grant associate degrees) - *Reject*
- I am not currently attending any college - *Reject*

⋮ Are you enrolled or registered with disability support services at your community college?*

- Yes - *Accept*
- No - *Reject*

⋮ What type of community college courses have you previously enrolled in?*

- Only on-campus courses - *Reject*
- Some on-campus courses and some online courses - *Accept*
- Only online courses - *Accept*

⋮ Which types of online courses have you enrolled in? *

- Only synchronous online courses, where the instructor and the students engage with the course content and each other at the same time, but from different locations (Example: Zoom, Google Meet, Skype, etc.) - *Reject*
- Only asynchronous online courses, where the instructor and the students engage with the course content at different times and from different locations (Example: Canvas, Blackboard, etc.) - *Accept*

☰ Which types of online courses have you enrolled in? *



- Only synchronous online courses, where the instructor and the students engage with the course content and each other at the same time, but from different locations (Example: Zoom, Google Meet, Skype, etc.) - *Reject*
- Only asynchronous online courses, where the instructor and the students engage with the course content at different times and from different locations (Example: Canvas, Blackboard, etc.) - *Accept*
- A mix of both synchronous and asynchronous online courses - *Accept*

☰ Do you have on your transcript from the prior two semesters at least one `W` for withdrawal or `EW` for excused withdrawal from an asynchronous online course?*



- Yes - *Accept*
- No - *Reject*

☰ Are you willing to answer optional basic personal questions related to age, number of dependents, employment status, income level, housing, gender, race, and disability type? *



- Yes - *Accept*
- No - *Reject*

☰ Do you agree to sign an electronic consent form prior to participating in the interview? *



- Yes, I do. - *Accept*
- No, I don't. - *Reject*

➕ Add new question

🔗 Add skip logic

Appendix N.

UserInterviews™ Participant Information

Demographic Characteristics

Age
18 or more

Marital status
Include all

Race / Ethnicity
Include all

Living situation
Include all

Gender
Include all

Home owner
Include all

Household income in USD
Include all

Children
Include all

Level of education
Some college

Professional Characteristics

Employment status
Full-time student, Part-time student

Seniority
Include all

Type of income
Include all

Technical Characteristics

Browsers
Include all

Smartphone operating system
Include all

Computer with a webcam
Has a webcam

Tablet operating system
Include all

Computer operating system
Include all

Appendix O.

Questionnaire Participant Demographic Data

Questionnaire participant number	Age	Number of dependent children	Employment status	Hours worked per week	Income level	Lived with	Gender	Ethnicity
QP1	25–34 years	2	Unemployed	Skipped	Low	Parent, spouse, 2 children	F	White / Native American
QP2	25–34 years	1	Employed	40 or more	Low	Parent, Spouse and/or children	F	Black / African American
QP3	18–24 years	0	Unemployed	Skipped	Middle	Parent,s	M	Hispanic, Latino, Spanish
QP4	18–24 years	0	Unemployed	Skipped	Low	Parent,s	F	Hmong
QP5	18–24 years	0	Employed	40 or more	Low	Parent,s	F	Hispanic, Latino, Spanish
QP6	35–44 years	2	Unemployed	Skipped	Low	Spouse and/or children	F	White / Native American
QP7	25–34 years	0	Employed	Less than 20	Low	Non-family others	M	Black / African American
QP8	18–24 years	0	Employed	20–39	Low	Parent,s	F	Hispanic, Latino, Spanish
QP9	18–24 years	0	Unemployed	Skipped	Low	Parent,s	F	Hispanic, Latino, Spanish
QP10	18–24 years	0	Employed	Less than 20	Low	Parent,s	F	Hispanic, Latino, Spanish
QP11	18–24 years	2	Employed	20–39	Low	Parent,s	F	Hispanic, Latino, Spanish
QP13	25–34 years	0	Unemployed	Skipped	Skipped	Skipped	Skipped	Skipped
QP14	35–44 years	0	Employed	Less than 20	Low	With non-family others	F	Black / African American
QP15	18–24 years	4 or more	Employed	40 or more	Low	Parent,s	M	Hispanic, Latino, Spanish

Questionnaire participant number	Age	Number of dependent children	Employment status	Hours worked per week	Income level	Lived with	Gender	Ethnicity
QP16	18–24 years	0	Unemployed	Skipped	Preferred not to answer	Parent,s	M	Hispanic, Latino, Spanish
QP17	25–34 years	0	Employed	40 or more	Low	Spouse and/or children	F	Black / African American
QP18	18–24 years	1	Unemployed	Skipped	Preferred not to answer	Spouse and/or children	F	Preferred not to answer
QP19	18–24 years	0	Unemployed	Skipped	Low	Parent,s	M	Black / African American
QP20	25–34 years	0	Unemployed	Skipped	Preferred not to answer	Parent,s	F	Hispanic, Latino, Spanish
QP21	35–44 years	1	Preferred not to answer	Skipped	Low	With non-family others	M	White / Native American
QP22	25–34 years	1	Employed	Less than 20	Skipped	Skipped	Skipped	Skipped
QP23	18–24 years	0	Employed	Less than 20	Low	Parent,s	Preferred not to answer	Preferred not to answer
QP24	25–34 years	0	Preferred not to answer	Skipped	Low	Preferred not to answer	M	Black / African American
QP25	25–34 years	3	Employed	40 or more	Low	Homeless	F	Black / African American

Appendix P.

Reflective Journal Entry

Photos of handwritten reflective journal entry redacted and on file with Grand Canyon University

Appendix Q.

Interview Transcript

Interview Participant 4, October 17, 2022, 56 mins

Researcher 03:07 So to begin, then, can you tell me about your educational goal in college?

IP4 03:11 Um, I am in community college trying to get my associates. That's what I'm doing. Like, while I'm while I'm in community college right now. And then I think eventually, my goal would be to transfer to more of like a four-year kind of thing. Maybe at my local state university. And I don't know what I want to do yet. Really, that's part of why I chose Community College, because it's just kind of less expensive way to like, give yourself time to figure it out. Yeah.

Researcher 03:44 What's your major right now?

IP4 03:46 Um, right now, I think it's something in business like a science business. I'm not really sure. I don't pay too much attention to it, because I don't intend on sticking with it.

Researcher 03:59 Okay, so that leads into my next question, which was, How committed are you to that goal?

IP4 04:06 Not super committed. I just want to leave myself really open while I get my prereqs.

Researcher 04:18 Right. Any ideas that kind of cross your mind as far as what you think you might be interested in doing when you're done with school?

IP4 04:25 I don't really have like a passion or a calling. But I do like the idea of being financially stable and just secure throughout my life. And I think human resources is something I'm interested in. We have a family friend's daughter is in human resources, and she seems to really like her job. It just seems like something I could do. And I have a neighbor who's also in human resources. And I've talked to her and she seems like she has a good time. So yeah.

Researcher 04:57 All right. So that's a possibility. How would you describe the kind of student you are?

IP4 05:06 Um, I would say I, I get things done but it's like a painful process. Like, I'm more of like, the end result is what counts and not really, how I got there.

Researcher 05:20 Okay, so talk more about the painful part of it.

IP4 05:27 I'm just super bad with like, all like time management like procrastination, like just having bad mental health issues. So like, it just makes the process of getting assignments done, and like turning things in and studying, like, really hard for me. But I think a lot of the reasons I didn't get help a lot sooner was because I would always like pull it out in the end, like, in the end, I would, I would usually, like get a pretty good grade. And that was working until it kind of stopped working. So yeah.

Researcher 06:05 So that doesn't work anymore?

IP4 06:08 Um, yeah, it kind of works. I mean, as you know, I did withdraw from a class. So it kind of is making me reflect on my process.

Researcher 06:20 Okay. So tell me about the classes that you take right now. Are you taking solely asynchronous online classes? Or are you doing a mix of on campus and online?

IP4 06:32 I'm taking solely asynchronous classes. The, I have like social anxiety. So it's a challenge for me to like, be motivated to go on campus. And I just I realized the other day, how much I like the feeling of not having school tomorrow. Like, I don't have to wake up for school, I don't have to plan for school. And it's, it's just kind of like, I don't know how healthy it is. But it's like a, it's like a relieving feeling.

Researcher 07:07 So how does being asynchronous online help with the issues that you come across?

IP4 07:17 It's just incredibly flexible. So as like my mood changes throughout the day. And like, whatever things come up, I can just, like, find ways to like fit schoolwork in. I have a really poor attention span. So sitting in like, two, three hour classes would be pretty hard for me. And asynchronous learning just, I discovered I liked asynchronous learning from the pandemic. I was like this so much easier. So yeah.

Researcher 07:53 Okay. Have you done any on campus courses in college so far?

IP4 07:55 Not yet.

Researcher 07:58 Okay. Did you do high school asynchronously, or were you on campus for high school?

IP4 08:02 I was on campus for high school until COVID. And then I was asynchronous the rest. So part of my junior year and all of my senior year.

Researcher 08:15 All right, so you, you mentioned that you're not very good with time management, can you go a little bit more into that?

IP4 08:22 Um, I just, I, when I feel like intimidated by assignments, like, I'll just really put them off. I'll also like severely underestimate, like, the time it takes for me to get things done. Like I was beating myself the other day, up the other day, because I realized it took me an hour to write a single paragraph. Because I don't know it was just really hard for me at that time. But yeah, I just, I'm not that good. Yeah.

Researcher 08:58 What other study habits besides time management do you think are necessary to do well?

IP4 09:07 Um, I think like reviewing and there's just like, I think an initiative you have to take with some courses that I just can't get, like, you have to put in like the extra time like you can't just do the assignments that the teacher gives you. You have to like make flashcards you have to review things every so often. And if like there's not an assignment that I am looking at, like I just forget about it's like an like an object permanence issue. Like if it's not on screen, then I just don't do it. So yeah, I'm not good at taking that extra initiative to like, set myself up for success.

Researcher 09:53 What I thought I heard you say was certain classes are that way? Is that correct? So sometimes you will take the initiative but others you can't?

IP4 10:03 It's more like some classes require it and others don't. Like I would say math definitely, because you're learning so many different things. And by the time you get to like a cumulative final, like it is necessary to take, like, repetition like to like do flashcards review your old assignments, like every so often, in order to get a good grade in math, I would say that's true. But with like, I'm taking a stress management class. And I wouldn't say that I need to, like do take that initiative with that class, because I just think it's a lot easier, but that's just my opinion.

Researcher 10:43 So is it ease of the material that helps with that?

IP4 10:49 Um, yeah, I'd say so. I guess I, I'm speaking as if it's universal. It's just me personally. I'm not very good at math. And I'm also, I also noticed this in psychology, just like with all the different studies that are that, like you learn about over the course of the course, by the time you get to like a cumulative final, you would have had to have like, review those studies, like it would be really hard to just remember.

Researcher 11:19 Alright, So when you started college, right out of high school, how prepared do you think you were for it?

IP4 11:30 Um, I was not super prepared. So I actually decided to take a, one class over the summer, before, like, an actual startup term. I just decided to take one class, just to really ease myself into it. And I would say also, like, learning online during high school, and learning online during college really helped me because it was just pretty similar. Like, obviously, I was a lot more scared, because I was worried, like, professors would be mean to me. But yeah, it was pretty similar. It was not so bad.

Researcher 12:11 Okay, so you felt pretty good about expectations of what college would be like?

IP4 12:17 Yeah, yeah. I just knew it would be like the same.

Researcher 12:23 Great. How easy or difficult would you say schooling comes to you? And why?

IP4 12:29 Um, I'd say it's always been incredibly difficult. And I, it wasn't always that way. But just for some reason, I just got worse. But. But yeah, it does not come easy to me. It's a big source of insecurity. Because I do view like academic intelligence as like the kind of intelligence. I know that's not the case. But it's the intelligence I value most highly. And it's also something I've never been able to attain.

Researcher 13:06 So how would you say you learn information best? What is your learning style?

IP4 13:11 Um, I think I'm a visual learner. For sure. Seeing things helps me. I noticed that again, from online or learning, like a lecture where I'm listening to a teacher doesn't really work the same as like me being able to, like, look at it. It just, it flows a lot better that way.

[remainder of transcript redacted and on file with Grand Canyon University]

Appendix R.

List of Final Themes, Definitions, Research Questions Addressed, and Quotes from Each Theme

Final themes	Theme definitions	RQs addressed	Quotes from each theme
Theme 1: Community college students with disabilities describe how disabilities influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	Students describe how disability-related lack of motivation or interest, their physical and mental health, focus and time management issues, distractibility, forgetfulness, and negative course experiences influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	ORQ, RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4	“Um, I had a really bad, like, I think like, week or two just like with my illness. It, you can have like flare ups. And so I had one of those. And I missed like, I couldn't really do anything for like that week and a half, two weeks, because my illness like also does impact you like mentally, with like that um brain fog and concentration, communication and everything.” “It just doesn't make me like really feel as good because, like, like once like, I feel like any pain or like, I get anxious, it's hard for me to sit down and like really want to focus like on my schoolwork because I'm like, Well, I'm more worried about myself right now.” “I think that um, when, like, your disability, like you get sick or something, and it makes it hard to turn in like an assignment or something and you're late, um you use that time, like trying to catch up instead of working on the stuff that's happening like then. And so it sort of snowballs into a bigger issue, till you can't really keep up with it or handle it.”
Theme 2: Community college students with disabilities describe how time management issues influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	Students describe how procrastination and prioritization, attention span or focus issues, lack of routine, schedule or structure, intimidation, insecurity, low confidence, discouragement, and lack of authority figure or pressure influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	ORQ, RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4	"But now I kind of have all this time. And so it's like, I'm like, Well, like I can do my work. But also like, I don't have to because there's no one telling me really, you know." "But now I can't really sit still. Um, so that can also be a problem with online courses that have no meetings because I, there's nobody, there's nothing that's like keeping me sitting here. I am free to get up and procrastinate." "And internally, you kind of calibrate well, I have this much in class time. So I should spend this much time out of class working on the assignments. Where you have none of that in a completely asynchronous class." "And uh I think how my time was structured at that point was simply, it wasn't." “I think I'll keep putting it off due to being like overwhelmed with all of it and so that also like affected my grades.”

Final themes	Theme definitions	RQs addressed	Quotes from each theme
Theme 3: Community college students with disabilities describe how external life crises and commitments influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	Students describe how losses, living situations, employment, financial issues, care of dependent children, illnesses, and other crises and commitments influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	ORQ and RQ3	"I usually do fine with asynchronous, but during this time I had lost a close family member. Because of this loss, I was during terribly and my psychological state had worsened." "So my mom had a brain surgery. So, she, that, I was dealing with, you know, helping take care of her too at that time so, yeah." "And, and I was in a very structured place where you had to do your things, or you had a chance of being kicked out on the street, and that, and I wanted to succeed in my recovery." "And also, when um, you know, financially, I'm not stressed out about how am I going to work? How am I going to survive?"
Theme 4: Community college students with disabilities describe how the type of course influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	Students describe how the subject matter, amount of work, type of work, and accelerated course pace influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	ORQ, RQ1, RQ2, and RQ4	"Um I think that what I learned is that I really need to take it on a normal semester. A normal semester period because the short term it just was too much too fast." "And because it was a, it, the course was during the summer, already, it was really condensed." "It's too much. There was too much to read from page 100 to page 350, and write a 600 word essay about this artist. And it's like, there was going to be a lot of that that semester." "And so I missed that, like, week and a half and I just wasn't able to catch up. And focusing on what I missed caused me to fall behind on the week that I was there for, because it was the project that was building upon each other."
Theme 5: Community college students with disabilities describe how the instructor's teaching style influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	Students describe how the instructor's teaching style, lack of resources, and lack of, late, or unhelpful responses to emailed questions influence their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	ORQ, RQ2, and RQ4	"But to me, it was like, you know, if you're going to be a professor, give time to your students, you know. Set a day away. Say, Okay, I'm gonna sit down, I'm gonna have meetings with my students today, you know, or read their email, you know." "I learn at a slow pace and the teacher's teaching strategies did not mix well with my learning strategies." "Uh, I think and I don't know if it's like, a possibility or not but if there was some way to get like even just audio, not even video, but just like audio of the textbook, that would have been significantly helpful." "The way he had his Blackboard™ set up was very difficult. It wasn't set up in in like, organized folders or anything like that."

Final themes	Theme definitions	RQs addressed	Quotes from each theme
Theme 6: Community college students with disabilities describe how a lack of personal connection with the instructor influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	Students describe how the impersonal feel of the course, the instructors not seeing or talking to students, and the lack of interaction with the instructor influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	ORQ and RQ4	"Um, he graded actually he graded by how well we did our search or citations. Yeah. Yeah, it wasn't any, I wasn't any content whatsoever. Really. I didn't get any. I didn't get any feedback about content." "But it was more like you did a good job, or something like, something like next time, something like, next time I want to see like a little more from you." "They could have also participated, and maybe, you know, asked some questions as well, um to get some feedback. So to get the, you know, the conversation going." "So I thought maybe like, he would realize that I've been going to them a lot recently, like, maybe he would know that I'm really struggling with this assignment, but I don't think he did, yeah." "Um, I mean, the teachers never discriminated against anything like that, especially because like we the teachers didn't really talk to us that much."
Theme 7: Community college students with disabilities describe how a lack of personal connection with peers influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	Students describe how forced, impersonal, material-based interactions, community found only through Discord™, feeling lonely, isolated, and independent, and the perception that peer communication is easier on campus influences their reasons for asynchronous online course withdrawal.	ORQ and RQ4	"But it's not it's, it's almost like I might as well be talking to a bot because it's very formal, very stilted. We're all just trying to meet a word count and get a good grade. So I don't really view that as interaction." "You can go up to a fellow student in a group the tell them hey, how do you want to tackle this group assignment this week? You want to work, this my schedule. This is what your schedule. We can meet after class. We can meet at the library. You don't do that on an online class." "It felt like a connection and I just felt less lonely because like, and even sometimes I think that if I had a way to be like, connected like this with my classmates, it would help." "Like, I think that like companionship and that connection could have like really helped me."

Appendix S.

The Three Most Important Reasons Students Withdraw From Asynchronous Courses

Response/Reason	The most important reason I withdrew was	The second most important reason I withdrew was	The third most important reason I withdrew was	Frequency
That type of course is too difficult to take online	QP1, QP8, QP12, QP16	QP4, QP15	QP9, QP11	8
My age				0
My commitment to my dependent children	QP18, QP21, QP25	QP6, QP7, QP21	QP21	7
I had never taken an online course and did not know what to expect		QP8, QP9, QP16, QP17		4
My commitment to my employment	QP17	QP5, QP25		3
I had financial difficulty	QP5		QP6, QP7, QP18, QP25	4
My living situation		QP14, QP18		3
My gender/sex				0
It was too hard to stay motivated to complete the course successfully	QP4, QP9, QP14, QP19	QP10	QP5, QP8	7
My race/ethnicity				0
My disability	QP6, QP20	QP12	QP1, QP3	5
I fell behind and was unable to catch up	QP15, QP24	QP1	QP10, QP14	5
Lack of commitment to my goal	QP3		QP17	2
I did not realize I enrolled in an online course				0
A feeling of isolation in the online course		QP11, QP20, QP24		3
Other commitments outside of school	QP7		QP4, QP15, QP19	4
I did not like the instructor's teaching style		QP3, QP19	QP16, QP20	4
I did not want a bad grade affecting my GPA	QP10, QP11		QP12, QP24	4
I had too many technical problems				0

“Other” responses:

Wasn't being given my DSS approved accommodations that the professor agreed to (QP1)

I loss a few people this year so it distracted me at times left me spacey (QP15)

Appendix T.

How Disability Influences Students' Withdrawal from the Asynchronous Course

Questionnaire participant number	Response
QP1	I wasn't being given my accommodations that the professor agreed to, so I couldn't stay afloat
QP2	My symptoms at the time were really bad and I couldn't focus on assignments, I was too anxious or no motivation to complete the assignments.
QP3	My mo. Couldn't help me in everything
QP4	It didn't, I wear a prosthetic leg. I just had too many things on my plate and couldn't continue the course.
QP5	Could not focus and lost interest
QP6	I have ADHD and I struggled with time management issues in both my household and school work.
QP7	Did not
QP8	Prefer not to answer
QP9	decided it was not best for me
QP10	I usually do fine with asynchronous, but during this time I had lost a close family member. Because of this loss, I was during terribly and my psychological state had worsened.
QP11	I was unable to focus and set time aside to study this unknown topic
QP12	I learn at a slow pace and the teacher's teaching strategies did not mix well with my learning strategies.
QP13	
QP14	Not interested in the course any more
QP15	Well with having dyscalculia I had a hard time remembering basic formulas especially when negative numbers were involved it made it difficult because test scores were pretty low because I couldn't do a few things.
QP16	had trouble focusing
QP17	I could not focus or find motivation to continue
QP18	Was unable to stay focused.
QP19	It did not.
QP20	Because I was not getting the help I needed
QP21	it did not cause it
QP22	
QP23	sdrtsert
QP24	It was very difficult to teach myself
QP25	Lack of internet/ homeless

Appendix U.

Students' Views on Taking Other Subjects Asynchronously After Withdrawal

Questionnaire participant number	Yes or No	Why
QP1	Yes	Most classes are still online and professors tend to like asynchronous classes
QP2		
QP3	Yes	My mom can help me better
QP4	Yes	It's easier for me when I work and have to run errands
QP5	Yes	Due to COVID all classes were online
QP6	Yes	Required for my degree.
QP7	Yes	To save gas money
QP8	No	I learn best when I'm sitting in a classroom
QP9	Yes	Because I understand how it works now
QP10	Yes	If it is absolutely necessary, I will complete the classes to graduate.
QP11	Yes	I feel like I now have better studying techniques and I have a better idea of successful ways I retain information
QP12	Yes	Because it is apart of requirements for my degree.
QP13		
QP14	Yes	Because it is more important to me
QP15	Yes	Because my disability made really just math hard axiety over test days things like that made it hard,but with classes like biology I really enjoyed it let me work more hours as they let me be in class while I am there.
QP16	No	because i didnt want to go through what i went through the first time
QP17	Yes	Because I don't quit
QP18	Yes I will	Willing to try things that'll help me.
QP19	Yes	It was required for my major and as pre req.
QP20	Yes	It's on my ED plan
QP21	Yes	easier for me since i have one leg
QP22		
QP23		
QP24	Yes	I love learning
QP25	Yes	I need to pass this class in order to be my career

Appendix V.

Students' Views on Taking the Same Course Again Asynchronously After

Withdrawal

Questionnaire participant number	Response
QP1	Not happening. It's only taught by one professor and I'm not doing that again
QP2	
QP3	Pretty good since it would be my second time
QP4	I think I may pass with a C or B
QP5	I would feel that I will be able to manage the class and pass it.
QP6	Yes.
QP7	Confident
QP8	I wouldn't take this course online again
QP9	I would complete it better with a better grade
QP10	I would feel competent to complete it.
QP11	I feel more confident about being successful in the course now
QP12	I feel like I will successfully complete with my prior experience.
QP13	
QP14	Success it is the more important than towards me
QP15	Still feel low esteem for the math classes online
QP16	I would ace it because i learn from mistakes
QP17	I could do it with help
QP18	The same
QP19	Now? Yes! Successfully
QP20	I always feel good about it until the actual time comes
QP21	great
QP22	
QP23	
QP24	Confident
QP25	Some what confident

Appendix W.

Students' Views on Their Ability to Complete the Asynchronous Course When They Started It

Questionnaire participant number	Response
QP1	I thought it would be an easy-ish class
QP2	
QP3	I had no choice there was no in person classes available for me since I had to have the vaccine and I'm terrified of needles
QP4	I wasn't sure if I was gonna finish this course because I was having a hard time in my biology class.
QP5	I believe that I would be able to manage working full time and sometimes over time, taking evening classes, and taking online class.
QP6	Unfortunately, I haven't been able to retake and successfully pass this course yet.
QP7	Fairly unconfident.
QP8	I felt pretty confident that I would pass, but in reality it was harder than what I expected it to be
QP9	I felt that I could complete it successfully
QP10	I felt pretty confident to complete because I had completed some asynchronous classes before said semester.
QP11	I was weary about learning a new subject since it is hard to learn unfamiliar topics
QP12	I felt like I wasn't going to pass the class because I honestly didn't understand the topic.
QP13	
QP14	So I can pass the course
QP15	I didn't think I was able to do it the first time especially with work so I decided that I was better off dropping MATH102 for the third time and take it again next semester with more planning.
QP16	it felt great
QP17	Very small chance
QP18	Nervous before even beginning the course because I am not good at math.
QP19	I felt able to complete it successfully!
QP20	I felt very good about it
QP21	fine and I will finish it next semester for sure
QP22	
QP23	
QP24	No confidence but I know have a AA in math and science in business and continuing it for marketing.
QP25	Confident