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Quality of Life in Young Adults With Dyslexia

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Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

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Nathanael G. Kirkegaard

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Walden University
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Abstract

Quality of Life in Young Adults With Dyslexia

by

Nathanael G. Kirkegaard

MA, Walden University, 2013

BS, Liberty University, 2011

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Research has emphasized cognitive differences and emotional and behavioral dysfunctionality related to dyslexia. However, there has been limited emphasis on quality-of-life (QOL) experiences on adults with dyslexia within educational, work, family, and social environments. The purpose of this narrative study was to explore the lived experiences of adults with dyslexia to better understand QOL experiences. The integrative quality-of-life (IQOL) theory was used to address QOL from a subjective, existential, and objective perspective to define what QOL means more completely. The narrative approach was used to explore chain-of-event themes throughout a participant's told story to examine QOL experiences. Seven participants were interviewed to document their unique experiences related to dyslexia and QOL. Furthermore, four environments (education, work, family, and social) were explored to inquire where dyslexia had influence on QOL experiences. Within each environment, the subjective, existential, and objective perspectives were explored. The key results showed that struggling with dyslexia had far reaching implications that went beyond the educational environment. QOL experiences related to dyslexia stemmed from both internally and externally caused perceptions. The type of intervention used to address issues with dyslexia influenced patterns of behavior, beliefs, and overall QOL experiences. This study can promote positive social change by educating parents, teachers, and researchers on the far-reaching implications dyslexia has over the course of a life as related to QOL experiences. With awareness, interventions can be designed to mitigate the negative impact and optimize the QOL experiences of individuals with dyslexia.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

This study was designed to take a close look at quality-of-life (QOL) experiences of young adults with dyslexia. Historically, researchers have focused on specific cognitive and emotional differences associated with individuals with dyslexia. This focus has helped build a significant amount of knowledge and strategy to better address educational difficulties. However, these studies have been too narrow, with a large emphasis on children and the cognitive/emotional emphasis being limited to specific experiences. Exploring QOL allowed me to broaden the perspective. By addressing chain-of-event (COE) experiences that influence overall QOL, I provided a bridge to better understand how young adults with dyslexia perceive themselves within a given environment (educational, work, family, and social). COE can be defined as an accumulation of life experiences that link together through cognitive, social, and emotional experiences, resulting in a particular outcome.

Previous researchers have addressed emotional struggles and needs through documented accounts regarding individuals with dyslexia and their experiences with life (Cameron, 2016). However, these studies primarily addressed children or had a narrow focus on specific issues. This study was designed to broaden the perspective by exploring COE themes and providing a narrative to further address QOL experiences. The potential social implication for this type of study is to inform the community on the COE influences on QOL experiences for young adults with dyslexia. More specifically, educators, employers, parents, and peers can have a more complete explanation of the

accumulated influence of negative experiences. Researchers have indicated that emotional problems do not stem from one isolated experience but rather an accumulation of negative experiences that occur throughout a period (Russell et al., 2015). My focus was on young adults with dyslexia because they are at a prime cognitive stage to reason through their life experiences. Also, their life experiences have likely permeated several environments (i.e., educational, work, family, and social). The participants' ability to formulate a rich narrative around life experiences was the foundation of my study. Without a rich narrative, I am left with speculation on how individuals with dyslexia experience QOL.

Background of the Problem

Early research in the field of dyslexia was concerned with understanding the cognitive and biological differences of those who are dyslexic versus those who are not, with the primary emphasis on children and adolescents (Bonifacci et al., 2013; Vellutino et al., 2004). As research expanded in this field, more emphasis was placed on specific emotional experiences, suggesting dyslexia to be a dimensional disorder (Snowling & Hulme, 2012). Researchers who focused on emotional experiences addressed a wider range of age groups, branching out into late adolescents and young adults in both work and college settings. However, these studies focused on specific emotional difficulties, such as anxiety and low self-esteem (Beer et al., 2014; Cameron, 2016; Carroll & Iles, 2006; Claassens & Lessing, 2015; Jordan et al., 2014; Klassen et al., 2011; Leather et al., 2011; Nalavany et al., 2015; Nergard-Nilssen & Hulme, 2014; Skinner & MacGill, 2015). This is in contrast to the research that emphasized cognitive and biological

differences amongst children and adolescents. Some studies also alluded to other emotional difficulties, such as depression, low self-perception, and maladaptive behaviors, but that was not the primary focus. Cameron (2016) identified that adults with dyslexia are more likely to have lower self-esteem, especially in educational environments: “Adults with dyslexia often have to manage memories of very challenging experiences at school, which continue to have an impact upon their adult educational experiences” (p. 224). However, these studies did not address COE occurrences that may lead to experiences such as depression, low self-perception, and maladaptive behaviors. Therefore, each studied experience (i.e., depression, low self-perception, and maladaptive behaviors) is recognized without a deeper look into how they manifested. Moreover, no researcher has specifically addressed COE possibilities on QOL. There is no clear explanation on COE themes that may occur throughout the lifespan. Therefore, in this study, I compiled told stories (rich with specific events) related to cognitive, social, and emotional experiences related to dyslexia and the resulting outcomes. By exploring specific events and comparing the resulting experiences to other specific events, I started the process of understanding COE possibilities on QOL.

By exploring these COE themes, the research further expanded the understanding of prolonged stress and its emotional influence on young adults with dyslexia between the ages of 22 to 35. Furthermore, this study broadened the wealth of knowledge on dyslexia by analyzing told stories to draw out common themes linking depression, low self-perception, and maladaptive behaviors to life experiences. Told stories are significant because they are first-hand accounts of the subjective experiences felt by each participant

within their educational, work, family, and social environments. More specifically, this study addressed the told stories of young adults with dyslexia who provided personal narratives to explain how these common themes came about and how their experiences have swayed on QOL.

Problem Statement

Although there has been significant research into childhood dyslexia and the emotional repercussions found to influence adulthood, no emphasis has been placed on addressing the COEs that shape QOL experiences for young adults with dyslexia. COEs are the accumulated experiences that link together and have influence on how a person experiences QOL. QOL can be defined as having a good life, which encompasses experiences related to education, work, family, and social environments (Ventegodt et al., 2003). Children and young adults with dyslexia often have problems with QOL issues. For instance, children and young adults with dyslexia may experience depression and anxiety linked to earlier experiences in areas such as academic achievement, motivation, teacher interaction, and peer involvement (Casserly, 2013; Grills-Taquechel et al., 2012; Schulte-Korne, 2010). Researchers have suggested that dyslexia leads to continued struggles associated with self-efficacy, motivation, positive social development, and career development (Cameron, 2016; Grills-Taquechel et al., 2012). Kola et al. (2014) indicated that dyslexia has the potential to significantly influence key aspects of adult life, such as educational attainment, job status, and social mobility. Thus, the transition from adolescence to adulthood for individuals with dyslexia may present difficulties in conjunction to QOL. More specifically, Kola et al. reported that this transition is often

filled with social, emotional, and psychological problems that are complex and difficult to negotiate. These complex problems have the potential to influence lived experiences especially associated to QOL in young adults with dyslexia. However, there are few studies that identify COE experiences that shape QOL in young adults.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this narrative study was to explore how life COEs are encountered through the subjective, existential, and objective perspectives and how they relate to QOL experiences within educational, work, family, and social environments (see Ventegodt et al., 2003). The subjective perspective addresses personal beliefs on how good a life an individual feels they have (Ventegodt et al., 2003). The existential perspective addresses unrealized thoughts and experiences associated with QOL (Ventegodt et al., 2003). The objective perspective uses the social construct to identify societal norms on what it means to have a good QOL (Ventegodt et al., 2003). Using these three perspectives – subjective, existential, and objective - I explored the lived experiences of young adults with dyslexia, within educational, work, family, and social environments. Emerging themes and COE patterns revealed the experiences associated with QOL in young adults with dyslexia.

Research Questions

The purpose of this research was to explore QOL experiences amongst young adults with dyslexia within educational, work, family, and social environments. I used subjective, existential, and objective perspectives as parameters for exploring educational, work, family, and social environments. Therefore, the subjective, existential, and objective perspectives were addressed within each environment (educational, work,

family, and social). Within each environment, I explored COE themes related to depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, low motivation, hostility, guilt, and shame. Furthermore, I looked for situational experiences related to social mobility, career development, and how one deals with transitional moments.

Research question – Qualitative: What is the subjective, existential, and objective QOL experience of young adults diagnosed with dyslexia within educational, work, family, and social environments?

Sub question: What is it like living with dyslexia within the educational environment from a subjective, existential, and objective perspective?

Sub question: What is it like living with dyslexia within the work environment from a subjective, existential, and objective perspective?

Sub question: What is it like living with dyslexia within the family environment from a subjective, existential, and objective perspective?

Sub question: What is it like living with dyslexia within the social environment from a subjective, existential, and objective perspective?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was the integrative quality-of-life (IQOL) theory (see Ventegodt et al., 2003). Ventegodt et al.'s (2003) theory addressed QOL from eight other theories, which have addressed the subjective-existential-objective spectrum in some way. Ventegodt et al. identified that many of the QOL theories have focused on levels of satisfaction, emphasizing specific areas of the subjective-existential-objective spectrum. However, there is no unified emphasis on the subjective, existential,

and objective spectrum and its influence on QOL. QOL has deeper implications than how satisfied a person feels. Ventegodt et al. theorized that QOL means a good life; however, this idea needs to be observed from a subjective, existential, and objective perspective. The IQOL theory was created to fill the gaps left by other QOL theories, recognizing the complexities of what it means to have a good QOL (Ventegodt et al., 2003). The subjective QOL can be identified by “how good a life each individual feels he or she has” (Ventegodt et al., 2003, p. 1031). The existential QOL reflects a deeper nature that is within each person. Ventegodt et al. identified that “there is a biological nature that has to be fulfilled, such as conditions for growth, or how one lives life in accordance with their spiritual and religious ideals laid down by the nature of their being” (p. 1030). The existential perspective can be explored through a combined effort from both the researcher and the participant, engaging in a reflective dialog to draw out the deeper nature of an experience. The objective QOL is observed by the outside world and how others may perceive the individual. This perspective explores the status quo or cultural expectations of what a good life represents. The objective perspective leaves out opinions, inferences, and feeling only looking at the reported data. Thus, this model provides a comprehensive view of QOL and lends itself to exploration of these three perspectives in young adults with dyslexia.

Nature of the Study

For this study, I used a narrative approach to explore told stories and QOL experiences of young adults with dyslexia. These stories were elicited through questions designed to inquire about experiences within specific environments (educational, work,

family, social). From these told stories, experiences were sequenced and compared to find themes and possible explanations of COEs that shape QOL (see Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000; Ventegodt et al., 2003). More specifically, the narrative approach involved listening to the stories told by participants and how they experienced key events within each environment (educational, work, family, and social). I explored each environment using subjective, existential, and objective perspectives, which are the frameworks used to organize the chronological development of each participants' told story. From there, smaller plots within the overall story emerged (see Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). Each plot was then developed into common themes that could be linked to the COEs that shape their lives, producing a thematic analysis of the participants told stories (see Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). As themes emerged, I coded common experiences and sequenced them into categories such as QOL in education, work, family, and social environments; depression and anxiety; low self-esteem, self-efficacy, motivation, positive social development, and career development; educational attainment, job status, and social mobility; transition from adolescence to adulthood; and themes not found in the literature. Each environment represented contextual framework for the subjective, existential, and objective perspectives, allowing me to explore themes previously addressed in earlier studies. Each environment provided a lens that revealed where young adults with dyslexia experienced depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, self-efficacy, motivation, positive development, and career development.

Definitions

Chain-of-events: An accumulation of life experiences that link together through specifically experienced cognitive, social, and/or emotional episodes, resulting in a particular outcome. My study was designed to gather the narrative stories of young adults with dyslexia for the purpose of drawing out common COE themes related to QOL experiences. COEs are the building blocks to QOL experiences.

Dyslexia: A specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin and is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties generally result from deficits in the phonological component of language that is inconsistent with other cognitive abilities. Secondary consequences may include difficulties in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge (International Dyslexia Association, 2002).

Environment: The surroundings or conditions in which a person lives (Lexico, n.d.-a). I was interested in the surroundings and conditions of the educational, work, family, and social environments of young adults with dyslexia. More specifically, my interest was on the COE experiences within each environment and the overall experience of QOL.

Existential quality of life: The deeper meaning behind one's personal belief of having a good life. This concept assumes that the individual has a deeper nature, which needs acknowledgement (Ventegodt et al., 2003).

Objective quality of life: The socioeconomic standard of what a good QOL represents. This perspective addresses the cultural definition associated with QOL. The objective quality is revealed through the person's ability to adapt to the values and customs of the culture (Ventegodt et al., 2003).

Perspective: "A particular attitude towards or way of regarding something; a point of view" (Lexico, n.d.-b, p. 1). This study was designed to explore three points of view (perspectives): the subjective, existential, and objective perspectives in conjunction to QOL experiences. These three perspectives were used to address how young adults with dyslexia experience QOL. The terms subjective, existential, and objective perspectives were introduced by Ventegodt et al., addressing aspects of QOL. I adapted Ventegodt et al.'s QOL theory to explore these three perspectives and find common themes and COE patterns related to QOL experiences.

Quality of life: To have a good life, which is based on the standard of health, comfort, and happiness experienced by an individual or group (Lexico, n.d.-c; Ventegodt et al., 2003).

Subjective quality of life: One's personal belief that life is good. This is derived from each individual's personal evaluation that they are living a good life (Ventegodt et al., 2003).

Assumptions

In this study, I assumed that young adults with dyslexia had COE connections with personal experiences related to QOL. More specifically, I proposed that specific positive and/or negative experiences within educational, work, family, and/or social

environments have an accumulative influence on how that individual experiences QOL. These assumptions were made because past research has indicated that socioeconomic environments are influential in social/emotional difficulties for individuals with dyslexia, and these experiences can be felt throughout the lifespan (see Beer et al., 2014; Bonifacci et al., 2013; Brante, 2013; Cameron, 2016; Carroll & Iles, 2006; Casserly, 2013; Claassens & Lessing, 2015; Grills-Taquechel et al., 2012; Klassen et al., 2011; Kola et al., 2014; McNulty, 2003; Nalavany et al., 2015; Nergard-Nilssen & Hulme, 2014; Skinner & MacGill, 2015; Tsovili, 2004; Whitehouse et al., 2008). However, there has been no study that has directly addressed these connections. Other researchers have emphasized specific areas of emotionality, such as anxiety, stress, depression, and/or feelings of inferiority, but there has been no connection to the longevity of the experience. My assumption was that these social/emotional difficulties manifest over time through COE experiences, which has the potential to influence QOL experiences.

Scope

The scope of this narrative study was to explore detailed accounts of lived experiences of young adults with dyslexia to draw out COE themes related to QOL. QOL does not specifically relate to one environment; therefore, the emphasis was allocated to four environments (i.e., educational, work, family, and social). These four environments were chosen because each has a substantial role in the socioeconomic experience and can be used as objective identifiers of QOL experiences. More specifically, my emphasis was to explore COE themes, which requires a broad array of experiences. By exploring

several environments, it was possible to tease out themes that may cross over from one environment to another.

Delimitations

The population I drew from were young adults with dyslexia. The reason for using young adults with dyslexia is that their life experiences have had time to develop. However, the young adult group is also at a pivotal point where they are establishing relationships in school, work, family, and social environments. Older adults have had time to develop, but many are past that pivotal point and have established a QOL foundation despite their cognitive differences. My interest was to collect the QOL experiences found after high school, when career, relationship, and self-value choices are at a pivotal point in time. Therefore, the young adult population was the best age group for this study.

Another factor is that young adults can describe and reason abstractly through detailed accounts of their experiences, due to the continued development of the brain into the mid-20s. The young adult age group is also more likely to have experiences in each environment (educational, work, family, and social). If I had used a younger population, I would have been required to draw conclusions from other sources, such as parents. Parents would have been a second-hand source, incapable of defining the internal struggles felt by their child with dyslexia. By addressing the young adult population with dyslexia, a direct narrative explanation was provided, reducing second-hand bias.

The IQOL theoretical perspective provided the framework to address several QOL perspectives (subjective, existential, and objective) experienced by young adults

with dyslexia. However, the IQOL framework does not specifically address dyslexia. This theory was used as a template to provide consistency and accuracy as I collected the told stories of the participants. The IQOL theory was also my foundation for addressing experiences related to environments (educational, work, family, and social). More specifically, the subjective, existential, and objective perspectives were emphasized within each of the environmental experiences.

Limitations

This was a qualitative study designed to give voice to young adults with dyslexia about their experiences and insights related to COE themes and QOL experiences. Due to the qualitative nature of this study, a small pool of participants was used. This limitation allowed for a rich exploration of COE themes from each participant, revealing the told stories, experiences, and insights related to QOL. However, these findings were particular to participants' experiences. Further research would need to be conducted to address the larger population of individuals with dyslexia. Furthermore, this research only addressed young adults with dyslexia. The overall QOL experience might reveal different outcomes if the study addressed another age range (such as adolescents or older adults with dyslexia).

Significance

For individuals with dyslexia, self-awareness of the subjective, existential, and objective perspectives of QOL can lead to healthier life choices and a better QOL. Awareness in educational, work, family, and social settings can invoke positive change. Educators, employers, family, and social groups can begin to understand young adults

with dyslexia as it relates to QOL by addressing their own potential biases, stereotypes, and prejudices. Educators and employers who understand factors associated with QOL can adapt environments for success and satisfaction by individuals with dyslexia.

Awareness of what constitutes QOL may help family and social groups appreciate, respect, and support individuals with dyslexia, thus enhancing their QOL. New insights on QOL can emerge allowing for further research, greater understanding, and potential for positive change.

Summary

QOL experiences are wide ranging amongst young adults with dyslexia. The aim of this study was to explore QOL using the IQOL theory. The IQOL theory provided the framework needed to collect QOL experiences. By collecting the told stories of young adults with dyslexia, I was able to explore common COE themes and formulate a detailed analysis of each participant's lived experiences. Through this detailed analysis, it was possible to further identify COE moments to further understand QOL perceptions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Dyslexia has been a part of education for many decades, creating challenges for educators, parents, and students worldwide. Historically, dyslexia was identified as a learning disorder, which involved difficulty learning to read and/or encode words, letters, and symbols (Cameron, 2016). Individuals with dyslexia face particular difficulties in specific areas of learning but not in other areas of learning (Cameron, 2016). These learning deficits are a byproduct of cognitive differences that span beyond reading and spelling abilities (Schulte-Korne, 2010; Szmalec et al., 2011). Schulte-Korne (2010) indicated that over the last several decades, dyslexia has been defined as a neurobiological disorder, suggesting a genetic influence on the reading and spelling abilities of individuals with dyslexia. However, the definition of dyslexia has varied in the way it has been labelled throughout its history (Cameron, 2016). This shifting definition may be a byproduct of educators, parents, and researchers seeking to remedy the learning gaps found in students with dyslexia. Despite these efforts, individuals with dyslexia still experience lasting educational, work, family, and social problems. The purpose of this study was to explore the COE happenings of young adults with dyslexia and find common themes related to QOL experiences.

One challenge that has emerged amongst institutions is whether to recognize the significance of the problem associated with dyslexia (Cameron, 2016). Educators throughout history have struggled to help these individuals develop basic literacy skills such as reading and writing. This has elicited decades of cognitive research to better

identify the specific problem (Cameron, 2016). These studies have generally focused on the measurable deficits found amongst the dyslexic population, such as neurobiological differences, phonetic understanding, serial order processing, phonological awareness, and auditory processing (Bonifacci et al., 2013; Cameron, 2016). However, these cognitive differences represent one side of the overall experience felt by those with dyslexia. Kola et al. (2014) suggested that neurological conditions, such as dyslexia, can negatively influence aspects of self-perception and identity. These negative views on self-identity can lead to continual struggles within educational, work, family, and social environments, which has the potential to reduce QOL (Kola et al., 2014). However, there has been little exploration into the day-to-day life of adults with dyslexia and how they experience QOL. In this study, I explored experiences in educational, work, family, and social environments and the COE relationship these environments have on QOL. Furthermore, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, self-efficacy, motivation, social mobility, career development, and transitional moments are all possible experiences that require exploration within the educational, work, family, and social environments.

A review of current research was used to make a connection from what has been explored to what has had little emphasis. Specifically, the literature review highlighted research on young adults with dyslexia collected from educational, work, family, and social environments, which addressed aspects of QOL such as stress and anxiety. However, I used previous research to categorize experiences such as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, self-efficacy, motivation, social mobility, career development, and transitional moments into sequences by exploring COEs and the overall experience of

QOL. The IQOL theory was used as the framework to define what QOL means (Ventegodt et al., 2003). In this study, I used previous research and personal interviews to explore emerging themes focusing on (a) QOL in education, work, family, and social environments; (b) depression and anxiety; (c) low self-esteem, self-efficacy, motivation, positive social development, and career development; (d) educational attainment, job status, and social mobility; (e) transition from adolescence to adulthood; and (f) themes not found in the literature. This provided a better understanding of the social experiences early in life and how these experiences may be linked to experiences with QOL as young adults.

Literature Search Strategy

Literature research was conducted using several sources, such as PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, and Google Scholar. Each was accessed using the general search terms *dyslexia* and *quality of life* as the root of all inquiries. Other search words such as *experience*, *lifespan*, *depression*, *family*, *work*, and *education* were used to further explore the topic. Article references were also used to locate additional resources. The Walden library was the main source of the needed articles. Additionally, the Sioux City, IA Public Library and Google Scholar were used to locate additional articles not found through the Walden library. There were no articles that directly addressed QOL in conjunction to dyslexia. Articles were found addressing QOL and learning disabilities; however, these implications also addressed other disabilities such as ADHD and autism spectrum disorder. Therefore, the content of this study has limited information directly addressing QOL issues for young adults with dyslexia. However, I also found articles that

specifically addressed anxiety, depression, and experiences in relation to dyslexia. Also, there were several articles that addressed behavioral difficulties in children and adolescents who have been diagnosed with dyslexia. I gathered articles addressing behavioral problems, anxiety, depression, and experiences that focused on both children and adults with dyslexia. It was significant to address childhood experiences because there are likely links between negative experiences and QOL issues as children with dyslexia grow into young adults. With these articles and my theoretical framework, I explored lived stories bridging experiences, such as anxiety and depression, to QOL issues in adults with dyslexia. By exploring previous research on childhood and adulthood experiences with dyslexia, I was able to compare the COE experiences gathered through my own participants. From the gathered research and stories told, I drew out key themes that addressed QOL issues for young adults with dyslexia.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework for this study was the IQOL theory (see Ventegodt et al., 2003). Ventegodt et al. (2003) identified that many of the QOL theories have focused on levels of satisfaction. However, QOL has deeper implications than how satisfied a person feels. Ventegodt et al. theorized that QOL means a good life; however, this idea needs to be observed from a subjective, existential, and objective perspective. The IQOL theory was created to fill the gaps left by other QOL theories, recognizing the complexities of what it means to have a good QOL (Ventegodt et al., 2003). The subjective QOL can be identified by “how good a life each individual feels he or she has” (Ventegodt et al., 2003, p. 1031). The existential QOL reflects a deeper nature that is

within each person. This perspective can be explored through a combined effort from both the researcher and the participant, engaging in a reflective dialog to draw out the deeper meaning of an experience. The objective QOL is observed by the outside world and how others may perceive the individual. The objective perspective explores the status quo or cultural expectations of what a good life represents. This perspective leaves out opinions, inferences, and feeling, only looking at the reported data. This model provides a comprehensive view of QOL and lends itself to exploration of these three perspectives in young adults with dyslexia.

Even though this theory does not specifically address young adults with dyslexia, it provided the framework needed to analyze the experiences and insights revealed through the participant's told story. This means that I was able to explore the COEs that relate to QOL experiences from a subjective, existential, and objective perspective, providing a well-rounded approach, which organized experiences into understandable patterns addressing underpinnings of QOL issues in young adults with dyslexia.

Literature Review

Research on dyslexia has indicated that there are educational, social, work, and family difficulties for both children and adults. The following literature review provided insight into how these educational, work, family, and social difficulties can manifest into QOL issues. I categorized each article based on the environment, perspective, COE, and QOL focus and specifically addressed the articles significance to my study. I also addressed limitations to each study emphasizing possible gaps in research.

Research on dyslexia has emphasized the inconsistencies in learning, addressing cognitive impairments to explain success in one subject and weaknesses in another (Barry et al., 2012; Leather et al., 2011; Nergard-Nilssen & Hulme, 2014; Schulte-Korne, 2010; Szmalec et al., 2011). Researchers have also emphasized isolated examples of cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioral issues associated to individuals with dyslexia (Bonifacci et al., 2013; Carroll & Iles, 2006; Casserly, 2013; Claassens & Lessing, 2015; Dahle et al., 2011; Gerber, 2012; Grills-Taquechel et al., 2012; Jordan et al., 2014; Leather et al., 2011; Nalavany et al., 2015; Nergard-Nilssen & Hulme, 2014; Skinner & MacGill, 2015; Snowling & Melby-Lervag, 2016; Tsovili, 2004; Whitehouse et al., 2008). However, there has been little research on how these cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioral inconsistencies are experienced together and how young adults with dyslexia perceive their QOL experiences. In this study, I focused on the lived stories of young adults with dyslexia, through the subjective, existential, and objective perspectives of what it means to have a good QOL within an educational, work, family, and/or social environment (see Ventegodt et al., 2003).

Dyslexia and Education

Educating young children plays a central role in the United States, which persists throughout the adolescent years. These experiences can positively or negatively influence self-perception, educational attainment, career development, social mobility, and overall wellbeing, which led to my interest in the lived experiences of individuals with dyslexia within an educational environment. There is a large body of research indicating that children with dyslexia in an educational environment often grow up experiencing

negative lifelong emotional and behavioral problems as a byproduct of their difficulties learning to read and write (Cameron, 2016; Carroll & Iles, 2006; Claassens & Lessing, 2015; Dahle et al., 2011; Jordan et al., 2014; Russell et al., 2015). More specifically, Russell et al. (2015) stated that “if children met the dyslexia criteria, there was a 51.6% chance of having another disorder as well” (p. 125). Russell et al. further asserted that in an educational setting, children with dyslexia have more problems adjusting to peer relationships and displayed less prosocial behavior. Furthermore, these children were more prone to emotional and conduct problems with higher levels of hyperactivity and inattentiveness (Carroll & Iles, 2006; Russell et al., 2015). Russell et al. concluded that there is an overarching complex system that influences behavioral problems in children with specific word reading difficulties. Genetic, environmental, and social contexts may each play a unique and interactive role in determining the behavioral outcomes of individuals with dyslexia (Cameron, 2016; Russell et al., 2015).

Research has indicated that children, adolescents, and young adults with dyslexia have higher levels of anxiety than those individuals without dyslexia (Cameron, 2016; Carroll & Iles, 2006; Claassens & Lessing, 2015; Jordan et al., 2014; Russell et al., 2015). The anxiety felt by these students is accompanied by outward expressions of worry and concentration difficulties (Carroll & Iles, 2006; Jordan et al., 2014; Russell et al., 2015). Russell et al. (2015) further asserted that within an educational environment, parents reported their children with dyslexia to have experienced more anxiety, depression, social, and attentional problems than normal. Carroll and Iles (2006) indicated that children and adolescents with dyslexia were more prone to develop trait

anxiety, which manifests as fear, worry, and/or anxiety but is not linked to a particular stressor.

As young adults with dyslexia transition into college, experiences with anxiety do not dissipate and may even evolve (Cameron, 2016; Claassens & Lessing, 2015; Jordan et al., 2014). Cameron (2016) identified that young adults with dyslexia often must manage memories of challenging school experiences that continue to impact them into their young adult lives. These challenging memories often lead these young adults to experience lower self-esteem, heightened levels of anxiety, and bouts of depression (Cameron, 2016; Jordan et al., 2014). Claassens and Lessing (2015) declared that these negative emotions do have a significant influence on how an individual with dyslexia may experience self-perception. However, these connections between challenging memories, self-esteem, depression, and anxiety problems are not biological in nature but rather environmentally influenced (Jordan et al., 2014).

More specifically, Cameron (2016) identified a phenomenon called “inside-my-head/out-in-the-world divide” that coexisted with college students who were dyslexic (p. 231). All the participants had feelings of judgment when pressured to talk in a seminar, study group, or meeting type setting in which they were unable to perform appropriately to the demands of the environment (Cameron, 2016). The participants in this study reported that they had difficulty getting words and ideas out into the world (Cameron, 2016). These participants reported experiencing feelings of not being good enough and sometimes making them doubt their sense of self-worth, their own competence, and/or their intelligence (Cameron, 2016). Cameron acknowledged that it appears certain

university settings require the student with dyslexia to take significant risks with their academic identities. This has the potential to create a double-bind experience: On the one side, the student takes the risk of feeling stupid in front of peers and teachers; on the other side, the student takes the risk of hurting their self-worth by not participating (Cameron, 2016).

Jordan et al. (2014) addressed the social aspect of dyslexia and its influence on perceived experiences in higher education, specifically showing a correlational relationship between social support from family, teachers, and peers to the rise in levels of self-esteem and overall emotional experiences found in young adults with dyslexia. Jordan et al. expressed that if students with dyslexia had an appropriate support network where effective coping strategies could be developed, there would be lower risks of poor mental health, including depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and low self-efficacy. These effective coping strategies include recognizing personal strengths and weaknesses in the learning process (Jordan et al., 2014). However, Jordan et al. identified that young adults in a university setting are not receiving appropriate support; instead, these students show an increase in “worrying, denial, seeking instrumental support, and less use of the positive reinterpretation coping strategy” (p. 225). Jordan et al. further analyzed that adults with dyslexia in higher education who had higher levels of perceived family support had better emotional experiences and improving academic success.

The research addressing children, adolescents, and young adults with dyslexia has indicated a correlational relationship between educational experiences, wellbeing, positive social development, educational attainment, and career development. (Cameron,

2016; Carroll & Iles, 2006; Claassens & Lessing, 2015; Dahle et al., 2011; Jordan et al., 2014; Russell et al., 2015). Each article addressed a specific aspect related to educational experiences and wellbeing, showing a distinct experience to behavior correlation.

However, no researcher addressed how educational experiences are interpreted and later felt through a QOL perspective. These articles were significant to my study because they showed, through a micro perspective, how experiences are influential to feelings of wellbeing through an educational environment. With my study, I explored these experiences and feeling of wellbeing through a macro lens (a wide range of experiences and emotions). By exploring the lived experiences of young adults with dyslexia, I addressed all the emotional and life experiences felt by the participants, including depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, self-efficacy, motivation, social mobility, career development, and transitional moments. More specifically, I explored the QOL experience of young adults diagnosed with dyslexia, addressing educational, work, family, and social environments.

Dyslexia and Work

Educational possibilities for individuals with dyslexia have improved significantly over the past few decades (Beer et al., 2014). Research has helped bridge the gap between learning difficulties associated with dyslexia and educational demands. With the assistance of technology, extensions in time, and other adaptations, individuals with dyslexia can graduate their school environment successfully (Beer et al., 2014). However, these adaptations do not often transfer to the work environment, leaving the young adult with dyslexia unprepared for the demands of work (Beer et al., 2014; Leather et al., 2011;

Skinner & MacGrill, 2015). Beer et al. (2014) identified that these experiences have the potential to bring back earlier memories of failure in an educational setting. These young adults have to readapt to their work environments much like they had to earlier in their educational experiences (Beer et al. 2014).

The research indicated that these unforeseen needs to adapt influence a COE occurrence that starts with extensive amounts of work and ends with feelings of stress, anxiety, and low self-value (Beer et al., 2014; Leather et al., 2011; Skinner & MacGrill, 2015). These added work needs influence additional stress on the working adult with dyslexia, requiring added support and effort to develop key tools to assist with the work demands (Beer et al., 2014; Leather et al., 2011; Skinner & MacGrill, 2015). The added support often involves family and friends but can also branch out to coworkers and employers (Beer et al., 2014; Leather et al., 2011). With the added demands associated to work content, the attitudes of coworkers and employers can intensify and influence emotional and behavioral problems such as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-perception, and motivation on behalf of the adult with dyslexia (Beer et al., 2014).

Some research addressed the hindering and facilitating factors associated with work on adults with dyslexia (Beer et al., 2014; Leather et al., 2011; Skinner & MacGrill, 2015). This research indicated that over the lifespan, dyslexia has an expanding effect on the domains of human functioning (Beer et al., 2014; Leather et al., 2011; Skinner & MacGrill, 2015). These effects start off small affecting specific activities such as reading, writing, and spelling but later cross over into other areas such as personal and

environmental domains influencing feelings of stress, anxiety, and low self-esteem (Beer et al., 2014; Leather et al., 2011; Skinner & MacGrill, 2015). More specifically, Beer et al. (2014) identified that, within work and personal environments, the influence of dyslexia can impact the functionality of individuals such as the motivation to socialize, social mobility, career development, and transitional stages.

The research identified that literacy is an important part of adult life, which plays a significant role in many work settings (Beer et al., 2014; Leather et al., 2011; Skinner & MacGrill, 2015). Young adults with dyslexia who do not have adequate reading and writing skills are at a disadvantage when it comes to their work environments and must learn to adapt (Leather et al., 2011). Moreover, the research indicated that young adults with dyslexia have lower job satisfaction levels than amongst peers without dyslexia (Leather et al., 2011; Witte et al., 1998). These satisfaction levels were associated with literary learning in childhood and unresolved weaknesses with reading and writing throughout childhood (Beer et al., 2014; Leather et al., 2011; Skinner & MacGrill, 2015). Furthermore, the research indicated that young adults with weaknesses in their literary development are more likely to experience lower pay, fewer promotional prospects, and more boring roles while at work (Beer et al., 2014; Leather et al., 2011; Skinner & MacGrill, 2015).

Leather et al. (2011) explored the multi-faceted constructs at play when determining the success of an adult with dyslexia. Leather et al. (2011) identified that these finding was not one-sided; there were examples of adults with dyslexia who had established highly successful roles despite their initial problems with literacy and

learning. More specifically, Leather et al. (2011) explored which factors determined the success level of adults with dyslexia. The finding indicated key factors to the success of some young adults with dyslexia to be associated with the interaction between internal and external aspects of control (Leather et al., 2011). The internal aspects of control addressed adults with dyslexia understanding their own strengths and weaknesses, which included having the motivation and the drive to set goals and plan a course of action to achieve those goals (Leather et al., 2011). This combination of self-recognition, goal setting, and course planning influenced adults with dyslexia to succeed. The external aspects addressed finding a good fit for the adult with dyslexia (Leather et al., 2011). This involved the adult with dyslexia finding a job that focused on his or her strengths, not his or her weaknesses (Leather et al., 2011). This external aspect also involved social ecologies that included people and systems which could compensate the weaknesses experienced by adults with dyslexia (Leather et al., 2011).

Much of the research addressing dyslexia and the workforce emphasized aspects associated to work demands and the inherent disadvantages found amongst adults with dyslexia (Beer et al., 2014; Leather et al., 2011; Skinner & MacGrill, 2015). More specifically, much of the emphasis was placed on the workload and individual struggles with organizational skills, memory, reading, and writing (Beer et al., 2014; Leather et al., 2011; Skinner & MacGrill, 2015). The other part of the emphasis addressed work difficulties and emotional problems which derived from coworkers and employer frustrations (Beer et al., 2014; Leather et al., 2011; Skinner & MacGrill, 2015).

Skinner and MacGrill (2015) emphasized the struggles for balance associated with work and home life and the experiences felt amongst adult mothers with dyslexia. The assertion was that, for some working mothers with dyslexia, the perceived impact of work may be more problematic in comparison to working mothers who are not dyslexic (Skinner & MacGrill, 2015). The research indicated that nine out of ten mothers with dyslexia described combining work and motherhood as being difficult (Skinner & MacGrill, 2015). They further asserted that the difficulties manifested around their “poor organizational skills, memory, reading speed, and handwriting” required more time at work to complete the task (p. 427). The findings identified that extra time spent accomplishing work activities in combination with the already perceived difficulties are associated with stress, anxiety, and low self-esteem in working mothers with dyslexia (Skinner & MacGrill, 2015). One key factor is that mothers with dyslexia “may be vulnerable to being seen as less than ‘ideal’ both in terms of commitment to work and ability to work (by themselves and by their managers/supervisors)” (Skinner & MacGrill, 2015, p. 432). This research reflected literature that supports emotional difficulties in conjunction with dyslexia and suggested that social/work dynamics play a significant role in the emotional well-being of working women with dyslexia (Skinner & MacGrill, 2015).

The research addressing dyslexia and work emphasized correlational relationships between early experiences in educational environments and later experiences in work environments (Beer et al., 2014; Leather et al., 2011; Skinner & MacGrill, 2015). More specifically, adults with dyslexia have an ongoing literary weakness that stretches beyond

their educational environments, influencing the way they function in their work environments (Beer et al., 2014; Leather et al., 2011; Skinner & MacGrill, 2015). In addition, the research also indicated a potential crossover from educational struggles (reading, writing, and spelling) to maladaptive character flaws in emotionality, such as higher levels of anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and other emotional difficulties (Beer et al., 2014; Leather et al., 2011; Skinner & MacGrill, 2015). However, the research has a limited emphasis on how reading, writing, and spelling deficits could influence depression, anxiety, self-esteem, self-efficacy, motivation, social mobility, career development, and transitional moments in life. The Beer et al., Leather et al., and Skinner et al. articles showed clear examples of how adults with dyslexia experienced their work environments, but there was limited emphasis on their overall QOL experiences.

The Beer et al., Leather et al., and Skinner et al. articles were significant to my study because they provided both a subjective and objective look at adults with dyslexia and their inherent difficulties adjusting to work demands. These articles provided the framework to how young adults with dyslexia experience QOL through the context of work environments. However, there was not a clear exploration of QOL experiences within these articles. The articles addressed situational experiences such as social mobility, career development, and transitional moments, as well as the proceeding feelings of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, and low motivation (Beer et al., 2014; Leather et al., 2011; Skinner & MacGrill, 2015). Situational experiences and proceeding feelings are aspects of QOL, but do not fully address the

overall lived experiences of QOL. My study used the Beer et al., Leather et al., and Skinner et al. articles as a subjective and objective observation on how young adults with dyslexia experience their work environments.

Dyslexia and Family

Families play a central role in the upbringing of their children with dyslexia who later become young adults with dyslexia. There are several factors that influence children with dyslexia and their ability to develop their reading and writing skills. The first being socioeconomic factors, which encompasses the ability to obtain appropriate resources to address the difficulty. Snowling and Melby-Lervag (2016) reported that there are higher rates of reading difficulties in communities found in low socioeconomic status. Another factor are the education levels and literacy skills of parents found inside the home (Snowling & Melby-Lervag, 2016). This may include, but is not limited to, parents who have also been diagnosed with dyslexia. Research showed that parents who have dyslexia have an increased chance (up to 66%) of passing the disorder to their children (Bonifacci et al., 2013; Pennington & Lefly, 2001; Scarborough, 1990; Snowling et al., 2003). Finally, the parents' efforts to encourage regular reading and writing practices plays a crucial role in the level of difficulties experienced. Research indicated that children with dyslexia who are encouraged by their parents to engage in regular reading and writing practice also experience improved emotional wellbeing (Bonifacci et al., 2013; Nalavany et al., 2015; Snowling & Melby-Lervag, 2016). Through the improvement of emotional wellbeing, children with dyslexia are more likely to grow into well-adjusted adults (Bonifacci et al., 2013; Nalavany et al., 2015; Snowling & Melby-Lervag, 2016).

As children with dyslexia mature into adulthood, the amount of effort provided by their family to develop reading and writing skills has been shown to play a role into how they experience adulthood. Research indicated that the development of young adults with dyslexia are comprised of multiple variables (Bonifacci et al., 2013; Nalavany et al., 2015; Snowling & Melby-Lervag, 2016). These variables are continuously mediated between genetic, cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors (Bonifacci et al., 2013; Nalavany et al., 2015; Snowling & Melby-Lervag, 2016). Each factor may have direct or indirect implications on how young adults with dyslexia experience QOL.

The Bonifacci et al. (2013) study emphasized social class and educational levels as an indicator for the well-being of children with dyslexia. This research proposed three questions: (a) “Do parents of children with dyslexia show endophenotypes for reading disorders or other cognitive, behavioural, or environmental characteristics, compared with parents of children with typical development?” (Bonifacci et al., 2013, p. 178); (b) “Do parents’ cognitive skills predict their children’s performance?” (Bonifacci et al., 2013, p. 178); and (c) “Do parents of children with dyslexia show higher parental stress, family dysfunction, anxiety, and depression levels than parents of typically reading children?” (Bonifacci et al., 2013, p. 179). In answering the first question, the article reported that both groups of parents (parents of a child with dyslexia and parents of a child without dyslexia) had similar education levels and did not differ in terms of socio-demographic factors (Bonifacci et al., 2013). The second question revealed that parents of children with dyslexia had lower performance scores on reading speed, reading accuracy, phonological awareness, and verbal tasks than parents of children without

dyslexia (Bonifacci et al., 2013). However, none of the parents had been diagnosed with dyslexia (Bonifacci et al., 2013). The research also indicated that the parents' reading difficulties were significantly related to their children's reading fluency (Bonifacci et al., 2013). In conclusion to this study, it was reported that cognitive and literacy measures did not influence emotional difficulties (in particular, depression) in either parental group (Bonifacci et al., 2013). In contrast, there was a significant difference in self-reported anxiety amongst the two groups (Bonifacci et al., 2013). This research indicated that the genetic components associated with dyslexia in conjunction to the environmental factors are not a direct or absolute representation of QOL (Bonifacci et al. 2013). However, the combined influence of genetic and family levels of support/practice could subsequently encourage QOL.

This is a limitation to the research because there are other factors (parental frustration, teacher frustration, emerging feelings of self-doubt, and internal struggles with self-perception) that may provide evidence for gene/environment interaction. The research indicated higher levels of self-reported data on anxiety amongst parents of children with dyslexia; however, there is little information on how that may influence parental/ child relationships and overall QOL. The Bonifacci article specifically addressed the parents' perspective on how they perceive their child's quality of environment, which is a limitation to the study. It provides a unique perspective of children with dyslexia; however, it is a second-hand account of how these children perceive their environment. Finally, there was little to no indicators to how children with dyslexia may experience life as adults. With that in mind, it could be beneficial to explore

gene/environment interactions on an adult scale. The Bonifacci article helped my study because it took an objective approach to exploring QOL in children with dyslexia, using parental observations. It also indicated a correlational relationship between parents' and children with dyslexia. More specifically, parents of children with dyslexia were shown to have similar difficulties to their children, with lower performance scores on reading speed, reading accuracy, phonological awareness, and verbal tasks (Bonifacci et al., 2013). This provided environmental evidence for the reported influx of anxiety during reading/writing practice.

In another article provided by Snowling and Melby-Lervag (2016), the research emphasized parent/child correlations to dyslexia and how the environment as sway towards attitudes, perceptions, and language development. More specifically, the intent of the Snowling and Melby-Lervag (2016) article was to explore the prevalence of dyslexia and the potential influence it may have in a home where one or both parents also experience dyslexia. The second intent was to explore the nature of the home literacy environment of the dyslexic family to determine possible causes to language difficulties (Snowling & Melby-Lervag, 2016). A third intent is to explore "the relationships between early cognitive abilities and later reading" (Snowling & Melby-Lervag, 2016, p. 501). The final aim of this research was to identify effective intervention strategies to assist in overcoming deficits (Snowling & Melby-Lervag, 2016).

The Snowling and Melby-Lervag (2016) research indicated that children with dyslexia who are engaged in regular reading and writing practice with their parents are generally more successful as they become adults. These findings also supported the idea

that children who have shared book reading practices with their parents have significant improvements to their oral language development (Snowling & Melby-Lervag, 2016). This research indicated a correlational relationship between oral language skills and how well young adults with dyslexia can relay their intended message within an educational, work, family, or social environment.

Another key factor addressed in the Snowling and Melby-Lervag (2016) article was the attitudes parents elicit while they are engaged in reading and writing practice with their children who have dyslexia. Snowling and Melby-Lervag (2016) indicated that parents with dyslexia are likely to influence not only the reading frequency but also the type of reading being digested. Furthermore, Snowling and Melby-Lervag (2016) found parental educational levels influenced the home literacy environment. Both mothers and fathers who had children with dyslexia had moderately lower educational levels than the control group (Snowling & Melby-Lervag, 2016). However, some of the findings did not indicate a significant difference, especially amongst mothers (with children who had dyslexia) in comparison to the control group (Snowling & Melby-Lervag, 2016). One factor that was found to be significant was the frequency of parental modeling activities in reading (Snowling & Melby-Lervag, 2016). They concluded that families who had children with dyslexia had less frequent exposure to reading activities than parents who did not have dyslexia in the family.

Research on long term outcomes of literacy development showed correlational relationships from receptive and expressive language to later reading abilities in late primary and secondary school, however, this information was limited (Snowling &

Melby-Lervag, 2016). Snowling and Melby-Lervag (2016) used longitudinal prediction study design to assess factors that made unique contributions to literacy outcomes. The conclusion showed that participants with a family risk of dyslexia who also experienced weaker letter knowledge, phonological awareness, and rapid naming abilities had prediction scores of continual school age difficulties as high as .80 (Snowling & Melby-Lervag, 2016). The Snowling and Melby-Lervag study showed a correlational relationship between family struggles with dyslexia and long-term deficits with learning to read. However, one limitation was the lack of emphasis on the continual emotional and behavioral problems beyond the adolescent years, specifically relating to depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, self-efficacy, motivation, social mobility, career development, and transitional moments. It would be interesting to see how young adults with dyslexia would fare next to their non-dyslexic counterparts on reading abilities, such as letter knowledge, phonological awareness, and rapid naming.

Snowling and Melby-Lervag (2016) emphasized task-oriented behaviors such as frequency of reading and parental engagement in the reading process. No emphasis was placed on cognitive and emotional risk factors or outcomes. A study on continual exposure to reading deficits in conjunction to social pressures to perform would likely elicit interesting results. However, this study provided evidence for familial patterns of behavior. For example: Parents who do not practice reading at home influence less overall reading practice for their children. This was significant for my study because reading fluency can be used as an objective measurement to assess QOL.

Further research conducted by Nalavany et al. (2015) explored family relationships and the parental role on influencing positive or negative self-esteem in young adults with dyslexia. Self-esteem is known to play a significant role in the social and emotional well-being of both children and adults. Nalavany et al. (2015) explored the relationship between parental attitudes and level of self-esteem found in their adult children who have been diagnosed with dyslexia. For example, when a parent imparted the belief that it is important not to talk about the invisible stigma (dyslexia), that influenced the child to keep a secret (Nalavany et al., 2015). As the child grows into an adult, under this presumption, he or she has the potential to develop chronic fears and/or hesitations about the condition (dyslexia) (Nalavany et al., 2015). This in turn, can set off a belief that there is something inherently wrong with him or herself. This cognitive thought process combined with other experiences has the potential to influence negative states of being such as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, low motivation, hostility, guilt, and shame (Nalavany et al., 2015). Negative cognitive thoughts could also influence social mobility, career development, and how one deals with transitional moments (Nalavany et al., 2015).

The purpose of the Nalavany et al. (2015) study was to examine the directional pathways constructed based off perceived family support systems. The first hypothesis suggested that higher levels of perceived family support would have a decrease in concealment behaviors, such as apprehension, avoidance, and shame associated with disclosure (Nalavany et al., 2015). The second hypothesis suggested that higher levels of concealment behaviors correlated negatively with self-esteem (Nalavany et al., 2015).

The third hypothesis stated that perceived family support would have an indirect correlation with self-esteem (Nalavany et al., 2015). Nalavany et al. (2015) found that higher levels of perceived family support systems had a negative correlation to levels of concealment. Meaning, when an individual with dyslexia felt high levels of family support, they were less likely to conceal their struggles with dyslexia. The second hypothesis showed that young adults with dyslexia who had higher levels of concealment were shown to have lower levels of self-esteem (Nalavany et a., 2015). The third hypothesis was also shown to be congruent, stating that perceived family support systems did have an indirect correlation with self-esteem (Nalavany et al., 2015).

The Nalavany article was beneficial to my study because it addressed the link between earlier parental influences and correlational relationship to self-esteem. Self-esteem addresses several aspects associated with QOL, such as perceived feelings of self-worth, social competence, problem-solving ability, intellectual ability, and self-competence and worth (Nalavany et al., 2015). The Nalavany study also addressed adult struggles with dyslexia, which can be directly linked to my study on adults with dyslexia and QOL. However, some limitations exist, such as how lower levels of self-esteem may influence experiences such as depression and anxiety and how those circumstances may correlate to negative QOL experiences. The Nalavany study only emphasized perceived family support, concealment, and self-esteem. There is limited information on how these experiences may influence different social environments (education, work, and social). More specifically, how might negative cognitive thoughts change the experience of social mobility, career development, and how one deals with transitional moments? How might

experiences of discrimination influence self-esteem in an educational, work, family, and/or social environment? Finally, this study did not emphasize QOL. It only addressed the correlational relationships between perceived family support, concealment, and self-esteem.

Dyslexia and Social Environment

In every community a person's social life has correlational relationships to their overall well-being. The social experience in educational, work, family, and social environments can have an instrumental role in the perceived perceptions of overall QOL. Lawrence (1988) states that "whenever the teacher enters into a relationship with a child, a process is set into motion which results either in the enhancement of self-esteem or in the reduction of self-esteem" (p. 284). Even though the above quote addresses the social relationship between a teacher and a child, this relational experience can permeate many environments (educational, work, family, and social). This social implication can also influence individuals with dyslexia at any age group and any social group they are associated with.

Casserly (2013) explored the socioemotional effects of children with dyslexia attending special schools and classes before returning to their mainstream environments. It is well known that children with dyslexia experience difficulties in educational areas such as oral language, reading, spelling, and writing. However, Casserly (2013) further asserted that children with dyslexia experience secondary difficulties such as low self-esteem and lower academic achievement, which are not correlated to biological differences. Through the initial stages of this research, data suggested that many children

with dyslexia experienced negative socio-emotional feelings towards their mainstream reading programs (Casserly, 2013). A large part of this discontentment came from feelings of “self-consciousness because of their reading problems and inability to keep up with their peers” (Casserly, 2013, p. 84). However, all the parents reported other prevalent experiences such as anxiety, a tendency to avoid tasks, lack of motivation, and inattentiveness (Casserly, 2013).

After the children with dyslexia attended special reading classes, the parents were asked to identify happiness levels of their children (Casserly, 2013). It was reported that the children who attended special reading classes or schools had increased levels of happiness (Casserly, 2013). Self-esteem was also reported to be higher upon finishing their special reading sessions (Casserly, 2013). The teachers reported that 15 of the 18 children with dyslexia had an increase in self-esteem levels (Casserly, 2013). Teachers also identified that the key method to raise self-esteem was by creating learning objectives that met each child’s work and difficulty needs (Casserly, 2013). This customization provided an environment that influenced continual achievement, where the children could never fail (Casserly, 2013). The children also had favorable experiences in the special reading classes, stating their reading had a large improved (Casserly, 2013). These findings show a correlational relationship between a child’s environment and their perceived sense of self. However, Casserly provided limited information on long-term correlational relationships between the environment and self-perceptions.

Little is known about how children with dyslexia perceive their disability and how that may influence internal feelings of self, which is related to experiences such as

depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, low self-efficacy (Casserly, 2013). To take this a step further, there is even less research exploring adult self-perceptions and the emotional aftermath associated with a lifetime of educational difficulties and how QOL is experienced. These secondary difficulties can be alleviated or aggravated depending on a variety of variables, such as the adaptability of their educational environment, teachers, parents, and peers (Casserly, 2013). One finding indicated that children with dyslexia perceived reading as a priority need, which resulted in feelings of disappointment, frustration, shame, sadness, depression, anger, and embarrassment over their educational difficulties (Casserly, 2013). However, when these children were provided special reading classes to improve on basic reading concepts, there were correlational improvements to self-esteem (Casserly, 2013). Casserly's findings reiterated the socio-emotional impact education has on children with dyslexia and its influence on lifelong experiences with self-perception. This led me to ponder the repercussions of a lifetime struggle adapting to educational demands as children. Does a lifetime struggle of adapting to educational demands influence social mobility, career development, and how one deals with transitional moments? There is limited study on COE experiences and how it is perceived by individuals with dyslexia. Casserly's research was significant to the study because it provided an early age example of how the environment has an influential sway on self-perceptions. More specifically, if early educational experiences have that much sway on self-perception, what are the long-term ramifications on self-perception if not appropriately addressed? Thus, the emphasis was placed on adults with

dyslexia and their QOL experiences. This emphasis was explored through told stories related to educational, work, family, and socio-emotional experiences over time.

Research supported that young adults with dyslexia have more of a risk of developing social, emotional, and motivational difficulties than their non-dyslexic peers (Claassens & Lessing, 2015). These struggles may manifest in several social environments including but not limited to educational, work, and social situations. However, there is limited information on how these specific emotional difficulties manifest. To address this limitation, Claassens and Lessing (2015) “explored the young adult learners’ subjective accounts of their social and emotional experiences with dyslexia during adolescence” (p. 32). Efforts to address these issues consisted of a phenomenological enquiry approach (using semi-structured interviews) designed to develop a descriptive account of each individual’s adolescent experience (Claassens & Lessing, 2015). A total of six participants who were previously diagnosed with dyslexia were used for this study. Three participants were in their 12th year of school and the other three participants had finished primary school (Claassens & Lessing, 2015).

Through these subjective accounts of social and emotional experiences with dyslexia several themes, categories and sub-categories emerged (Claassens & Lessing, 2015). The first theme was related to social experiences: the underlying experience derived by all the participants was that they felt misunderstood and judged by others (Claassens & Lessing, 2015). It was further expressed that learners with dyslexia had problems socializing due to misinterpretation of social cues (Claassens & Lessing, 2015; Peer, 2006). In one example involving peer interaction, Claassens & Lessing (2015)

recorded a participant's experience of being made fun of for not understanding a straightforward comment. This led to further assertions by peers that the participant was stupid (Claassens & Lessing, 2015).

A second theme found in Claassens and Lessing's (2015) article was the socio-emotional resourcing for adolescents with dyslexia. These resources are the influential roles that peers, teachers, parents, and personal assets have on the participant's ability to adapt to their given environment with the influence of dyslexia (Claassens & Lessing, 2015). Claassens and Lessing (2015) identified that young adults with dyslexia reported to value friends who believed in them. This belief coexisted with a willingness by their peers to help them out on difficult tasks rather than saying hurtful comments (Claassens & Lessing, 2015). These findings showed a significant correlation in having trusting peer relationships and more positive personal feelings about self (Claassens & Lessing, 2015). In another example of resourcing, young adults with dyslexia reported to value assistance by their teachers (Claassens & Lessing, 2015). More specifically, the better the support from teachers the more positive a learner with dyslexia is likely to feel about themselves (Claassens & Lessing, 2015). Parents of children with dyslexia are also a resource which has a significant role in self-perception. Research indicated that parents who provide constant positive feedback and support for their children with dyslexia positively influenced self-perceptions (Claassens & Lessing, 2015).

Finally, a young adult with dyslexia who actively pursues their personal assets inadvertently focuses on the positive aspects of being dyslexic which influences self-perception (Claassens & Lessing, 2015). Research indicated that individuals with

dyslexia have better practical and artistic abilities than other types of learners (Claassens & Lessing, 2015). Claassens and Lessing (2015) pointed out that this positive take on dyslexia is a coping mechanism that allows the young adult to realize that they are not that different from others. With this perspective in mind, a young adult with dyslexia has the means to accept their strengths and weaknesses (Claassens & Lessing, 2015). These perspectives allow young adults with dyslexia to feel a sense of self-worth within their given environment, which also provides the framework for adaptive coping mechanisms (Claassens & Lessing, 2015).

With this idea that socio-emotional resourcing has sway on self-perception in young adults with dyslexia, Claassens and Lessing (2015) explored the antithesis of positive socio-emotional resourcing, stating that participants who did not have these positive socio-emotional resources were more prone to social difficulties. One participant with dyslexia stated that much of his time was spent playing catch up on schoolwork and/or work than his peers (Claassens & Lessing, 2015). This extra time spent on schoolwork and/or work interfered with social opportunities with friends (Claassens & Lessing, 2015). This kind of situation is common amongst individuals with dyslexia, potentially influencing social isolation (Claassens & Lessing, 2015). Another common theme amongst individuals with dyslexia was that they experienced social struggles due to misinterpretation of social cues (Claassens & Lessing, 2015). More specifically, Claassens and Lessing (2015) reported that all the participants believed that they were “misunderstood and judged by others” (p. 34). Claassens and Lessing identified that individuals with dyslexia who had developed healthy social connections as teenagers

were more likely to develop positive self-perceptions as adults. Claassens and Lessing (2015) analyzed the importance of social support systems and its ability to influence socio-emotional outcomes in young adults with dyslexia. Claassens and Lessing's findings indicated that young adults with dyslexia who have had resources and support for their difficulties fared better in social and emotional settings. Research also showed that young adults with dyslexia who develop positive self-perceptions in their teenage years were more likely to develop better coping mechanisms (such as self-support, autonomy, and independence) as young adults (Claassens & Lessing, 2015).

The Claassens and Lessing article was significant to my study because it specifically addressed self-perception and emotional difficulties in young adults with dyslexia. Both self-perception and emotional difficulties are aspects of QOL, however, these perspectives do not fully define QOL. The Claassens and Lessing article also identified a link between earlier experiences with dyslexia and later examples of self-interpretations based on earlier experiences. This concept was central to my study on perceived and realized QOL experiences. However, one limitation would be the lack of focus on QOL perceptions. Also, the focus on QOL within the Claassens and Lessing article was too narrow. More specifically, Claassens and Lessing only addressed the experiences through a subjective lens. No emphasis was placed on the objective or existential perspectives dealing with QOL.

Both articles addressed social implications from different perspectives, one emphasized teacher/ student (children with dyslexia) relationships (Casserly, 2013), while the other addressed young adults with dyslexia and socio-emotional resourcing

(Caassens & Lessing, 2015). Both articles indicated a correlational relationship between social experiences and emotional wellbeing for individuals with dyslexia (Caassens & Lessing, 2015; Casserly, 2013). However, the articles used generic language when addressing emotional wellbeing. There was an emphasis in self-perception, but other factors, such as depression, anxiety, self-esteem, self-efficacy, motivation, hostility, guilt, and shame, had little focus. Another limitation was the emphasis in issues related to social mobility, career development, and how one deals with transitional moments. These articles were significant to my study because they showed evidence that socioemotional factors influenced perceptions of QOL experiences for individuals with dyslexia. However, both articles were limited in scope to which they explore QOL experiences.

Dyslexia and Quality of Life

QOL is defined as having a good life or having a life with high quality (Ventegodt et al., 2003). This definition is a broad statement which encompasses factors such as “wellbeing, satisfaction with life, happiness, meaning in life, the biological information system (balance), realizing life potential, fulfillment of needs, and objective factors” (Ventegodt et al., 2003, p. 1). Furthermore, QOL does not pertain to one particular subgroup. Its definition spans globally and can be applied to many subgroups from a variety of socioeconomic circumstances. However, the purpose of this study was to apply Ventegodt’s theory on QOL to better understand the lived experiences of young adults with dyslexia and their perceptions related to QOL.

In a related article, Schulte-Korne (2010) sought to convey and understand the complexity of dyslexia and identify ways in which support can be provided. This article

did not directly link dyslexia with QOL; however, it addressed key issues that relate to QOL. Schulte-Korne (2010) stated, “The psychological manifestations which often accompany dyslexia have severe effects on children, adolescents, and adults with dyslexia” (p. 718-719). Research has reported that 40% to 60% of children with dyslexia have some sort of psychological manifestation such as anxiety, depression, and attention deficit disorders (Schulte-Korne, 2010). “These children experience more negative thoughts, depression, gloomy moods, and school related anxiety as early as primary school” (Schulte-Korne, 2010, p. 720). These experiences can manifest into feelings of rejection and feeling of disapproval by their teachers (Schulte-Korne, 2010).

Furthermore, the statistics for adolescents with dyslexia are even more problematic, such as weary thoughts and suicide attempts were three times higher than their non-dyslexic counterpart (Schulte-Korne, 2010). Adolescents with dyslexia were also two times more likely to experience depressive disorders and three times more likely to experience anxiety disorders (Schulte-Korne, 2010). Without properly addressing these learning struggles early in life, adults with dyslexia have compounding emotional, psychological, and educational difficulties. Schulte-Korne (2010) stressed the importance of preventative measures in addressing reading and spelling difficulties early in a child’s life. Research indicated that, if these measures have not been addressed early in life, there is a chronic progression that takes place negatively influencing the disorder itself, but also creating limitations to psychosocial and psychological stress (Schulte-Korne, 2010). These psychosocial and psychological experiences can begin with experiences such as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, low motivation, hostility, guilt,

and shame. If left unaddressed, these experiences can manifest into psychosocial and psychological problems related to social mobility, career development, and how one deals with transitional moments.

Several preventative methods have been employed to assist in these reading and writing difficulties, such as a well-researched support program “Hear, Listen, and Learn” that incorporated language games, rhyme recognition, clapping syllables, and sound recognition (Schulte-Korne, 2010). Another program called “Let’s Read” encouraged parents to take an active role by reading aloud together with their children, which facilitated a greater command of language and sound recognition abilities in the children who participate (Schulte-Korne, 2010). Research on these programs have shown significant effect on writing and reading capabilities for children who are at risk of dyslexia (Schulte-Korne, 2010).

However, one limitation to the Schulte-Korne study was: What do we do with the children who are dyslexic and have passed that pivotal period of learning? There is limited information on how early emotional difficulties influenced children with dyslexia. If emotional experiences formulate at the same time as risk factors connected to dyslexia, emotional difficulties may need further exploration to better understand the longitudinal experience on QOL. More specific to my study, the Schulte-Korne research addressed emotional, psychological, and educational experiences at each stage in the development of an individual with dyslexia. Because there is a cross-sectional view into the lives of individuals with dyslexia emotional, psychological, and educational changes were able to be explored to some degree. However, the Schulte-Korne study did not examine

influential factors that may play a role in the onset of these emotional difficulties. Finally, even though the Schulte-Korne article addressed potential long-term side effects to issues associated with dyslexia, there was no exploration on how these experiences may play a role in later QOL.

In another study, Kola et al. (2014) explored how neurological conditions (such as dyslexia, but not limited to dyslexia) could influence negative experiences in areas of life, such as education and work. This was a qualitative study designed to address QOL by exploring two main areas: identity and condition (Kola et al., 2014). The study consisted of six adult (18-25 years old) participants who were diagnosed with chronic neurological conditions (Kola et al., 2014). Each participant took part in an audio-recorded semi-structured interview that was later transcribed verbatim and analyzed through a phenomenological lens (Kola et al., 2014). The results of this research revealed several interlinking themes found amongst all the participants which include condition, support, strive for independence, and transition (Kola et al., 2014). This study also provided information associated to specific needs for those who experience chronic neurological conditions (Kola et al., 2014). This research indicated a greater need for informational and social support needs and removal of barriers that hinder successful participation (Kola et al., 2014). Kola et al. (2014) identified that negative experiences can potentially reduce levels of self-esteem and sense of identity, reducing an individual's overall experience with QOL. Thus, QOL issues are uniquely personal, often a byproduct of socioeconomic factors that vary from one individual to another (Kola et al., 2014). Kola et al. (2014) explored how QOL for young adults with chronic neurological conditions

are influenced by key experiences and how those experiences are perceived by the outside world. Some factors that potentially influence identity formation are peer acceptance, development of autonomy, school-related issues, and acceptance of condition (Kola et al., 2014).

Kola et al. (2014) identified four themes that helped predict QOL outcomes which include conditions, support, strive for independence, and transition. Conditions are the day-to-day challenges of experiencing their neurological differences (Kola et al., 2014). For the young adult with dyslexia, this would mean their difficulties with reading and writing and how they perceive themselves in an environment surrounded by individuals who are not dyslexic. This would also incorporate how well they understood their condition and their ability to find solutions to address the problem (Kola et al., 2014). Support represents their level of educational, work, family, and social support. Within these parameters the level of structural and functional support would influence feelings of empowerment, which could influence autonomy (Kola et al., 2014). If levels of structural and functional support were not addressed, young adults with chronic neurological conditions had a higher probability of experiencing a lack of support and negative QOL experiences (Kola et al., 2014). Researchers indicated that when young adults with chronic neurological conditions lack support, feelings of worthlessness are more common (Kola et al., 2014). Kola et al. postulated that feelings of worthlessness could influence life choices, potentially directing QOL experiences.

Ultimately, young adults with chronic neurological conditions strive for independence (Kola et al., 2014). Young adults with chronic neurological conditions who

develop a strong sense of autonomy perceived QOL more favorably than those who do not perceive quality-of-life favorably (Kola et al., 2014). Furthermore, barriers to independence (such as self-esteem, depression, and anxiety) may hinder the overall QOL experience of young adults with chronic neurological conditions (Kola et al., 2014). Often, these experiences are associated with facilitators of independence, which include financial independence, supportive family and friends, educational structures, and employment structures (Kola et al., 2014). Young adults with chronic neurological conditions who lack the social and structural support of their environment are more likely to experience a decrease in QOL (Kola et al., 2014). Finally, the transition from adolescence to adulthood played a significant role in the overall experience of QOL (Kola et al., 2014). In this parameter the transition itself, the level of support, the perceived barriers, and the suggestions for service improvements all had an impact on experiences (Kola et al., 2014).

One limitation to the Kola study was the broad focus on chronic neurological conditions. There was no direct tie into specific issues related to dyslexia, it is a broad examination of a multitude of neurological conditions and their influence on QOL. However, the Kola study benefitted my research in several ways. First, it provided the framework from a neurological standpoint to investigate how young adults with dyslexia experience QOL. Second, the Kola study addressed the adult cohort and the multitude of situations that may have sway on QOL experiences. Finally, the Kola study indicated a relationship between personal experiences, self-perception, and QOL experiences.

Gerber (2012) sought to address whether the findings of previous investigations relating to learning disabilities, held up to more recent studies. Earlier investigations identified that students who were found to be following positive trends in 1976 were later identified as having positive improvement throughout their life (Gerber, 2012). In other findings, those that were in question (i.e., showing educational difficulties) had little improvement in their adult years (Gerber, 2012). More specifically, basic reading, math, and spelling skills continued to be a challenge for these adults with learning disabilities (Gerber, 2012). However, it was also identified that their learning disabilities were no longer a dominant focal point as adults (Gerber, 2012). Gerber identified that learning disabilities (such as dyslexia) persisted into adulthood. However, the emphasis shifted from overcoming educational struggles to maintaining their adult lives, both in personal and work settings (Gerber, 2012).

The Gerber study investigated three environments, which included employment, residential environment, and interpersonal networks. Information was gathered through phone interviews, which elicited several interesting finds (Gerber, 2012). First, adults with learning disabilities had minimal adult adjustments in their given environments to accommodate their learning disabilities (Gerber, 2012). Therefore, little accommodation took place once they found their given work environment. Second, the unemployment rate of the sample population was at a 31%, which was two times the national average (Gerber, 2012). Third, only 35% of the sample population went on to postsecondary education and no one went into a 2- or 4-year college program (Gerber, 2012). However, it was identified that the extra training helped to improve employment opportunities

(Gerber, 2012). Fourth, women were more likely to be underemployed, which led the researchers to conclude that learning disability programs did not adequately prepare this population with the skills needed for the workforce (Gerber, 2012). Fifth, much of the sample population were not employed full time (Gerber, 2012). However, 87% of the sample population stated that they were happy with their jobs (Gerber, 2012). Finally, it was noted that all participants had general satisfaction within their social and recreational environments (Gerber, 2012). However, the researchers identified that the participants were limited to a narrow range of experiences (Gerber, 2012).

Through these findings, several conclusions were made. First, despite the disability young adults with dyslexia are still required to adapt successfully to a multitude of situations, such as educational, work, family, and social environments. Second, there are a myriad of challenges and outcomes young adults with dyslexia face as they encounter transitional stages in adult roles. Third, Gerber reported that the development of autonomy and self-determination are crucial to QOL amongst all individuals; however, this is especially significant for young adults with dyslexia. Fourth, Gerber identified that individuals with learning disabilities had a correlational relationship between the severity of their disability and the experience of having debilitating adult life experiences. Lastly, another factor that showed a correlation was whether the individual with a learning disability found success in their own systems of accommodation (Gerber, 2012).

Gerber's research explored issues with learning disabilities; these explorations incorporated dyslexia but did not pertain specifically to dyslexia, limiting the influence on this study. However, the research addressed correlational relationships between

learning disabilities and experiences with QOL into adulthood. Moreover, key factors accompanying adults with learning disabilities were addressed, which provided a foundation to explore adult perceptions on QOL experiences. Another useful tool to this study was the emphasis on adult environments (home, work, and social) and its potential influences on QOL experiences.

Whitehouse and colleagues proposed that individuals with dyslexia are at an increased risk for anxiety disorders. However, research is unclear over the extent to which the problem is genetically and/or environmentally derived (Whitehouse et al., 2008). The purpose of the Whitehouse study was to differentiate between whether anxiety was biologically influenced or socially influenced. The sample population for the Whitehouse study were adult female twin pairs who reported having dyslexia; 903 participants were dizygotic twins, and 940 participants were monozygotic twins (Whitehouse et al., 2008). Each participant answered a questionnaire which pertained to dyslexia and anxiety (Whitehouse et al., 2008). The mean age of diagnosis for dyslexia was 26.83 years (Whitehouse et al., 2008). However, the mean age for anxiety was several years higher at 36.11 years (Whitehouse et al., 2008). This study revealed that the tetrachoric matrices for dyslexia and anxiety were higher in monozygotic twins than in dizygotic twins, but not greater than double (Whitehouse et al., 2008). These findings suggest that there is a small correlation between dyslexia and anxiety (Whitehouse et al., 2008). However, these findings identified that the correlations are not explained by genetic factors (Whitehouse et al., 2008). It was further reported that the most likely cause of experiencing both dyslexia and anxiety was through commonly shared

environmental influences (Whitehouse et al., 2008). More specifically, Whitehouse's study indicated that dyslexia was moderately heritable, while anxiety had lower degrees of heritability. Furthermore, "the research indicated that the covariance between dyslexia and anxiety reflect environmentally mediated influences that are common to both members of a twin pair" (Whitehouse et al., 2008, p. 288).

Whitehouse et al. (2008) concluded that correlational studies showed no genetic link between anxiety disorders and dyslexia. Rather, the relationship between dyslexia and anxiety are influenced by shared environmental factors (Whitehouse et al., 2008). Whitehouse et al. (2008) explored the environmental factors that influenced emotional and anxiety problems for individuals with dyslexia. The environmental factors that potentially led to anxiety disorders for individuals with dyslexia have been speculated to associate with academic experiences, social experiences, nutritional levels, and lower socioeconomic status (Whitehouse et al., 2008). There could also be a causal relationship between dyslexia and anxiety, "where the combination of reading difficulties and a propensity to anxiety may lead to an anxious avoidance of reading, thereby exacerbating the underlying reading impairment" (Whitehouse et al., 2008, p. 288).

A limitation to the Whitehouse study was the narrow focus on dyslexia and anxiety. This narrow focus did not address other potential experiences associated with dyslexia, such as low self-esteem, self-perceptions, and depression. However, it benefitted this study because it identified the COE link between dyslexia and social experiences that increase levels of anxiety. Furthermore, the Whitehouse study addressed adult participants with dyslexia, which brings to light a progressive development of early

reading and writing difficulties and its correlational relationship to anxiety. Another limitation to the Whitehouse study was the lack of depth due to the large group of participants and its lack of focus on the male population. Because there was a large participation pool, it was difficult to delve deep into situational turning points that had sway on anxiety development. Another limitation was that the correlations pertained only to the female population; due to a lack of male participants. Furthermore, the Whitehouse study did not clarify whether dyslexia and anxiety had similar correlational relationship in the male population.

In McNulty's (2003) study, emphasis was placed on the exploration of life stories of adults with dyslexia. This resulted in a survey on emotional issues which addressed young adults and their struggles with dyslexia (McNulty, 2003). McNulty asserted that even though dyslexia has been diagnosed, there are a unique set of emotional experiences that emerge throughout the lifespan associated with the hidden phenomenon and are often prone to misunderstanding on the part of self and/or others. One participant noted that "he had contentious relationships with teachers who misunderstood his difficulties with learning" (McNulty, 2003, p. 368). He found his sense of self-worth through other activities such as jobs, athletics, and art (McNulty, 2003). However, his educational experiences had facilitated lasting emotional effects of intense fears of failure (McNulty, 2003). Another participant in McNulty's (2003) study felt stigmatized due to her struggles during the testing process, difficulties in the classroom, and her need for extra help.

McNulty (2003) found that adults with dyslexia between 1940 and 1977 who had substantial societal and educational resources did not fare as well as their parents and peers within a similar socioeconomic environment. Even though this study is dated, it showed that, even under optimal situations, young adults with dyslexia can potentially have negative experiences in academic and vocational achievements (McNulty, 2003). The research implied that there is a correlation between adults with dyslexia and a more negative self-concept (McNulty, 2003). Kosmos and Kidd (1991) reported that individuals with dyslexia are more likely to have dependent personality characteristics than their non-dyslexic counterparts. Caregivers who are aware, sensitive, and act to foster appropriate accommodations in given tasks and in psychological issues are likely to influence a more positive outcome (McNulty, 2003). McNulty further asserted that interventions, which focused on low self-esteem and academic remediation, were amongst the most effective methods in helping individuals with dyslexia learn to cope and adapt.

One limitation to the McNulty study is the time frame of this type of investigation. A more current exploration would be beneficial to address current research and its application on the current population of young adults with dyslexia. However, I was unable to locate a more recent study addressing the correlational relationship between self-concept and past educational experiences. The McNulty study benefitted my research by providing context to the current environment. Self-concept is a key focal point in McNulty's study, which is another aspect of QOL. However, McNulty did not define QOL outcomes. The McNulty study also identified how educational experiences

had influence on later self-perceptions; providing the foundation to explore other COE experiences in correlation to QOL.

Klassen et al. (2011) explored “whether adults with learning disabilities exhibited higher levels of anxiety and depression than their non-learning-disabled peers” (p. 1). Two hypotheses were proposed: the first being the “abeyance hypothesis which suggests that psychological problems associated with learning disabilities decline in adulthood” (Klassen et al., 2011, p. 2). The second is the “continuance hypothesis which proposes that the incidence and impact of internalizing problems may continue after adolescence, and even worsen in adulthood” (Klassen et al., 2011, p. 3). This study focused on anxiety and depression because the comorbidity between childhood and adulthood emotional distress generally yielded high results (Klassen et al., 2011). Another reason for the emphases on anxiety and depression was due to the limited research addressing these stressors in correlation to adults with learning disabilities (Klassen et al., 2011). The purpose of this study was to examine the supporting evidence for both hypotheses (Klassen et al., 2011).

Klassen et al. concluded that internalized problems started off as reading, writing, and comprehension problems but often manifests into lower levels of emotional well-being, higher levels of anxiety and depression. These emotional toils manifested in individuals with learning disabilities as early as childhood and persist throughout their adolescent years (Klassen et al., 2011). Further research indicated that these internalized problems manifest into attainment levels in college and reduced vocational opportunities for young adults with learning disabilities (Klassen et al., 2011).

The Klassen et al. article was valuable to my study because the research addressed internalized problems that persisted into adulthood as children with learning disabilities matured. This supported the theory that early childhood difficulties with dyslexia have sway on adulthood experiences with QOL. One limitation was the general focus on learning disabilities, which is a general term to describe anyone who experiences a difficulty with learning. This would incorporate individuals with intellectual, visual, and/or memory deficits. This definition is also used to describe children who have behavioral difficulties such as ADHD. My study specifically addressed dyslexia, which falls under the umbrella of learning disabled. Thus, I cannot directly transfer the information found in the Klassen study to my own because the focus is too broad. More specifically, the Klassen study cannot directly show a correlational relationship between anxiety and depression for adults with dyslexia. Another limitation was the singular focus on anxiety and depression, which are aspects of QOL but not a complete exploration of QOL. Other factors of QOL, not present in this article, were emotional and behavioral experiences, such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, motivation, hostility, guilt, and shame. The Klassen et al. article did indicate that internalized problems could influence social mobility, career development, and how one deals with transitional moments. However, the focus was to explore emotional well-being, anxiety, and depression levels (Klassen et al., 2011).

Tsovili emphasized the teachers' role in how anxiety influences the lives of adolescents with dyslexia. Part of this research focused on the relationship between dyslexia and emotional factors created by the unexpected difficulties associated to the

acquisition of reading and spelling skills (Tsovili, 2004). Anxiety was the key emotional factor addressed in this article; however, behavioral problems, such as aggression, were also addressed (Tsovili, 2004). Another focal point to Tsovili's study was the teachers' attitude towards adolescents with dyslexia in correlation to reading anxiety.

There were two terms that helped to define the issue associated with anxiety: the first being state anxiety and the second being trait anxiety (Tsovili, 2004). State anxiety is defined as the emotional response given at a particular event (such as receiving a reading assignment from the teacher) (Spielberger, 1966; Tsovili, 2004). Trait anxiety is defined as the tendency to perceive a variety of situations as threatening (Spielberger, 1966; Tsovili, 2004). Tsovili indicated that the objective characteristics of a given situation in conjunction to the memories and thoughts experienced from past events contribute to the level and type of anxiety. Tsovili further asserted that children with dyslexia not only had to cope with reading difficulties and the emotional aftermath, but they also had to deal with the frustration of anxiety and the impact that had on their ability to read. This anxiety may come from within the individual with dyslexia, but the research indicated that it is not always internally derived (Tsovili, 2004). Another associated problem was their obligations to read out loud in the classroom and the regular interruptions to correct their reading errors (Tsovili, 2004). Tsovili described these experiences as punishment, leaving the children with dyslexia experiencing a constant state of pressure to keep up with the other children. Researchers have shown instances where children and adolescents with dyslexia have reported problems with teachers who focused on their failure to meet the teacher's expectations (Tsovili, 2004). Some teachers have been

reported as being insensitive or lacking understanding when addressing educational difficulties (Tsovili, 2004). In Tsovili's report, these teachers were accused of making inappropriate comments when the individual with dyslexia displayed learning difficulties, such as calling them lazy and willfully disobedient. Tsovili (2004) stated that "in all cases, a great number of complex interactions between the child/adolescent with dyslexia and the school or the teacher impede academic progress" (p. 72).

The Tsovili study was beneficial to my research because it presented specific events that correlate with anxiety from adolescents with dyslexia. The Tsovili article addressed two main ideas: the first is that adolescents with dyslexia show a correlational relationship with their difficulties in learning to develop language skills and anxiety levels. The second idea is that the frustration levels of educators have a correlational relationship to anxiety levels in adolescents with dyslexia. These specific barometers may reflect changes in future experiences, such as QOL throughout the lifespan. However, the Tsovili article did not provide insight into long term experiences with anxiety and its correlational relationship on adult behavior. Another limitation was the narrow focus on anxiety. The Tsovili article did not address potential links between anxiety and depression or anxiety and low self-perception. There was no emphasis on other emotional factors, such as depression, self-esteem, self-efficacy, motivation, hostility, guilt, and/or shame. There was also no exploration into long-term factors, such as social mobility, career development, and how one deals with transitional moments. By exploring these aspects, potential COE experiences may provide insight into QOL dynamics for young adults with dyslexia.

The conclusion of the McNulty, Schulte-Korne, Tsovili, and Whitehouse et al. articles did not address QOL experiences in young adults with dyslexia. However, they did provide insight into cognitive, emotional, and social implications that influence QOL experiences. These articles addressed relational experiences with teachers, employers, parents, and peers that influence the onset of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, low motivation, hostility, guilt, and/or shame found amongst individuals with dyslexia. Depression, anxiety, self-esteem, self-efficacy, motivation, hostility, guilt, and shame are all aspects of QOL, but by themselves do not fully address issues related to QOL. However, these articles showed a correlation between social experiences and the onset of emotional difficulties (McNulty, 2003; Schulte-Korne, 2010; Tsovili, 2004; Whitehouse et al., 2008). The research also indicated that these emotional difficulties are not biologically significant, leading more to social implications (McNulty, 2003; Schulte-Korne, 2010; Tsovili, 2004; Whitehouse et al., 2008).

The Gerber, Kola et al., and Klassen et al. studies did not specifically address dyslexia, but they addressed QOL issues related to individuals with neurological conditions or learning disabilities. Both neurological conditions and learning disabilities are umbrella terms used to describe several intellectual conditions, such as dyslexia, ADHD, and low intelligence. More specifically, these articles explored QOL experiences using a broad perspective, addressing several cognitive conditions. The Gerber, Kola, and Klassen studies were the only articles I could find that directly addressed QOL in conjunction with issues related to dyslexia. The research indicated that QOL experiences

are influenced by social dynamics within school, work, and home environments (Gerber, 2012; Klassen et al., 2011; Kola et al., 2014).

Summary and Conclusions

Some major themes found in the literature: first, unaddressed reading and writing problems in children with dyslexia were identified as having a secondary effect on self-perception, self-esteem, and negative experiences with anxiety and depression. Second, children with dyslexia who experience reading and writing difficulties were more likely to experience prolonged difficulties throughout their lifespan, such as motivation, social mobility, educational attainment, and career development. Third, the prolonged difficulties associated with reading and writing had compounding effects on emotional difficulties as these children transition into adulthood. Fourth, many of these emotional difficulties stemmed from a lifetime of internal perceptions over how teachers, parents, coworkers, and peer perceived them in their given roles. Finally, these perceptions also stemmed from situational dilemmas. An example of this may be a situation in which the individual with dyslexia cannot interact with their peers because they are catching up on school or work activities.

The reviewed articles revealed that dyslexia is a worldwide phenomenon found in many countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Africa, China, Britain, Scotland, Italy, Ireland, Norway, Greece and Germany (Barry et al., 2012; Beer et al., 2014; Bonifacci et al., 2013; Brante, 2013; Cameron, 2016; Carroll & Iles, 2006; Casserly, 2013; Claassens & Lessing, 2015; Gerber, 2012; Grills-Taquechel et al., 2012; Jordan et al., 2014; Klassen et al., 2011; Leather et al., 2011; Nalavany et al., 2015;

Nergard-Nilssen & Hulme, 2014; Russell et al., 2015; Schulte-Korne, 2010; Skinner & MacGill, 2015; Szmalec et al., 2011; Tsovilis, 2004; Whitehouse et al., 2008). Children with dyslexia develop into adults with dyslexia (Beer et al., 2014; Claassens & Lessing, 2015; Gerber, 2012; Jordan et al., 2014; Klassen et al., 2011; Leather et al., 2011; McNulty, 2003; Nalavany et al., 2015; Russell et al., 2015; Schulte-Korne, 2010; Snowling & Melby-Lervag, 2016). More specifically, dyslexia is a neurobiological disorder that impairs an individual's ability to read and write (Barry et al., 2012; Beer et al., 2014; Bonifacci et al., 2013; Brante, 2013; Cameron, 2016; Carrol & Iles, 2006; Casserly, 2013; Gerber, 2012; Nergard-Nilssen & Hulme, 2014; Schulte-Korne, 2010; Snowling & Melby-Lervag, 2016; Szmalec et al., 2011). Furthermore, if these reading and writing difficulties are not addressed early in a child's development, maladaptive social-emotional behaviors are more likely to occur. These maladaptive social-emotional behaviors were shown to have a compounding effect (i.e., increasing in magnitude the longer the problem is unaddressed). These maladaptive social-emotional behaviors can manifest as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, low motivation, hostility, guilt, and/or shame. These negative cognitive thoughts could also influence social mobility, career development, and how one deals with transitional moments. However, the studies reviewed did not address the specific COEs that lead to maladaptive behaviors. There was no direct research that addressed how COEs lead to QOL experiences.

The purpose of this study was to categorize experiences into sequence by exploring COEs, allowing me to draw out common themes that describe QOL

experiences of young adults with dyslexia (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). The phenomenon is the accumulation of COE experiences and the QOL experiences found in young adults with dyslexia. One key example of this phenomenon would be that individuals with dyslexia, who have significant difficulties with reading, writing, and spelling in conjunction to social difficulties, are more prone to lifelong negative consequences with behavioral, emotional, and anxiety experiences (Cameron, 2016; Jordan et al., 2014; Russell et al., 2015). However, previous studies only emphasized specific behavioral, emotional and anxiety aspects, linking early educational efforts to the onset of these later adapted experiences.

There was limited information on the accumulation of emotional difficulties and QOL experiences for young adults with dyslexia. I have gathered information that addressed emotional difficulties associated to individuals with dyslexia; these difficulties included emotional struggles, such as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, low motivation, hostility, guilt, and shame. Furthermore, I found studies that addressed negative cognitive thoughts and those influences on one's social mobility, career development, and how one deals with transitional moments. Historically, research on dyslexia emphasized diagnostic aspects, with some emphasis on emotionality, educational, work, family, and social experiences. However, there was limited information on COE and QOL experiences related to educational, work, family, and social environments for young adults with dyslexia. This was somewhat problematic because there were minimal resources to draw from. Therefore, the emphasis was to explore the COE experiences of young adults with dyslexia to categorize and define key

themes to better understand QOL experiences. This was accomplished through the exploration of articles that already addressed key aspects of QOL (such as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, low motivation, hostility, guilt, and shame) and through the told stories of COE and QOL experiences provided from the participants.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

Research on individuals with dyslexia that addresses QOL experiences has received limited attention. Generally, research on dyslexia has emphasized specific emotional and behavioral-related topics, such as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, low motivation, hostility, guilt, and shame. Few studies have addressed negative cognitive thoughts and how they influence social mobility and career development and how one deals with transitional moments. These emotional experiences can be associated to QOL experiences but are not solely responsible for the overall experience. Research that addressed dyslexia has had no emphasis on the overall QOL experiences. The purpose of this narrative study was to describe the COEs that shape QOL experiences of young adults with dyslexia through subjective, existential, and objective perspectives. These three perspectives provided the framework to explore QOL experiences and can be applied to several life environments (e.g., educational, work, family, and social). A qualitative approach was used that consisted of in-depth interviews to gather a rich narrative to describe the lived experiences related to QOL of individuals with dyslexia.

By using the IQOL theory, it was possible to identify emerging themes derived from the narrative stories told by young adults with dyslexia. These emerging themes were obtained by exploring COE occurrences and comparing them with other participants. COEs are the building blocks to QOL experiences. By exploring COE occurrences and identifying emerging themes, this study expanded on the wealth of

knowledge already known about dyslexia. More specifically, this approach bridged the gap in understanding related to the emotional development and QOL experiences of individuals with dyslexia. Researchers have identified correlational relationships between dyslexia and depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, low motivation, hostility, guilt, and shame. Furthermore, researchers have indicated that negative cognitive thoughts can influence social mobility, career development, and how one deals with transitional moments. However, no research, related to dyslexia, has addressed the COE experiences and what it is like based on QOL perceptions.

Research Design

The design of this research was to explore QOL experiences amongst young adults with dyslexia within educational, work, family, and social environments, using the subjective, existential, and objective perspectives as parameters. Therefore, the subjective, existential, and objective perspectives were addressed within each environment (i.e., educational, work, family, and social). Within each environment, I explored COE themes related to depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, low motivation, hostility, guilt, and shame. Furthermore, I looked for situational experiences related to social mobility, career development, and how one deals with transitional moments. Below are the research question and subquestions:

Research question – Qualitative: What is the subjective, existential, and objective QOL experience of young adults diagnosed with dyslexia within educational, work, family, and social environments?

Subquestion: What is it like living with dyslexia within the educational environment from a subjective, existential, and objective perspective?

Subquestion: What is it like living with dyslexia within the work environment from a subjective, existential, and objective perspective?

Subquestion: What is it like living with dyslexia within the family environment from a subjective, existential, and objective perspective?

Subquestion: What is it like living with dyslexia within the social environment from a subjective, existential, and objective perspective?

By addressing COE experiences, I developed categories and themes to fully explain QOL for young adults with dyslexia. Through the use of the research questions, I addressed several environments (e.g., educational, work, family, and social), which provided a wide range of life experiences to draw from. By using IQOL theory, I had a theoretical perspective that addressed the complex nature of QOL (see Ventegodt et al., 2003). This theory goes beyond the simple definition of QOL, which means to have a good life (Ventegodt et al., 2003). More specifically, this theory incorporates the subjective, existential, and objective perspectives of what it means to have a good life (Ventegodt et al., 2003). Using the IQOL theory, I had a lens to draw out QOL experiences in each of the environments (educational, work, family, and social). By analyzing the told stories of each participant, I developed categories and themes that addressed the central phenomenon. The central phenomenon for young adults with dyslexia was the COE experiences and the perception of QOL over time.

Rationale

Traditionally, research on dyslexia has addressed cognitive and emotional differences specific to school-aged children. As technology developed and research methods became more refined, researchers were able to conclude that dyslexic individuals are neurologically wired differently than their nondyslexic counterparts (Barry et al., 2012). As cognitive differences were realized, a shift to emotional and behavioral outcomes became a focal point in research. This shift addressed emotional and behavioral differences, such as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, low motivation, hostility, guilt, and shame. There were a few articles that addressed negative cognitive thoughts and how those thoughts influence social mobility, career development, and how one deals with transitional moments (see Beer et al., 2014; Gerber, 2009). However, there was little emphasis on COEs and QOL experiences. My decided focal point came from Casserly's (2013) article, which indicated that individuals with dyslexia have higher rates of stress, anxiety, and depression over their nondyslexic counterparts. Furthermore, Casserly identified that the higher rates of stress, anxiety, and depression were not due to neurological differences but rather the differences were correlational.

This led to my interest in exploring COE experiences and the overall QOL perceptions of individuals with dyslexia. My interest was to explore experiences, through the told stories of young adults with dyslexia. The experiences of interest included emotional and behavioral aspects related to depression, anxiety, self-esteem, self-efficacy, motivation, hostility, guilt, and shame. Furthermore, I inquired about cognitive

thoughts and decision making related to social mobility, career development, and how one deals with transitional moments. As I explored QOL experiences, I realized that these overall perceptions do not derive from one specific emotional event. The research indicated that perceptions on QOL are derived from an accumulation of experiences. This perspective led my need to do a narrative study, which is a written account of connected events (see Creswell, 2013). The term COE was derived from the type of study I chose to utilize. Therefore, my focus on COEs was simply a byproduct of my interest in exploring QOL experiences. I cannot get at the heart of QOL experiences without exploring the COEs that led up to the overall experience.

I planned to use a qualitative study because there has been limited information that addressed experiences, specifically pertaining to young adults with dyslexia. Furthermore, QOL experiences in this subgroup has had little to no emphasis, leaving a gap of insight into how those individuals with dyslexia are understood. The narrative approach was the most appropriate qualitative strategy because it relies on the written or spoken words of the participant about their lived experiences (see Creswell, 2013). Because my emphasis was on QOL, it was important to address the whole experience or life leading up to the participants' current position. By using a narrative approach, a linear timeline of experiences was explored for each participant. From this point, COE themes were then explored for each of the participants. This linear timeline and COE correlation provided the framework to explore common themes amongst all participants, which allowed me to address common experiences realized within each of the participants.

The phenomenological approach could be used to explore QOL experiences. However, the purpose of this approach was to put emphasis on the phenomenon, which was to provide a composite description of the essence of the experience for all individuals involved in the study (see Creswell, 2013). More specifically, this approach allows the researcher to explore told stories of people who have experienced the phenomenon. I found that the phenomenological approach was not appropriate because it emphasizes the lived experiences of the participant in the here and now. The phenomenological approach does not focus on the story told over time. A QOL study needs to incorporate stories told over time, making the phenomenological approach too narrow of an emphasis. Because QOL experiences can be influenced by many potential phenomena, my emphasis has taken a broad perspective. Therefore, gathering the lived experiences related to QOL was a more appropriate strategy for my study.

The grounded theory approach is another strategy that could shed light on QOL experiences in young adults with dyslexia. However, this approach is designed to generate explanations of interactions, which were shaped by the views of the participants over time (Creswell, 2013). There is less interest in how participants' experienced QOL over time. The emphasis is in developing a theory to describe an experience, which can lead to a plan of action (such as an educational program). My current interest was to understand something about the QOL experiences of young adults with dyslexia. It was not to develop a theory or action plan. Therefore, using the ground theory approach did not suit my initial strategy.

The ethnographic approach emphasizes the shared patterns (such as values, behaviors, and beliefs) for a larger group (Creswell, 2013). This approach could shed light on common themes found amongst individuals with dyslexia. However, QOL is a multifaceted perspective that does not specifically address shared patterns, such as values, behaviors, and beliefs. Because the ethnographic approach emphasizes specific groups and the cultural experiences within, it did not fit the purpose of my study. Although I was addressing a specific subgroup of people, these individuals do not always share the same cultural backgrounds.

The case study approach is a strategy that could shed light on specific place and time variables (Creswell, 2013). Specific issues, problems, and concerns within a given place and time can provide valuable information, which can ultimately relate in some way to QOL. However, this approach does not directly emphasize QOL issues. First, QOL does not strictly form out of specific issues, problems, and/or concerns. Often, QOL experiences are derived from the accumulation of issues, problems, and concerns throughout the lifespan. Second, QOL usually does not stay within the parameters of a specific time and place. Finally, a case study explores the phenomenon from a variety of perspectives whereas in a narrative study, the only perspective being explored is that of the person who had the experience. Because of these specific limitations and my emphasis on QOL experiences, the case study method did not suit my purpose.

Role of the Researcher in a Narrative Study

My role as the observer-participant was to collect the told stories of young adults with dyslexia to find common themes related to their QOL experiences. More

specifically, as the participants narrated their life experiences, my role was to observe and collect the data as it was told. From that point, I then used the IQOL as the framework to categorize their experiences into subjective, existential, and/or objective perspectives within the four environments (e.g., educational, work, family, and social). As a participant, I reconnected with the research participants to tease out possible misinterpretations or incorrect analyses of the given narrative.

I used Apples of Gold learning centers (private companies that specifically focus on dyslexia and the learning difficulties associated to the disorder), to which I had a professional connection and had already received approval, to find potential participants. I had not worked with the organization in several years. My former employer was helpful to the development of my study because of her large connection with the dyslexic population. Apples of Gold learning centers primarily addresses children and teenagers with dyslexia. However, this organization has connections to young adults with dyslexia all over the United States through a Facebook group called Decoding Dyslexia. Because my focal point was on young adults with dyslexia, I used Apples of Gold as a starting point to connect to the larger Facebook group. The Facebook group (Decoding Dyslexia) was my primary way of recruiting adult participants, as sponsored/supported by Apples of Gold learning centers.

Researcher Biases and Power Relationships

Researcher bias is the imposition of the researcher's personal experiences and feelings into the study. A power relationship is when the researcher uses their role as an authority figure to direct how a person responds to a given question to shape the direction

of the study. Both researcher bias and power relationships can happen with or without awareness. However, safeguards against researcher bias and power relationships are important to establish an authentic representation of the participants' experience.

One way I addressed researcher biases and power relationships was through unknown participants. I did not use participants whom I have met or worked with, leaving out personal biases and avoiding the power relationship struggle. Also, the participants were young adults with dyslexia to minimize the risk of power relationships between myself and the participants. The goal was to hear and share the stories told given by the participants. To avoid my own biases, I established general questions to explore specific situations within a given environment (e.g., education, work, family, and social). Beyond the generalized lead questions needed to direct the participants toward a particular topic, my role was to record their stories as they were told. This means that I did not impose my own thoughts and experiences into the interview. The interview recordings were used to ensure the integrity of each participant's told story.

Congruence analysis focuses on drawing inferences to the relevance of the study (Mills et al., 2010). This process includes exploring concrete observations (i.e., told stories and recordings) and analyzing those observations with the theory (Mills et al., 2010). As the participant's stories were recorded and analyzed, I reconnected with each participant to confirm that my interpretations were congruent to their experience. This reconnection was designed for two purposes: the first was to ensure my analysis consistently represented each participant told story, more specifically that the COE experiences that are unraveled through the analyses process are accurate and clear. The

second purpose was to ensure a thorough representation of each participant, allowing me to further address questions I gathered through the analysis process.

Methodology

Within the methodology section, I addressed the logic for choosing participants, instrumentation, and participant questions. Additionally, I explained procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection. Finally, I addressed the data analysis plan and how I systematically drew conclusions from my gathered data. Together, this information described my strategy for exploring the lived experiences of young adults with dyslexia and QOL.

Participant Selection Logic

The desired sample population and criteria was eight to 10 young adults who had been diagnosed with dyslexia and were between the ages of 22 and 35. Eight to 10 participants were needed to ensure a large enough group to saturate the topic and to explore common themes; however, the sample size was small enough to conduct an in-depth analysis of each individual's narrative story. My initial approach was to reach out to Apples of Gold learning centers, located in several cities and towns in the middle of Iowa. Apples of Gold learning centers specifically work with dyslexic individuals on reading remediation. This organization supplements traditional school systems but are not affiliated with these school systems. I was an employee of the organization for 5 years but currently do not work for the company. This organization was important to my study because of their large connection with individuals diagnosed with dyslexia. From my initial contact, I used a snowball strategy to find young adults with dyslexia. More

specifically, my former employer had connections to other learning centers and organizations (with an emphasis on dyslexia) across the United States. By using my former employer as a resource, I made connections to a larger pool of people who work with families of children with dyslexia. Some of these children were too young for this study, but many were adults and fell within the 22 to 35 years age-group criteria. To make a connection to the larger pool of individuals with dyslexia, I provided an invitation email/flyer that was distributed to the broader group. My contact information was provided on the email/flyer so that potential participants could contact me. This approach was the best strategy because of the direct connection to individuals with dyslexia. Overall, I acquired participants through my connections with Apples of Gold. The owner of Apples of Gold directed me towards other groups where I found other participants. In total seven people chose to participate in the study. Five of the participants were female and two were male. All participants brought different experiences related to their struggle with dyslexia, which provided a large amount of data. Even though I did not find eight to 10 participants, with seven participants I was able to saturate the data needed.

Instrumentation

The information was gathered from phone interviews; each interview was recorded verbatim through the use of phone recordings. The interviews were recorded to ensure that the told stories of the participants and the analysis process maintained a congruent message.

NVivo is a qualitative data analysis computer software package designed for working with text-based and/or multimedia information. This software program allows

for deep levels of analysis on small and large volumes of data. NVivo was used to store and organize the collected information. NVivo has the capacity to organize large amounts of information, which allowed me to analyze the participants' stories into emerging themes, experiences, and feelings that are supported by previous studies. From there, I used broad thoughts and ideas to build a narrative that explored the specific dynamics associated to QOL for young adults with dyslexia. Then, I shared these stories through a detailed analysis that unraveled the participants' experiences.

Researcher-Developed Instruments

For this study, a semi-structure interview format was employed. First, a structured set of questions were adapted to establish consistency and validity. Each participant was asked the same questions with no deviations. These leading questions were paramount to the research because each question directed the participants to respond to the appropriate environment being explored (i.e., educational, work, family, and social). Each question was derived from a previous study, which addressed QOL experiences in young adults living with a chronic neurological condition (Kola et al., 2014). I received permission from Dr. Kola to adapt these questions to specifically address dyslexia, which is a chronic neurological condition.

Next, participant-specific unstructured questions led the participants to engage in a reflective narrative of their lived experiences with dyslexia. The IQOL was the theoretical foundation to which these questions and answers were sifted through to directly address QOL experiences (Ventegodt et al., 2003). Ventegodt et al. identified a need to explore QOL from a subjective, existential, and objective basis to more fully

address QOL experiences. By using Ventegodt's theory and addressing different environments (i.e., educational, work, family, and social), a narrative exploration of QOL experiences was conducted. By comparing the narrative stories of several young adults with dyslexia, the research revealed common themes and COE experiences that deepened the understanding of QOL experiences in this subgroup.

Procedures for Recruitment

Procedures for recruitment included an initial contact with Apples of Gold learning centers located in central Iowa. This organization works directly with people who have dyslexia and they directed me towards an appropriate sample group. I used a snowball sampling approach to recruit the participants. Overall, 7 participants were obtained between the ages of 22 to 35. The purpose of this young adult group was to explore the lived experiences and to sift through the COE experiences related to QOL perceptions. Furthermore, I acquired participants across the United States. I was able to recruit enough participants to achieve data saturation.

Procedures for Participation

Each participant took part in an initial phone interview (which was recorded) where I explained, in detail, the purpose of the study and the participant's rights. During this phone interview I addressed the research questions and encouraged the participants to share their lived experiences with dyslexia. The interview time frame was set to one hour with flexibility to accommodate conversation flow. A 30-minute follow up phone interview was scheduled to ensure accuracy and consistency between the participants' lived experiences and my interpretations of those experiences. Each participant sent me

completed consent forms, stating that they were aware of the purpose of the study and their rights as participants. The time frame of each phone interview was designed to allow the participant to warm up before getting into deeper conversation.

Procedures for Data Collection

I used a semi-structured phone interview format that started with baseline questions designed to keep every participant on topic. As the participants' shared their stories, I took notes and asked specific questions related to their unique experiences. The phone interviews were recorded and stored on NVivo. NVivo is a software program designed to organize large amounts of data and sift through the recorded data for transcribing. Once the information was gathered, I reviewed the stories told and looked for common COE themes related to QOL. Finally, I shared their stories and the shared COE themes related to QOL.

Data Analysis Plan

The first step in my data analysis plan was to collect the told stories of each participant, which were conducted through phone interviews. Each phone interview was recorded for the purpose of ensuring an authentic representation of the participants' experiences. The second step began once the data was collected, which required organizing the information into NVivo. NVivo is a software program that can help me organize and analyze each participant's lived experience. The third step was a process of reading and memoing the large amounts of data collected. During this process, I wrote memos in the margins of field notes collected throughout the interview process. During this stage, I reflected on the overall thoughts presented in the data to form broad

categories. During the search for categories, multiple forms of evidence were needed to confirm that a category accurately represented the participants' experiences (see Creswell, 2013). The fourth step was to describe, classify, and interpret data into codes and themes (see Creswell, 2013). During this stage, I created detailed descriptions of what was revealed within the told stories provided by the participants. Coding was an integral part of the process, which involved aggregating the data into smaller categories of information, by seeking evidence across multiple sources of information and assigning a label to the code (see Creswell, 2013). The fifth step was to develop themes, which are broad units of information derived from several code aggregations (see Creswell, 2013). Once these themes were developed, I wrote them into the narrative study. The sixth step was the interpretation of the data, which is the "organization of themes into larger units of abstraction to make sense out of the data" (Creswell, 2013, p. 187). The final step was the representation of the data through textual narration, focusing on processes, theories, and unique and general features experienced by young adults with dyslexia.

Throughout the data analysis process, discrepant cases were analyzed, and further information were gathered to provide an in-depth explanation. Discrepant cases could be anything from inconsistencies in the story told to researcher bias or misunderstanding of information. Further information was gathered by a second phone interview to clear up inconsistencies in the story told and/or to revisit their description of events to ensure I understood the experience correctly. The second phone interview was designed to weed out any potential bias and to ensure an authentic representation of the participant's told story.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility was established using several methods, which included triangulation, prolonged contact, member checks, saturation, and reflexivity. First, triangulation is the use of multiple methods when collecting data. My triangulation approach included phone interviews, recordings, and member checks to ensure the message is authentically presented. During the phone interviews I took notes regarding the experiences being shared. Furthermore, those notes were compared with the phone recordings to ensure accuracy. Finally, member checking was utilized through a second phone interview to confirm that my narrative story authentically represented the participants' experiences.

Second, prolonged contact is the extent of time needed to develop trust and openness with a participant. Prolonged contact allows ample time to collect each participant's told stories and experiences with dyslexia. It also provided the time needed for each participant to ask questions about the process, my purpose for the study, and any other concerns each participant may have. The initial interview set the expectations and answered any concerns the participants may have about the study. In addition, it devoted enough time to collect each participant's told story. The second interview incorporated member checking, wherein I shared the findings with each participant and ensured the narration of their stories were accurately displayed.

Third, saturation is the point at which there is enough information to fully develop a theory (see Creswell, 2013). This study incorporated saturation in two ways. First, this was done by collecting the told stories of several participants with dyslexia (7 participants). The need for 7 participants was to ensure variations in participant selection.

Second, saturation occurred through the interview process and the use of key questions that address the heart of the study. These pointed questions ensured that each participant addressed their life experiences with dyslexia in educational, work, family, and social environments. Each question was designed to address QOL experiences in each environment (i.e., educational, work, family, and social). Each of the participants were asked the same initial questions to ensure consistency.

Finally, reflexivity is the representation of my own interest for conducting this study (see Creswell, 2013). I recognized that the readers have a right to know what drives the direction of my study. More specifically, they would want to understand my background (work experiences, cultural experiences, and history) and how that may influence my interpretation of the information in the study (see Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, I addressed how I plan to reduce bias to conduct an authentic narration of my participants' experiences. To address personal bias, I established several ways of collecting data (e.g., phone interview, recordings, and member checks). These data collection methods were then used to triangulate data, which specifically addressed the participant's experiences and not my own. More specifically, as each participant shared their told story, I then drew out (through the use of notes and phone recordings) emerging patterns, themes, and concepts specifically related to their experiences. Once my narrative exploration was completed, I then conducted member checks to ensure my interpretation authentically represented their experiences. Through this process I used objective sources of data to write the narrative study. The second interview was designed as a check and balance system to ensure their message was displayed accurately.

Transferability

To ensure transferability amongst young adults with dyslexia, I used a narrative approach to develop a rich description of their lived stories and perceptions related to QOL. Several environments (educational, work, family, and social) were addressed to ensure a variety of life circumstances and experiences. The participants were from diverse backgrounds and of varying genders and socioeconomic positions, which ensured a variety in participant selection. By using a diverse group and addressing several social environments I was able to develop a rigorous method of qualitative data collection and analysis (see Creswell, 2013). I then incorporated NVivo to assist in the analysis process. From this point, the qualitative study was written and included objective evidence through the participants' told stories.

Dependability

Dependability relied on both triangulation and audit trails to ensure a reliable account of the participants' told stories. Triangulation was established by using several methods to acquire data. More specifically, phone interviews were the primary method to acquire data, with each interview being recorded. The recorded information was used as a check-and-balance system to ensure accuracy in the narration of each participant's told story. By using several sources of information (audit trails, phone interviews, and recordings) validity was ensured.

Audit trails were used to show transparency. This approach involved a description of the research steps from start to finish. These steps included the collection of raw data, data reduction and analysis, data reconstruction and synthesis, process notes, materials

related to intentions and dispositions, and instrument development information (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985). More specifically, each step included a descriptive explanation which laid out the research approach to ensure accuracy.

Confirmability

Reflexivity helped establish confirmability through my acknowledgement of personal experiences with dyslexia within educational, work, family, and social environments. This process incorporated both my experiences and how these experiences have shaped my interpretation of the phenomenon (see Creswell, 2013). More specifically, through the use of reflexivity, trustworthiness was established on behalf of the findings. By addressing my experiences and the potential for bias, I was able to address where my participants' experiences differ. Through this process confirmability was established to verify that the findings are shaped by the participants rather than my own experiences.

Intracoder Reliability

Intracoder reliability was incorporated to ensure reliability with common patterns, themes, and concepts. Intracoder reliability is the evaluation of information to ensure the message is being represented accurately. One way this reliability can be established is by using the participants' voice to highlight common patterns, themes, and concepts. By speaking through the voice of the participants, rather than my voice, I established comprehensiveness, coherency, and trustworthiness of the research findings. Furthermore, the information being shared did not come from my understanding, experiences, and biases, rather the information came from the participants' point of view.

Intracoder reliability ensured that the message being represented was directly addressed by the participants' experiences, not my own. To ensure consistency, I incorporated each participant's voice (chosen words) to represent a common theme related to COE and/or QOL experiences.

Ethical Procedures

The Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) was the foundation for ethical guidelines and procedures used in this study. The Walden University Institutional Review board approval number is: 04-22-20-0346139. This study consisted of phone interviews with young adults who have dyslexia to explore COE themes and QOL experiences. Safeguards were taken to ensure that the interviewees' privacy and confidentiality were maintained.

The IRB is concerned with ensuring safety on the part of the participant. To ensure safety, I used an adult cohort. First, the age range of 22 to 35 was an optimal age group for this study because of their ability to recall and reflect on firsthand experiences related to dyslexia and QOL experiences. Second, because I used an adult cohort, there was a reduction in potential vulnerabilities based on age and competence. The Walden IRB referred to vulnerable population as children under the age of 18, pregnant women and fetuses, physically disabled persons, emotionally disabled persons, hospitalized persons, incarcerated persons, persons under community supervision for a crime, and elderly persons. My chosen population was not inherently a vulnerable population; however, each participant was assessed to ensure they did not fall within the vulnerable population group.

One way I sought to safeguard the welfare and rights of the participants was by searching for participants' outside of my professional role. Gathering participants started with an initial contact to an organization that specializes in individuals with dyslexia. This organization has a large following of children and adults who have suffered from dyslexia. The organization also has connections to other groups of people with dyslexia who are not actively a part of the organization. I used a snowball recruiting strategy, which started with this organization but drew participants from outside of the organization. My reason for using participants outside of the organization was that the organization specifically worked with children and adolescents, but my study focused on adults with dyslexia. However, the reason for starting the process of recruiting with the organization was due to their large connection to young adults with dyslexia.

Each participant received a letter of informed consent, which described the research process and the participants' rights to discontinue their role in the research for any reason. The letter of informed consent was written so that the participants can understand what is being asked of them so they can make an informed decision. It was recognized that individuals with dyslexia often do not like to read. One way I ensured that my participants were aware of their rights was by reading the letter of informed consent to them. They were also given a copy as a resource to follow along and keep for potential conflicts later in the process.

Potential risks in this study were the sensitive nature related to the topic of dyslexia. Individuals with dyslexia often do not like to talk about their experiences. More importantly, do not want others to know about those experiences related to dyslexia.

These experiences could be associated with educational, work, family, and/or social environments. As the researcher probing into the experiences associated to dyslexia and QOL, I needed to provide safeguards to ensure their anonymity and confidentiality. My initial action towards participant's anonymity and confidentiality was to use adult participants. This was a safeguard to protect the rights and welfare of people whose vulnerabilities impair autonomous decision making (see APA, 2019). Another safeguard addressed the individual's rights for privacy. This included proper concealment of names, phone numbers, emails, and collected data. More specifically, all data were stored on a password-protected work computer. Phone recordings and participant records were filed and stored behind a locked door, with only the researcher having access to the data. All participants were given a pseudonym to conceal their identities. All participants were gathered from the United States. There may be gender, socioeconomic and/or educational differences, which proved informative with a potential to reveal the identity of the participants. Thus, information was used collectively to keep participants' identity confidential.

Finally, the need for integrity was paramount and required the use of research methods that promoted accuracy, honesty, and truthfulness. One way to promote integrity was by extensively documenting each step in the research process. Phone interviews and phone recordings were used as a research tool to collect each participant's told stories. The phone recordings were documented and used to ensure accuracy of each participant's story. As conclusions were drawn, based on the participants' stories, member checking was incorporated with a follow up phone interview to confirm that their experiences are

accurately displayed. Member checking engaged each participant in the review process to ensure that the emergent themes and conclusions accurately described their experiences.

Participants' rights for self-determination were explained in the initial phone interview. Ethical concerns related to participants' refusal and/or early withdrawal from the study were addressed by excluding their already presented information. Furthermore, additional recruitment would have been required to fill the gap left by a withdrawing participant. If a participant chose to withdraw from the study, they would have been informed of the removal of their recorded data. No participants withdrew from the study.

Summary

The goal of this study was to explore emerging themes associated with QOL experiences amongst young adults with dyslexia. The research indicated a correlational relationship between early experiences and the manifestation of emotional difficulties. However, there was limited research that addressed emotional difficulties and its influence on QOL experiences. Ventegodt et al. (2003) identified that QOL experiences are multifaceted and should be addressed through a subjective, existential, and objective lens. I used the IQOL theory and the educational, work, family, and social environment framework to guide the narrative exploration of the participants' QOL experiences. Once each participant shared their QOL experiences, an analytical process took place to explore and categorize common themes. Furthermore, a rich narrative, from each participant, brought to light common COE experiences and themes found to influence QOL experiences.

Ethical concerns were addressed in several ways: first, I used an adult cohort to eliminate permission requirements needed for a younger cohort. Second, each person was informed of their rights as a participant. An IRB-approved confidentiality agreement was signed by me and the participant. Third, gathered information were password-protected and stored behind a locked door to ensure participant confidentiality. Finally, each participant was given a pseudonym to ensure their identities were securely protected.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This narrative study was designed to explore how life COEs are encountered through subjective, existential, and objective perspectives and how they relate to QOL experiences within educational, work, family, and social environments. The research questions were designed to address each perspective (subjective, existential, and objective) within each environmental (educational, work, family, and social) setting. Together, the purpose and research questions were organized to explore life experiences in several environments and to address QOL experiences through three perspectives that were realized by each participant with dyslexia. The overall goal was to develop a rich narrative of common COE themes that all culminate in QOL experiences that have been realized/experienced by each participant with dyslexia. The goal was accomplished through semistructured phone interviews designed to address QOL experiences within each environment from a subjective, existential, and objective perspective.

Setting

Some potential conditions that may have influenced participants' experiences at the time of this study were age, educational experience and level, family demands, work demands, and the current COVID-19 pandemic. More specifically, a person can feel differently about their experiences with dyslexia depending on the age at which they talk about it. Educational experiences and level can also influence how a participant perceives their QOL experiences. Family and work demands can have varying degrees of influence based on the perceived difficulty of those demands. Lastly, the current pandemic has

influenced many life-altering changes, such as job loss, financial burdens, family tension, and social isolation, which can all have an influence on participants' interpretation of their experiences.

Demographics

The demographics relevant to this study were adults between the ages of 22 and 35 who had dyslexia. Having participants between the ages of 22 and 35 addressed young adults with dyslexia after they have had some time to experience educational, work, family, and social demands. Having dyslexia was important because it was the foundation of this study. I explored the lived experiences of individuals with dyslexia, not another cognitive difference. However, it is important to note that other cognitive differences (e.g., autism, ADHD, etc.) are also important to study from a QOL perspective, but this was not the focus of the study. Furthermore, other demographic areas were less important, such as location and socioeconomic status, for this study. I was interested in the QOL experiences of individuals with dyslexia from within their socioeconomic and location settings. By having participants from different locations and socioeconomic situations, I was able to explore common themes from their overall experiences. This allowed for a more comprehensive exploration of QOL experiences.

Data Collection

Seven participants were recruited in total: Five of them were women, and two were men. Participants ranged from 22 to 35 years of age; the majority were in their mid-to-late 20s. All participants were asked the same general questions related to their QOL experiences, which addressed three perspectives (i.e., subjective, existential, and

objective) within four environmental settings (i.e., education, work, family, and social). Each participant had a total of two phone interviews, the first being an hour-long and the second being 30 minutes long. All the interviews were recorded using a phone recording app, then transcribed verbatim and uploaded to NVivo.

Data Analysis

Each participant was asked the same interview questions related to the four environments (i.e., education, work, family, and social). All recorded information was transcribed and transferred to NVivo for analysis. For each participant, I explored their four environmental experiences for COE themes related to depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, low motivation, hostility, guilt, and shame. Furthermore, I explored situational experiences related to social mobility, career development, and how one deals with transitional moments. Each experience was then categorized into subjective, existential, and/or objective perspectives.

Findings

Five main themes emerged from the data analysis: lifelong struggles, feeling disconnected, feeling of inferiority, regression to old feelings, and adapting to the situation. Each participant experienced these themes to varying degrees, which will be explained in more detail. Each theme was analyzed within each environment under the subjective, existential, and objective perspectives. However, some themes were more prominent in one environment or perspective than in another. Throughout the results section, I explore each experience and categorize it into one or more of the five common themes.

Definitions of Common Themes

Lifelong struggles: The difficulties realized because of dyslexia by each participant and have been experienced throughout their life to date. There were two categories within the lifelong struggles theme: primary and secondary struggles. Primary struggles are the original struggles associated with individuals who have dyslexia, such as in reading, spelling, writing, comprehension, and math difficulties. Secondary struggles are the perceived experiences realized by the participant with dyslexia as a byproduct of having dyslexia. Examples include feelings of inadequacy, stupidity, inferiority, and worthlessness. These secondary struggles are not directly connected to dyslexia but are the aftermath of experiences of living with others and being viewed as different.

Feeling disconnected: Personal feelings of being different from their peers and others due to dyslexia that manifest over time and in different environments.

Feeling inferior: The feelings of being inadequate because of their struggle with dyslexia. These feelings of inadequacy are derived from school, work, family, and/or social environments.

Regression to old feelings: A return to previous emotional experiences based on current activities that elicit old dyslexia-related memories.

Adapting to the situation: The positive or negative way of learning to cope with current and future differences related to dyslexia. There are several adaptive categories: dependence versus autonomy, optimistic versus pessimistic outlook, and those who embrace uncomfortable situations versus those who avoid uncomfortable situations. The first category is dependence versus autonomy, which addresses a range of adaptation

techniques from fully needing others to having no need for others to accomplish a difficult task. The second category is an optimistic versus pessimistic outlook, which is the emotional perspective an individual chooses to hold onto when faced with a difficult situation. The third category is embracing the uncomfortable situation versus avoiding the uncomfortable situation, which is the general trend, by each individual, to overcome a difficult situation or to avoid it all together.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were used to establish trustworthiness. The exhaustive steps taken in data collection and analysis were established to provide a consistent, accurate, and precise representation of each participant's told story. Key comments, provided by the participants, were used to highlight specific experiences. Furthermore, these key comments provided credibility and confirmability to authenticate each participant's told story. Some interpretations were confirmed to be accurate through dialogue between the researcher and participant. Moreover, key comments provided by participants helped to highlight the authenticity of the interpreted information.

Credibility

Credibility was established using several methods, such as triangulation, prolonged contact, member checks, saturation, and reflexivity. First, the triangulation approach included phone interviews, recordings, and member checks, which ensured the message was authentically represented. Second, prolonged contact was established, which helped develop trust and openness with each participant. Third, saturation was

achieved by providing a wide range of participants with different backgrounds and experiences with dyslexia. Lastly, reflexivity was established by addressing my own interest in the study and how that has influenced my interpretations. Furthermore, reflexivity addressed my own approach, which reduced personal bias in conducting an authentic narration of the participants' experiences.

Transferability

To ensure transferability, a narrative approach was used to develop a descriptive representation of each participant's lived stories with dyslexia and their perceptions related to QOL. The seven participants had different backgrounds, genders, and socioeconomic positions, which provided diversity in participant selection. Several environments (educational, work, family, and social) were explored to provide a variety of life circumstances and experiences. Furthermore, the exploration of several environments provided a broader scope of influence in conjunction with the gravity dyslexia has on a person's QOL experience. Finally, NVivo was used to assist in the organization and categorization of data.

Dependability

Dependability was established using triangulation and audit trails. First, triangulation was established through phone interviews, which were recorded. The recorded information was used as a check-and-balance system to ensure accuracy. Second, audit trails were used to show transparency, which involved a description of the research steps from start to finish. Using audit trails, phone interviews, and recordings, I was able to ensure validity.

Confirmability

Reflexivity helped to establish confirmability through my own acknowledgement of personal experiences with dyslexia within educational, work, family, and social environments. This process incorporated both my experiences and how those experiences shaped my interpretation of the phenomenon (see Creswell, 2013). More specifically, by acknowledging my experiences, I was able to address where my participants' experiences differed. This process helped to verify that the findings were shaped by the participants rather than my own experiences.

Results

Environment 1: Education

There are many factors that can influence a person's experience in an educational environment. Some of these differences can include, but are not limited to, class size, a teacher's involvement, a teacher's temperament, a student's involvement with other peers, a student's temperament, and unseen intellectual differences found in students. For this study, the focal point was from the perspective of the participant with dyslexia, which could be classified under unseen intellectual differences. I was interested in their experiences as students' living with dyslexia and how those experiences have shaped their perceptions of QOL into adulthood.

Subjective Perspective

The subjective perspective addressed QOL experiences from each participant's own belief in how good their life is. This perspective did not seek to provide any insight into QOL experiences beyond what had been told by the participant. The focus was on

their own perceptions, from both the past and present experiences, and how they feel now about their QOL.

Lifelong Struggles. From the subjective perspective, all seven participants reported early educational difficulties. These educational problems originated during the elementary age, ranging from kindergarten to fifth grade. Most of those difficulties were related to reading, writing, spelling, and comprehension (both written and verbal). Five out of the seven participants reported having difficulty understanding math concepts as well. These educational difficulties were categorized under the lifelong struggles theme because each participant expressed continual difficulties in one or more of these educational tasks throughout their life. These educational difficulties were also categorized as a primary struggle because reading, writing, spelling, comprehension, and math difficulties are closely tied to dyslexia. All participants reported that these initial experiences were frustrating and made them feel stupid. Participant 1 stated,

I felt dumb sometimes because my peers or friends would understand what the teacher was explaining, where I was in the background trying to understand what the teacher was explaining or saying... I always felt like I was one or two steps behind everybody else.

This experience of “feeling one or two steps behind everyone else” was a common theme amongst all seven participants. However, not all participants felt behind in every subject. Many of the participants reported strengths in some areas of education. Each participant also reported feeling judged by others. Participant 7 asserted,

I'm sure education and personal life blend into this, but I think a moment of frustration was, I had a specific facilitator, and he was a nice gentleman, but I don't think he realized my learning disability. I think he assumed and wanted me to perform on the basis of everyone else, and when I wouldn't he would get frustrated with me, and then I would act out poorly.

All participants were initially unaware of their underlying problem (dyslexic) when they started school. Therefore, feelings of frustration, anger, disconnection, and feeling stupid were quite common. Furthermore, feelings of frustration, anger, disconnection, and feeling stupid were classified as secondary struggles because they are not directly associated with dyslexia. Feelings of frustration, anger, disconnection, and feeling stupid came about as a byproduct of the primary struggles and derived from the participant's given environment and connection with others. The people (teachers, employers, parents, and peers) within the environment played a crucial role in each participant's perceived experience with feelings of frustration, anger, disconnection, and/or feeling stupid. Some of the participants reported continual feelings of frustration, anger, disconnection, and/or feeling stupid, while others have learned to accept their situation and even embrace having dyslexia as a good thing.

Feeling Disconnected. One common theme among the seven participants was that they felt disconnected from their environment. This feeling was often realized in school between a teacher and/or peer and the participant. Participant 2 shared, "My teacher just thought I did not want to read for the attention." When her parents went to the teacher to address the issue, it was dismissed by the teacher, who thought that she just

wanted attention. This example shows a misconception by the teacher about the student.

Another example of a disconnect: Participant 7 claimed,

So, in the very beginning, it was kind of like me and school, just in the sense that I didn't like going. I felt different than all the kids. I could tell that, and it was hard for me because I was not performing, but in my head, I knew what was going on.

This is an example of a participant's experience of feeling disconnected from her peers and environment. Participant 7 also elaborated, "I feel like it was really frustrating to not be able to verbalize or get people to understand." This participant's account showed an internal struggle with their own lack of ability to connect. This experience of having a disconnect was reported by all seven participants. However, over time and with the support of teachers and/or parents, many of the participants learned strategies to work around their disconnect with others.

Feeling Inferior. All participants had experiences of feeling inferior, especially during their early years of school. These experiences ranged from feeling dumb, embarrassed, nervous, frustrated, jealous, angry, insecure, vulnerable, overwhelmed, defeated, and inferior. In one example, Participant 6 explained,

I was always behind in reading, so much so that when I tried to read something above my grade level, my teacher took my books out of my desk and showed me all of the books that I was able to read. These books were below my grade level, and I knew it, which made me feel like I wasn't able to progress. She didn't even try to build the confidence in me, so I was like why should I try?

When I asked Participant 3 how she felt about her struggles with dyslexia, she stated,

It makes you feel stupid. It makes you feel like you're not adequate and you're not living up to your potential, and that you aren't as smart as your peers and you can't get along with them, and you don't feel like you measure up as well as they did.

Participant 5 reported:

I just remember at a very young age finding out that I had dyslexia, not knowing what it was or how it impacted my life but had this feeling of always being behind my peers and having the pressure of performing but never living up to it. And not knowing how to express that anger, or that frustration, I guess.

Even though all participant experienced feelings of inferiority, there was a wide range in how those experiences were realized. For example, Participant 5 had more anger and frustration in conjunction with feeling inferior, but Participant 3 felt stupid. Participant 6 felt defeated, stating, "She didn't even try to build the confidence in me, so I was like why should I try?" However, all participants, at some point in their educational journey, felt inferior to others in their environment.

Regression to Old Feelings. Four out of the seven participants are currently in school. However, all four of the participants have experienced self-doubt, fear, and old feelings that have re-emerged. These re-emerging feelings come about when they are faced with an activity that has reminded them of an earlier experience. In this example, Participant 6 reflected on her re-occurring feelings of frustration; she stated, "I don't feel so much stupid but more frustration, especially with math and science. I just don't get it, and you can explain it to me in 100 different ways and it just doesn't make sense." In another example, Participant 3 stated,

When I have to take tests, it makes me very, very anxious. And getting to know your professor and how they teach just makes you nervous and... how they're gonna teach and how they're gonna react to how I learn and present myself.

Both examples show re-emerging feelings around uncomfortable experiences. However, Participant 6 emphasized frustration, and Participant 3 emphasized anxiety, fear, and self-doubt. Amongst all four participants, re-occurring feelings of frustration, anxiety, fear, and self-doubt have played a role in the choices they have made. Some have chosen to embrace the feelings and work through the difficult tasks despite the negative feelings while others have chosen to shift focus to less difficult tasks or activities. The one thing that was certain was that past experiences influenced future decisions. Individuals' perceptions of their QOL experience were influenced by both past and current life decisions.

Adapting to the Situation. All seven participants have developed some sort of adaptive mechanism to address their struggles with dyslexia. Some of these adaptive mechanisms were dependent on other people, while other adaptive mechanisms were not. Some of the participants chose to look at their situations from an optimistic outlook, while other participants chose to look at them from a pessimistic outlook. Lastly, some participants chose to lean into the uncomfortable situations and embrace the struggle, while others chose to focus only on their strengths. Each approach used by the participants can be classified as an adaptive strategy because each approach helped to alleviate emotional turmoil in some way. However, each approach taken yielded different QOL experiences. In the first example, Participant 1 asserted,

I had many offers at universities to play soccer as a walk-on, but because of my grades in high school and my academic ability, I knew I couldn't handle a 4-year university... Right out of high school. So, I actually went to a junior college first then transferred to a 4-year college after.

She also stated, "Well, on a side note, I didn't really focus in college 'cause I just wanted to play soccer." Both examples show a decision to do something she loved to do (soccer) over the other activity (schoolwork). This led to her first year of college being on academic probation. Eventually, she had to decide to turn her grades around so she could stay in soccer. However, she struggled to complete her schoolwork on her own and chose to find help. She stated, "I had help from my teammates, I had helped from teachers, and I think a couple of times I had help from study hall, the coaches required study hall and stuff."

Overall, her academic struggles in school influenced her to travel down a different path. First, she did not follow the traditional college route even though she had several scholarship offers. Instead, she chose to attend a community college, then transfer to a 4-year college. She decided to follow this route primarily because of her struggle with dyslexia. Second, she chose to focus on what she loved (soccer) over what she needed to accomplish for future success and possibilities (schoolwork). Lastly, when she was forced to address her academic failures, she did so by seeking out help from others. Asking for help is often a good thing. However, when someone relies too heavily on others to help them through many struggles, autonomy is not realized. In her situation,

she would not have been successful without the help of others. However, she was able to complete her college journey and now works in a daycare.

Participant 2 had this dream of being a second-grade teacher, but as she entered college, she ran into trouble, realizing her struggle with dyslexia would have an impact. She asserted,

When I was really little, I wanted to be a second-grade teacher to help kids, like me, who were struggling with dyslexia. I wanted to be another person that helped children with dyslexia not to slip through the cracks. Then I got to college, and I ran into a class called developmental psychology, I couldn't figure it out, my brains not wired for developmental psychology.

This experience led her to switch from a major in teaching to a major in theater. She coped with her disappointment by realizing all the problems she would have faced if she had become a second-grade teacher. She claimed,

I thought of all of the problems, that would have arisen if I would have become a second-grade teacher: You would have to write on the board, you have to do math constantly, you have to teach spelling and grade spelling tests, you have to read out loud daily. I'm like, Well I just avoided that.

Overall, Participant 2 switched from her goal of becoming a second-grade teacher to theater (something she loved to do). However, she was able to complete college and now works in a daycare.

Both Participant 3 and Participant 4 had insight into their struggle with dyslexia from an early age. Because of their early insight, they were aware of their strengths and

weaknesses. This awareness had significant sway in the educational path they chose. Participant 3 elaborated, "I knew what I wasn't good at, so I decided not to do those things." In school, this allowed her to focus on her strengths. As she graduated from high school, she chose to become a CNA because it was hands-on, and she knew that would tailor to her strengths. She has been a CNA for the last 10 years, but currently has returned to school to work towards being a dental assistant. Again, her choice to become a dental assistant is due to the hands-on nature of the job. Similarly, participant 4 chose a path that focused on his strengths. He stated, "I always liked the hands-on stuff. I've always said I probably would have been a great engineer, but engineers do math. And I don't do that." This led him to go to school to be a diesel mechanic. Both Participants 3 and 4 chose a path that was tailored to their strengths and avoided pathways that did not.

Both Participants 3 and 4 also had a positive outlook on their situations.

Participant 3 stated, "I've always been pretty good about accepting that I'm a little different, that's the way God made me." Participant 4 had a similar outlook. He stated, "I just kind of rolled with it. I was in a small enough school, like everybody knew that I was the kid who couldn't spell or do a few things. It was what it was." In both situations, Participants 3 and 4 had a down-to-earth approach to life. They did not spend much time focusing on why they were different. Rather, they both focused on how they could be productive in their own right. Both participants seemed to reveal positive QOL experiences with a positive outlook and motivation to do what they were naturally good at.

Similar to Participants 3 and 4, Participant 5 chose an educational path that avoided something he was not good at (tests). He went into cinematography, which consists of many projects and written assignments. He stated, "I picked something where tests don't really exist, instead it is more write a script or produce a film, and I'm good at those." However, where Participants 3 and 4 chose to go to a trade school, Participant 5 decided to go to a traditional college. He also learned to keep pushing when he found something difficult to figure out. One example of his continual effort was when he was given a project to write a script: he stated, "Even though I was stumped and emotionally unstable at the moment, I still kept pushing forward and we ended up being the best one out of the group." Participant 5 shared,

I think college has helped me to grow and to realize, yeah that I do have strengths, that I am great at what I'm great at, and to take pride and to be happy in those things. Instead of just look on the fact that, maybe my brother is smarter at this than me, that doesn't make him better than me in any way.

Before college, Participant 5 reported that he always felt less than his older brother and tried to be like him. When he could not, he felt less valuable, especially when it came to education and grades. By choosing to go to college, Participant 5 was able to break away from the realized pressures to perform at school from his home environment. By being far away from home and his normal environment, he was able to discover his own path and identity. In essence, as he broke away from the pressures of home, he became more autonomous. This has led to self-discovery and the ability to appreciate his own nature.

However, he still struggles to accept his own strengths as valuable and still feels the need to perform when in the presence of his family.

In the last two examples, Participants 6 and 7 chose to follow an educational path that did not avoid their weaknesses. Participant 6 is currently in college working toward a degree in human services and education. Participant 7, who is also in college, is working toward a degree in social work and counseling. When Participant 6 was asked about her motivation, she explained,

I think that's why I'm so much more into education now. I've seen how much it's failed me in a way. You feel so alone when you don't understand. I feel like a lot of the times kids' feelings get diminished because we just don't understand.

In the above statement, Participant 6 identified her reason for pursuing education, despite her personal struggle with it. She has a desire to help others who struggle in a similar way. She also stated,

I want to be able to have kids talk about what their experiences are, through their feelings, through their pictures, through whatever, as long as they are able to explain themselves. That's something that I didn't know how to do and with mental illness being so big right now, it's really important for teachers to understand or try to understand what a kid is going through.

The desire to change her situation is her motivator to continue in college and to help others. She has chosen this path despite her apparent difficulties in education.

Participant 7 found her motivation in college by recognizing her niche. She stated, “That's one thing that happened in college, I found my niche. I've always been good at

connecting with people, I'm able to read people and pick up on things months before they tell me." Because of this personal insight, she realized that social work and counseling best suited her abilities. However, she attributed a lot of her positive self-insights to her tutor. She stated,

I think my tutor did a really good job at pointing out the benefits and even just sending me articles about the positive things with dyslexia and the unique things about my brain and how it works. Without my tutor, I don't think I would have seen dyslexia as a gift. I know that the different impacts in my life definitely made it easier for me to not have a super negative outlook. Thinking back to how my education started, it would have been very easy for me to not want to continue my education.

In the above example, she identified a key person who helped her navigate her struggles with dyslexia. This tutor not only gave her the educational tools to succeed, but she also encouraged her to continue developing those skills.

Overall, all seven participants have had to utilize adaptive strategies throughout their educational journeys to feel comfortable in their current environments. These adaptive strategies ranged from co-dependent relationships to others having autonomy. Some of the participants chose to look at their experiences from a pessimistic point of view, while others chose to look at their experiences from an optimistic point of view. Finally, some chose to completely avoid their weaknesses, while others chose to fully embrace them. In most situations, the seven participants fell somewhere in the middle of all three adaptive ranges. For example, Participants 1 and 2 reported having some

educational help early on, but for the most part, they were on their own. When it came to college, both had to adapt quite a bit from their original dreams to finish their academic journey. Both started out pursuing a path that relied on their weaknesses, but eventually they changed their educational path to focus on their strengths. Participant 1 relied heavily on support from others to complete college, whereas Participant 2 did not need the extra help. Instead, she focused solely on a college path tailored to her strengths.

On the other hand, both Participants 3 and 4 chose to avoid traditional college. Instead, they focused on their strengths and found a trade that would best suit those strengths. They also seemed to have the most optimistic outlook of all seven participants. Both Participants 3 and 4 believed that having dyslexia is just how God made them and that their struggle is just part of their journey. With this upbeat outlook, Participants 3 and 4 spent little time pondering why they are so dissimilar. Instead, they focused on what they could do to be valuable people in their communities. They both emphasized mental perspective, which focused on their strengths; they believed that there was no point in doing something they struggle with.

Participant 5 chose to go to college, but he decided to pursue a path that was tailored to his strengths. In his journey before college, he felt a lot of pressure from his mother and brother to perform in an educational environment. This pressure caused him to feel inferior to his family. Once he went to college and focused on a path that was tailored to his strengths, he began to develop autonomy and self-worth.

Both Participants 6 and 7 had the most educational help of the seven participants. Both had a tutor that recognized their struggle with dyslexia and directly addressed their

specific weaknesses. This tutor also helped them both to realize their unique strengths. This added influence had a significant sway on how they currently think about their struggle with dyslexia. Both participants are currently in college with a focus on education and social work. They both chose their paths based on their strengths in communication and reflection. However, they chose not to shy away from their weaknesses (reading and writing). Instead, they both developed strategies to help them succeed despite their apparent weaknesses in their classroom settings. These strategies were developed in high school and were influenced by their tutor. Participant 7 stated,

I use my computer calendar, I use a whiteboard calendar, I have my planner, I have my phone calendar, And I also have a calendar for social events. It works, and it keeps me organized, without that I know myself and I get overwhelmed, and my brain just cannot keep everything straight.

Emotionally, both participants reported having struggles with self-confidence. However, as they have been able to progress through college and gain autonomy in their educational pursuits, both are starting to realize their own value in society.

Existential Perspective

The existential perspective addresses QOL experiences from a deeper meaning than one's personal belief in having a good life. From this perspective, continued emotional experiences that are present, despite the current situation, played an important role in how each participant perceived their overall experiences. Although these emotional experiences frequently corresponded to how a participant perceived their QOL, this was not always the case. For example, a person could feel like they have a high QOL

but still feel insecure about their ability to perform. This next section delved into these dynamics and explored where each participant experienced inconsistencies and where they were consistent.

Lifelong Struggles. Primary struggles are the known factors that psychologists use to identify dyslexia. Without the primary struggles, there would be no secondary struggles. This thought kept revealing itself to me, as I read through the interviews, and it is at the forefront of understanding the existential perspective.

There were common experiences amongst all seven participants. First, they all had early difficulties adjusting to their educational environment, and those difficulties continue to influence them today. Second, all participants felt different from their peers due to their struggles with dyslexia. Those feelings of being different continue to linger, despite having many years of adapting to their environment. Third, all participants were treated differently by others as children, and they continue to have those experiences now. As previously stated, all participants had early difficulties adjusting to their educational environment, and this has had an impact on them throughout their lives. However, each participant's past and current experiences are different. Participant 7 stated, "I think I am constantly having to overachieve in school because of all the negative feelings I have left over from the negative experiences I had in the first couple of years of school." In this example, Participant 7 has chosen to overcompensate by overachieving in her classes now. On the surface, this overachieving nature is good because it means she is performing well and can achieve her intended goals. However, her outside performance does not match her internal feelings about herself. She asserted,

I will never forget the feeling of... And I think part of it is, not that it's anyone's fault, but I was not fully sheltered from all the things that teachers and my principal were saying about my ability level in the first couple of years. Yeah, I knew what people thought and those are the forming years of your life. When you hear those things when you're very young you internalize a lot of that, and I think I, because of that, I have always felt like I was stupid.

This feeling of being stupid co-exists with her despite her ability to overachieve. Others around her recognize her intelligence, but she cannot see it in herself.

Participant 6 reported persistent educational difficulties throughout her years in school. In particular, she struggled to understand math and science concepts. She stated, "I had a personal teacher that worked with me all the time, and that made me feel even more like an outcast." Participant 6 also reported that she would have emotional breakdowns in one class and that would transfer to other classes, even on subjects that she was good at. Because of this constant tension, it led her to have eating problems. She stated, "My freshman year I was actually... I had an induced eating disorder because I was taking Concerta, and I was not eating from 7 o'clock in the morning to about 6 or 7 o'clock at night. Maybe even later." These experiences are all signs of higher-than-normal levels of anxiety and frustration, which have co-existed with her throughout her life. Currently, she is in college to become a teacher, but she is afraid of how she will struggle in the workforce. She stated,

There's that fear factor of messing up or I'm not good enough or I don't know it like the other kids. And that's kind of scary for me. I've seen that transition or that thought process as I become closer to becoming a teacher too.

In the above example, she was worried about how others (her students) would perceive her, especially if she messed up in front of them. Even though she performs well in her college classes, she still worries about how she is going to be perceived in the workforce. In this example, the fear of failure overrides her rational understanding of her ability to accomplish tasks, thus creating high levels of anxiety.

Feeling Disconnected. Feeling disconnected comes about because of a language and/or learning barrier between people. This feeling does not only apply to those with dyslexia. However, because dyslexia is a neurobiological disorder that influences how one processes data, people with dyslexia often feel disconnected from their teachers, co-workers, parents, and peers. In this study, all seven participants reported feeling disconnected at some point in their educational journey, but this feeling of disconnection manifests differently from person to person. Participant 1 elaborated, "I felt like the majority of the people did not fully understand what I was going through." She indicated that when teachers and/or peers tried to help her understand an assignment, she often felt tension between herself and that person. The tension came about because she struggled to process what the teacher or fellow peer tried to teach. This created frustration on both sides, wherein eventually the teacher or peer would give up trying to help.

Early on, participant 1 had a hard time formulating dialogue that could explain her struggle with processing. As she learned more about her struggle and developed a

vocabulary to explain dyslexia, her ability to communicate also improved. However, participant 1's struggle to communicate has impacted her in many areas of her life, which will be expanded on in a later section.

Participant 2 shared, "My teacher just thought I didn't wanna read for the attention." In this example, Participant 2 was mislabeled because the teacher did not understand how dyslexia influenced learning. Many teachers would initially try to help her, but eventually lashed out in frustration at Participant 2, thinking she had an alternative motive for learning. This is another example of disconnection that has greater emotional ramifications for the child. In her next example, she stated,

Because I have had some bad experiences early in my life, I don't wanna really broadcast this. I just wanna try my hardest to fumble through...even though I had to inform all of my professors that they would know to work with the SS office with me. but I wouldn't tell my friends or my classmates if I could avoid it.

In this way, Participant 2 learned to adapt from her initial struggle to comprehend information by tailoring who she would tell. On the other hand, she kept her struggle with dyslexia secret from others because of her earlier experiences of being mislabeled. This idea of keeping her struggle away from others only increased her feelings of disconnection and kept people from making a connection with her.

In the next example, Participant 3 took a biology class in college where she had to dissect a cat. Her first attempt at the class was a failure because her professor was not willing to help her. However, her second attempt was with a different professor, and she was able to complete the class. Participant 3 asserted,

Many teachers don't understand that I can't... We had to take apart a cat and memorize all the muscles, and I can't do that. I can't memorize all the muscles and where they are. I tried to explain it to him and tried to prove it, but he was like, 'well, then you're gonna fail the class.' I did fail the class, but I chose to take it again with a different professor and he did the class in a different way, and I was able to complete the class.

In this example, Participant 3 explained a scenario where she could not function well under the format the first teacher had laid out for the class, which caused her to fail. By analyzing her situation and success story of taking that same class with a different professor, the data revealed an inconsistency between her ability to perform and the environment she was placed in. It is important to note that if she did not have the internal fortitude to keep pushing forward toward a goal, she could have easily chosen to give up. However, the point being addressed here is that she was intellectually capable of completing the class, but her failure was due to a disconnect between herself and her professor.

These experiences can have a wide range of emotional consequences on a person's QOL experience moving forward. In another example, participant 4 described a scenario where he was misjudged by his teacher. Participant 4 explained,

My normal teachers understood that I worked fast on my assignments, and I knew the material. But we'd get a substitute, and I remember this really well. I think it was 5th grade, she gave us a sheet of paper. We were supposed to read our book and fill our answers out and turn it in. I was like done! Half the class was halfway

done, and she was like, 'No, you're not really done with that. You need to do the work.' And I was like, 'No, here's my answers. Go ahead and look at them. I'm done!'

This example showed another situation where a teacher misjudged the ability of the student. In general, people with dyslexia are misunderstood due to their struggle with reading and writing. But here he was misjudged because he finished early. In this scenario, Participant 4 shared, "It's kind of like you get a little upset because they don't believe you." Because of this situation and others like it, he developed a strategy to appear like he was still working on those tasks even after he completed them, just to avoid teachers misjudging him. This strategy also carried over into his work environment, which we will explore further in a different section.

Participant 5 stated,

I'm sure education and personal life blend into this, but I think a moment of frustration was, I had a specific facilitator, and he was a nice gentleman, but I don't think he realized my learning disability. I think he assumed and wanted me to perform on the basis of everyone else, and when I wouldn't he would get frustrated with me and then I would act out poorly.

In this example, Participant 5 reported feeling disconnected because he was unable to spell and memorize words. Participant 5 elaborated, "I was already very frustrated at myself for not being able to do it, so I would lash out and then he would also be angry with me." He also stated, "I had some teachers and facilitators who just thought like, maybe I didn't care, maybe I didn't wanna learn it." However, Participant 5 also shared,

“maybe that's what it seemed like, deep down I think I wanted to be able to do it. I just wasn't capable with the tools I was given.” This example shows a disconnect between the participant and some of his teachers, but the existential aspect of this example is the participant's feeling of self-defeat and frustration. Deep down, he wanted to perform well, but every time he tried, those around him (teachers) would become frustrated with him. Some would treat him as if he did not care to learn the material. Because of these types of frustrating scenarios, Participant 5 reported that he just shut down into his own internal world.

Participant 6 asserted,

I had one teacher in particular, who took my learning disability personally. That affected me, because she didn't understand how I learned she didn't ever try to do something else. She kind of pawned me off to other teachers, she didn't work with me. She knew when I was not paying attention or wasn't capable of paying attention and would ask me questions to throw me off and I felt like that was hurtful. It was embarrassing because she knew that I didn't actually have the answer. She knew that I wasn't paying attention but it's not because I didn't want to. That caused a lot of psychological problems for me and trauma throughout my educational experience. It really made me feel like I was incompetent.

In this example, Participant 6 felt ostracized because of her struggle with dyslexia. Not only did the teacher pawn her off on others, she also publicly embarrassed her in front of the class. This created a feeling of incompetence and influenced the fear of other situations that might be like this one.

In this next example, Participant 7 identified her early feelings of disconnection from her teachers and principal. Her mother often advocated for her but was dismissed as a biased parent. Participant 7 stated,

When I started my education, the ideas surrounding it were very closed-minded, and so I was in a school where it was just seen as like I was just honestly dumb, and I would never read or write above a third-grade level. At one point I had a principal who told my mom that I would never drive a car, because there was just something wrong with my brain and it was just never gonna work correctly. So, for the first four years of my education, like kindergarten through third grade, it was like a constant fight.

She reported being held back in kindergarten because of her underperformance. She stated,

My mom was so confused at first because I would speak with her at home and we would have conversations, and it was so clear to her that I understood above the level that my teachers were saying I was performing at.

This disconnected feeling left Participant 7 in a constant state of frustration. She explained, "I feel like it was really frustrating to not be able to verbalize or get people to understand." This experience of not being able to verbalize her thoughts and feelings did not just stay in elementary school. She identified more of the same experiences in middle school. These experiences also crossed over into her social and family environments as well, which will be explored in a later section. However, by high school, she was able to develop a social life with a few key friends. She identified that she was more comfortable

with having just a few trusted friends, people who could relate to her. Her life trajectory, from feeling disconnected as a child through middle school, has played a significant role in her decision to keep a few close friends.

Feeling Inferior. Feeling inferior and feeling disconnected have a lot of overlap, but there are some key differences. The primary difference between these two terms is that a person can feel disconnected from others in their environment but still hold onto a strong sense of self-worth. To be more specific, a person can feel disconnected based on two directional beliefs. First, they could believe that they are smarter than others around them and feel disconnected. Second, they could believe that they are less smart in comparison to others around them and feel disconnected. In both situations, disconnection can occur because, at some level, those around them cannot relate. However, feeling inferior generally relates to a belief that one is less smart or valued in comparison to those around them. In this study, feeling inferior and feeling disconnected are common secondary struggles to dyslexia, and they are interrelated. Therefore, it was important to identify where those two terms differed.

In this study, it was clear that all seven participants had early feelings of inferiority related to their school experiences. These experiences generally fall into three categories: not being understood, being mislabeled by others, and self-defeating beliefs. The first example combines both not being understood and self-defeating thoughts. Participant 1 explains how she feels when talking out loud in a school setting when asked to share a thought. Participant 1 stated,

Embarrassed, nervous, dumb! I wanted everybody to understand, and it made sense in my mind, but when I would try to explain something or do a report or something and it came out wrong, I felt like, let's say my self-esteem. I was very low.

In this example, she reported that her thoughts would become jumbled up in her head. When she would speak out, those thoughts would come out wrong. The jumbled communication made it hard for others to understand, and she was able to recognize the disconnect, which made her feel embarrassed, nervous, insecure, and stupid. Those feelings of embarrassment, nervousness, insecurity, and feeling stupid are a byproduct of her jumbled communication. Embarrassment, nervousness, insecurity, and feeling stupid are examples of self-defeating thoughts. Participant 2 shared, "I never gained the confidence with reading out loud in front of big groups. My tongue and my brain and my eyes couldn't agree on what sound I was supposed to make." Participant 2 reported that this experience would create feelings of panic, and, to this day, she does not like to read aloud in front of others.

Participant 3 reported that her struggles in school made her feel stupid. Participant 3 stated,

It makes you feel like you're not adequate and you're not living up to your potential, and that you aren't as smart as your peers and you can't get along with them, and you don't feel like you measure up as well as they did.

When asked if others did something to make her feel these thoughts, she stated, "no one made me feel like I was stupid, no one really made fun of me." Participant 3 further

reflected and identified that her feelings came from her observation of herself in comparison to her peers. Participant 4 reported his self-defeating thoughts in this way, “well, you never think you're quite as smart as everyone else. You're like, ‘I'm over here in the slow kids spelling group’, you know what I mean?” Participant 5 stated, “I had this feeling of always being behind my peers and having the pressure of performing but never living up to it. And not knowing how to express that anger, or that frustration.” Out of the seven participants, Participant 5 had a harder time separating his school experiences from his family experiences. His mother was an educator, and there were perceived expectations that he believed he needed to live up to. His older brother was only slightly ahead of him in school, and he felt as though he needed to perform more like his brother. Participant 5 often asked himself this question, “why is he (brother) able to excel in all these areas, and I'm just struggling to, just to keep up?” Participant 5 stated, “I was comparing myself, feeling like I need to be as good as my brother, and since I was not, I felt like a failure.” Furthermore, Participant 5 has indicated that he still doubts his ability to perform. He stated, “With feeling inferior, I think it still plays into my life to this day, this insecurity of, am I good enough.”

Participant 6 identified always being behind in her reading, which had an influence on her belief in self. She stated,

I was behind in reading so much so that when I tried to read something above my grade level, my teacher took the books out of my desk and showed me all of the books that I was able to read. Which made me feel like I wasn't able to progress. She didn't have the confidence in me, so why should I?

Participant 6 also reported working one-on-one with teachers to help her improve in reading, which took place throughout middle school. She identified as often feeling like an outcast because she was the only one, amongst her peers to have one-on-one help. Participant 6 stated, "I have an understanding that everybody works differently and learns things differently, but it makes me jealous that somebody can read something once and then remember it and then regurgitate it. Whereas, for me, I cannot."

While reflecting on education, Participant 7 reported feelings of inferiority in comparison to her parents and siblings. Participant 7 stated, "I have two older brothers who are very high achieving in school, and both my parents are very high achieving. So, it was always just kind of like, I don't know, I always just felt like an idiot." Participant 7 also stated, "I kind of knew what was going on and I remember just feeling defeated, and honestly, I took a lot of it personally." She further reflected on when these thoughts started and how she currently feels. Participant 7 stated, "even as a first grader I felt like an idiot and that's hard to be that young and feel that way." She further reported feeling like a disappointment, and these thoughts did not go away. Participant 7 stated, "I felt that way throughout school." What I find fascinating about her personal account is that she is currently in college, within a year of completing her degree but she still feels like an idiot and a disappointment. Her story reveals a large disconnect between her belief in herself and her ability to perform. Even though she can perform well in college, she has this internal feeling that she is a disappointment and an idiot.

Overall, all seven participants experienced feelings of inferiority. Those feelings have shaped their internal beliefs about themselves and the educational journey they

embarked on. However, each participant chose to interpret their experiences differently. These internal interpretations are the building blocks of how they currently perceive themselves and their QOL experiences. For example, Participants 3 and 4 chose to focus on the idea that “this is just how God made me.” Therefore, Participants 3 and 4 generally perceived their QOL as good. Whereas Participants 1 and 2 still hold onto many of their insecurities and avoid situations that bring those insecurities out into the open. For example, Participants 1 and 2 changed their educational journeys because they ran into roadblocks, they believed were too difficult, given their experiences with dyslexia. Participants 5, 6, and 7 have chosen to lean into their insecurities and take on tasks they find difficult. All three of them appear to wrestle with their insecurities. They are less afraid to face those insecurities, unlike Participants 1 and 2, but they also experience inconsistencies between how they feel about themselves and their ability to perform. All three participants indicated feelings of inferiority while still being able to maintain high levels of educational success.

Regression to Old Feelings. All seven participants reported experiences where old feelings resurfaced in their current situations. However, the emotional and influential impact of those experiences vary. In an educational environment, many of the participants had continual feelings of anxiety, stress, frustration, and anger. These feelings happened so often that they believed those feelings to be commonplace. Participant 1 did not report any regression to old feelings in her educational environment. Participant 2 only reported regression to old feelings in situational environments, such as a very specific incident or her first time at a new school. For example, Participant 2 was

very upset one day in her college class because another student made a blanket statement about dyslexia without knowing anything about it. Participant 2 stated, “It was like, this thing I've been struggling with my whole life is not something you just turn off and turn on, it's not something that's just a one day a month thing it is constant.” She indicated that she felt like someone was belittling her struggle with dyslexia. This made her angry, but she also felt misunderstood and disconnected from those around her. This is a feeling she was used to in past experiences and had worked hard to overcome. However, this college experience brought those old feelings back, which made her upset. Participant 2 also reported that anytime she transferred to another school, she would experience anxiety due to her initial experience with a teacher who did not take her dyslexia seriously.

Participant 2 asserted,

Every time I transferred schools and I had to go and be like, hey, I have dyslexia. It was like, I don't know how these teachers are going to react, I don't know if they believe in learning disabilities, I don't know what to expect as a reaction from this new adult who is meeting me for the first time.

This apprehension came about because of her initial experience but would resurface every time she had to meet a new teacher.

Participant 3 indicated her anxiety would stem from her past performances on tests. She recognized it as residual anxiety, wherein anytime she would take a test, the anxiety would resurface. She stated, “When I had to take tests, it makes me very, very anxious.” Her heightened levels of anxiety are influenced by previous experiences of failure when taking a test. She also identified being very nervous when starting a new

class in college. She stated, "...getting to know your professor and how they teach just makes you nervous, how they're gonna teach and how they're gonna react to how I learn and present myself." This is another example of how her past experiences with teachers treating her poorly have influenced her current experiences with a new professor.

Participant 4 did not indicate any regression to old feelings while in school. He indicated difficulties in school but developed an attitude early on that "this is just how it was going to be." In his dialogue, he seemed to come to terms with his shortcomings and decided to focus on school activities he did well in. In contrast, Participant 5 indicated a recent college experience that brought him back to earlier educational struggles.

Participant 5 elaborated,

Very recently, I had a big pitch for a screenplay that I wrote, and I'm trying to get made. Just so you know, I'm not someone that deals with this. I always tell my friend, 'I don't deal with stress almost ever.' I'm a very care-free, non-stressful guy, but when I do stress, I hit these walls, it's very, very aggravating to me. I do think it triggers emotions from childhood, this enclosed feeling like I'm trapped. I felt like that a lot when I was a child; feelings such as, 'can I even do this? Am I good enough to do this? What's the point?'

The analysis indicates that Participant 4 chose to embrace a nonchalant kind of attitude and decided to focus on tasks that best fit his strengths. Due to this approach, he displayed no signs of regression to old feelings. Participant 5 chose to embrace a college path that put him in situations that he felt insecure about. The combination of the situation and his insecurities influenced this regression to old feelings.

Participant 6 indicated that her regression to old feelings came in the form of frustration and feeling of jealousy. These were feelings she had experienced throughout her youth in school, and she currently experiences these feelings in college. Participant 6 stated, “not so much stupid but more frustration, especially with math and science. I just don't get it, and you can explain it to me in 100 different ways and it just doesn't make sense. That whole idea, I found that's where more jealousy and frustration come in.”

Participant 7 uses her old negative feelings as a driving force to achieve in school. Participant 7 stated, “I think I am constantly having to overachieve in school because of all the negative feelings I have left over from the negative experiences I had in the first couple of years of school.” In this example, Participant 7 indicated old negative feelings that persist. However, she uses those feelings as fuel to succeed in school. Participant 7 stated,

I have always felt like I was stupid, even though I know I'm not. I know that I am intelligent, and I have worked very hard to get to where I am today. I have put a lot of work into that, and I am achieving. I don't give myself the break of the fact that I've gotten this far. So, like it's not enough.

Adapting to the Situation. In the first example of adapting to situations, participant 1 reported that soccer was her outlet. She used this sport as a way to feel normal amongst her peers. Participant 1 shared,

I played sports; I was a multi athlete growing up. I played softball and soccer and all these different sports, but I understood soccer. My friends would give me a

hard time by saying ‘put her on a soccer field and then it’s like she’s normal but put her in a classroom and she’s a totally different person mentally.’

In college, she also played soccer, but early on, she chose to focus solely on soccer and neglected her homework. Eventually, she was forced to address her academic failures. She stated, “I realized how much soccer meant to me that if it was gonna be taken away because I didn't keep up my grades. like, that was a motivation for me.” Expanding on this idea, participant 1 tends to focus on what she is good at to feel normal, at the expense of other tasks that might be important. The above example shows soccer as her focus and education as the activity she avoided. This adaptive technique is a common trend throughout her life and will be explained further in other sections. However, she appears to be chasing the feeling of being normal, and she does this through activities that she is good at. By avoiding activities, she is not good at, she is able to feel valuable in her community. In her situation, that community is on the soccer field.

In another story, Participant 5 reported continual struggles with reading, comprehension, spelling, and math. However, in college, he learned to navigate those challenges and even found areas of strength. Some of these realized strengths are abstract reasoning and the social intuition to connect with a diverse group of people. Participant 5 elaborated,

It’s a little bit of a paradox, I do feel very inadequate, and I compare myself a lot of the times and feel like a failure, but in other degrees, I feel like I'm better than people and that's not good either. I'm trying to find that middle ground.

In this example, he feels inferior to others when it comes to studying and performing well on tests. On the other hand, he recognizes his ability to relate to others and the ease with which he can navigate educational difficulties because of his social strengths. Participants 1 and 5 are two examples of people with dyslexia who focused on activities they were good at and avoided activities they were not. However, five out of the seven participants used this same tactic throughout their lives.

Participant 2 went into theater in college and avoided her first dream, which was to be a teacher. Participants 3 and 4 chose to avoid college all together. Instead, they chose activities that better suited their hands-on nature. Participant 5 chose cinematography as his college choice and avoided a college path that required a lot of test-taking. The existential perspective is not that these participants chose to do activities they were good at, but that they chose to direct their attention to activities they were good at. The findings indicated that they chose to participate in activities they were good at to feel connected and have self-worth. They often neglected other activities because they felt worthless and disconnected. Participant 5 shared,

I believe places and objects and people can make you digress back to an emotional point you used to be at and I feel like in high school and in my home life, I built these walls up to keep myself safe and comfortable because I felt inferior, and when I went to college, I think I broke a lot of them down.

While in college, Participant 5 was able to choose a path that would best suit his interests (cinematography). Because of this, he found his niche, which allowed him to leave

behind feelings of inferiority. This pursuit also helped him self-reflect, allowing him to realize his self-worth.

All five of the participants who chose to pursue activities that were tailored to their strengths experienced similar self-revelation. However, they each went about it in a different way. Participants 1 and 2 generally chose to hide from their struggles all together. They would avoid activities and emotional situations that would bring those struggles to the forefront. Participants 3 and 4 held onto a *c'est la vie* approach. Both participants 3 and 4 never gave too much thought to why they were different. They just seemed to embrace it and find activities that suited them. Participant 5 reported that he spent much time reflecting on his difference. Along the way, he found that he had intellectual strengths along with his weaknesses. This insight helped him to establish self-worth and hope for his future endeavors. The other two participants chose to pursue a college/career path that would eventually lead to activities/tasks that were tailored to their strengths; however, their initial pursuits were not tailored to their strengths.

There were two main factors that were revealed throughout the results. First, both Participants had a desire to give back to others that struggled in a similar way. This was internally inspired and has been present in their thoughts for several years. The second factor, and most significant, was the type of help received by others throughout their educational journeys. Both Participants 6 and 7 had developed an early understanding of their struggles with dyslexia and developed strategies to navigate their weaknesses when those would get in the way. This insight came from guidance by a tutor/teacher who understood dyslexia. Participant 7 asserted,

I will attribute a lot of my success to my tutor. I think she did a really good job of pointing out the benefits and even just sending me articles about the positive things with dyslexia and the unique things about my brain and how it works. I mean I don't think I would see dyslexia as a gift if it weren't for my tutor.

Both Participants 6 and 7 did not avoid taking on tasks that would potentially be problematic. Instead, when faced with an intellectual challenge, both Participants 6 and 7 would find solutions to their situations that did not involve giving up their initial dreams. For example, Participant 6 nearly failed her freshman year of college, so she decided to take a year off and work. During her year of work, she developed some strategies to help her when she went back to school. Participant 6 claimed,

I think I was able to organize a little better, I know that I made a whole adjustment. I was like, 'Alright, first semester was down the drain, I can't come back from that.' Second semester I can build up, do better, set up a calendar, actually prioritize things, study, read, and do my homework. I went from a 1.6 or 1.7 GPA first semester of college to a 3.0.

In this example, she is displaying perseverance and her willingness to try again helped her to succeed. Participant 7 asserted,

I do a lot better with routine and structure, but because of that I've gotten really good at resetting my routine and structure and just getting in a routine at the start of a new school year and at a new transition or time. I know what works for me, I know that I have to write out my calendar and write out my schedule every year.

Objective Perspective

The objective perspective addressed QOL experiences based on socioeconomic standards of what a good QOL represents. This perspective was designed to explore where each participant is in comparison to the socioeconomic standards related to education. For example, since a C is the average standard in an educational setting, that would be the objective standard to refer to when addressing each participant's educational journey. However, there are other factors related to educational standards, such as time spent studying and student-teacher relations. These areas will be explored within each of the five sub-themes (lifelong struggles, feeling disconnected, feeling inferior, regression to old feelings, and adapting to the situation).

Lifelong Struggles. While attending school, the general population of students does not fall behind in their classes. However, children with dyslexia have a higher tendency to fall behind in school in at least one subject, if not more. This is the initial objective QOL standard that was explored. The results indicated that all seven participants started their educational journeys falling behind in one subject or another. Participant 1 stated,

I didn't do very well in school just because I had to take longer to understand something or to process a lecture or even a math problem. I had to teach myself ways to memorize things or to learn things to comprehend or to process.

Participant 2 shared, "My spelling and my math still leaves much to be desired! In spelling I was way below grade level." Participant 3 claimed,

In second grade, when we were trying to learn how to read and we were supposed to read a certain number of books, I couldn't accomplish that. My reading level was far lower than my peers, that was very frustrating.

Participant 3 also shared,

It was frustrating to have a learning disability that isn't noticeable, but yet it hampers a lot of different subjects. like with writing papers and even in math when having to do story problems and trying to organize my thoughts in the way they wanted them organized, but not the way my brain operated was very frustrating.

Participant 4 stated, "By the time we hit 8th grade there were three different spelling groups, and I was always in the bottom group, I just rolled with it at that point in time." Participant 4 also claimed, "My two things have always been spelling and math. I flip numbers around and I flip letters around." Participant 5 asserted, "I don't think I passed a single spelling test throughout all of middle school." Participant 5 also shared, "I'm not a good reader, I'm not fast. I would definitely say I'm slower than the average person." He then went on to say, "I think math was actually a lot harder in high school than it was in middle school, and I was horrible at Spanish, just atrocious."

Participant 6 shared, "There was a lot of traumas that was involved with school and being younger. I had a hard time trusting people, feeling like I was not capable of doing the work that I needed to get done." Participant 7 explained, "What I knew in my head was not what I saw on a page." All seven participants indicated that these

experiences were initially realized in grade school and that these experiences followed them throughout their educational journeys.

Feeling Disconnected. The school environment is a primary place for a person to develop positive connections. Building these connections is foundational to developing positive perceptions of belonging to a group. However, the findings suggested that individuals with dyslexia have a harder time making these positive connections and are often left feeling disconnected from their environment. One way to identify this objectively was to identify each participant's involvement with others, or lack thereof. For example, participant 1 stated, "I want people to understand, even if it's just a little bit of why I am the way I am. She just thought I was doing it on purpose to get attention." In this example, she is talking about how her teacher would perceive her "as seeking attention" when she was unable to understand an assignment. Teachers would make comments to her parents about how she sought attention. This misconception by this teacher and others created tension between herself and others, making her feel disconnected.

Participant 2 had a similar experience, wherein she stated, "My teacher just thought I didn't wanna read for the attention." This was also expressed to her parents by her teachers. In both examples, they were mislabeled as seeking attention rather than as someone who struggled with dyslexia. Due to being mislabeled, both participants developed feelings of disconnection and had a harder time trusting other teachers later.

Participant 3 had teachers who were willing to help early on. She stated, "I think more in grade school, my teachers were pretty understanding and worked with me, and

this went on throughout high school.” She reported being a part of a small school that held grades from kindergarten through 12th grade. Because of the smaller environment, she was able to have many of the same teachers all the way through her graduation. However, college was different. Early on, she took a biology class with a teacher who was not helpful. Participant 3 asserted,

We had to take apart a cat and memorize all the muscles, and I can't do that. I can't memorize all the muscles and where they are. I tried to explain it to him and tried to prove it, and he was like, 'Well, then you're gonna fail the class.' I did, I failed the class.

She reported that this experience caused her to hesitate about going into future classes. Some of her teachers were helpful, while others were not. Because of the above example, she was forced to take that same class over with a different teacher. The second teacher was more understanding, and she was able to pass the class. Some of her available classes, however, only have one available teacher. Her experience in those classes is closely tied to whether that teacher is willing to work with her or not. Participant 3 reported that when a teacher is unwilling to understand her struggle, she is left feeling frustrated and disconnected.

Participant 4 reported minimal frustration when it came to teachers' understanding of his struggle with dyslexia. He went to a small school, and many of his teachers were with him throughout high school. This allowed his teacher to be well versed in how he learned, and the class size was also smaller, which allowed for more individual instruction by his teachers. His experience in school was very similar to

Participant 3. Both had positive experiences in their early educational journeys. The difference between the two is that Participant 3 went on to college and participant 4 chose not to.

Participant 5 had a similar experience to Participants 1, 2, and 3. In his example, his teacher did not understand his struggle with dyslexia and took his frustrations out on him. The difference between participant 5 and participants 1 and 2 is that his teacher did not give another reason for not performing well, such as “he just wants attention”. Instead, participant 5 indicated that his teacher was frustrated with him. Participant 5 explained,

A moment of frustration was, I had a specific facilitator, and he was a nice gentleman, but I don't think he realized my learning disability. I think he assumed and wanted me to perform on the basis of everyone else, and when I wouldn't he would get frustrated with me.

This is an objective example of feeling disconnected because Participant 5 was able to recognize and describe the teacher's behavior and it was different than the way he treated other students. This experience was also perceived by the participant as a personal problem that he had to deal with alone. As a child, with little insight into his learning struggles, this type of experience can leave one feeling disconnected from others.

In the next example, Participant 6 felt picked on and discarded by others because the main teacher did not want to help her. Participant 6 elaborated,

Yeah. I had one teacher in particular, who took my learning ability personally.

And that affected me, because she didn't understand how I learned she didn't ever

try to do something else. She kind of pawned me off to other teachers. She didn't work with me. She knew when I was not paying attention or wasn't capable of paying attention and would ask me questions to throw me off. And I felt like that was hurtful and it was embarrassing, because she knew that I didn't actually have the answer. She knew that I wasn't paying attention, but it's not because I didn't want to! That caused a lot of psychological problems for me and trauma throughout my educational experience. It really made me feel like I was incompetent.

In this example, she was not mislabeled, but she was handed to other teachers (as though she was not as important as the other students). She was also called out publicly in front of her class to answer a question she was unable to answer. This experience created feelings of distrust and disconnect from others, and these feelings continue to plague her today.

Participant 7 had an experience where her teachers and principal mislabeled her as dumb. When her parents tried to explain dyslexia to the educators, they just dismissed the information. Participant 7 stated,

When I started my education, the ideas surrounding it were very closed-minded, and so I was in a school where it was just seen as like I was just honestly dumb, and I would never read or write above a third-grade level. At one point I had a principal who told my mom that I would never drive a car, because there was just something wrong with my brain and it was just never gonna work correctly.

This left Participant 7 feeling disconnected and, because she lived in a small community, there were very few people who understood her struggle with dyslexia. It took her many years of schooling to find appropriate help. So, for the first several years of school, she did not like her experience and felt disconnected from teachers and peers.

Overall, six out of the seven participants had objective experiences that left them feeling disconnected from others in their educational environments. Three out of seven participants reported teachers/principals who mislabeled them as seeking attention or as being dumb and incapable of learning. One out of the seven participants experienced being pawned off and bullied by their teacher for struggling to learn like the rest of their class.

Feeling Inferior. An objective representation of feeling inferior can only be expressed through an experience. Participant 1's first statement described a subjective experience of feeling inferior, but her second statement was an objective example of how her feelings of inferiority came about. Participant 1 stated,

I felt dumb sometimes because my peers would understand what the teacher was explaining, where I was in the background trying to understand what the teacher was explaining, I always felt like I was one or two steps behind everybody else.

The objective representation of feeling inferior is the experience from which she derived her subjective belief. Participant 1 shared,

Particularly in Math, one problem would be presented to me, Let's take 6 times 4, I would understand what that was, but then if it was two or three minutes later and

it was the problem as presented, but it was 4 times 6, I would have a hard time understanding that's the same as 6 times 4, it just felt backwards.

Participant 2 asserted, "I hate popcorn reading!" She described popcorn reading as an approach her teacher would use to have everyone read a section of a book. Popcorn reading is where a student reads aloud for a while, and then they call on another student to take their place. She indicated that when it was her turn, she would never know where the last student left off. Participant 2 shared, "Oh, it was such a panic and I remember hearing a couple of my classmates snicker because they caught me off guard and they knew they did." This example was an objective experience where other children would purposely catch her off guard and then laugh at her for it. In this example, it appeared that other children found her weakness and exploited her to have a laugh. Participant 2 reported this experience as humiliating and often felt inferior to others because of it.

Participant 3 reported having internal feelings of inferiority but not so much in external situations that made her feel inferior. It was not until college that she had a teacher who was unwilling to work with her in conjunction with her struggles with dyslexia. Participant 3 stated, "I can't memorize all the muscles and where they are." When she talked to her teacher about her struggle, he did not give her any guidance and told her that she would fail. She kept trying and, eventually, she failed class. This objective example influenced feelings of inferiority. Participant 4 had a similar experience to Participant 3 in his school experiences growing up. He reported having internal feelings of inferiority, but his teachers and peers did not treat him differently for it. Where his experience differs from Participant 3's is that he chose not to attend college.

He learned a trade because he was good at hands-on work, and he began working immediately after high school. Participant 4 did not share any objective examples of feeling inferior.

Participant 5 often felt feelings of inferiority, but he did not provide any objective examples of how those feelings came about. Participant 5 elaborated,

I just remember at a very young age finding out that I had dyslexia, not knowing what it was or how it impacted my life but had this feeling of always being behind my peers and having the pressure of performing but never living up to it.

In this example, he addressed feeling inferior and provided a vague example of needing to perform but not living up to it. However, this example gave no objective details, so I did not classify it as an objective example.

Participant 6 claimed,

When I tried to read something above my grade level, my teacher took those books out of my desk and told me all of the books that I was able to read. This experience made me feel like I wasn't able to progress.

This experience shows an objective example of how a teacher can influence a student in a negative way. From this experience, Participant 6 reported feeling inferior to her peers and feeling stupid. She asserted, "My teacher didn't even try to build the confidence in me, so I was like why should I try?" This experience was one of many that influenced a feeling of wanting to give up hope of becoming a good reader.

Participant 7 felt feelings of inferiority because her two older brothers were highly academic, but she was not. Participant 7 elaborated,

I have two older brothers who are very high achieving in school. Both my parents are very high achieving. So, it was always just kind of like I felt like an idiot, even as a first grader. I felt like I was a disappointment throughout school.

Generally, Participant 7 developed an academic model of success from her family dynamics. This model became her objective standard for academic success, and when she fell below that standard, she felt like a disappointment. This is an example of how objective observation and internal comparison reflection can influence QOL experiences. In Participant 7's situation, she felt like an idiot and a disappointment throughout her school years.

Regression to Old Feelings. Regression to old feelings generally takes place after experiences have formed and interpretations of feelings have been developed. Often, the individual re-experiencing the old feelings has been separated from those feelings for a time, then something sparks the feelings again. Because of this complexity, many of the experiences were hard to link to an objective perspective. Furthermore, because educational development is often the starting point for children with dyslexia and their learning struggles, it was harder to establish regression to old feelings in this environment.

Participant 1 had no examples of regression to old feelings in her school years. She did provide examples in later sections of her life, which will be addressed in a different section. Participant 2 had an initial experience with a teacher who did not take her struggle with dyslexia seriously. Many years later, when addressing her situation with teachers in high school and college, Participant 2 reported that her old feelings of anxiety

and stress came back. Talking to a new teacher should not come with added tensions of anxiety and stress. However, because of her past negative experiences with a teacher, Participant 2 would re-live these feelings each time she had to address a new teacher.

Participant 3 reported having high levels of anxiety whenever she had to take a test, but this cannot be objectified. Participant 4 reported no experiences where he regressed to old feelings. Participant 5 reported feelings of anxiety when he was introduced to a new project by his professor. These feelings of anxiety were old feelings he experienced in his school system growing up. However, these feelings are not able to be objectified. Participant 6 also reported old feelings of frustration, especially when introduced to math and science projects. However, feeling frustrated is a subjective experience, and there were limited objective examples of regression to old feelings. The only objective example would be her success or failure in that class. Participant 6 stated, "You can explain math to me in 100 different ways and it just doesn't make sense." For Participant 6, historically, she has done poorly in math classes. This was an objective example that related to her feelings of frustration.

Participant 7 reported needing to overachieve in school because of her feelings of being stupid. In elementary school, Participant 7 stated, "I had a principal who told my parents that I would never drive a car because there was something wrong with my brain." The principal made this comment to her parents, but she was also in the room and took it personally. This is an objective experience that had sway over her feelings of being stupid. Participant 7 also stated, "So I repeated kindergarten because I was not performing but, in my head, I knew what was going on." The objective portion was the

repeat of kindergarten and the internal experiences of feeling stupid and disconnected from everyone else. These feelings were the aftermath of the objective experiences wherein she reported feeling stupid and disconnected throughout school. In general, showing an objective perspective of one's regression to old feelings is rather difficult. However, when I followed back, the subjective experiences described prior were also connected to an objective experience.

Adapting to the Situation. Six out of the seven participants sought help because of their academic struggles, which can be objectively significant to QOL experiences. The results indicated that there are several objective experiences that have a significant influence on QOL experiences. All participants started with an investigation due to academic failure, which involved educators, school counselors, and/or parents. The investigation sought to address the issues presented and to find a solution for each of the participants. However, there was a wide range of interventions that took place between the seven participants. According to the study findings, some interventions had a more positive outcome on the individual with dyslexia than no intervention. Furthermore, the results also indicated that the type of intervention and support provided has an influence on the overall self-perception of an individual with dyslexia. Out of the seven participants, only two sought help outside of their school environments. One participant did not receive any intervention or support until she entered college. Another participant received no intervention at all, but he had a mother who was well-versed in dyslexia and guided him at home. The other three participants had intervention and support through their school systems.

The first objective indicator is the quality of added support by educators, school counselors, other programs, and/or parents. The second objective indicator is the age at which each participant received help for their struggles with dyslexia. The third objective indicator is whether the participant found an activity they were good at as a motivator in conjunction with their academic struggles. Participant 1 stated, "I had to teach myself ways to memorize things or to learn things to comprehend or to process." In this example, participant 1 had little help processing through her struggle with dyslexia. She indicated that her need to find help only came when she was in college, and she was motivated to keep playing soccer. Participant 1 reported that her first year of college was not good because she was put on probation because of poor grades. Participant 1 shared, "I realized how much soccer meant to me and it was gonna be taken away because I didn't keep up my grades." Participant 1 also elaborated, "Soccer was my motivation to seek help from my teammates, teachers, and study hall groups." Participant one did not receive intervention until college, and soccer was the catalyst to keep her motivated. Without soccer, her interest in doing well in college was nonexistent. Furthermore, participant 1 adopted a co-dependent type of relationship with others to pass her classes in college.

Participant 2 had a father who also struggled with dyslexia. So, when she struggled to learn to read, her father decided to have her tested for dyslexia. This process took place in her early years of school. Once she was diagnosed as being dyslexic, she was given extra accommodations. These accommodations included extra time to take tests and special education classes. All accommodations were made within the school

setting, which meant her accommodations had to be orchestrated around others.

Participant 2 also showed a strong interest in theater and would use her learned skills to help her through the reading struggles that did not take place until later in her educational journey. Participant 2 claimed, “If I am reading it will still sound choppy, but if I am performing then it comes out smooth.” In this situation, participating in theater helped her cope with her struggle to read. In college, she struggled to keep her grades up in her education classes, so she eventually switched to a degree in theater. Participant 2 developed a strategy to avoid activities she found difficult and instead participated in activities she was good at.

Participants 3 and 4 had a mother who taught at their school and was also a special education teacher. Participant 3 asserted, “It helps that I was diagnosed when I was very young, because my mom figured out my older brother had it, so then she was able to get me tested and diagnosed very early.” Participant 3 also explained, “My mom was a teacher at the school I went to. So, she was able to talk to my teachers and tell them what was going on. She was a wonderful advocate for us, which most kids do not have.” Participant 4 stated, “My mom always pushed us to read. So, it was pretty much repetition that she made me do, which probably allowed me to be as well as I am.” Both Participants’ 3 and 4 enjoyed hands-on types of activities, which influenced the classes they chose and eventually what type of work they would go into. Both Participants 3 and 4 chose careers that did not require going to a four-year college.

Participant 5 had a mother who understood dyslexia quite well and spent some time with him and his struggles with dyslexia. However, Participant 5 claimed, “I’ve

never really done intervention for having dyslexia.” Participant 5 reported having internal thoughts of not being good enough. Participant 5 shared, “In high school and in my home life, I built these walls up to keep myself safe and comfortable because I felt inferior.” His family places a high value on education, which has influenced him to continue his education. However, his family’s strong focus on education made him feel inferior because he struggled to succeed in that realm. The family’s strong interest in education also caused sub-conscious tension between him, his brother, and his mother. In college, Participant 5 found a niche field in cinematography, which has allowed him to utilize his strengths and avoid his weaknesses. Because of this more recent experience, Participant 5 has begun to develop this counter belief that he is good at something and now believes he has value. Participant 5 asserted,

I’d definitely say I’m not where I need to be, but over the years, I’ve been able to be more comfortable with who I am around them and feel less judged and feel just like they’re my family members, and that’s all they need to be.

In Participant 5’s example, education crosses over into family issues because of the family’s strong emphasis on education. That strong emphasis influenced feelings of being inferior, especially when he compared himself to his older brother. Furthermore, participant 5 reported that his intervention was directed by his mother, which caused more tension between him and his mother. However, Participant 5 found a niche interest in cinematography, which allowed him to develop a more positive sense of himself and his place in the world. He no longer feels inferior, but rather he recognizes that everyone

has strengths and weaknesses. He just happened to not find his strength until he was in college.

Participants 6 and 7 began intervention for dyslexia at an early age. Their initial struggles in the education system started out in a similar way to the other participants, with difficulties keeping up with the rest of the class in reading and math. However, both sets of parents recognized a disconnect between what their children's teachers were saying about performance and how they performed at home. This influenced further investigation and a need to look outside of the school system for help. Both participants 6 and 7 started after school intervention early on in their education and continued throughout high school. With both participants, their early intervention helped them to realize some key factors in their struggle with dyslexia. The first realization is that all people have strengths and weaknesses, and those weaknesses might look different from person to person. The second realization is that dyslexia is a processing disorder that affects many areas of learning. When given an assignment in school, Participant 6 stated, "I don't understand what I'm reading, and I've read it three or four times and I've been sitting here for an hour." Participant 7 described her processing struggle like this, "Originally, the difficulty was that what I knew in my head was not what I saw on a page. I feel like it was really frustrating to not be able to verbalize or get people to understand." In these two examples, Participants 6 and 7 could identify their initial difficulties with learning. In both scenarios, processing information was important to understand the content and/or deliver the information back. Private intervention helped both Participants 6 and 7 understand their particular struggles with dyslexia and also helped them develop

key tools to synthesize and organize information in a coherent way. For both participants, outside interventions had some key advantages over the other participants who received in-school assistance for struggles with dyslexia. Those advantages were that they were taught about the unique struggles associated with dyslexia and were given the proper tools to address the unique struggles. This added benefit provided the foundation for Participants 6 and 7 to develop an autonomous nature. Both participants chose to pursue a college/career path that would eventually lead to activities/tasks that were tailored to their strengths; however, their pursuit in college did not initially match their strengths.

There were two main factors that were revealed throughout the study results. First, both participants had a desire to give back to others who struggle in a similar way. This was internally inspired and has been present in their thoughts for several years. The second factor, and most significant, was the type of help received by others throughout their lives. Both Participants 6 and 7 had developed an early understanding of their struggle with dyslexia and developed strategies to navigate their weaknesses when those weaknesses would get in the way. This insight came from guidance by tutors or teachers who understood dyslexia. The other five participants did not have this type of specific training; therefore, when faced with adversity, they chose to avoid those conflicts and find a different path. However, Participants 6 and 7 chose to embrace those difficulties and find a solution despite their struggle with them.

My final thoughts on QOL experiences from an educational environment perspective were that awareness is an important component to healthy self-perception. Furthermore, developing the intellectual tools to navigate difficulties related to dyslexia

was potentially more important than self-efficacy and self-esteem in the emotional growth of self-efficacy. In conclusion, all participants had an early struggle with dyslexia and felt feelings of inferiority. Participant 1 had very little support from her school system and had no outside help. As she entered college on a soccer scholarship, she found learning to be quite frustrating, eventually turning to teammates, coaches, and others to help her through. Participant 2 experienced some early intervention through the school system. She also struggled through school and college. Eventually, she was forced to drop out of her first college pursuit to follow a different college direction. Only Participants 3 and 4 seemed to be emotionally content, having experienced struggles with dyslexia. In both cases, they adopted a perspective of “this is how God made me.” Furthermore, they were both aware of their struggles with dyslexia early on and had a supportive school system. Both chose to focus their interests on activities that best suited their strengths.

Participant 5 had a mother who was well-versed in dyslexia, which caused emotional conflict between the two of them. Participant 5 had a long-standing desire to prove himself and his worth to his family. His initial experiences in school were hard, which created an internal strain between him and his mother. He reported that it was nothing she did wrong, but his own internal battle to perform well, which he could not. It was in college that Participant 5 began to develop his own sense of self-worth. During this time, Participant 5 was able to separate himself from his family, which allowed him to focus on his own self-interests. He no longer had to live under the perceived shadow of his mother and brother. Participants 6 and 7 learned at an early age about their struggles

with dyslexia and developed tools to navigate those educational difficulties. One key difference between Participants 6 and 7, in comparison to the other 5 participants, was that they did not shy away from educational difficulties. Instead, they were willing to participate in activities that were difficult if they knew it led toward a path they wanted to be on. All the other participants tailored their learning endeavors towards areas they had strengths in.

In conclusion, when addressing QOL related aspects, the findings indicated that Participants 1 and 2 had difficulties finding a place in the world. Both struggled throughout school to keep up academically. College was not easy and often required help from others to finish a class. Eventually, both had to switch majors to better accommodate their strengths. Emotionally, both still experience anxiety and embarrassment due to the activities they must perform in their daily lives. Currently, they both rely on close friends to help them navigate the everyday difficulties of dyslexia.

Participants 3 and 4 had different experiences relating to QOL. Both emphasized a belief that “this is how God made me” and chose to strongly emphasize their strengths. They spent very little time dwelling on how they were different from others; they even embraced their differences as good. When faced with activities they are not good at, they adapt quickly by either finding help or switching focus to activities they are good at. Rather than feeling embarrassed or having anxiety over difficult situations, Participants 3 and 4 would make a joke about it or laugh about it.

Participant 5 has a tendency to wrestle with competing internal thoughts. On the one hand, he recognized his insecurities, fears, and inadequacies. However, on the other hand, he recognized areas of real strength. Participant 5 put it this way,

It's a little bit of a paradox, I do feel very inadequate, and I compare myself a lot of the times and feel like a failure, but in other degrees, I feel like I'm better than people and that's not good either. I'm trying to find that middle ground.

In general, Participant 5 talked about putting up walls to protect his ego from his brother and mother, whom he looked up to significantly. However, throughout his high school and college journey, he began to develop a sense of his own self-worth. Once he found cinematography in college, his own talents started to emerge, turning his once negative view of himself toward a more positive position.

Participants 6 and 7 were the only two that had specific help with issues related to dyslexia. Because of this added guidance, both were well informed of their strengths and weaknesses due to dyslexia. Furthermore, both were taught strategies to navigate their weaknesses and perform well in education. This ability to navigate their weaknesses has opened educational opportunities in college. Both Participants 6 and 7 are the only two out of seven that pursued a college path that would force them to face their weaknesses. Furthermore, because both had intervention that taught them strategies to navigate those weaknesses, they were able to perform well in their college settings. Emotionally, both experienced a dichotomy between feeling inadequate and/or stupid and performing well in their given roles. Despite their ability to navigate their weaknesses and do well, they still felt inadequate. This feeling of inadequacy was a lingering byproduct of their many

years of education, where they did not have the tools to perform well. Participant 7 elaborated, “I think I am constantly having to overachieve in school because of all the negative feelings I have left over from the negative experiences I had in the first couple of years of school.”

My final thoughts are twofold. Initially, I believed that if one were to build autonomy and self-worth, QOL experiences would improve. I still believe that building autonomy can be highly valuable to self-worth and QOL experiences. However, the findings did not support my initial belief. The findings indicated that the participants who did not focus at all on their weaknesses had improved QOL experiences. Participants 3 and 4 seemed to embrace their struggle with dyslexia with open arms. They quickly recognized they had strengths and did not dwell too much on their weaknesses, but rather they tailored their experiences around their strengths. Furthermore, they adopted a way of thinking that de-emphasized their weaknesses.

On the other hand, building autonomy appears to have a long-term influence on QOL experiences. Initially, the journey to systematically developing strategies to overcome weaknesses is long and tedious. This experience was likely to feel overwhelming at times, which could allow self-defeating thoughts to resurface. However, through practice and the reinforcement of achievement, improved QOL experiences could begin to flourish. In the context of this study, Participants 6 and 7 are at the beginning stages of their adult lives. Both are gaining insight daily into their strengths and weaknesses and how to navigate their given challenges. I wonder how they will view

themselves in another 10 years? Further research in this area of study could yield some important insight, especially in correlation to overcoming weaknesses related to dyslexia.

Environment 2: Work

The work environment is the natural path most individuals proceed to once they exit their educational environments. This journey can be filled with excitement and a sense of freedom as they break away from their homes and begin to explore the world on their own. However, for a person with dyslexia, the work environment can be overwhelming and can shape perceptions of QOL experiences. This section of the study involved an in-depth look at each participant's perceptions related to work and how each participant experiences QOL. Three perspectives are explored (subjective, existential, and objective) in conjunction with their QOL experiences.

Subjective Perspective

The subjective perspective addressed QOL experiences from each participant's own belief in how good their life is. This perspective did not seek to provide insight into QOL experiences beyond what had been told by the participant. The focus was on their own perceptions from past and present experiences and how they feel now about their QOL. The focal point of this subjective perspective was the work environment. This focal point is different from the educational environment because a different environment can influence different experiences, thoughts, and emotional outcomes.

Lifelong Struggles. Participant 1 becomes frustrated and overwhelmed in specific work situations where she handles money and/or is required to follow directions.

Participant 1 stated,

I think the biggest part is especially when I handle money, do math or taking orders. When taking orders, I have to write it down or I can't remember what was said. Then as they tell me what they want, sometimes I get the letters mixed up, even though I'm good at spelling, but they're just going so fast that it's hard for me to just get it down.

In the next example, Participant 2 works at a preschool and is sometimes required to teach spelling to four- and five-year-old children. Participant 2 asserted,

I still get really embarrassed when I have to spell. The pre-school I work at is a learning-based preschool, we teach them how to spell and how to read and we give them phonics lessons and grammar lessons. The biggest anxiety of my day is when I have to write something on the board. I don't want to teach them how to misspell the word.

Participants 3 and 4 did not vocalize having emotional difficulty at work. Both generally appreciate their hands-on work environments and have very few situations that cross over from their school experiences.

Participant 5 stated,

Some very specific examples are that I worked as a cashier, sometimes I'll get confused with money and mixing my numbers up. More recently, I'm a server at Olive Garden and it took me a long time to remember the number system for seating. So, sometimes I will bring food out to a table that's not theirs, and my manager has to say it goes to seat 328 and a good number of times I'll have to come back to ask again.

Participant 5 reported feeling embarrassed by this common mistake. As a receptionist, participant 6 found the work overwhelming. Participant 6 explained,

Oh my God, I hated the appointment scheduler. I have a tracking issue, so it was really hard for me to see where the times were and how they all lined up. On top of that, talking to somebody to find a date and time that worked for them, over the phone, was quite difficult. So, being able to transfer what they said while checking the date and time was overwhelming. Sometimes a person would hang up and they were like, 'Okay. Well, we're good' and I was not. I often could not figure out what they said.

Participant 6 found the process of taking information in and transferring it into an appointment to be overwhelming, and she reported being afraid of it. Participant 6 also stressed the need to double- and triple-check every task she was required to do, because she easily mixed information up. Participant 7 shared,

During my summer job I had to do documentation type work. So, within that role I just simply did the documentation slower and double or triple-checked my documentation. because when I try to do it quickly my spelling is still less than half right.

Participant 7 also reported having feelings of shame when someone else needed to see her documentation.

Out of the seven participants, five reported having regular workplace difficulties. Participants 1 and 6 reported work situations where they had to listen to another person speak and make detailed notes. Both found this process overwhelming and often mixed

up the information provided. Participants 2 and 7 reported situations where they needed to spell accurately and would mess up. Both participants felt embarrassment and shame because they had a difficult time spelling correctly. Participant 2 also reported having anxiety when she had to spell something out. Participant 5 had difficulty keeping numbers organized in the correct combination. This often caused a mess at his work, and he would become overly frustrated. Participants 3 and 4 did not report having regular difficulties in their work environments. Both chose professions that required very few situations that they would be uncomfortable with.

Feeling Disconnected. Participant 1 brought up a situation between her and a boss where she felt like her boss did not understand her. She elaborated,

The tension was that I did not understand some of the instructions that she would give about preparing lessons. It had to be a certain way, I had to follow the state guidelines. I didn't understand what she was asking or what she was referring to, and so I did it the way I understood it, and she'd get frustrated because it's not the way she explained it. It wasn't the way she wanted me to understand it.

Furthermore, participant 1 reported feeling mad because she felt misunderstood and did not get a fair chance at being good at the job. Participant 2 did not share any feelings of disconnect in her work environment. She reported having few work environments, and her current place of employment is very supportive of her struggle with dyslexia.

Participant 3 reported that, in general, her work experience is good. However, COVID-19 has created an interesting side effect that was not realized before. Participant 3 elaborated, "With the masks on everybody now, that's been a challenge. I read lips a lot

when I talk to people, so not being able to read people's lips and their facial cues is challenging, just in general.” Dyslexia is a processing disorder that can branch into other areas of processing, such as verbal communication. In Participant 3’s example, she subconsciously interpreted interactions with staff and residents through body language and facial expressions. However, due to the mask mandates for COVID-19, she had to rely on other cues and had a hard time interpreting their communication correctly. Participant 3 stated, “With residents, they'll tell me something, and sometimes I think they're being silly and they're not. Then they get grumpy at me and I'm like, ‘Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't know you were being serious.’” She reported this type of miscommunication happening more often after the mask mandate was enforced.

Participant 4 had feelings of disconnect when it came to working with bosses who required a systematic process for analyzing a problem. Participant 4 asserted,

I drove him nuts and he drove me nuts, because I can look at something and go ‘alright, let's try to replace this component and see what’s going on.’ He would want me to go through an entire process and confirm that's gonna be the issue. But I'm like, ‘dude, I've done this enough in my life, I can tell you this is where we gotta start.’ And I drove him nuts because of that.

In this example, participant 4 is explaining his intuitive ability to recognize a problem. However, his boss did not recognize his experience as valuable, and it caused conflict. This example was related to dyslexia because it addressed a situation that is tailored to the strengths of being dyslexic but is often misunderstood. Much of the conflict between participant 4 and his boss was due to participant 4’s inability to explain the situation.

Participant 5 had a negative experience working with his stepdad on the farm.

Participant 5 explained,

I would get confused on the location in the building he wanted me to move something. And then, when he corrected me, he did it in kind of an aggressive way where I felt like I wasn't being respected. He made me feel stupid for not being able to do the simple task.

In this scenario, participant 5 had a hard time interpreting his stepdad's orders and became confused. This frustrated his stepdad, and in turn, he would belittle Participant 5. Participant 5 became more flustered and unable to explain the situation to his stepdad. This type of interaction not only caused a disconnect between him and his stepdad but also feelings of frustration, anger, and being stupid. Participants 6 and 7 did not have work experience of feeling disconnected because they are currently in college, or they have had work experiences that have been more encouraging.

Feeling Inferior. Participant 1 did not report feelings of inferiority in her work environment. Participant 2 experienced feelings of inferiority. One key example is when she reads aloud to her preschool class. Participant 2 stated,

With the 5-year-old books, sometimes I would hit a word I didn't know, and I would be like, 'Okay, these children are 5...I can't figure out what this word is, is there a way I can use context clues to find a synonym?' And of course, there's always a really smart kid that kind already knows how to read, and so I come up with a synonym and I say it and that smart kid would call me out saying, 'that's not what the book said.'

In this case, participant 2 expressed embarrassment about the situation and stated that it was a common occurrence in her preschool environment.

Participants 3 and 4 did not indicate having feelings of inferiority in their work environments. Participant 5 reported feelings of inferiority only when working with his stepdad on the farm. His work environments, to date, have been customer-service oriented, and he tends to thrive in those types of environments. Participant 6 does not have much work experience yet, but she does think about her future insecurities.

Participant 6 elaborated,

I thought about trying to find work within a field that I generally enjoy, which is teaching and educating and being with kids. Then I put myself in that situation like, 'maybe I'm not qualified enough to be a tutor or help students.' I then think, 'I can pretty much do well with the English aspects of it, but don't give me a student who's struggling in math, I won't be able to help him.' I think that's what scares me, to put myself out more in situations like that.

Participant 7 had not had work experiences that would have led to feelings of inferiority.

Regression to Old Feelings. Participant 1 reported having high levels of anxiety when taking orders and mixing up information. This experience happens each time she starts a new role or job, and any time directions are given by her boss. Participant 1 asserted, "Oh! anxiety, a lot of anxiety because I felt like I was that little girl again. I have to relearn everything; I have to re-teach myself everything. What are people gonna think? Am I gonna get fired?" This feeling of anxiety comes because she is worried about

what others are going to think, but she is also worried about what it might take to figure out the new process.

Participant 2 explained,

My current job is the one I see more of my dyslexia rearing up its head. This is because we have different trainings, we have to read every month and answer a little questionnaire. It feels frustrating, it feels like I'm back as a second grader a lot of the time, and I'm trying to do these trainings but it's hard to keep up.

In another example, participant 2 reported feelings of anxiety when she had to spell something out. Participant 2 stated,

I still get really anxious when I have to spell something out! I have no problem reading, I have no problem being the teacher, Or the authority in the room. My problem is when they want me to write something on the board and I don't have a cheat sheet.

In Participant 3's experience, using the phone gives her higher levels of anxiety. Participant 3 elaborated, "Even talking on the phone makes me anxious because I can't see the other person." In general, Participant 3 likes to have face-to-face interactions with others. This is partially why she chose to be a CNA at a nursing home. However, interactions over the phone are more difficult for her because she cannot read body language, which causes her anxiety. Participant 3 also mentioned the influence of the mask mandate (due to COVID-19) and how it makes it more difficult for her to interact with others because she cannot read their lips. Participant 3 identified that these negative experiences stemmed from her years in college, where teachers did not understand her

struggle with dyslexia and would dismiss her struggle. Because of these experiences, she has a strong need to be understood and, when she is not, she experiences anxiety.

Participant 4 had a boss that did not understand his approach to work. Participant 4 explained,

I can look at things and I can tell you probably what's going on. So, if something has an issue, I can look at it and, in my head, diagnose and tell you what's wrong and what needs to be replaced. I've had bosses who cannot handle that at all.

Many people with dyslexia develop creative ways to solve problems, often using their intuition. In this example, the participant uses this strength to analyze problems with engines. However, the boss that he had, at the time, did not understand and tried to force him to do a step-by-step model to figure out the problems. He reported that he did not know how to explain himself at the time, which created constant friction between the two.

Participant 5 did not report having a regression back to old feelings in his work environment. Instead, his work environments have been a positive influence, which has allowed him to fully realize some of his strengths in communicating with others.

Participant 6 has not had much work experience, but she has had fear about work the closer she is to graduation. Participant 6 explained,

There's that fear factor of messing up or I'm not good enough or I don't know it like the other kids. That's kind of scary for me. I've seen that transition in my thought process as I become closer to becoming a teacher too.

In this example, she is describing how she might feel in the future based on how she has felt at times in her past. Participant 7 did not share any examples of regression to old feelings from her work environment. She is still in college and has had little work experience to date.

Adapting to the Situation. When it comes to adapting to a situation, the transition from school to work can be particularly tricky. Participant 1 chose to adapt to her situation by choosing a work environment that works with dyslexia. She currently works in a daycare and feels connected to others. Participant 1 stated,

I feel comfortable there, because I don't feel like there's any judgment from the teachers that I work with or from the students I work with. My friends, that have completely different jobs, have a greater respect for kids with special needs, or teachers who work with special needs.

Participant 2 shared an example of her trying to get out of a task that creates anxiety. She was working with an older group of students, and they were talking about different types of apologies. As a student would reveal one, she would write it on the board. However, she would sometimes come across a word that she did not know how to spell. This is how she dealt with this uncomfortable situation: Participant 2 elaborated,

I try to just not have to write it on the board, I'm like, 'yes, that's a great example, why don't you write it?' And then I try to get someone else to give me a different example. And I try to play it off as; 'oh, there's not that much room on my board for that word, but if you had enough room write it on your board' so my board is getting filled, but their board has like one sentence on it.

Participant 2 reported that it was better to avoid telling her students about her struggle with dyslexia because they would not understand. Participant 2 stated, “To a five-year-old, adults know all. ‘What do you mean, you don’t know.’” Participants 1 and 2 work in a preschool setting because they originally wanted to be teachers. However, the preschool setting allows them to teach but does not require an extensive amount of reading and writing.

Participants 3 and 4 chose work that was tailored to their strengths. Participant 3 is currently a CNA at a nursing home and is in school to be a dental hygienist. Both professions are hands-on with very little reading and writing. She has purposefully picked these professions for the hands-on nature of the job. Participant 4 chose to become a diesel mechanic also because of the hands-on nature of the job. Like participant 3, he recognized his strengths and tailored his work around them. Furthermore, participant 4 had some trouble working with a boss who had set up a system of procedures to solve a problem, so he eventually started his own company. Participant 4 asserted, “Yeah, I’ve always been better if you turn me loose. My first job was really good at that.” This has allowed him to solve problems the way he knows best, and he does not have to follow the systems set by others. Participant 5 shared,

The occasional numbers will slip me up. I did a good job of picking fields where I would thrive, where it was very verbal-based conversations, people-orientated. I do really well in those settings. So, I really have thrived in most of the work I have done.

Both Participants 6 and 7 have not had much work experiences that required adaptation.

Existential Perspective

The existential perspective addressed QOL experiences from a deeper meaning than one's personal belief in having a good life. From this perspective, continued emotional experiences that are present despite the current situation play an important role in how each participant perceives their overall experiences. The focal point of this existential perspective was the work environment. This focal point is different from the educational environment because a different environment can influence different experiences, thoughts, and emotional outcomes.

Lifelong Struggles. Participant 1 reported that her main struggle is with math or taking orders. She stated, "I have to write it down or I can't remember it." She also mentioned that the process of writing information down is frustrating, but over the years, she has gotten used to it. As for the existential perspective, participant 1 reported that her experience with writing information down is normal and she has adapted it to her scenario. She identified that even though it is a bit frustrating, it does not have a huge influence on her QOL experience. Participant 2 explained,

I still get really embarrassed when I have to spell. The pre-school I work at is a learning-based preschool. So, we teach the children how to spell and to read. The biggest anxiety of my day is when I have to write something on the board, I don't want to teach them how to misspell a word.

In this example, participant 2 addressed two experiences: the first is the feeling of being embarrassed, and the second is the anxiety/fear of teaching a child to spell a word incorrectly. Participant 2 reported that she purposely works with the younger children to

avoid a scenario where she is required to spell. The existential perspectives related to this example are the internal feelings of embarrassment and anxiety. Participant 2 purposely limited her ability to adapt to her work environment because of her fear of misspelling a word. Because of this avoidance technique, she potentially limits her ability to influence QOL experiences.

Participants 3 and 4 have both chosen work environments that are tailored to their strengths. Because of this, they have not addressed the difficulties they have in their work environments. However, like Participant 2, participants 3 and 4 have a tendency to avoid any work environment that utilizes their weaknesses. I have noticed a common theme wherein Participants 2, 3, and 4 reported having a perception of having higher QOL when they avoid their weaknesses. However, they are limiting their ability to diversify their skills, which could potentially influence their QOL experiences.

Participant 5 reported that his work struggles, as a server, involve confusion with money and the number system for seating. However, he has no problem working with others. Participant 5 claimed, "I've had some awesome bosses and some amazing co-workers." He further explained that he has not had anyone frustrated with him, outside of his stepdad on the farm. Participant 5 has recognized some of his weaknesses and also used his strengths as a communicator to smooth over any mess-ups that occurred due to his weaknesses. He indicated that his bosses and coworkers are understanding and supportive of his weaknesses. In this example, Participant 5 leans on his strengths as a communicator to influence internal feelings of worthiness. Participant 6 indicated that she has a tracking issue, which makes it really difficult to organize information and set

appointments for clients. Participant 6 asserted, "Being able to transfer what I'm hearing and type correctly into the computer, at the same time, is overwhelming." She also indicated that she double- and triple-checks herself on every task she does. Generally speaking, because of participant 6's weakness with organizing information, she spends extra time making sure it is correct. This often leads to confusion, stress, and anxiety. Likewise, participant 7 did a summer job in a social work office where she did documentation work. Participant 7 elaborated, "I just do documentation slower, and I double- or triple-check my documentation. When I do documentation quickly, my spelling is still less than half right." She then indicated that when she misspells something, she feels shame when someone else sees it. Both Participants 6 and 7 reported spending extra time on work tasks to reduce feelings of confusion, stress, anxiety, and shame. However, by adding more time to one area of life (such as work), there is often a need to take time away from another area of life (such as social). This correlational relationship of time spent between environments can influence QOL experiences.

Feeling Disconnected. Participant 1 experienced a disconnect between herself and her boss. Participant 1 shared,

The tension was that I did not understand some of the instructions that she would give us for preparing lessons. It had to be a certain way. I had to follow the state guidelines. I didn't understand what she was asking or what she was referring to, so I did it the way I understood it and she'd get frustrated because it's not the way she explained it.

When asked how she felt about the situation, Participant 1 explained,

In the beginning I was mad, because I feel like I didn't get a fair chance at being able to do a good job with the kids and stuff. and then as it progressed, I got more annoyed and when I get annoyed, I say stuff that I probably shouldn't say.

Participant 1 also asserted, "I want people to understand, even if it's just a little bit of why I am the way I am. She just thought I was doing it on purpose to get attention." In this example, participant 1 revealed a couple of common experiences/themes that have crossed over from her years in school to her years at work. First, she just wanted to be understood. Second, she had an experience where someone else mislabeled her work intentions. She reported feelings of anger and frustration that eventually led to her speaking inappropriately to her boss.

Participant 4 describes a similar situation in which his boss did not understand his approach to a project. Participant 4 stated,

I drove him nuts and he drove me nuts, because I can look at something go, 'Alright, let's try to replace this component and see what's going on,' and he would want me to go through a whole entire process and confirm that's just gonna probably be the issue, blah, blah, blah. And I'm like, 'Dude, I've done this enough in my life, I can tell you this is where we gotta start.' And I drove him nuts because of that. I know it.

In both scenarios, there is a disconnect between the participants and their bosses. Both Participants 1 and 4 expressed feelings of anger and frustration that eventually had to be addressed. Participant 1 chose to talk to her boss and explain why she struggled to follow

her directions. Eventually, they were able to come to some sort of resolution. On the other hand, participant 4 decided to quit his job and start his own company.

Participant 3 shared some examples of feeling disconnected at work, identifying that COVID has had the most impact on her. Participant 3 explained: "I read lips a lot when I talk to people, so not being able to read people's lips and their facial cues (because I need to wear a mask) is challenging, just in general." Participant 3 asserted,

In my work it's hard to communicate with my co-workers who don't know me as well and when I'm trying to put humor into something or explain myself, I feel like they don't take it the way I'm trying to present it.

She also identified this same communication problem when dealing with her residents.

Participant 3 shared,

I only work every other weekend, so thankfully I don't have to deal with it very much, but with residents, they'll tell me something, and sometimes I think they're being silly and they're not. They get kind of grumpy at me and I'm like, 'Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know you were being serious.'

Participants 2, 5, 6, and 7 did not share work experiences where they felt disconnected.

Participant 5 identified that he has been able to thrive in his work environment because of his choice to choose a field where he could focus on his strengths.

Feeling Inferior. One out of seven participants reported having feelings of inferiority at work. Participant 5 reported a time when he worked for his stepfather and felt belittled. Participant 5 elaborated,

I've noticed I've always had bigger issues when people are related to me when it comes to following orders. Anyways, unlike school where I did feel frustrated and I did feel pressured in the scenario, I also felt like I was being belittled and/or talked down to. So, there was a lot of frustration there, couple that with the fact of not being able to process well, I felt belittled. One example was this time I had to move this cart to this location, and I got confused on the location in the building he wanted me to move it to. And then, when he corrected me, he did it in kind of an aggressive way where I felt like I wasn't being respected. I felt like he made me feel stupid, and I felt stupid for not being able to do the simple task.

In this example, Participant 5 had been working for his stepfather on the farm, which is both work and family related. Participant 5 also identified his personal struggle in dealing with his own family members. Therefore, the findings indicated very little in the experiences of inferiority in conjunction with each participant's work environment. These results might be a byproduct of the type of work each participant chose to participate in, or that some participants have not had an extended amount of work experience yet. A further look into these areas may yield more information.

Regression to Old Feelings. Five out of the seven participants reported having old feelings, fears, and/or insecurities re-emerge during work. These experiences were initially realized in an earlier setting, such as school, but dissipated over the years and re-emerged at work. Participant 1 reported having lots of anxiety when she came across complications or when she mixed up information at work. Participant 1 stated,

Oh, a lot of anxiety, just because I felt like I was that little girl again thinking, ‘this is my world again, I have to re-teach myself everything. What are people going to think? Am I going to get fired?’

Participant 1 also indicated feeling lost when COVID-19 resulted in a nationwide shut down. She identified that COVID took her away from her comfort zone and connection with her work and soccer kids. Both activities were essential components to making her feel valued. She identified feeling lost without her connection to work. Participant 1 shared,

I would think back to my childhood, but then stop myself because it's destructive. I wouldn't say that I suffer from severe depression, but I think the majority of the population say that people who keep to themselves and are isolated are depressed. However, during that time I was giving myself a moment to think things through, re-focus, re-adjust, and then I move forward.

Furthermore, Participant 1 asserted, “Yeah, its bearable and then when COVID happened I felt like everything was taken away.” In her last statement, she identifies work as being bearable. She recognizes her struggle with specific aspects of work but enjoys her connection with the children she interacts with. More significantly, she relies on those interactions to bring herself value, and without them, she feels lost.

In another example, Participant 2 explains how her current job causes problems in conjunction with her struggle with dyslexia. Participant 2 elaborated,

My current job is the one I see more of my dyslexia rearing up its head. This is because we have different trainings, we have to read every month and answer a

little questionnaire. It feels like I have homework again to which I am like, 'I graduated college.'

She further shared, "It's frustrating, I feel like I'm back as a second grader a lot of times." Participant 2 explained in more detail her frustrations with work, where she had to write a paper. She asserted, "Spell check hates me because it can't figure out what I'm trying to say and I had tried to change the word five different times, getting increasingly more frustrated." She eventually had to ask her roommate to help her spell the word she was trying to spell. Generally, Participant 2 has a tendency to rely on her friends for help with spelling, writing, and communicating via text or email. In another example, Participant 2 reported feelings of being overwhelmed on her orientation day at her current job. Participant 2 claimed,

They put you in a room and they give you a giant binder of all the trainings of everything. It was so much reading and I'm alone in a room by myself and I had to read and answer questions; it put me right back at the standardize testing in high school.

She wished she had someone there with her just in case she stumbled on a word.

Participant 2 explained, "When I was doing all of those trainings at one time, I just wanted to cry." The above example is another situation where she wanted help from others. Overall, Participant 2 has learned to be co-dependent by finding friends that are willing to help her with reading, writing, and spelling. When others are not able to help, she feels overwhelmed and anxious. Participant 2 stated,

At work I still get really anxious when I have to spell something out. I have no problem reading or being the teacher. My problem is when the students want me to write something on the board and I don't have a cheat sheet.

Participant 3 experiences re-emerging feelings of anxiety from the anticipation of how she might feel. Participant 3 shared, "Talking on the phone makes me a little anxious because you can't see the person." In this example, she identifies her need for visual cues that cannot be seen when talking on the phone. These feelings of anxiety stemmed from her past experiences with phone calls and how she might have misjudged a situation because she was unable to recognize body language. This is an example that crosses over into other areas, such as feeling disconnected, lifelong struggles, and even feeling inferior. Generally, misinterpreting phone conversations can happen to anyone, with or without dyslexia. However, for a person with dyslexia, using visual information to draw out information is a strength and is heavily used in many settings. Without that ability, a person with dyslexia has to resort to other methods of gathering information that are not part of their strengths. For Participant 3, having to resort to other methods to draw out information causes anxiety.

In another example, Participant 4 explains a situation where a boss did not understand his approach at work. Participant 4 explained,

I can look at something and tell you probably what's going on. If I get a piece of machinery that's got an issue with it, I can look at it and, in my head, I can diagnose the problem and tell you what's wrong. I've had bosses who cannot handle that at all.

Participant 4 indicated that this is a re-occurring theme in his life, where others do not believe that he does an adequate job. This experience started in school and has carried over into work, causing feelings of frustration and even anger. Participant 4 stated,

The last boss I had could not handle that. I drove him nuts and he drove me nuts because I can look at something and figure out the problem. He would want me to go through a whole process and confirm what the issue was; there was lots of arguing.

The research on dyslexia indicated that people with dyslexia generally have limitations in some areas but strengths in other areas of processing. For those individuals who have dyslexia, they generally experience visual strengths and often have an ability to analyze a problem through observation. Participant 4 relies on this strength to analyze problems with engines. However, the boss that he had at the time did not understand and tried to force him to use a step-by-step approach to figure out the problems. Because Participant 4 was unable to explain the situation to his boss, there was constant friction between the two. Eventually, Participant 4 quit his job and started working for himself, which helped him to alleviate that problem.

In the final example, Participant 6 reported having a struggle with remembering the rules of grammar. Even though she has not started work yet, this fear remains at the forefront of her thoughts when she starts teaching. Participant 6 asserted, "There's that fear factor of messing up or I'm not being good enough or I don't know it like the other kids. That's kind of scary for me." She indicated that this thought has become more real the closer she is to becoming a teacher. Currently, Participant 6 is a tutor for children, and

when she is faced with a grammar issue, she experiences that fear and anxiety.

Participants 5 and 7 did not address any issues related to regression in the work environment.

Adapting to the Situation. Six out of the seven participants reported adaptive strategies within their work environments. In the first example, Participant 1 indicated that her daycare work and coaching soccer were essential components to making her feel valued. She reported feeling lost without both activities. Participant 1 explained, “When COVID happened I felt like everything was taken away. I didn’t know what to do because I didn’t have those escapes from the world.” She also stated, “Things have kind of gone back to normal but, at that time, the only world I knew had been taken away.” In the above example, Participant 1 used her work with children to feel valued. She indicated that this is a strategy she has utilized throughout her life. She reported feeling lost without that affirmation. Participant 1 also found work that would accommodate well with dyslexia, which is another adaptive strategy. She reported that she is able to feel connected to others. Furthermore, her peers are more forgiving due to their understanding of how dyslexia affects others. Participant 1 asserted,

I feel comfortable there because I don't feel like there's any judgment from the teachers that I work with, from the students I work with, and from my friends that have completely different jobs. They have a greater respect for kids with special needs and the teachers who work with special needs.

In another example, Participant 1 had a disconnect between her boss and how she was to build a lesson plan for her classroom. When Participant 1 was given instructions, she

struggled to understand, which caused tension between her and her boss. Her boss became overly critical when she did not understand the directions. Eventually, Participant 1 decided to inform her boss about her struggle with dyslexia, and together, they devised a plan to help her improve the process of building a lesson plan. This was a proactive approach she used to improve her work QOL. Participant 1 shared, “It wasn’t until I sat down with her and described my struggle that things started to change.” Participant 1 reported that her boss did not fully understand her struggle with dyslexia, but she became less critical after that point.

In another example of adaptive strategies, Participant 2 found it difficult to read new books to her classroom. She reported her reading as choppy, especially when she had not memorized the book. To work around this struggle, she decided to treat reading like a performance. Participant 2 asserted, “If I am reading it will sound choppy, but if I am performing, then it comes out smooth.” In another example, Participant 2 had a dream of becoming a second-grade teacher but was disheartened in her first year of college. She began to rationalize her decisions to adapt to a new dream. Participant 2 claimed,

It was at that moment I stopped trying so hard to live my second-grade dream of being a teacher. I thought of all of the problems that would have arisen such as reading out loud, writing on the board, doing math, teaching others how to spell, and grading others work. I was like, ‘well I just avoided that.’

In general, by rationalizing her decision to switch directions, she was able to adequately cope with the emotional struggles of accepting something other than her previous dream. Participant 2 realized that she could be happy doing something else. This strategy was

effective for her in improving QOL. She did not dwell on what could have been; instead, she just adapted.

For Participant 3, she recognized her struggle with dyslexia from the beginning and decided to emphasize activities that best suited her strengths. Currently, she works as a CNA and is in college to be a dental hygienist. Both pathways were chosen due to the hands-on nature of the work. Throughout her journey, she has tailored her work choices around the amount of reading and writing required. Participant 3 is adaptive to her work environment because she chose work that best suits her strengths. Participant 4 has a similar approach to Participant 3; he also chose work that best suits his strengths.

However, he has had a few relational complications within his work environment. In one situation, Participant 4 had a conflict with his former boss. Participant 4 elaborated, “There was lots of arguing about how I was to analyze a problem. Basically, sometimes I would just tell him I did things that I really never did.” His adaptive strategy was to lie and do the job his way. Participant 4 further asserted, “This is just who I am, and that is it.” This mentality can be both valuable and destructive. It is a valuable perspective because it means he has learned to accept himself as he is, flaws and all. Because of this, he has confidence in himself and his ability to perform in his given role. However, it can be a destructive perspective because he is not compliant when working with others, especially when they are not willing to understand his way of analyzing a problem. Participant 4 has experienced the destructive side of his adaptive strategy, and it has influenced him to adapt further. Thus, due to the conflict between him and his boss, he chose to work for himself. Participant 4 claimed, “That was probably the best decision I

ever made.” Participant 4’s example shows a COE pattern of an initial difference in how someone processes information (dyslexia), the conflict that arises due to that difference, and a series of adaptive strategies to work around the differences.

For Participant 5, when asked about his work experiences, he stated,

The occasional numbers will slip me up but, I'd like to say, I did a good job of picking fields where I would thrive. Where I could have conversations and it was people-orientated, I do really well in those settings. So, I really have thrived in most of the work I have done.

In one example, Participant 5 described a scenario where he became a manager of a coffee shop. In that role, he was required to take inventory and count money. Participant 5 explained,

I was in charge of counting the money every night and doing inventory weekly. So, I did start to have a little bit more trouble. However, I wasn't really on anyone's time besides my own. So granted, while it took me a lot longer to do inventory than most people, I wasn't pressured into it.

Participant 5 also stated, “I think if I had a time constraint, I would have been a lot worse at it. But luckily it was just me coming in by myself and doing things on my own.”

Generally, Participant 5 chose work environments that were tailored to his strengths.

When he had work that was not tailored to his strengths, he reported spending extra time in that capacity to accommodate his struggle with dyslexia. Extra time spent could get in the way of QOL, especially if he had to spend many hours doing tasks. However,

Participant 5 did not indicate having much of a problem with spending extra time on work tasks.

In the final example, Participant 6 addressed that her first semester of college was a failure, but during the summer, she found a job that helped her develop organizational skills. She asserted,

I think I was able to organize a little better, I know that I made a whole adjustment. I was like, 'Alright, first semester was down the drain, I can't come back from that. Second semester I can build up, set-up a calendar, prioritize things, study, read, and do my homework.' I went from a 1.6 or 7 GPA first semester of college to a 3.0.

Participant 6 further identified her reasons for developing a strategy that crossed over into college. Participant 6 claimed, "When my first boss left the company, I really had to pay attention to the fine details of things, which really scared me." She also elaborated, "I think from there, I learned to not be so dependent on people and ask the questions that I needed to in case that happened again." In this example, Participant 6 was able to recognize her weaknesses in her work environment and devised a strategy that helped her deal with daily challenges in both her work and school environments. Participant 7 did not report any adaptive strategies in her work environment.

Objective Perspective

The objective perspective addressed QOL experiences based on socioeconomic standards of what a good QOL represents. This perspective was designed to explore each participant's experiences of QOL through an objective lens. There are several factors

related to objective work standards, such as income, coworker/employer relationships, job intensity, and time off. These areas will be explored within each of the five sub-themes (i.e., lifelong struggles, feeling disconnected, feeling inferior, regression to old feelings, and adapting to the situation).

Lifelong Struggles. Four out of the seven participants reported experiences of lifelong struggles at work. In the first example, Participant 1 shared,

I think the biggest part is, especially when I handle money or take orders, I have to write it down or I can't remember it. Then, as they're telling me what they want, I get the letters mixed up even though I'm good at spelling. They're just going so fast that it's hard for me to get it down.

In a similar situation, Participant 5 explained,

Some specific examples are that I worked as a cashier, sometimes I'd get confused with money. More recently, I'm a server at a local restaurant and it took me a long time to remember the number system for seating. Sometimes I would go into the back to bring food out to a table that's not mine. My manager would say it goes to seat 328 and a good number of times I would need to come back and ask what that number was.

The above examples showed that both Participants 1 and 5 had similar experiences with taking orders. Both identified feelings of anxiety and tension from the confusion and extra time needed, which were addressed in the subjective section. However, the objective factors in these scenarios were the extra time spent taking orders and/or correcting communication errors. Time is part of the objective perspective because there

is generally an average time an activity should take. If a person were to go beyond that time limit, they would be outside of the normal expectations of that activity.

In another example, Participant 6 asserted,

Oh my God, I hated the appointment scheduler; I have a tracking issue. So, it was really hard for me to see where the times were and line up the appropriate date and time. On top of that, talking to somebody on the phone to try and find a date and time that worked, was frustrating.

Participant 6 further elaborated, “Transferring what I heard while writing it down was always scary to me. I felt bad asking them to repeat themselves two or three times.” In the final example, Participant 7 reported that her summer job was documentation work, which she indicated was not her strong suite. Participant 7 claimed, “I just simply do the documentation slower. Also, I have to double- or triple-check my documentation, because when I try to do it quickly my spelling is still less than a half.” Participants 6 and 7 also had difficulties translating information correctly, which caused both to take longer to complete their given tasks. In general, Participants 1, 5, 6, and 7 reported having difficulties with translating information at work, which caused them to spend extra time on their given tasks. This extra time spent has interfered in their lives outside of work. Participants 2, 3, and 4 did not identify any objective indicators related to their work environments.

Feeling Disconnected. Three out of the seven participants reported feeling disconnected at work. Participant 1 reported a disconnect between herself and her boss. Participant 1 elaborated,

The tension was that I did not understand some of the instructions that she would give for preparing lessons. Lessons had to follow state guidelines. I did it the way I understood it and she'd got frustrated because it's not the way she explained it.

In another example, Participant 3 reported feeling disconnected when talking on the phone and while she was wearing a face mask at work. Participant 3 claimed, "I read lips a lot when I talk to people, so not being able to read people's lips and their facial cues is challenging, just in general." One example Participant 3 gives,

I work in a nursing home, so it's hard to communicate with my co-workers who don't know me as well and when I'm trying to put humor into something, or explain myself, I feel like they don't take it the way I'm trying to present it.

She also identified this same problem when dealing with residents. Participant 3 explained, "The residents will tell me something and sometimes I think they're being silly but they're not. They get grumpy at me and I'm like 'Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know you were being serious.'"

In the final example, Participant 4 explained a situation where a boss did not understand how he worked. Participant 4 stated,

I drove him nuts and he drove me nuts because I can look at something and go, 'Alright, let's try to replace this component and see what's going on.' He wanted me to go through an entire process to confirm what the issue was.

Because of their different approaches, Participant 4 reported lots of conflict between him and his boss.

All three participants had similar experiences of feeling disconnected. All of the experiences were derived from a lack of understanding between the participant and their bosses, peers, and/or residents. In all the examples, each participant reported experiences of tension and/or frustration due to their bosses, peers, and/or residents. Furthermore, these experiences of tension and frustration continued between them and their bosses, peers, and/or residents until further action took place. Participant 1 eventually confronted the issue between herself and her boss, giving her boss insight into her personal struggle to comprehend information. Participant 4, however, chose to separate himself from the conflict and eventually started his own business. These experiences are part of the objective perspective because there is a general expectation to have a cohesive relationship with bosses, peers, and/or residents. When a cohesive relationship is not experienced, tension, anxiety, and fear can influence QOL experiences. Participants 2, 5, 6, and 7 did not identify experiences of feeling disconnected in their work environments.

Feeling Inferior. One out of seven participants reported feelings of inferiority at work and had an objective indicator associated with their experience. Participant 2 indicated that when she reads a book to her class, she often comes across words she does not know how to say. Her strategy for dealing with this dilemma was to use the context clues to figure out its meaning and find a synonym to replace it. However, she has had children call her out for using the wrong word. Participant 2 asserted, “Of course, I have had smart kids that kind already know how to read. So, when I would come up with a synonym and say it, I would get called out.” Participant 2 indicated that this experience is a common occurrence, and it is embarrassing for her. Participants 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 did

not identify experiences of feeling inferior with objective indicators in their work environments. Many of the participants experienced feelings of inferiority; however, there were no objective indicators to showcase those experiences.

Regression to Old Feelings. Because regression to old feelings is based on personal interpretations of current experiences in conjunction with past experiences, there are no objective indicators for this section. Therefore, the seven participants did not indicate any objective evidence to support their regressed feelings. However, in the subjective and existential sections of the work environment portion, there are examples of participants experiencing regression to old feelings.

Adapting to the Situation. There were three types of choices, amongst all participants, when it came to choosing a career. The first was that their job choices were influenced by their strengths rather than their weaknesses. Participants 3, 4, and 5 all identified that their work was chosen based around their strengths. Participants 3 and 4 chose careers that involved hands-on work. Participant 3 claimed, "I knew what I wasn't good at, so I decided not to do those things." Likewise, Participant 4 shared, "I always liked the hands-on stuff. I've always said I probably would have been a great engineer, but engineers do math. And I don't do that." In another example, Participant 5 chose a career that involved socializing with others. Participant 5 asserted, "I would like to say I did a good job of picking fields where I would thrive, where it was verbal-based conversations, people-orientated, and I do really well on that." All three examples showed a desire to participate in work that tailored to their strengths.

The second way participants adapted due to dyslexia was by choosing a job based on helping others with similar struggles. This type of work was chosen despite the need to face difficult tasks, in conjunction with their dyslexia, on the journey to and within the chosen profession. Participant 6 explained, “I wanted to be able to relate to kids even though their experiences are different, you can still relate. That was one thing that I missed, nobody related to me. Nobody understood me.” This need to relate to others was Participant 6’s driving force in choosing a career path, and not her struggle with dyslexia. In another example, Participant 7 went to college to be a counselor. Participant 7 stated, “I’ve always been good at connecting with people.” Participant 7 chose counseling as her profession because she stated it was her “niche.” However, the journey to that career path was difficult. She indicated many educational struggles until she developed a system that kept her organized. Participant 7 elaborated, “It was just developing those systems to keep myself organized that I knew would work.” By developing systems to help her organize, Participant 7 was able to utilize the necessary tools she needed to progress through college.

Participants 6 and 7 were the only two participants to have formal training geared around their issues with dyslexia. This may have been an influencing factor in their choices for a career. Both Participants 6 and 7 indicated that their formal training helped develop the necessary organizational tools needed to thrive in college. Furthermore, the training was infused with positive support. Participant 7 asserted,

I think my tutor did a really good job at pointing out the benefits and even just sending me articles about the positive things related to dyslexia. I don't think I would see dyslexia as a gift without my tutors help.

The third choice was to do a hybrid of both pathways, which was to choose the easiest path and find a career that helped others in an educational setting. Participants 1 and 2 chose to avoid careers that involved their weaknesses and chose a career path that allowed them to help others. Participant 1 stated, "There's not really any more struggle, just because I've been put in jobs where I feel comfortable, so working with special education." In another example, Participant 2 had a long-term dream of being a second-grade teacher but abandoned that path in college. Instead, she switched to a theater major, and when she graduated, she began to work at a preschool. Both Participants 1 and 2 chose careers that did not require a lot of reading and writing but were able to have a positive influence on another's life.

In conclusion, regarding QOL experiences within the work environment, there were a few observations. First, participants were able to have a sense of self-value even with their apparent struggles related to dyslexia. Second, choosing to avoid activities that cater to a known weakness and participating in activities that cater to their known strengths does not mean that QOL experiences are less than those of someone who chose a different path. Third, how a person chooses to reflect on their internal struggles matters. If one were to dwell on how inferior they were, then their overall QOL experiences appeared to be lower than those who chose to look at their struggles with dyslexia in a

different way. For example, participant 2 came to terms with her struggle with dyslexia by settling for less. Participant 2 stated,

It was at that moment I stopped trying so hard to live my second-grade dream of being a teacher. I thought of all of the problems I would have to deal with if I would have become a second-grade teacher, such as writing on the board, doing math, spelling, and reading out loud. I'm like, well I just avoided that.

Originally, Participant 2 tried to pursue her goal of becoming a second-grade teacher but was continually faced with the struggles associated with dyslexia. It was not until she gave up that dream, in college, that she stopped dwelling on her own feelings of inferiority to others. Therefore, she experienced the emotional freedom of not dwelling on her weaknesses, which influenced a more positive outlook related to QOL experiences.

Participants 3 and 4 chose to accept their differences as “This is how God made me”. Overall, they appeared to have a happier disposition despite having less education. On the other hand, Participants 5, 6, and 7 chose to take their weaknesses as a challenge to overcome. Even though they revealed their insecurities, they also showed perseverance and a willingness to push the boundaries of what they believed were possible. This perseverance has opened the door to opportunities, related to work, that they originally thought were impossible. Furthermore, Participants 5, 6, and 7 indicated that when they had overcome difficult tasks, they also uncovered unrealized talents that were hidden behind their weaknesses. Participant 5 explained, “When it comes to myself, my own

internal thoughts, I almost like that I have this disability or this challenge because I can overcome it.”

Environment 3: Family

The family environment is the foundation of a person’s sense of value, self-worth, and overall QOL. From the beginning of a person’s life, their parents are there to protect, teach, and guide them through the many challenges that come with life. A parent’s choice in how to protect, teach, and guide their child can be significant to a person’s ability to adapt. A parent’s educational level, temperament, and overall understanding of how to navigate parenthood can have a direct influence on their child’s future experiences related to QOL. Therefore, the family environment was a key area to explore in conjunction with struggles with dyslexia and QOL experiences. Three perspectives were explored through subjective, existential, and objective perspectives in conjunction with each individual’s QOL experiences.

Subjective Perspective

The subjective perspective addressed QOL experiences from each participant’s own belief in how good their life is. This perspective did not seek to provide any insight into QOL experiences beyond what has been told by the participant. The main focus was on their own perceptions, from both past and present experiences, and how they feel now about their QOL experiences. In this section, I explored the subjective perspective of QOL experiences within each participant’s family environment.

Lifelong Struggles. Two out of seven participants reported experiencing lifelong struggles related to family and dyslexia. In the first example, Participant 1 indicated that

her initial struggles with dyslexia started at home. She was one of five children, but she was the only one with dyslexia. Participant 1 asserted that her father would lecture and belittle her, yelling comments like “You need to get your act together, you need to figure things out, why are you like this? When are you going to get over yourself and learn?” Participant 1 indicated that her mother did not intervene because “she was afraid of him.” This experience of insensitivity and fear occurred throughout her childhood and eventually crossed over into her married life. Participant 1 identified that her ex-husband also treated her in the same manner as her father treated her. Participant 1 claimed, “It got so bad at one point that he divorced me because he didn’t want to deal with my dyslexia.” Participant 1 indicated feeling unwanted and having low self-esteem because she was unable to live up to her father and ex-husband’s expectations. Currently, participant 1 shared, “I have a hard time trusting men in particular.”

In the other example, participant 5 did not have a parent who lectured and/or belittled him for not performing. Instead, Participant 5 indicated that much of his emotional struggle came from his own perceptions and thoughts related to performing in an educational setting in conjunction with his family. Participant 5 elaborated, “My mom is very big on being smart and having social skills. My brother took that to another level, which made me feel like I needed to as well. If I can't socialize with people and I can't prove that I'm smart, then you know, what's the point?” Participant 5 reported always feeling behind and having this pressure to perform but was never able to live up to the standard his mother inadvertently set for him. Participant 5 further indicated that he did not know how to express that anger and frustration.

Both examples show a continual emotional struggle from childhood to their current age. However, both participants reacted differently to their emotional struggles. Participant 1 felt ostracized by her father and later her husband, which led to feelings of insecurity, fear, and loneliness, whereas Participant 5 internalized his experience based on the perceived family standard he thought was important to maintain. This internalization left him feeling insecure, frustrated, angry, and alone. Participants 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7 reported having no lifelong struggles in relation to family and dyslexia.

Feeling Disconnected. Four out of seven participants had feelings of disconnection from their family environments. In the first example, Participant 1 stated that

My dad was very impatient with me. There was a lot of yelling and arguing with my dad because I tried to tell him how to help me. But the way he would break it down, I didn't fully understand. So, then I'd get frustrated, and he would get frustrated and then there would be name calling and all that stuff.

Participant 1 reported feeling worthless. She stated, "There were so many nights that I cried myself to sleep, thinking, 'why am I even in school?'" This feeling of worthlessness and disconnection carried over into her marriage, which eventually led to a divorce.

Participant 1 claimed, "My ex started being emotional and mentally abusive because he got tired of breaking information down for me to understand."

In the next example, Participant 5 reported having a supportive mother but felt a strong need to perform at a high level and could not maintain that standard. Furthermore, his mother would bring up his struggle with dyslexia to others, which made him feel

uncomfortable. Participant 5 explained, “Whenever she brings up the context of dyslexia and me to other people, I definitely have an issue with it because she is sharing something that's vulnerable to me, without my permission.” Participant 5 also reported having a disconnect with his stepdad because they came from two different worlds. Participant 5 elaborated, “My stepdad, although he's a good guy, doesn't express his emotions very well. We would just butt heads. I think we had very different ways of looking at life, so that was a really hard transition.” Participant 5 also reported that he had a hard time with his mother working all the time. He stated,

As a child, it was hard not having my mother around all the time. when she did try to connect it was through dyslexia, I think that was also painful for me. Referring to his mother working all the time, he internally thought, ‘You're not here all the time. And now that you are, I'm having trouble in school and I don't feel like you're supporting me, so it's hard for me to connect with you.’

Participant 5 explained, “As a child it made no sense and I think I still have a lot of hurt from that, even though I understand now.” Due to these experiences, Participant 5 reported feeling insecure and less valued. In addition to feeling insecure and less important, he thought he had to do well like his mother and siblings, which made him feel angry and frustrated.

In another example, Participant 6 identified her relationship with her mother as strained, especially in conjunction with school. She asserted,

My memory was so poor. My mom hated doing spelling with me. And that's where I really struggled with coming home and doing homework. I felt like it was something that she didn't want to do because she was angry with me.

Participant 6 later realized that her mother did not understand how she worked intellectually. She reported that disconnect as the main struggle between her and her mother. Participant 6 claimed, "It felt like I was being neglected or ignored because she didn't understand how I learned." Participant 6 also explained, "I was very much in the demographic of, 'Oh, she's just not trying hard enough.'" She stated, "It was scary, and it was frustrating because I wasn't able to articulate myself. I wasn't able to explain why I couldn't understand." She indicated that, as a child, she just wanted to be part of the decisions and have things explained to her. Instead, she was in and out of testing centers without understanding why. Participant 6 elaborated,

From second grade on, I was in and out of test centers all the time trying to figure out what was wrong. I never had those explanations to me, and my mom didn't necessarily have the answers because she was just doing what she was told.

Participant 6 reported her experiences with her mother and education as a nightmare. She stated, "You just see a parent who doesn't want to help, and I felt like I was being ignored and that was hard." Furthermore, Participant 6 asserted, "There is a lot of misunderstanding about dyslexia, with little to no education to inform others. Instead, teachers and parents often brush it under the rug and pretend like it's not there." She further shared, "I'm very much a talker, so when I don't get to talk about my struggle it makes it hard to relate to anybody or not feel alone."

In the final example, Participant 7 reported that her family were her biggest supporters. However, there is also a disconnect between them. Participant 7 explained,

They don't make me feel bad about being dyslexic, but they don't understand why I get frustrated or struggle with certain things. It's not their fault that they're uneducated, but I don't necessarily think anyone in my family has tried.

Participant 7 also asserted,

I think they know enough to understand it's more than just my reading and writing ability. They know that I'm fully capable and intelligent, but they don't choose to know more. Yeah, I think there's definitely a disconnect because they don't fully understand.

Overall, the disconnect reported by the four participants came about in different ways. Participant 1 reported having a father that was impatient with her and tended to yell and belittle her for not understanding a given task. Participant 5 had a mother who was well educated and busy with work, leaving him to imagine (without counsel from his mother) an expected educational standard. He also indicated feeling less valued due to his mother's focus on helping others rather than himself. However, he did report that she was supportive and provided insight into his struggle with dyslexia. Participants 6 and 7 identified that they both had supportive parents, but they lacked insight into issues related to dyslexia. Both Participants 6 and 7 indicated that their parents would rather hire outside help instead of learning the needed information themselves. Finally, Participants 2, 3, and 4 did not report feeling disconnected from their family environment.

Feeling Inferior. Five out of seven participants had feelings of inferiority in conjunction with family and dyslexia. In the first example, Participant 1 reported that her father and ex-husband belittled her for not understanding something, especially when they had to teach her something new. Participant 1 identified that both her father and husband would lecture her, making comments such as, “Why are you like this? When are you going to get over yourself and learn?” Participant 1 stated, “In part, her husband left her because of her constant struggle with dyslexia. They were unable to connect on an intellectual level.”

In another example, Participant 3 reported that internally she felt inferior. Participant 3 elaborated, “No one made fun of me, mom was very understanding. I got dyslexia from my dad, so he understood. My brother also had dyslexia, so he couldn't make fun of me.” She reported that her internal feelings of inferiority came from her observations of her family and compared those observations with her own struggle.

In another example, Participant 5 explained that some of his feelings of inferiority came from a relational dynamic between him and his brother. He claimed,

I definitely have dyslexia the worst out of all my siblings. I also compared myself to my brother, when it came to education and social situations. I often felt frustrated, thinking: ‘Why is he able to excel in all these areas and I just struggle to keep up?’

Participant 5 indicated that his comparison to his brother was self-defeating because he was unable to maintain the same standard. He reported that this made him feel like a failure. Participant 5 also felt inferior when comparing himself to his mother. He

indicated that she was well-educated and was well-versed in issues related to dyslexia.

Participant 5 elaborated,

A pretty specific memory that impacted me the most was her desire to help me. she obviously wanted me to get help, so she decided to work with me herself. It was very difficult for me to work with her because she was my mother and knew a lot about the subject. I felt vulnerable having to do anything with dyslexia or my education with her.

Participant 5 shared, “I remember multiple times sitting down at the table and just shutting down and crying because I felt like I just wanted to give up.” Participant 5 indicated that his feelings of vulnerability was a byproduct of feeling like a failure in front of his mother. He also specified that when he did study with his mother, he would get angry and frustrated to the point of crying and shutting down. Participant 5 stated, “Even to this day education is not something I want to sit down and talk about with my mother. The moment anything about education is brought up my walls instantly go up.” Participant 5 reported that his mother inadvertently set a standard that was hard to achieve. He stated, “I think she may have idolized education too much and my brother developed insecurities about his own education. This focal point led him to believe that intelligence was the only thing that mattered, which rubbed off on me.”

In the next example, Participant 6 indicated that both she and her father had similar educational and social experiences with dyslexia, but she did not find this out until later in her life. These experiences ranged from being bullied, to seeking help with no resolution, to having groups of friends who made comments of me being retarded.

Participant 6 explained that these experiences set the standard for how she felt in her home environment. Participant 6 stated, "I watched my siblings just kind of fly by with school and that's where a lot of the jealousy came from." She indicated that watching her siblings finish assignments in a fraction of the time it would take her was quite frustrating. Participant 6 asserted that, "There was no one to relate to, there was no one to talk to, and there was no one to explain." She indicated that her father, who had a similar struggle, was not a part of her family life, which contributed to her feeling alone. Participant 6 stated, "It really made me feel, for the longest time, like I wasn't competent, and I was incapable of learning, which led to many breakdowns." She also shared, "I had this idea of what smart was and it wasn't what I felt about myself."

In the final example, Participant 7 asserted, "I have two older brothers who are high achieving in school and both my parents are high achieving, I felt like I was a disappointment." Furthermore, Participant 7 stated, "I remember just feeling defeated and honestly I took a lot of it personally." She reported feeling like an idiot as far back as first grade and this feeling stayed with her throughout school. Moreover, participant 7 indicated that her self-perceived expectations of her family influenced her educational perceptions and expectations. Participants 2 and 4 did not report having feelings of inferiority within the family environment.

In conclusion, out of the five participants who reported feelings of inferiority, there were two main observations. The first observation was that internal feelings of inferiority were influenced by external experiences, such as yelling, name calling, and belittling. Participant 1 reported these external experiences that came from her father and

ex-husband. The second observation was that the internal feelings of inferiority were influenced by the internal observations of those around them. The internal observations would manifest as the participant observed the abilities of other family members.

Participants 3, 5, 6, and 7 all reported examples of internal observations. These observations often created feelings of jealousy and perceived expectations that cannot be realized. Both external experiences and internal feelings of inferiority created a schema of feeling less than others. All five participants reported feeling less intelligent and less capable than their other family members.

Regression to Old Feelings. Out of seven participants, two reported experiences of regression to old feelings in conjunction with their family. Participant 1 indicated that her father's treatment of her growing up was a contributing factor to her lack of trust in men. Furthermore, her ex-husband continued with the emotional and mental abuse until he eventually divorced her. Participant 1 claimed, "My ex-husband would refuse to break things down for me to understand, which led to emotional and mental abuse." Participant 1 reported that these experiences with her father and ex-husband, in conjunction with dyslexia, were the influencing factors that made her not trust men. Furthermore, these experiences, in conjunction with dyslexia, influenced and perpetuated feelings of insecurity, inferiority, unworthiness, and a lack of self-value.

In the last example, participant 5 identified that even now he feels insecure when talking about specific topics with his mother. He stated, "I do think that because I have those memories of sitting down and feeling like a failure in front of her, I don't like bringing school stuff up with her." Participant 5 also shared, "With my mom I can talk

freely about most things, but when it comes to education or dyslexia, I do notice myself putting up walls.” Participant 5 indicated that when his mother brings up dyslexia, he feels anger. However, if another person wants to talk about dyslexia, he reported having no problems. Participant 5 elaborated, “I think it is hard to talk about my education and dyslexia with my mother and brother on a deeper level because I spent many years trying to compare myself to them and I feel inferior to them sometimes.” Participants 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7 did not report experiences of regression within their family environments.

In conclusion, both participants 1 and 5 reported having old feelings re-emerge at different times in their lives. However, there is a difference between the two participants. Participant 1 reported external experiences of verbal and emotional abuse in conjunction with her struggle with dyslexia as a major contributor to regression. Whereas, Participant 5 reported internal thoughts from observations of his mother and brother in conjunction with his struggle with dyslexia as the major contributing factor to regression.

Adapting to the Situation. Six out of seven participants reported adapting to situations associated with family influence. In the first example, Participant 2 indicated that her ability to adapt started with her parents’ recognition of dyslexia. She further explained that she was an only child and her parents put all their efforts into her struggle with dyslexia. Participant 2 claimed, “Once my dad saw my struggle, he worked with my teacher to learn some tricks to help me.” In another example, participant 2 reported having childhood dreams of becoming a second-grade teacher. However, her second semester in college proved to be too difficult and she wanted to switch paths. She was afraid that her father would be disappointed, so she called him. Participant 2 asserted,

I called my dad crying, I asked if he would hate me if I dropped out of the education program and focused on a theater major. My dad immediately threw a party, he was so excited because he had been trying to talk me out of it my entire life.

Participant 2 reported that this experience reassured her that her father was not going to hate her. She reported that her father, who knew that she had dyslexia, just wanted her to choose an educational path that was good for her mental stability. Participant 2 explained, “My parents worked really hard at getting me the help I needed, doing everything they could to ensure I had a system in place to be successful.” She further elaborated that, “My parents tried to get me as many tools as possible to help because they recognized that dyslexia would be a life-long struggle.”

In the next couple of examples, Participants 3 and 4 had mothers who were special education teachers. Participant 3 stated, “It helps that I was diagnosed when I was very young, because my mom figured out my older brother had it, so then she was able to get me tested and diagnosed very early.” Participant 3 further reported that because of her mother’s background in education, she was able to talk to her teachers and inform them on how to navigate challenges. Participant 3 claimed, “My mother was a wonderful advocate for which most kids did not have.” Participant 4 also indicated that his mother really helped him to adapt throughout life. Participant 4 further explained that his mother did pre-school with him, she informed him of his struggles with dyslexia, and she provided tips and tricks to work through those struggles. He asserted, “My mom always pushed us to read. So, it was repetition that shaped who I am and what I can do today.”

Furthermore, Participant 4 identified that he lived in a household with more than one person who had dyslexia. He reported this to be a benefit because it was a shared struggle with a specific focus on what was needed.

In the next example, Participant 5 had a mother who had developed an insight into dyslexia. Conversations about the struggles of dyslexia were a common experience in his home. Participant 5 reported that his mother and many of his siblings also had dyslexia, so issues related to dyslexia were commonplace. Furthermore, Participant 5 mentioned that his mother and older brother emphasized education greatly, which had both positive and negative influences on his life. Participant 5 explained, “My mother was a big advocate for me getting extra time on the ACTs and other tests because she was like, ‘You have dyslexia, we could get help.’” He further asserted, “I was very against it. I think, maybe to a slightly unhealthy degree, I almost refused that I had dyslexia. But in other ways, I’m almost proud of having dyslexia.” Participant 5 reported that when it came to his mother, it was like he had to prove something. However, when it came to himself and his own internal thoughts, he liked having dyslexia because it was a challenge to overcome. Furthermore, Participant 5 reported that he spent much of his youth comparing himself with his mother and brother, which made him feel inferior. Participant 5 elaborated,

I feel like there are certain expectations to be met when I’m at home. Even though I know my brother and mother don’t view me that way. They’re like, ‘As long as you’re yourself, we love you,’ but I feel I have to perform a certain way.

This dichotomy of refusing to believe he has dyslexia in front of his family, while internally having pride in having dyslexia, is how he has adapted. Participant 5 reported that at home he does not show vulnerability or seek help. However, while away at college, he reported having the freedom to choose his own path. Participant 5 stated, “I think going away to college actually really helped me get out of my comfort zone. I was able to break through the walls to protect myself from feeling vulnerable in front of my family.” Furthermore, participant 5 explained,

I believe places, objects, and people can make you digress back to an emotional point you used to be at. I feel like in high school and in my home life, I built these walls up to keep myself safe and comfortable because I felt inferior. When I went to college, I think I broke a lot of those walls down. I am life of the party, I have fun, I have confidence, but when I come back home, I feel like I have to put those walls back up because I guess there's this stigma.

Participant 5 indicated that his family influenced his desire to be a high achiever in his school endeavors. However, he internalized his observations of family interests (education and intelligence), which led to feelings of inferiority and anger.

In the next example, Participant 6 identified that her mother put her in activities to help her through her struggles with dyslexia. She further identified that because of her mother's actions, she was able to talk about her struggles with dyslexia openly and with minimal emotional stress. Her mother found the type of help Participant 6 needed to directly address the issues she had with dyslexia. Furthermore, Participant 6 spent many years working with a tutor to help her navigate reading and writing struggles due to

dyslexia. She was also able to develop systems and strategies to navigate her own unforeseen difficulties as she transitioned to college and work.

In the last example, Participant 7 also had a mother who played a significant role in supporting her development throughout the years. Participant 7 explained,

With my mom directly, I think she did a really good job of presenting me with key information. Such as, there were a lot of people who were like me, people with dyslexia have done a lot of different things with their lives, and that people with dyslexia can be successful in life.

She also stated,

I know that the different impacts in my life definitely made it easier for me to not be super negative. I feel like with how my education started, it would have been very easy for me to not want to continue my education.

Participant 1 did not report any information related to family experiences and adapting to her struggle with dyslexia.

Overall, there was a common theme amongst the six participants who reported adapting to the situation in conjunction with their family. Each participant had at least one parent who supported their struggle with dyslexia and helped them find resources to navigate learning difficulties. However, the resources found were vastly different for each participant. Participant 2 had a supportive father who found resources through the school system. Participants 3 and 4 had a supportive mother who had a background in special education and used her knowledge to assist with learning difficulties. Participant 5 had a mother who had significant knowledge about dyslexia and was supportive, but he

had internal motivations to figure out his own solutions to his educational difficulties.

Participant 5 reported that he did not want to be vulnerable in front of his mother. Instead, he used his mother's influence and high educational standards as motivation to overcome obstacles. Lastly, Participants 6 and 7 had parents that sought specialized help, outside of the school system, specifically designed to address their educational difficulties.

Existential Perspective

The existential perspective addressed QOL experiences from a deeper meaning than one's personal belief in having a good life. From this perspective, continued emotional experiences that are present despite the current situation play an important role in how each participant perceives their overall experiences. The focal point of this existential perspective is the family environment. The family environment plays a crucial role in how an individual perceives life challenges and how they choose to overcome those challenges. Furthermore, the family environment is part of the foundation for emotional development and can have a significant influence on how a person perceives their QOL experiences later in life.

Lifelong Struggles. One out of seven participants reported lifelong struggles in association with family and dyslexia. Participant 1 identified that her father was aware of her struggle with dyslexia but had no patience to help her through the learning struggles. Participant 1 stated that her father would make comments such as, "You need to get your act together, you need to figure things out, why are you like this? When are you going to get over yourself and learn?" She also claimed, "Out of all five kids, I'm the only one that was treated that way." Furthermore, she identified that her mother did not confront

her father because she was afraid of him. Her mother's fear of her husband only perpetuated the negative experiences Participant 1 had to endure. Later in her life, Participant 1 reported similar treatment from her ex-husband.

Throughout Participant 1's family experiences (at first, with her father, then her ex-husband), she reported continuous verbal and emotional abuse due to her inability to perform well in a learning situation. Moreover, these experiences left Participant 1 feeling worthless, anxious, and fearful. Participant 1 elaborated, "There were so many nights that I cried myself to sleep, thinking, 'Why am I even in school?'" She also reported experiencing high levels of anxiety and fear when learning new information or taking on a new role at work. Lastly, Participant 1 reported having trust issues with men because of the way her father treated her throughout her life.

Out of the seven participants, Participant 1 was the only person to report a home life that was not supportive of dyslexia in some way. This lack of support is a strong indicator of her continual emotional struggles in association with family and dyslexia. Other participants reported having conflict with their parents at times, but the parents found positive solutions to help their children with impeding learning struggles. Therefore, Participants 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 did not report having lifelong struggles in association with family and dyslexia.

Feeling Disconnected. Four out of seven participants reported feeling disconnected from their family. In the first example, Participant 1 identified that her father was verbally and mentally abusive due to her struggles with dyslexia. Furthermore, she reported that out of the five children, she was the only one who was called names and

belittled for not understanding. Participant 1 asserted, “Those experiences made me feel worthless. There were so many nights that I cried myself to sleep, thinking, ‘why am I even in school?’” Participant 1 reported that there were many times she tried to explain to her father how to help, but he would not. This experience ostracized her from the family, with whom she does not interact anymore.

From an existential standpoint, Participant 1 struggled with dyslexia at first. This original struggle comes with primary educational difficulties associated with dyslexia that can hinder performance throughout an individual’s time in school. However, because Participant 1 had a father who was impatient with her difficulties, she experienced secondary struggles associated with dyslexia, which also influenced her overall life experiences. These secondary struggles are not directly influenced by the genetic aspect of dyslexia. Instead, these secondary struggles are a byproduct of how the family unit interacts with the primary difficulties associated with dyslexia. Participant 1 reported feeling worthless, alone, afraid, and having high levels of anxiety.

Furthermore, these feelings carried over into a marriage that ended in divorce. Participant 1 shared, “My ex started being emotionally and mentally abusive when he refused to break information down, it got so bad to a point that he divorced me because he did not want to deal with it.” Her initial struggle with dyslexia influenced the way those closest to her (e.g., her father and ex-husband) treated her. Those experiences with her father and later ex-husband were the catalyst for lifelong experiences of feeling ostracized and alone.

In another example, Participant 5 reported feelings of frustration and anger because of his inability to explain his struggle with dyslexia. Participant 5 elaborated, “I think inwardly I was frustrated at myself and felt like a failure but outwardly I was angry with everyone else.” He identified this need to prove himself, and when his mother would intervene to help, he reported feeling as though that was an affirmation of his failure. Furthermore, Participant 5 reported feeling jealous of his mother’s dedication to her business. He explained,

I think another big impact was that my mother worked all the time, trying to run the business. Now that I'm older I can see why but as a child that was traumatic not having her around all the time.

Participant 5 further elaborated,

When she did try to connect through dyslexia, I think that was painful for me.

‘You are not here all the time and now that you are, I'm already having trouble in school and I don't feel like you're supporting me, so it's hard for me to connect with you.’

Participant 5 indicated that he understands his mother’s decisions now, but as a child, he felt as though she was choosing her work over him.

From an existential perspective, Participant 5 reported feeling hurt by his mother’s dedication to work, and, in turn, he internalized his struggle with dyslexia. Furthermore, he indicated that these experiences led to feelings of anger towards his mother whenever she tried to help and feelings of failure when he struggled on his own.

In the next example, Participant 6 stated, “My mom hated doing spelling with me. That's where I really struggled with coming home and doing homework. I felt like it was something that she didn't want to do because she was angry with me.” Participant 6 identified that her original feelings about her mother were misplaced but that affected their relationship as a child. Participant 6 explained, “It felt like I was being neglected or ignored.” She also claimed, “I was very much in the demographic of, ‘oh, she's just not trying hard enough.’” Later, she recognized that her mother did not understand how dyslexia affected learning and those perceptions influenced frustrations and a misconstrued label of being lazy. From an existential perspective, her feelings manifested into fear. Participant 6 asserted, “It was scary and frustrating because I wasn't able to articulate myself. I wasn't able to explain why I didn't remember or why I couldn't understand.” She indicated that this experience of disconnect came from three groups of people, her mother, teachers, and peers, which made her feel alone. Furthermore, she reported feeling helpless because no one was able to understand her struggle or help her at that time in her life.

In the final example, Participant 7 indicated that her family was her biggest supporter, but she also felt a disconnect between them and her. She explained, “They don't understand why I get frustrated or why I struggle with certain things. It's not their fault that they're uneducated, but I don't necessarily think anyone in my family has tried to learn about dyslexia.” She also elaborated,

I think they know enough to understand it's more than just my reading and writing ability, but they don't choose to know anything more than that. Yeah, I think there's definitely a disconnect because of that, they don't fully understand.

Participant 7 indicated that her family never makes her feel bad. However, because they are unwilling to understand dyslexia more fully (i.e., specifically her struggle with it), she reports a limitation to their ability to connect as a family. From an existential perspective, Participant 7 indicated that she wanted to be understood by the people closest to her. Moreover, because of that disconnect, she often felt alone, despite having a supportive family. Participants 2, 3, and 4 did not report feelings of disconnect from their family.

Feeling Inferior. Four out of seven participants reported feeling inferior in conjunction with dyslexia and family. In the first example, Participant 1 identified that she felt inferior to her father and her ex-husband. Both would make belittling comments because of their annoyance over her slower comprehension speeds. Participant 1 stated, “Both my father and ex-husband would make statements like: ‘why are you like this? When are you going to get over yourself and learn?’” Furthermore, Participant 1 identified that her ex-husband left her because of her constant struggle with dyslexia. She elaborated that, “They were unable to connect on an intellectual level. He was always having to explain everything to me and over time it frustrated him.” She indicated that her ex-husband’s frustration turned into anger and that is when the emotional and mental abuse started. Participant 1 asserted, “Let’s just say my self-esteem was very low.”

In the next example, Participant 5 explained a relational dynamic between him and his brother. He claimed,

I definitely have it the worst of all my siblings. I also compared myself to my brother because we were similar in so many regards. So, when it came to education, I felt like I needed to be as good as him, but I was not. That belief made me feel like a failure.

Moreover, Participant 5 reported that the need to compare and the feeling of inferiority were perpetuated by his mother's strong emphasis on education. Furthermore, Participant 5 addressed being dyslexic with a mother who knows a lot about dyslexia. He shared,

A pretty specific example, that probably impacts the most memories, is that when my mother found out I had dyslexia she wanted to help. It was very difficult, because she knew a lot about dyslexia, which made me feel vulnerable. I remember multiple times sitting down at the table and just shutting down and crying because I felt like I just wanted to give up.

Participant 5 further indicated that his difficulty with his mother came from his internal perceptions. He further identified that, because she was his mother and she was so informed about issues with dyslexia, he felt vulnerable. Participant 5 asserted, "I felt like I was failing in front of her." He reported that his belief, that he was a failure in front of his mother, caused much anger and frustration. Even doing simple tasks like spelling would cause him to emotionally shut down. Participant 5 shared, "To this day talking about my education and/or classes are topics I do not want to talk about with my mother." He further elaborated,

Obviously, she did not try to hurt me, and my emotional struggles are more on me. However, I do think because I have those memories, of feeling like a failure

in front of her, I tend to put my walls back up when she wants to talk about education and/or classes.

In the next example, Participant 6 reported feeling alone in her own home because she was so different from her mother and siblings. Participant 6 explained, “There was a lot of jealousy towards my siblings because I saw how easy school was for them. They did not have to spend hours working on one task or have teachers explain things to them.” Furthermore, Participant 6 reported that her mother would make comments about her learning approach. Participant 6 claimed that her mother would make comments like, “I don't get it! Why are you like this? Why don't you just write it down?” Participant 6 asserted that, “It really made me feel, for the longest time, like I was not competent, and I was incapable of learning.” She reported that there was no one to relate to, talk to, or explain. Due to this feeling of being alone, she reported having many breakdowns throughout her years in school.

In the last example, Participant 7 explained how she felt disconnected with school in conjunction with her family. She stated,

I kind of knew what was going on and I remember just feeling defeated and, honestly, I took a lot of it personally. It was hard because I have two older brothers and parents who were high achievers in school. So, I always just felt like an idiot and that was hard to be that young and feel that way.

Participant 7 reported that she also felt like a disappointment throughout her school years. From an existential perspective, Participant 7 reported that these feelings of being an idiot and/or being a disappointment did not derive from her family's communication with her.

She indicated that they were supportive and did what they could to provide help for her struggle with dyslexia. She further addressed that her feelings were derived from internal thoughts of her observations of those closest to her in comparison to herself.

Of the four participants, 1 and 6 reported external examples of family members making comments that influenced feelings of insecurity in conjunction with learning. However, Participant 6 indicated her family sought outside help when they could not help her, whereas Participant 1 did not have that outside support. Participants 5 and 7 did not report negative comments from family members. Rather, their perceptions came from their own internal dialogue. Participants 5 and 7 reported that through their own observations of family members, they perceived themselves as inferior, less competent, less intelligent, and/or a disappointment. Participants 2, 3, and 4 did not report feelings of inferiority in conjunction with family.

Regression to Old Feelings. Two out of seven participants identified experiencing regression to old feelings. In the first example, Participant 1 reported having a father who did not understand her struggle with dyslexia. Her father's treatment has had lasting effects on her since of self-worth and trust in other people. In one example, Participant 1 claimed, "I have a hard time trusting men in particular." She identified that her father's treatment of her was a contributing factor to her lack of trust in men. Furthermore, Participant 1 explained that her ex-husband would treat her in the same way her father treated her. Participant 1 elaborated, "My ex-husband would refuse to explain how to do something, during those moments he would be emotionally and mentally abusive. Eventually he divorced me over the frustration."

In the next example, Participant 5 identified that he feels insecure when talking to his mother about school related topics. He elaborated, “I do think because I have memories of that pain of sitting down and feeling like a failure in front of her, my walls come back up when she asks me about school.” Participant 5 also identified feelings triggered by frustration and anger when his mother would share something about him and his dyslexia with another person. Participant 5 shared, “It's like, I still find talking about dyslexia easy but as soon as my mother or my brother say something about dyslexia I shut down.” He further explained,

I think the reason for that is that I compare myself to them and I feel inferior to them sometimes. I think it's very hard for me to talk about my intelligence, education, and dyslexia with my mother and brother on a deep level.

Out of the two participants, Participant 1 identified that her regression to old feelings started with her father’s verbal abuse for not understanding something. Those feelings of low self-value, low intelligence, and low confidence re-emerged while she was married to her ex-husband. Participant 1 reported that her ex-husband would treat her in the same way as her father did as a child. The verbal abuse she experienced from her father and ex-husband were examples of external dynamics that influence internal perceptions. On the other hand, Participant 5 reported having a supportive mother who understood his struggle with dyslexia and was willing to help. However, his internal perceptions and pride would interfere. Participant 5 identified that he compared himself to his mother and brother and often felt inferior, which influenced an avoidance strategy with them. He further identified that any conversation related to education and/or

dyslexia would bring back those old feelings of inferiority. In this example, Participant 5 has identified that much of his experiences with regression have come from his internal perceptions of feeling inferior to his mother and brother. Participants 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7 did not report experiencing regression to old feelings in conjunction with their family environments.

Adapting to the Situation. All seven participants adapted to the situation in conjunction with family and dyslexia. In the first example, Participant 1 identified that the way her father and ex-husband treated her was not her fault. Participant 1 stated,

I think it's been within the last 18 months that I have finally felt like none of that was my fault. It was their fault because they did not take the time or have the wanting or the desire to understand where I was coming from.

In her reflection on how dyslexia had influenced her life, Participant 1 indicated that she chose to focus on the positive moments of her educational, work, family, and social life. She explained, "I guess it has been a choice on how I want to react to my situations, I know I have dyslexia, but just because I have dyslexia does not mean that I have to make it hard on myself." After her divorce, she reported feeling disconnected with the group of people she was with and sought a solution. She chose to move to a completely different community without a connection to anyone. Participant 1 shared, "I felt that if I could get a fresh start, I could find out who I really was and what I was capable of. I could make a better group of friends." Participant 1 elaborated, "I wanted to feel like I belong in the world again! I mean because he left me, he broke up my marriage and family." In both examples, Participant 1 chose to make a personal change. These changes happened

around the same time, which was 18 months ago. The first change was in her thought process: Rather than dwelling on the negative, she chose to focus on the positive. The second change was her environment: She needed to get away from the relationships that caused the emotional harm.

In the next example, Participant 2 indicated that her ability to adapt started with her parents' recognition of dyslexia. Initially, her mother struggled to encourage Participant 2 to read. Participant 2 claimed, "We would both end up on the floor crying." However, her mother recognized that her husband was dyslexic, and there was a higher chance that her daughter would be too. This recognition influenced immediate action to figure out her daughter's learning difficulty. Participant 2 asserted, "My mother was like, 'If you think she has dyslexia, we're getting her tested, because I am not doing this anymore.'" Participant 2 further indicated that she was an only child, so her parents invested time in her. Participant 2 also identified having a teacher that would teach her father tricks to help her. Participant 2 elaborated, "They worked really hard at getting me the help I needed. They did everything they could to make sure I had a system in place." She further identified that her father knew it would be a lifelong struggle, so he wanted to give her as many tools as necessary to help her succeed. Participant 2 stated, "The sooner you have the tools, the faster you get and the more... I don't want to say, you can hide it better, but it kind of feels like that!"

From an existential perspective, Participant 2 expressed having a supportive family who devoted much time to her struggle with dyslexia. The support she has had throughout her life has helped her to cope with dyslexia. However, Participant 2

identified her struggle with dyslexia as something negative and she has a desire to hide it from everyone else. Her coping mechanism appears to be geared around hiding her struggle with dyslexia rather than embracing the differences.

In the next example, Participant 3 identified that she was able to figure out adaptive strategies early because of her mother. She shared, “It helps that I was diagnosed when I was very young, because my mom figured out my older brother had it. So, she was able to get me tested and diagnosed very early.” Furthermore, Participant 3 elaborated,

My mom was a teacher at the school I went to, so she was able to talk to my teachers and tell them what was going on. She was a wonderful advocate for me, which most kids did not have.

Participant 3 also identified that her mother was a special education teacher and knew strategies to help her break down words to learn to spell and read. Likewise, Participant 4 reported having a mother who helped him adapt throughout his life. He claimed, “My mom always pushed me to read. We did not have much TV time. Her big thing was reading, so that is how I entertained myself.” Participant 4 further identified that his mother created an environment that influenced reading repetition. He asserted, “Because she made me read, that practice has allowed me to adapt into society quite well.”

Participant 4 also indicated that Microsoft helped, when it came to spelling correctly. He stated, “Once I really started writing, the digital age (as I call it) came into existence and helped more than anything.”

From an existential perspective, Participants 3 and 4 had a mother who laid the foundation to their ability to adapt. Once they developed their reading abilities (which came early), both were able to navigate their educational struggles more efficiently. Furthermore, Participants 3 and 4 grew up in a hands-on style family dynamic. Their fathers were farmers and their mothers were teachers. Both parental perspectives were influential in their decisions for work later and their acceptance of being dyslexic. Both Participants 3 and 4 have made the statement, “This is how God made me.” They did not appear (through conversation) to dwell on their weaknesses, rather they focused on their strengths and found work environments that accommodated those strengths.

In the next example, Participant 5 reported living in the shadow of his mother and brother, which caused internal turmoil. He stated, “Going away to college really helped me because I did not need to compare myself to my brother or mother. I did my own thing and was able to stand out in my own way.” Before college, Participant 5 reported feeling less intelligent, less charismatic, and/or less capable than his brother and mother. Due to these internal feelings of being less than, he put up walls to protect his ego. Participant 5 asserted, “I think forcing myself to go to a college, 12 hours away, really helped me get out of my comfort zone.” He further elaborated, “I had this realization the other night, if my family could see how I am in college, I am a completely different person. I am much more outgoing, more outspoken, and people gravitate towards me.” He has identified that these are the traits he admired in his mother and brother, which he thought he lacked. Furthermore, Participant 5 explained that going away to college has relieved him of the pressures of his mother and brother watching him. He shared, “I feel

like there is a certain expectation to be met when I am at home; even though those expectations have never been expressed.” Participant 5 further explained an epiphany he had recently, he asserted,

I feel like in high school and in my home life, I built these walls up to keep myself safe and comfortable because I felt inferior. When I went to college, I broke a lot of those walls down. For example: I can be the life of the party, I have fun, I have confidence. However, when I come back home, I feel like I have to put those walls back up because I guess there's this stigma.

Participant 5 has reported that this experience of “putting his walls back up” has lessened over the years. Participant 5 shared,

I would definitely say I am not where I need to be but over the years, I've been able to be more comfortable with who I am around family. I feel less judged and feel just like they're my family members and that is all they need to be. So, yeah, it has been a process!

In the next example, Participant 6 identified having a dependency on other people. She claimed, “I feel like I became really reliant on parents and teachers, making sure they were there to ask questions and help me solve problems.” She reported not realizing how dependent she was on others, but it made her feel safe. Participant 6 reported that her dependence on others was hard to give up. However, she then realized her fear of independence and failure and felt it was important to try. Therefore, she began to rely more on her own ability to solve problems rather than others. Participant 6 asserted,

“That was a big transition, just being able to form my own independence and my own opinions. That is something that I’m still kind of learning to do now, talk for myself.”

In the final example, Participant 7 identified her mother’s supportive role in helping her develop through the years. She explained, “With my mother directly, I think she did a good job of presenting me with important insights. She showed me examples of people who were like me and were able to accomplish many things.” Participant 7 also shared,

The different impacts in my life definitely made it easier for me to not have a super negative attitude. Based on the way my education started, it would have been very easy for me to not want to continue in education.

Overall, six out of seven participants had parents who were supportive and sought possible solutions to help their children adapt with dyslexia. Participant 1 was the only participant who reported having non-supportive parents in conjunction with her struggle with dyslexia. She further indicated that her struggle with dyslexia and the way her parents treated her had a perpetual influence on her lived experiences relating to QOL. Throughout her life, Participant 1 reported feeling dumb, insecure, helpless, depressed, anger, embarrassed, and alone. Furthermore, she identified having high levels of anxiety, stress, low self-esteem, and low confidence. However, Participant 1 also indicated using adaptive strategies, despite her struggle with dyslexia. In connection to family, she has adapted by separating herself from that environment. Participant 1 stated, “I moved away from my family to get a fresh start. I wanted to find out who I really am and what I am capable of.”

The other six participants did have varying degrees of support from their parents. The types of support fell into three categories: in-school support, family support, and learning-center support. All types of support were influenced and initiated by the parents. Participant 2 was an only child, and her parents spent a significant amount of time finding solutions within the school system for her struggle with dyslexia. Participant 2 identified that her parents took every step they could, within the school system, to find solutions for their daughter. She indicated that the help she received was beneficial in finding solutions to her immediate struggles with dyslexia. However, she reported that her help did not address the underlying issues of dyslexia. Participant 2 indicated that she learned tricks that allowed her to hide her struggle with dyslexia. Participant 2 asserted, “The sooner you have the tools, the faster you get and the more, I don't want to say you can hide it better, but it kind of feels like that!”

Participants 3 and 4 had a parent who was a teacher and provided strong educational support at home. This help was two-fold: First, their mothers helped in the education process to overcome issues related to dyslexia. This was accomplished by creating a home environment where reading was important. Their mothers also taught them strategies to overcome their struggles with dyslexia. Second, Participants 3 and 4 lived in Christian homes where God was the foundation of their thoughts. Both Participants 3 and 4 stated, “This is how God made me.” Both indicated that they did not dwell on what they were not. Rather, they chose to adapt by focusing their attention on activities they were good at.

Participant 5 had a mother who was well-educated in topics related to dyslexia. However, Participant 5 reported that his own pride and insecurity stopped him from seeking help from his mother. Participant 5 identified that his mother would try to help, but he would not let her. Participant 5 identified that he felt inferior to his mother and brother and did not want to show that part of himself to them. Instead, his adaptive strategy was to put up an emotional barrier to hide any issue he had related to education from his mother.

Finally, Participants 6 and 7 had parents who were willing to find help outside of the home and school environment. Participants 6 and 7 both reported that the school system did not know how to deal with their issues related to dyslexia, so their parents sought outside help. Both participants spent years in a learning center that specifically addressed issues related to dyslexia. Because of this added investigation brought on by both sets of parents, Participants 6 and 7 have a well-rounded approach when adapting to issues related to dyslexia. Both have learned to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of their struggle with dyslexia. Furthermore, Participants 6 and 7 have indicated an openness to their struggle with dyslexia, which they use to seeking help to overcome difficult tasks. Likewise, because of their openness to seek help, Participants 6 and 7 are not afraid to take on tasks that are out of their comfort zone.

Objective Perspective

The objective perspective addressed QOL experiences based on socioeconomic standards of what a good QOL represents. This perspective was designed to explore the socioeconomic standards related to family environments. Some objective indicators that

were explored were financial, mother-father relations, parent-child relations, sibling relations, and family support. These areas will be explored within each of the five sub-themes (i.e., lifelong struggles, feeling disconnected, feeling inferior, regression to old feelings, and adapting to the situation).

Lifelong Struggles. Out of seven participants, two reported experiencing lifelong struggles in conjunction with family and objective indicators. Participant 1 reported that despite her father's awareness of her struggle with dyslexia, he treated her poorly. Participant 1 identified that she was the only child, out of five, that had dyslexia, and there was a distinct way her father treated her over the other siblings. Furthermore, Participant 1 claimed, "My mother didn't really say much because she was afraid of my father." These experiences are objective indicators because they were experienced rather than perceived. Participant 1's father distinctively treated her differently than her siblings. This experience is known and realized by others in the family, which makes it an objective indicator. Likewise, Participant 1's mother distanced herself from her husband's anger. Her mother did not interfere with the emotional and mental abuse handed down by her father. The interpretation of fear is subjective, but the distancing that coexists with fear is objective. The distancing can be seen and realized by others; therefore, it becomes objective. Participant 1 reported that the lifelong struggles that came from these experiences were lack of trust (especially in men), fear, feeling worthless, low self-esteem, high anxiety, high stress, anger, depression, and feeling dumb.

In the next example, Participant 5 identified that his mother emphasized education, social skills, and intelligence so much that it permeated the home environment. Participant 5 asserted,

My mom is very big on being smart and having social skills, because of that my brother took that to another level. My brother's social nature and intellectual talents influenced a personal belief that, 'if I can't socialize with people and prove that I am smart, then what is the point?'

Participant 5 elaborated, "I still deal with that insecurity, especially when it comes to meeting new people." In this example, Participant 5 reported feeling insecure about his own intelligence and social capabilities. These feelings are not objective; rather, they are subjective and realized internally by the participant. However, these feelings are the byproduct of a family structure that emphasized intelligence and social ability. That emphasis by Participant 5's mother is objective and was realized by other siblings in the family. Moreover, Participant 5 interpreted that emphasis on needing high intelligence and social ability as an unattainable pursuit, which influenced feelings of insecurity, anger, and frustration.

From the two examples, Participants 1 and 5 experienced negative subjective perceptions of themselves, which derived from their family dynamics. However, Participant 1 experienced overtly negative treatment by her father because of her struggle with dyslexia, whereas Participant 5 experienced a strong emphasis on developing intelligence and social abilities, which he felt insecure about. Participant 5's experience was internally perceived because of the high standards set by his mother. Given a

different scenario or person, the internal perceptions would likely be interpreted differently. The objective indicators in both examples are the negative treatment passed down by Participant 1's father and the high expectations set by Participant 5's mother. Participants 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7 did not indicate having lifelong struggles in association with family and objective indicators.

Feeling Disconnected. Five out of seven participants reported feeling disconnected from their family in conjunction with dyslexia. In the first example, Participant 1 stated, "My dad was very impatient with me. There was a lot of yelling and name calling." Furthermore, Participant 1 reported that her ex-husband treated her in a similar way. This treatment continued until he divorced her over her difficulties learning new information. In both scenarios, Participant 1 reported feeling worthless. With her father, she reported many nights where she cried herself to sleep. Participant 1 stated, "There were so many nights that I cried myself to sleep thinking, 'Why am I even in school?'" Participant 1 had several objective indicators related to dyslexia and her feeling disconnected. First, her father and ex-husband repeatedly lacked patience for her struggle with dyslexia. This lack of patients led to yelling and name calling, which happened throughout her life. Furthermore, her ex-husband eventually divorced her over her struggles with dyslexia.

In the next example, Participant 2 reported having an initial struggle with her mother over reading assignments at home. Participant 2 claimed, "I remember my mother holding me down as I screamed and cried, while she tried to get me to read. My mother was also frustrated, thinking, 'It's not fair to have her do this.'" This experience came

after Participant 2 was held back in school. The teacher she had required her to read more at home, which created tension and frustration between Participant 2 and her mother. Furthermore, Participant 2 reported being mis-labeled by her teacher and her mother as being lazy and/or rebellious. This early objective experience of being called lazy and/or rebellious, along with being held back in school and forced to read more, influenced further emotional turmoil in correlation to dyslexia.

In the next example, Participant 5 identified having an issue with his mother talking about his successes and/or struggles with dyslexia to others. Participant 5 asserted, “Whenever my mother brought up dyslexia in front of other people, I would become uncomfortable. At least, when it has to do with me.” Participant 5 further indicated that he felt uncomfortable because dyslexia made him feel vulnerable, and when information was shared without his permission, he would become frustrated. Another objective factor, related to dyslexia, that had an influence on participant 5’s perceptions was when his mother remarried. Participant 5 shared, “I think that had a prolific impact on me. I think part of it had to do with dyslexia and not being understood. Moreover, I was unable to express it.” Participant 5 further elaborated,

My stepfather, although he is a good guy, does not express his emotions very well, which caused us to butt heads. I think we had very different ways of looking at life, so that was a really hard transition. My own insecurities did not help either. Participant 5 shared another objective factor that had an emotional influence on his struggle with dyslexia. His mother started a business, which made her very busy, leaving little time to help at home. Participant 5 claimed, “I think another big impact was that my

mother worked all the time. So, when she did try to connect through dyslexia, that was painful for me.” He further indicated that he felt unsupported in his struggle with dyslexia. When his mother would try to connect with him, it was after he showed clear signs of struggle in school. Participant 5 asserted, “You are not here all the time and now that you are, I'm having trouble in school and I do not feel like you are supporting me, so it's hard for me to connect with you.” Participant 5 reported that this experience caused feelings of frustration and anger toward his mother. Participant 5 stated,

Now that I am older and more mentally secure, I can say that my mother's dedication to work makes sense to me, but as a child it made no sense. I think I still have a lot of hurt from that experience. The feeling of, 'she's choosing work over me.'

Overall, Participant 5 reported three objective indicators that were linked with dyslexia. The first was his mother's sharing of his personal struggles and successes related to dyslexia with others. The second was the introduction of his stepfather, who did not understand Participant 5's struggle with dyslexia. The third example was his mother's dedication to her work and how that made Participant 5 feel alone in his struggle with dyslexia. In general, these three objective indicators created an environment where Participant 5 reported feelings of jealousy, frustration, anger, and aloneness in his struggle. Furthermore, Participant 5 identified that he turned his emotions inward, closing the uncomfortable emotions off from the rest of the family. Finally, Participant 5 also reported that he envied the successes of his mother and brother and devalued his own

abilities. The devaluing of his own abilities influenced his low confidence and continual insecurities that he still feels today.

In the next example, Participant 6 explained, “My parents went through a really bad divorce when I was seven, which caused a lot of stress in school and at home.” She reported that dyslexia caused a disconnect in her school environment, but when her parents divorced, it created a disconnect at home too. Participant 6 reported that her father also had dyslexia and she related well with him, but after the divorce, he was never around. Furthermore, Participant 6 indicated that her mother did not understand how she learned new information, which caused a misinterpretation of feelings. In one example, Participant 6 elaborated,

My mom hated doing spelling practice with me. That's where I really struggled with coming home and doing homework. I felt like she was always angry with me. This experience affected our relationship when I was a child. It felt like I was being neglected or ignored.

Furthermore, Participant 6 reported being mislabeled often by her mother. Participant 6 explained, “I was very much in the demographic of, ‘She's just not trying hard enough.’” Participant 6 later realized that the tension between her and her mother was due to a lack of understanding of how dyslexia influenced learning patterns. Participant 6 asserted, “I don't even think my mother had a good enough understanding to be able to explain it to me more than just a few statements about learning differently.” Overall, the objective indicators from Participant 6’s experiences were her parents’ divorce and being mislabeled by her mother. Participant 6 indicated that these objective indicators were the

preliminary experiences that later morphed into feeling alone, neglected, and misunderstood. Furthermore, feeling alone, neglected, and misunderstood influenced internal thoughts of self-doubt, jealousy, anger, and a host of other feelings related to self-value.

In the last example, Participant 7 reported that her family was her biggest supporter growing up; however, there was still a disconnect between them. Participant 7 stated, “They never understood why I got frustrated or why I struggled with certain things. It is not their fault that they were uneducated about dyslexia, but I don't think anyone in my family tried to learn more.” Furthermore, Participant 7 shared,

I think they know enough to understand that my experience with dyslexia is more than just my reading and writing ability. But because they have not chosen to learn more there has definitely been a disconnect between me and them.

Overall, the objective indicator in Participant 7's experience is related to her parents' choice to seek help for her but not to learn about her struggle with her. Participant 7 reported spending many years with a tutor who specialized in dyslexia. During those years, she learned much about her own struggle with dyslexia and found strategies to navigate her difficulties. Her parents, on the other hand, chose to take a back seat in her education, delegating the majority of the work to the tutor. Because of this choice by her parents, Participant 7 expressed feelings of disconnect from her parents. Participants 3 and 4 did not report feeling disconnected from their parents in conjunction with dyslexia.

Feeling Inferior. Three out of seven participants reported having objective indicators in conjunction with feelings of inferiority due to dyslexia. In the first example,

Participant 1 felt inferior to her father and husband. This feeling of inferiority came from their treatment of her because of her dyslexia. Both would belittle her because of their annoyance with trying to teach her something new. Participant 1 asserted, both her father and husband would give many lectures stating, “Why are you like this? When are you going to get over yourself and learn?” Participant 1 further identified that, in part, her husband left her because of her constant struggle with dyslexia. They were unable to connect on an intellectual level. He was always having to explain everything to her, and, over time, it frustrated him. The objective indicators in Participant 1’s experience are the verbal abuse and the divorce. Participant 1 reported that the verbal abuse and divorce influenced feelings of inferiority.

In the next example, Participant 5 reported experiencing internal thoughts of inferiority. However, on the surface, his family did not directly display objective reasons for him to feel inferior. Instead, he based his self-perception on his own interpretations of his observations of his family. For example, Participant 5 reported having similarities to his brother, yet his brother performed better in school. Therefore, he believed that if he could not perform at the same level, then he was inferior and he was a failure. The only objective indicator in the above example is the performance output. Participant 5 created his own interpretation of adequate performance, which influenced his negative self-perception. Participant 5 explained, “I compared myself to my brother feeling like I needed to be as good as him, since I was not, I felt like a failure.”

Participant 5 also indicated feeling inferior in front of his stepfather in a work scenario. Participant 5 elaborated, “There was a lot of frustration working for my stepdad.

That frustration coupled with the fact that I was not able to process well, created tension between me and him.” Participant 5 further explained that when his stepfather would ask him to move a cart to a specific location, he would become confused, and his stepfather would correct him. Participant 5 stated, “When he corrected me, he did it in an aggressive way where I felt stupid. Furthermore, from an internal perspective I felt stupid for not being able to do the simple task.” In this experience, the objective indicators are his stepfather’s response and his ability to perform the task. Because he was unable to perform a simple task, internally, he reported feeling stupid and inferior. Furthermore, his stepfather used impatient language, which reinforced feelings of being stupid and inferior. In Participant 5’s final example, he shared,

I got a 35 on the reading section of the ACT, my mother liked to point out that fact in front of other people. She would say something like, ‘My son has dyslexia but he did so well on the reading section of his ACTs.’ Even though she praised my accomplishments to others, my own insecurity prevented me from being able to accept it because of my own shame associated with dyslexia and learning.

In this example, the objective portions are the high ACT score and the verbal recognition of that score by his mother to others. However, internally, Participant 5 chose to de-value his accomplishments and hold onto the belief that he is not worthy or not intelligent. Participant 5 claimed, “I am lackluster, when it comes to education, compared to my mother and brother.” Participant 5 further indicated that he has held onto an unhealthy view of what it means to be smart. Participant 5 asserted,

I think my mother glorified education so much that my brother started saying, 'Well this is the only thing that matters.' Therefore, I took on the belief that if intelligence is the only thing that matters, and my brother is so much smarter than me then I must be inferior.

Participant 5 further explained, "I also had dyslexia which prohibited my ability to perform. I think those internal thoughts influenced my insecurities. I still feel those insecurities today."

In the last example, Participant 6 identified where feelings of jealousy of her siblings came from. Participant 6 stated,

There was a lot of jealousy on my end because I saw how easy school was for my siblings. They did not have to spend hours working on one thing or have teachers explain things to them, but I did.

Furthermore, Participant 6 identified that her family were high achievers. Participant 6 stated, "I always just felt like an idiot and a disappointment. I felt that way throughout school." In Participant 6's example, the objective indicators were time spent on an activity and the need for outside help. Through her observations of family and the comparison of those observations to herself, she developed a belief that she was an idiot and a disappointment. Furthermore, this belief evolved with her throughout her years of school. Participants 2, 3, 4, and 7 did not report examples of objective indicators in conjunction with family and dyslexia.

Regression to Old Feelings. One out of seven participants reported objective indicators related to regression to old feelings. Participant 1 identified her father's

treatment of her as a contributing factor to her lack of trust in men. Furthermore, her ex-husband treated her in a similar way, which brought up past emotional trauma from her father. Participant 1 stated, "Let's just say it goes back to being able to trust a man. My ex-husband was emotionally and mentally abusive because I had a hard time learning new information." Participant 1 earlier stated that her father would belittle her because of her educational struggles. Her ex-husband's emotional and mental abuse eventually led to their divorce. The two objective indicators in Participant 1's experiences are the emotional and mental abuse and the divorce. Participant 1 identified that both objective indicators are tied to her struggle with dyslexia. Participant 1 explained that her ex-husband would get tired of explaining how to do something and blow up on her. Participant 1 stated, "He would refuse to help, eventually the mental and emotional abuse would start. It got so bad at one point he divorced me because he did not want to deal with it anymore." Participants 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 did not report objective indicators related to regression to old feelings.

Adapting to the Situation. All seven participants reported objective indicators in conjunction with dyslexia and adapting to the situation. In the first example, Participant 1 reported that her struggle with dyslexia was not her fault. She further emphasized that her father and ex-husband did not take the time to understand her struggles. Participant 1 stated, "Just because I have dyslexia, does not mean that I have to make it hard on myself." The objective decision she made to adapt to her situation was to distance herself from her father and ex-husband. Moreover, she has chosen to remain cautious over whom she allows to be a part of her life. She reported that after her divorce, she moved to a

different community without any ties to her past. Participant 1 elaborated, “I felt that if I could get a fresh start, I could find out who I really am and what I was capable of. I could start a new and better group of friends.”

In the next example, Participant 2 indicated that she was an only child and her parents used all their resources to help her with dyslexia. Participant 2 claimed, “My father saw my struggle and thought she might have dyslexia. I went to see a specialist and from that point forward my parents worked hard to make sure I had a system in place.” She further explained, “My parents made sure I had the tools I needed to work around my struggle with dyslexia.” In Participant 2’s example, the objective indicators were her parents’ use of resources to help her navigate dyslexia and their early recognition of having dyslexia.

In the next example, Participant 3 shared,

My mother was a teacher at the school I went to, so she was able to talk to my teachers and tell them what was going on. She was a wonderful advocate for me, which most kids did not have.

Furthermore, Participant 3 explained, “My mother was also a special education teacher, so she knew the tips and tricks to help me figure out spelling and reading.” The objective indicators in Participant 3’s experiences are her mother’s connections in the school system and her background in education.

Participant 4 identified that his mother helped him significantly throughout his life. He elaborated,

My mother pushed us to read as a way to entertain ourselves. We did not have much TV time. Her big focus was on learning to read. So, my mother used repetition as a tool to develop my reading ability and to work past my struggle with dyslexia.

The objective indicator in Participant 4's example was his mother's use of resources to develop his reading ability. Furthermore, Participant 4 identified that his mother worked with him as a child to develop his understanding of reading concepts. He reported that the early help his mother provided played a significant role in how he worked around his struggle with dyslexia.

In the next example, Participant 5 identified that going to college was an important part of breaking down his emotional barriers. Participant 5 elaborated,

A pivotal moment for me was going to college. The new environment forced me out of my comfort zone and allowed me to have new experiences. Most importantly, I think college really lessened my feelings of inferiority towards my brother and mother.

Furthermore, he stated, "I have been able to be more comfortable with who I am around my family." The objective indicator in Participant 5's experience was going to college. Participant 5 indicated that in college, he was able to see that being intelligent did not have to follow the same format that his family modelled. Instead, he was free to explore where his own personal talents were and could develop those. This, in turn, helped him to develop confidence in himself and broadened his understanding of what is important. Moreover, he was able to connect with his family in a more positive way.

In the next example, Participant 6 recognized how much she depended on people to help her resolve difficult tasks related to dyslexia. Participant 6 explained, “I feel like I became reliant on parents and/or teachers, making sure they were there to answer my questions.” However, Participant 6 indicated that in college, she was left to her own resources to figure out a solution. Her college experience influenced a transition that she found difficult. Participant 6 elaborated, “Relying on my own resources was a big transition, just being able to form my own thoughts and opinions was challenging. That is something I am still learning to do now, talk for myself.” Participant 6 identified that in the past, “It was always my family who talked for me.” The objective indicator in Participant 6’s experience was that in college, she recognized that she could not always bring her family or others with her. Therefore, she needed to learn to think for herself.

In the final example, Participant 7 identified two objective indicators related to adapting to her situation and family. First, Participant 7 indicated that her mother was quite supportive throughout her years at home. Participant 7 explained, “My mother did a good job of presenting me with information about others who struggled like me and were able to be successful despite.” Second, Participant 7 identified that her parents used their financial resources to find an intervention to help her catch up in school. Participant 7 stated,

I know that the different impacts in my life made it easier for me to not be negative about having dyslexia. Because I feel like with how my education started, it would have been easy to not want to further educate myself.

In conclusion, several insights can be drawn from family influence in conjunction with struggles with dyslexia and QOL experiences. First, whether or not the parent(s) choose to help their child with dyslexia has long-term consequences for QOL experiences. Second, the parent(s)' decision to support their child with dyslexia has long-term implications on QOL experiences. Third, internal self-perceptions related to family and how one chooses to direct those perceptions, as associated with their struggle with dyslexia, can have long-term implications on QOL experiences. Lastly, a person's struggle with dyslexia has far-reaching implications that go beyond the previously believed notion that dyslexia is a learning disability primarily experienced in the education system.

Environment 4: Social

The social environment is an integral part of a person's sense of value, self-worth, and overall QOL. A healthy social system provides support, encouragement, and guidance when faced with everyday challenges. However, isolation from a healthy social system can lead to low self-esteem, frustration, depression, anger, and feeling alone. A person's ability to connect with others plays an integral role in their QOL experience. Therefore, how an individual with dyslexia learns to accept their differences and connect with others has long-term ramifications for their QOL experience. More specifically, three perspectives were explored (i.e., subjective, existential, and objective) to more fully understand how dyslexia and social connection shape each participant's QOL experiences.

Subjective Perspective

The subjective perspective addressed QOL experiences from each participant's own belief in how good their life is. This perspective did not seek to provide any insight into QOL experiences beyond what had been told by the participant. The focus was on their own perceptions, from past and present experiences, and how they feel now about their QOL experiences. In this section, I explored the subjective perspective of QOL experiences within each participant's social environment.

Lifelong struggles. Three out of seven participants reported lifelong struggles in conjunction with their social environment and dyslexia. In the first example, Participant 2 explained, "One problem I have is trying to date with a dating app because it is message based and my ability to spell is awful." She further elaborated, "I know a lot of times, if I misspell a word or use a word wrong, the person on the other end thinks I am illiterate, and they do not want to talk anymore."

In the next example, Participant 5 reported feeling insecure when meeting new people, which he indicated stemmed back to his childhood experiences related to education, family, and dyslexia. Participant 5 shared,

I met one of my friends' parents the other day. They were visiting her in college, and she wanted me to meet them, so I met her parents and felt like I needed to prove myself to her father. Previously, my friend told me how smart her father was, which influenced a need to prove that I was smart too.

Participant 5 reported that when he interacted with other parents or leadership figures in his life, he would have an internal desire to prove that he was intellectually and socially

smart. He indicated that, growing up in his household, those qualities were what mattered. Therefore, he identified that whenever he met someone for the first time, he wanted to impart a message that he was intelligent and socially smart. Participant 5 elaborated, "If I cannot socialize with people and prove that I am smart, then what is the point?" Likewise, Participant 5 explained, "I still deal with the insecurities of feeling inadequate or less than. Not so much on a daily basis, not with my friends, but meeting new people."

In the final example, Participant 7 asserted, "Yeah, dyslexia definitely interferes with my social life, especially over text or emails." Participant 7 indicated that she often felt embarrassed when she misspelled a word in front of a friend or someone she had socially interacted with.

Overall, all three participants have had lifelong struggles in social settings. However, Participants 2 and 7 only seemed to struggle when they needed to use a written form of communication. Participant 5 seemed to have internal struggles of feeling insecure in conjunction with socializing with new people. Those insecurities stemmed from his lifelong struggle with dyslexia, as well as his internal perceptions of what is important. Participants 1, 3, 4, and 6 did not report lifelong struggles with dyslexia in conjunction with their social environments.

Feeling disconnected. Four out of seven participants reported feeling disconnected because of dyslexia in their social environment. In the first example, Participant 1 explained a scenario on the soccer field where a friend of hers yelled at her to perform more aggressively. Participant 1 reported that due to her past experiences of

her father yelling at her for school and learning related problems, she has become hypersensitive to any form of yelling. The example of her friend yelling at her on the soccer field is not directly associated to issues with dyslexia. However, the initial experience of her father yelling at her over learning issues is directly connected to dyslexia. Her disconnected experience with her friend is a byproduct of her earlier experiences related to family, school, and dyslexia. Participant 1 stated, "I explained to my friend that when you yell at me, I shut down because it is what my father used to do over my difficulties learning in school."

In the next example, Participant 2 reported that she avoided the use of text messaging until college to protect her image. Participant 2 asserted,

I did not have texting until college because I was embarrassed about having to spell out what I wanted to say. Furthermore, I would rather have a phone conversation for three hours rather than text someone and have to rely on my spelling abilities to get across what I want to say.

Participant 2 further identified issues with spelling and dating apps. She stated,

It always came across that I am being distant in our first talk and not actually fully invested in the conversation. So, the conversation always dies. This is because I do not know what to say or how to spell what I want to say.

Participant 2 reported that her inability to spell creates tension between her and the person she is talking to, which makes her feel disconnected initially. Participant 2 further identified that her social insecurities are primarily related to dating apps, texting and eating at a new restaurant where she is unfamiliar with the menu.

In the next example, Participant 3 reported that she feels disconnected when talking on the phone because she relies so much on body language to interpret how a conversation is going. Participant 3 explained, "Talking on the phone makes me anxious because I cannot see the other person's body language." Generally, a person with dyslexia struggles to decipher language-based cues. Therefore, an individual with dyslexia has a natural tendency to seek out body language cues to interpret how the interaction is being perceived. Participant 3 pointed this issue out as an insecurity and anxiety, which is the byproduct of this disconnected feeling.

In the final example, Participant 7 stated, "I struggled socially, because I saw that I was not the same as everyone, to which I internalized and did not build a good social foundation. Furthermore, my initial experience in grade school made me feel ostracized." Participant 7 indicated that in grade school she was often pulled out of her normal class for specialized help. Participant 7 reported that her experience influenced other children to make comments like, "You're just one of the dumb ones." Participant 7 further claimed, "That was hard to hear." Currently, participant 7 reported that she has few friends. Participant 7 elaborated, "I don't really have a group of friends. I have core friends that I'm really close with within different groups." Participant 7 further indicated that she feels disconnected from most people because of their differences in perception and overall life experiences.

Overall, the four participants who felt disconnected because of dyslexia in their social environments revealed a few insights. First, Participant 1 revealed that the feeling of being disconnected is not always directly associated with dyslexia. Instead, her

experience on the soccer field, where her friend yelled at her, was related to her father and his treatment of her as a child. The connection to dyslexia came from her relationship with her father. Both examples are byproducts of her struggle with dyslexia. However, the soccer field example was a second-hand experience. Therefore, the COE experience unfolds like this: Her struggle with dyslexia led her father to yell and belittle her for years. Later in life, she developed a strong distaste for any form of yelling, which originated from her experiences with her father and her struggle with dyslexia.

Participant 1 reported that her four other siblings did not have dyslexia and did not have the same experience with their father. Therefore, I am left to conclude that if Participant 1 did not have dyslexia, she would have had a different interpretation and experience when her friend yelled at her on the soccer field. This example represents a tertiary connection, which are experiences that are not directly connected to dyslexia but stemmed from an experience that can be negatively perceived because of previous similar experiences that are related to dyslexia.

Second, Participants 2 and 3 revealed that different forms of communication can have positive or negative influences on perceptions and life experiences. Both Participants 2 and 3 felt disconnected when they had to use technology to communicate in social settings. Participant 2 reported that texting was a big issue because she was not proficient at spelling. She reported that in the past, people had stopped interacting with her because she appeared distant to them. However, Participant 2 explained that she was afraid of making a spelling error and did not respond due to those fears. Participant 3 reported feeling disconnected from talking on the phone because she is unable to read

body language. Participant 3 identified that she relies heavily on body language to interpret how she is perceived by others. Both examples reveal how having dyslexia can influence self-perception of feeling disconnected based on communication approach.

Lastly, Participant 7 revealed that internal perceptions based on experiences can influence feelings of being disconnected. Participant 7 reported that she felt disconnected due to her belief that others have not had the same life experiences and their perceptions of reality are different. Participants 4, 5, and 6 did not report feeling disconnected in conjunction with their social life and struggles with dyslexia.

Feeling Inferior. Three out of seven participants reported feeling inferior because of dyslexia in conjunction with the social environment. In the first example, Participant 3 claimed,

My friends were way smarter than me. They got things quicker than I did and got better grades in school. So, I always felt like I was not as smart as they were because I did not get good grades.

Participant 3 further explained, “They did not make fun of me. I played it off like I was ‘too cool for school’ and I did not care.”

In another example, Participant 5 stated, “Feeling inferior to my friends and colleagues I did feel. I think my feelings of inferiority are still a part of my life today, with thoughts of ‘am I good enough?’” Participant 5 further elaborated, “I do believe having dyslexia and struggling as a child, with feeling like a failure, has contributed to my insecurities, this feeling of inferiority and having to prove myself to friends.”

Participant 5 explained, “Early on, I compared myself and my intelligence to my peers.”

Moreover, Participant 5 identified having a superiority complex with his best friend as well. Participant 5 stated, “I would compare myself to my best friend despite being smart in completely opposite ways. He was much better at math, but I was more creative.” Participant 5 indicated that he experienced jealousy towards his friend’s intellect. However, it was at a time when he did not understand his own abilities. Currently, Participant 5 claimed, “Having dyslexia doesn’t bother me at all. Now I have a healthier understanding of dyslexia and have learned to accept that I have dyslexia for the most part.” Furthermore, Participant 5 stated,

I do not think dyslexia has impacted my social life very much. while I am getting better at my ‘not thinking that everyone needs to be smart and whatnot,’ I still struggle with feeling like I need to be better somehow. Maybe that is my compensation for the lack of feeling smart as a child.

In the final example, Participant 6 reported a need to use friends to help with reading tasks. She asserted, “I am appreciative toward my friends for being able to help but I feel like I am taking away their time.” Furthermore, Participant 6 elaborated, “I think that is where jealousy comes in, I can read it to them and without trying they can solve the problem. Whereas, when I read it by myself, I cannot figure out the problem.” Participant 6 reported that her need for help with comprehension and solving problems are the main areas where she feels inferior to her friends.

Regression to Old Feelings. Two out of seven participants reported experiencing regression to old feelings in a social environment. In the first example, Participant 1 reported that when her friend yelled at her during a game, she experienced regression to

previous feelings of fear and frustration when her dad would yell at her over homework.

Participant 1 elaborated,

We were playing a game on the same team, and he yelled at me in a competitive way, he just wanted me to get the point. I got that he wanted me to succeed and stuff, but the yelling triggered so many memories of what my dad did that I avoided him.

In the last example, Participant 5 reported having insecurities when meeting new people, which stemmed back to his childhood experiences. Participant 5 stated,

I met one of my friends' parents the other day, to which I felt like I needed to prove myself to her father. Not like in a prove myself because I like their daughter; more like I need to prove that I am smart to her father because that is what matters.

Participant 5 reported that this need to prove himself is a common trend in social settings. Participant 5 further identified that this desire to prove himself comes from his mother's dedication to intellect and social development despite dyslexia. However, Participant 5 indicated that even though appearing intelligent and sociable are generally valued as healthy qualities, to him, insecurities are left behind. Participant 5 asserted, "If I cannot socialize with people and I cannot prove that I am smart, then what is the point? I still deal with those insecurities."

Adapting to the Situation. Six out of seven participants reported adapting to their social environments in association with their struggles with dyslexia. In the first example, Participant 1 identified that she would choose a friend based on their

willingness to accept her difficulties with dyslexia. Participant 1 elaborated, “My friends know that my experiences are who I am, and they have learned to protect me from new people that come into my life.” As an adult, Participant 1 reported that she has learned to openly explain her struggle with dyslexia to others. Her willingness to open up information about dyslexia and her experiences with others has allowed her friends to more fully understand her. Furthermore, Participant 1 identified that she has also been able to reconnect with old friends because of her openness. In one example, Participant 1 shared,

I had a friend yell at me during a soccer game and it upset me to the point I stopped interacting with him. Eventually, I explained my situation and immediately he was remorseful and actually worked on being more patient with me.

In the next example, Participant 2 reported a need to pick friends that had patience with her spelling and writing abilities. Participant 2 explained, “With all my friends, they know that my spelling and writing abilities are terrible. So, they try to help me in a very loving way.” In the next example, Participant 3 reported that she does not like to share with others her struggle with dyslexia. Participant 3 elaborated,

It is hard to open up to people all the time, to trust them and tell them about myself. I worry about if they are going to judge me, or think I am stupid because of the way my brain works.

However, Participant 3 further stated, “When I do open up, I explain how I am different and that I am fine with how God made me.” She also identified that if others have a hard

time with her differences, then they do not have to be a part of her life. Participant 3 claimed, “If you do not like it, you do not have to hang out with me.”

In the next example, Participant 4 indicated that when socializing, he allows others to do the activities he finds difficult and then has them explain how the activity works afterwards. In one personal example, Participant 4 explained a social norm he has when playing board games with friends. When he is required to learn a new game, Participant 4 identified that he does not like to read the directions by himself. Rather, he allows his friends to teach him the rules after they become familiar with them. Participant 4 stated, “I learn by doing the game, for the most part. I have somebody tell me how the game works and get a rough estimate. Then I am like, let’s go.”

In the next example, Participant 6 explained,

That for the most part high school was very accepting, and I was able to hide my struggle with dyslexia, nobody knew who I was, nobody knew how I learned, it was easy. Because of that ability to hide in high school, I was able to also connect with people that were like me.

Participant 6 further asserted, “I try to make my own experiences profitable. I may not understand my strengths and/or weaknesses but I know that whatever I have gone through has benefit me in the long run.” Participant 6 identified that she has recognized that many children become frustrated or bitter after having a multitude of negative experiences. However, she has chosen to hold on to the belief that there is a reason for every experience, good or bad. Participant 6 elaborated, “Each of my experiences have taught me a different lesson. I think a lot of it has to do with how you view the situation

you are dealing with.” A personal example shared by Participant 6 was wherein she stated, “There are little situations like a friend making fun of me, but I have come to a point where I am like, meh, it is what it is.”

In the final example, Participant 7 shared that, “As I have gotten older, I have really started to see my own gifts when it comes to social interactions. However, I also see the protective factors that come with that.” Participant 7 indicated that she has learned to find a balance between what is appropriate versus what is not appropriate interactions with her social groups. She further identified a need to have friends but also a need to protect her social integrity.

Overall, Participants 1, 2, 3, and 4 identified a need to choose friends who were willing to accommodate their struggles with dyslexia. Participants 1, 2, and 3 reported that open communication about their struggle with dyslexia has helped them find friends who are willing to be accommodating. Participant 4 did not identify a need to talk to his friends about his struggle; rather, his friendships just happened through natural interactions. However, Participant 4 did indicate that when he does interact with a friend, there are distinct roles. In one example, Participant 4 reported that while playing board games with friends, he never reads the directions. Rather, he lets someone else read the rules of the game and he follows their directions. Participants 6 and 7 reported an internal thought process shift to adapt to their struggle with dyslexia. Participant 6 identified that she has chosen to hold onto a positive perspective when faced with difficult struggles related to dyslexia. On the other hand, Participant 7 has chosen to develop social boundaries to find balance between herself and her chosen friends.

Participant 5 did not report a need to find adaptive strategies in connection with his struggle with dyslexia within his social settings.

Existential Perspective

The existential perspective addressed QOL experiences from a deeper meaning than one's personal belief in having a good life. From this perspective, continued emotional experiences that are present, despite the current situation, play an important role in how each participant perceived their overall experiences. The focal point of this existential perspective was the social environment. The social environment plays a crucial role in how an individual perceives life challenges and how they choose to overcome those challenges. Furthermore, the social environment is part of the foundation of one's emotional development and can have a significant influence on how a person perceives their QOL experiences later in life.

Lifelong Struggles. Three out of seven participants reported experiencing lifelong struggles within their social groups in conjunction with their struggles with dyslexia. In the first example, Participant 2 identified her current struggle with spelling and social connection. Participant 2 explained,

The problem I have with spelling is trying to date with dating apps. Those apps are message based and I misspell words all the time. I know that if I misspell something or use the wrong word, the other person does not want to talk to me anymore.

In this example, the lifelong struggle that Participant 2 experiences is the misspelling of words and the denial of connection. However, from an existential perspective, Participant

2's experiences and perceptions extend beyond the misspelled words. Participant 2 reported that the reason the other people discontinued talking to her was because of her misspelled words. However, that analysis is her perception, which has inadvertently influenced her experience with dating apps. For example, on behalf of the other person, their reasons for discontinuing communication could have been due to other reasons or circumstances, such as personality differences, family issues, and a wide variety of other potential reasons. However, Participant 2 did not address any other reason but her own inability to spell. Due to Participant 2's perception, she has inadvertently chosen to believe that it was her fault that other people did not want to talk to her because of her struggle with dyslexia. Therefore, her experience with dating apps is that the other person does not want to communicate with her because she does not spell well.

In the next example, Participant 5 indicated that he has insecurities when meeting people, which stemmed back to his childhood experiences. Participant 5 identified that growing up, his mother stressed the importance of being intelligent and having social skills. Furthermore, Participant 5 reported that he had developed an unhealthy expectation of what it means to be intelligent and sociable. Participant 5 elaborated, "If I cannot socialize with people and cannot prove that I am smart, then what is the point?" From an existential perspective in conjunction with dyslexia, Participant 5 reported from a very early age that he struggled in school because of dyslexia. His mother was well educated in issues related to dyslexia and often used her expertise to help. However, Participant 5 reported feeling inferior to his mother and making the internal decision to fight his struggle with dyslexia without his mother. Furthermore, Participant 5 reported

looking up to his mother and trying to find success intellectually and socially like she had. Participant 5 identified that his pursuit left him with feelings of jealousy and anger because he was unable to meet those perceived expectations. Participant 5 stated that his feelings of jealousy and anger are still present. However, those experiences have significantly reduced since he moved away to college.

In the final example, Participant 7 asserted, “Dyslexia definitely has interfered with my social life, especially through text messaging, typing emails, and group work with friends and peers.” Participant 7 did not define how dyslexia has influenced text messaging, emails, and group work with friends. However, she did identify that it generally had an influence on her self-perception and ability to connect with others. Participants 1, 3, 4, and 6 did not report an existential perspective that showed lifelong struggles in conjunction with their struggle with dyslexia and social environments.

Feeling Disconnected. Three out of seven participants reported feeling disconnected within their social groups in conjunction with their struggles with dyslexia. In the first example, Participant 1 explained a scenario where a friend yelled at her while playing soccer. She reported that he was trying to influence more aggression on the field and that he meant no harm. However, her experience of yelling as a child traumatized her. Her father would yell at her for not understanding schoolwork, which stemmed from her struggle with dyslexia. Her example of being yelled at on the soccer field addresses her feelings of disconnect with a friend. Participant 1 further identified that her friend, who yelled at her, perpetuated feelings of being unsafe. Participant 1 elaborated, “What he did to me was what my father used to do, but my friend did it in an environment I felt

safe. Now I do not feel safe in that environment.” Furthermore, Participant 1 reported that her friend had no idea of the impact his actions had on her feelings of safety. From an existential perspective, the soccer field example shows how a normal sporting activity used to encourage aggression (yelling at your peers) can cause a disconnected experience between players. Furthermore, Participant 1’s experience was perpetuated by her father’s treatment of her, brought on by her struggles with dyslexia. The example itself is not a direct connection to her struggle with dyslexia. However, Participant 1’s example demonstrated that dyslexia had a COE connection that led to the soccer field example and influenced her perceptions and QOL experiences.

In the next example, Participant 2 identified that she avoided common tools, such as texting and emailing, to make life easier and to protect her social image. Participant 2 explained,

I did not have texting until college because I was embarrassed about having to spell out what I wanted to say. I would rather have a phone conversation for three hours than text someone and have to rely on my spelling abilities to get across what I wanted to say.

Participant 2 identified that dating apps were particularly frustrating because she found it difficult to spell correctly. Participant 2 reported that her inability to spell created a disconnect between herself and the person she would talk to. Participant 2 elaborated, “It always came across that I was being distant and not actually invested in the conversation. So, the conversations always died.” Participant 2 further identified that her dyslexia influenced insecurities in social settings, especially when using dating apps. From an

existential perspective, Participant 2 indicated that she worried about how others perceived her, especially in conjunction with her inability to spell. The inability to spell and dyslexia are known factors that are directly connected. The COE experiences in Participant 2's life, which led to her fear of social engagement, are indicators that dyslexia has had an influence on her social experiences. Furthermore, Participant 2 identified that dyslexia has influenced feelings of disconnect between herself and others. Dyslexia has also influenced the social activities she has chosen to participate in.

In the final example, Participant 7 stated, "I struggled socially because I saw that I was not the same as everyone." Participant 7 further elaborated,

I did not really have a good foundation. My grade school handled my social relations poorly. I do not like the word ostracized, but it was kind of like that. I was pulled out of my classroom and put in another room on a daily basis. Other kids would often say, 'you just go in there and they give you all the answers and you're just one of the dumb ones' and that is hard to hear.

Currently, Participant 7 identified that she does not have a group of friends. However, she does have a few close friends. Furthermore, Participant 7 claimed, "I think I am in a generation that does not thrive on deep social connections." From an existential perspective, her last statement is a continuation of her previous statement about "not being the same as everyone else." Moreover, it appears that Participant 7 has made social decisions based on a lifetime of feeling disconnected from others. Her decision to keep a few close friends over many is not directly connected to her struggle with dyslexia. However, her experiences in elementary school, because of her struggle with dyslexia,

influenced feelings of disconnection. The COE experiences follow this path: Feeling disconnected led to feeling ostracized, which led to finding a few friends who accepted her. Lastly, Participant 7 created a narrative that justified her decision to have a few close friends. Participant 7's narrative statement states, "This generation does not thrive on deep social connections." From a QOL perspective, she has grown to value deep social connections in conjunction with how she experiences QOL. Inadvertently, deep social connections have become the tool she utilized to sift through whom she included in her inner circle of friends. However, deep social connections were not the original way she acquired friends. Her initial experience with finding friends stemmed from her feelings of disconnection and ostracization. She gravitated towards those that would accept her, despite being dyslexic. Furthermore, Participant 7 indicated that she spent years reflecting on her differences by herself and with her closest friends. Her years of self-reflection perpetuated a need to find deep social connections. Participants 3, 4, 5, and 6 did not report an existential perspective that showed feeling disconnected in conjunction with their struggle with dyslexia and social environments.

Feeling Inferior. Three out of seven participants reported feeling inferior in comparison to their friends because of dyslexia. In the first example, Participant 3 claimed,

A lot of my friends were way smarter than me. They got things quicker. So, I always felt like I was stupider than them because I did not do as well in my classes. I played it off like I was too cool for school, and I didn't care.

Furthermore, Participant 3 identified that her friends always told her that “they were book smart, and she was street smart.” From an existential perspective, Participant 3 has continued to perceive herself as less intelligent in comparison to her friends. However, she has chosen to use her friendly and funny demeanor to positively connect with others. Her stories indicated that she was perceived well amongst her friends. Participant 3 identified that her friends were supportive and never mean to her, which has allowed her to maintain a positive perspective on life despite her struggles with dyslexia. Moreover, Participant 3 has adapted this mode of thinking to “this is how God made me.” This perspective is an adaptive technique that has allowed her to appreciate who she is despite her struggles with dyslexia.

In another example, Participant 5 identified that, growing up, he did feel inferior to his friends, with thoughts of “am I good enough?” Participant 5 further indicated that these feelings of inferiority continue today. Participant 5 elaborated, “I do believe having dyslexia and struggling as a child has led to me having insecurities, feelings of inferiority, and a desire to prove myself.” Participant 5 identified that, from an early age, he compared his own intelligence to his friends. Participant 5 explained, “I compared my intelligence very much to my peers and friends.” Moreover, Participant 5 asserted,

When my superiority complex was at its peak, I developed a co-dependent relationship with my best friend. I did not realize that he was smart in a completely opposite way to me. I am more creative than him, but he is better at numbers and math, he is very left brained.

Participant 5 reported that it was not until college that his own perceptions of intelligence started to change. Participant 5 claimed, "I think I changed to a healthier understanding of intelligence, I have accepted for the most part, that I have dyslexia." Furthermore, Participant 5 shared,

For the most part, I am very secure with my friends. People like me and I like them, but I still shut down emotionally if someone comes into the room who appears more dynamic and/or is louder than me. I still feel inferior in those moments.

He further stated,

I think while I am getting better at my, not thinking that everyone needs to be smart and what not, I still struggle with feeling like I need to be better somehow. Maybe that is me compensating for the lack of feeling smart as a child. Now, I need to be the best intellectually and socially.

From an existential perspective, Participant 5 has identified a shift in perceptions from childhood to adulthood. Furthermore, he has learned about his own potential as a social person and has developed his own group of friends. Participant 5 has indicated that he has come to terms with his struggle with dyslexia and, in some ways, values his struggle with dyslexia. However, Participant 5 has also indicated that he still struggles with the desire to prove himself socially and intellectually to his friends. He stated that this desire to prove himself socially and intellectually stemmed from his experiences as a child. Those experiences mainly evolved from his mother's dedication to social and intellectual factors in her own life. Moreover, Participant 5 reported that his mother

pursued those endeavors because of her own struggle with dyslexia and wanted to help her children (who also had dyslexia) in the same way. Therefore, Participant 5's mother and her dedication to social and intellectual improvement appear to be the catalyst for his personal struggle with self-identity.

The COEs that have led to participant 5's current perspective of QOL started with his own struggle with dyslexia. From there, his mother emphasized intelligence and social abilities to compensate for his struggle with dyslexia. Participant 5 has reported that this experience has continued to persist and has led to an inferiority complex, especially when in the presence of his own family or someone who appears more outgoing and/or intelligent.

In the final example, Participant 6 identified that at times she has felt like a burden to her friends. Participant 6 stated,

Often, I do not understand what I read, and in the past, I have had friends who have asked to read for me. During those times I am appreciative of them.

However, I feel like I am taking away their time to do work, which makes me feel like a burden to them. Furthermore, I think that is also where some jealousy comes in.

Participant 6 identified that the jealousy stems from the ease with which her friends can interpret written text, but she cannot. From an existential perspective, Participant 6's experience with friends has been positive. She has identified that their help was always appreciated. However, the negative experiences were twofold. First, Participant 6 feels like a burden to her friends because she has often relied on their help. Second, Participant

6 has experienced feelings of jealousy because of the ease with which her friends can interpret written text.

The COE experiences started with her struggle with dyslexia. As Participant 6 struggled to understand her assignments in school, she sought help from anyone who was willing to help. Furthermore, Participant 6 identified that she developed co-dependent relationships because she felt incapable of finishing her assignments alone. As she found friends who were willing to help, she further developed feelings of inferiority and jealousy. Participant 6 reported that the negative experiences with friends were twofold. She felt bad for taking them away from their tasks, and she felt jealous because of the ease with which they were able to solve problems. Furthermore, Participant 6 reported using her friends' abilities in comparison to her own to define what it means to be intelligent. Participant 6 shared, "I had this idea of what smart was and it wasn't what I felt about myself." Currently, Participant 6 has reported that her previous belief about intelligence was wrong. However, she still struggles with self-doubt, fear of the future, and self-perceptions, all of which stemmed from her experiences with dyslexia. Participants 1, 2, 4, and 7 did not report an existential perspective that showed feeling inferior in connection with their struggle with dyslexia and social environments.

Regression to Old Feelings. Two out of seven participants reported experiencing regression to old feelings related to their friend groups in conjunction with their experiences with dyslexia. In the first example, Participant 1 reported having a friend yell at her in a soccer game, which caused regression to previous feelings of fear and frustration. The regression experience stemmed from her father's treatment of her as a

child in relation to homework and learning. He would yell at her and belittle her because she struggled to understand her homework material. Participant 1 explained,

We were playing a game on the same team, and he yelled at me in a competitive way, he just wanted me to get the point. I got that he wanted me to succeed but his yelling triggered so many memories of what my father did to me as a child.

From an existential perspective, Participant 1's experience on the soccer field is not directly related to her struggle with dyslexia. However, there are COE experiences that Participant 1 has reported, which all stemmed from her struggles with dyslexia. The COE pattern unfolds as follows: Participant 1 reported that her father yelled and belittled her because she had a hard time learning new information (dyslexia). Participant 1 identified that she is one of five children, and she explained that her father only yelled and belittled her, not her other sibling (who did not have dyslexia). Participant 1 indicated that her father's treatment of her persisted throughout high school. Lastly, while playing soccer, a friend yelled at her, perpetuating those old feelings she experienced as a child from her father.

In the next example, Participant 5 addressed having insecurities about meeting people, which he identified as an old issue stemming back to his childhood experiences. Participant 5 explained,

I met one of my friend's parents the other day, they were visiting her in college. However, I met them and this specific trend of mine kicked in. I felt like I had to prove myself to her father. It was just like I needed to prove that I was smart to her father, because that is what matters.

Participant 5 further articulated, “I feel like I have to prove myself intellectually and socially, otherwise, what's the point.” Participant 5 identified that his need to prove himself intellectually and socially stemmed back to his mother. Participant 5 elaborated, “My mother was very big on being smart and also very big on social skills.” Participant 5 reported that his struggle with dyslexia made him feel inferior to others. However, his mother’s drive for intellectual and social competence influenced an unhealthy dedication to the cause. Participant 5 claimed, “I felt that if I could not socialize with people and could not prove that I was smart, then you know, what is the point?” Participant 5 further addressed that he still deals with a superiority complex, especially when meeting new people.

From an existential perspective, Participant 5 has identified a need to prove himself because of his feelings of inferiority. His drive to prove himself to others stemmed back to an early age and was further perpetuated by his mother’s drive for success/purpose in her own right. Moreover, Participant 5’s drive to prove himself to others is internally driven. Participant 5 reported that his mother has always played a supportive role in whatever path he has chosen to take. He also identified that his need to prove himself came from internal interpretations of his own educational struggles. Furthermore, Participant 5 identified that through watching his own mother overcome her own struggle with dyslexia, both intellectually and socially, he became envious. Because he was at a different stage in life and unable to perform at the same standard as his mother, he experienced self-doubt, frustration, and anger. Participant 5 further reported

that self-doubt, frustration, and anger were the emotions that shaped his perceptions, insecurities, and drive to prove himself to others.

The COE pattern started with dyslexia. Insecurities formed because of his struggles in school and his observations of friends and his mother. Through observations, he developed self-perceptions that influenced his self-doubt, frustration, and anger. Eventually, he found activities wherein he could thrive and began to develop his own social and intellectual strengths. However, Participant 5 reported that he still has a superiority complex and has a strong desire to prove himself to others. His superiority complex is not directly connected to his struggle with dyslexia. However, Participant 5 has identified that he believes it is connected to his struggle with dyslexia because of his own personal experiences in combination with his own perceptions. Participants 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7 did not report an existential perspective that showed regression to old feelings in conjunction with their struggle with dyslexia and social environments.

Adapting to the Situation. Four out of seven participants reported adapting to the situation in conjunction with dyslexia and social connections. Participant 1 identified that she has become choosy when it involves finding friends. Participant 1 elaborated,

Because of the way my father treated me, I have chosen to find friends that have a desire to protect me from new people coming in. Whether it be boyfriends, new friends, or old friends that want to come back.

Participant 1 has also chosen to open up about her struggle with dyslexia and its impact on her life. In one scenario, Participant 1 had a friend yell at her on the soccer field. He did not realize the impact it had on her emotionally. Eventually, Participant 1 explained

to her friend why she had been distant for the last few weeks. This action allowed her friend to understand her more completely, which helped them to reconnect. Participant 1 explained,

After some time away from him, I decided to explain what happened and immediately he was remorseful. He actually worked on being more patient with me, I guess more loving as a friend, more understanding.

In the next example, Participant 3 indicated that she does not like to share her struggle with dyslexia. Participant 3 asserted,

It is hard to open up to people all the time, to trust them and tell them about myself. To worry about if they are going to judge me or think I am stupid because of the way my brain works.

However, Participant 3 has allowed some people to know about her struggle with dyslexia. For the situations where people did not respond well, she developed an internal perspective to help her emotionally, but also a desire not to share personal information. Participant 3 identified that her internal perspective has allowed her to come to terms with her own struggle with dyslexia. Participant 3 stated,

Hey, I am like this, that is just how I am. I have always been pretty good about accepting that I am a little different. That's fine, that is the way God made me. If you do not like it, you do not have to hang out with me.

From an existential perspective, both Participants 1 and 3 have indicated that they are guarded. However, the difference between the two is that participant 1 fully discloses her struggles with dyslexia and the past. Participant 1 has chosen to be particular about who

she invites into her friend group, whereas Participant 3 has chosen not to disclose her struggle with dyslexia. However, when she does, Participant 3 has established a mode of thinking that has helped her to cope, which she asserted, 'God made me this way, if you do not like it, you do not have to hang out with me.'

In the next example, Participant 4 identified his social norms in connection with his friends. Participant 4 gave an example of playing board games with friends.

Participant 4 claimed,

I learn by doing it, for the most part. I generally have somebody tell me how the game works to get a rough estimate, then we just start playing. I do not need full details on how the game works, I generally pick it up as I go along. So, that is how I do it.

From an existential perspective, Participant 4 indicated that his friends generally understood the activity before he participated. Moreover, Participant 4 identified that he does not read the directions; rather, he prefers others to guide him through the rules.

Participant 4 shared that he generally chooses activities that are best suited to his strengths. This pattern of behavior has been shown in school, work, and social environments. Moreover, Participant 4 has identified that his friends and him have established a common pattern of behavior where they do the research and later inform him on how to play the game.

In the next example, Participant 6 shared,

I was more accepted in high school. I was able to hide my struggle with dyslexia, nobody knew who I was, nobody knew how I learned, it was easier. I think it was at that point I was able to also connect with people that were like me.

Furthermore, Participant 6 asserted, "I try to look at my own experiences profitably. I may not understand or see the situation as profitable in the moment, but I know that whatever I have gone through will benefit me in the long run." When it comes to friends, Participant 6 shared, "My friends sometimes make fun of me over my differences, but I have come to a point where I am like 'meh' it is what it is." From an existential perspective, Participant 6 has chosen to incorporate a few adaptive approaches in conjunction with friends. First, she explained that she hides her struggle with dyslexia. Participant 6 did not explain to what extent, but at some level, she hides her struggle with dyslexia. Moreover, she did not expand on situations where she would potentially reveal more about her struggle with dyslexia. Second, she found friends that were like her in some way. Third, she adopted an optimistic approach to dealing with hardships. Participant 6 identified that she would rather embrace how her situation will one day benefit her over dwelling on how bad her situation is at that moment. Lastly, she has chosen to embrace the little bit of teasing she does hear from friends. From a QOL perspective, Participant 6 identified that she has come to terms with her struggle with dyslexia. Even though she has insecurities, she has also found strategies to help her through difficult situations. Participant 6 further indicated that she has found friends who have accepted her despite her differences.

Out of the four participants, two chose to hide their struggle with dyslexia from others. Participants 3 and 6 have indicated that they purposefully hide their struggle with dyslexia. Moreover, Participants 3 and 6 identified that they hide their struggle because they have been judged by others over their differences. Participant 4 did not indicate that he hides his struggles with dyslexia. Instead, he finds scenarios where he does not need to reveal his struggle with dyslexia. For example, Participant 4 has established norms within his friend groups where he does not read instructions for the game they want to play. Instead, his friends read the instructions and informed him how to play. Participant 1 was the only participant that identified a need to address her struggles related to dyslexia with a friend. Her disclosure encouraged a healthy switch in her interactions with that friend. However, Participant 1 identified that she is quite specific when deciding on who to let into her friend group. Participants 2, 5, and 7 did not report an existential perspective that showed how they adapted to the situation in conjunction with their struggle with dyslexia and social environments.

Objective Perspective

The objective perspective addressed QOL experiences based on socioeconomic standards of what a good QOL represents. This perspective was designed to explore the socioeconomic standards related to each participant's social environment. Some objective indicators that were explored were financial, mother-father relations, parent-child relations, sibling relations, and family support. These areas will be explored within each of the five sub-themes (i.e., lifelong struggles, feeling disconnected, feeling inferior, regression to old feelings, and adapting to the situation).

Lifelong Struggles. Two out of seven participants reported experiencing lifelong struggles with their social environment in conjunction with objective indicators. In the first example, Participant 2 identified a lifelong struggle with written communication. She identified that her spelling can be a hindrance when connecting with others. Participant 2 elaborated,

The problem I have with spelling is trying to date on dating apps because everything is message based. For example, if I were to misspell something or use the wrong word, I am judged by that. They probably think I am illiterate, and they do not want to talk to me anymore.

In the last example, Participant 7 stated, “Dyslexia definitely has interfered in my social life, mostly over-texting and emails.” For both participants, written communication created conflict within their social settings. Communication skills matter in conjunction with friendship development. Written communication, especially through text messages, is a key form of communicating with friends. However, having dyslexia has created challenges for both Participants 2 and 7. Participants 2 and 7 claimed that they are judged by their inability to spell. They reported that sometimes that judgment is minor, and a friend may poke fun at them. In other situations, potential friends have stopped communicating all together. Moreover, Participants 2 and 7 identified that their written communication can be misconstrued. They reported that it is difficult to express their thoughts through written communication. Participants 2 and 7 expressed that what they write often comes out disorganized and confusing. Participants 2 and 7 both reported that their disorganized and confusing communication has at times caused tension, frustration,

and feelings of ostracization. Participants 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 did not report objective indicators that showed lifelong struggles in conjunction with their struggle with dyslexia and social environments.

Feeling Disconnected. Four out of seven reported feeling disconnected with objective indicators. In the first example, Participant 1 reported an incident where her friend yelled at her on the soccer field. The objective indicator was the treatment she received from her friend. However, the disconnect came from each participant's understanding of communication norms. Her friend believed that it was normal to yell at another to encourage them to perform better. However, Participant 1 had previous negative experiences associated with yelling, which influenced her negative response to her friend. Participant 1 shared, "I explained to him, 'What you have done to me the last couple of weeks at the games was what my father would do but you did it in a place where I felt safe, now I do not feel safe!'" This experience does not directly relate to dyslexia. However, there is a COE link to dyslexia. Participant 1 reported that her father yelled at her throughout her childhood because of her inability to learn efficiently in school. The yelling from her father is a byproduct of her struggle with dyslexia. Furthermore, Participant 1 identified that when someone yells at her, she reverts to her childhood experiences from her father.

In the next example, Participant 2 reported that she avoided text messaging until college, a common tool to make life easier. Participant 2 elaborated, "I did not have texting until college because I was embarrassed about having to spell out what I wanted to say." Furthermore, she identified issues with spelling and dating apps. Participant 2

reported that because she struggled to spell accurately, she feared making a mistake.

Participant 2 claimed, “It always came across that I was distant in the first talk, not fully invested in the conversation. So, the conversation always died.” From an objective perspective, not utilizing a common tool, such as text messaging, created a disconnect between herself and others. Moreover, Participant 2 reported that there were many missed social opportunities because of her struggle with dyslexia (spelling) and text messaging. How that disconnect influenced QOL has far-reaching implications.

In the next example, Participant 3 shared, “Talking on the phone makes me a little anxious because I cannot read a person’s body language.” From an objective perspective, Participant 3’s experience is like that of Participant 2. The objective aspect is the limitation of a common tool (the telephone) to establish a connection with others. Furthermore, there are far-reaching implications to how the limitation of phone conversations can have influence over QOL experiences.

In the final example, Participant 7 reported feeling isolated in elementary school, which influenced her inability to socially connect with others. Participant 7 stated,

I was pulled out of my classroom and put in another room daily. Other kids would often say, ‘you go in there and they give you all the answers. you're just one of the dumb ones.’ That was hard to hear.

Participant 7 reported feeling ostracized from her social group because of those experiences in school. Participant 7 explained, “I struggled socially, because I saw that I was not the same as everyone else.” From an objective perspective, her isolation, due to her struggle with dyslexia, was influential in her inability to connect with others.

Participants 4, 5, and 6 did not report objective indicators that showed feeling disconnected in conjunction with their struggle with dyslexia and social environments.

Feeling Inferior. Two out of seven participants reported feeling inferior, with objective indicators, in conjunction with their social groups and dyslexia. In the first example, Participant 3 reported that her friends were smarter than her. Participant 3 claimed,

A lot of my friends were way smarter than me. They got things quicker. They got As in school, which made me feel stupider than them because I did not do that good in my classes.

The objective indicator in Participant 3's example was the lower grades in comparison to her friends. Furthermore, her recognition that others performed better in school influenced her feelings of inferiority. From a QOL perspective, Participant 3 reported that because she felt inferior to her friends, self-doubt, and insecurity permeated her self-perceptions.

In another example, Participant 6 elaborated,

I have a problem comprehending what I read. I often read something three or four times and still struggle with comprehension. I waste a lot of time trying to understand what I read. My friends sometimes see this process take place and ask if they can help me by reading it for me. Which makes me feel grateful for my friends, but I also feel jealous over their ability to read and comprehend at the same time.

The objective indicator in Participant 6's example was the time spent reading and her friends' willingness to help her read. From a QOL perspective, Participant 6 reported feeling both grateful and jealous of her friends' ability to read and comprehend what they read. Furthermore, Participant 6's feelings of jealousy influenced her overall feeling of inferiority. Participants 1, 2, 4, 5, and 7 did not report objective indicators that showed feelings of inferiority in conjunction with their struggle with dyslexia and social environments.

Regression to Old Feelings. One out of seven participants reported experiencing regression to old feelings with objective indicators in conjunction with their social environments. In the example, Participant 1 identified the internal thoughts and emotions that came after her friend yelled at her on the soccer field. Participant 1 stated, "We were playing a game and he yelled at me in a competitive way, he just wanted me to get the point. That experience triggered so many memories of what my father did to me as a child." Her experience is not directly connected to dyslexia. However, when her friend yelled at her, memories were triggered about her father and his treatment of her over her struggles with dyslexia. The objective indicator in this example was her friend's yelling at her. From a QOL perspective, Participant 1 identified that her experiences with her father, over issues related to dyslexia, have had a long-term emotional impact. Participant 1 expressed that her experience on the soccer field with her friend triggered repressed feelings derived from her father. Furthermore, Participant 1 reported that even though her soccer field experience was not directly connected to her struggle with dyslexia, it was indirectly connected because of her father's treatment. Participants 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 did

not report objective indicators that showed regression to old feelings in conjunction with their struggle with dyslexia and social environments.

Adapting to the Situation. Two out of seven participants reported adapting to the situation in association with dyslexia, with objective indicators in their social environments. In the first example, Participant 1 reported the use of open communication to inform her friends about past experiences. Participant 1 identified that open communication is the adaptive approach she has used to determine who she will be friends with. Participant 1 shared, “Because I communicate, my friends know who I am and have developed a need or desire to protect me from new people, such as boyfriends and/or new friends.” The objective aspect of Participant 1’s strategy was the open communication. Participant 1 reported that she can explain her struggle to others, and they understand her. Participant 1 also indicated that another byproduct of sharing personal information is that her friends protect her. From a QOL perspective, Participant 1 expressed that her willingness to communicate her struggles has effectively helped her to make a healthy group of friends who are willing to support her in various ways.

In the next example, Participant 4 indicated a need to establish social norms within his friend groups that accommodated his struggle with dyslexia. Participant 4 explained a scenario where he was engaged in playing board games with friends. Participant 4 explained,

I learn by doing, for the most part. I have somebody tell me how the game works, to get a rough estimate, and then we start the game. I do not need full details on how it works, I will pick it up as I play.

The objective indicator in this scenario was the established social norm that was developed between him and his friend group. More specifically, Participant 4 has chosen not to read directions when playing a new game; instead, he relies on others to teach him. From a QOL perspective, Participant 4 has developed a system between him and his friend group that works for them. Participant 4 did not report experiencing issues with friends and their established social norms. Furthermore, Participant 4 established social norms that created a scenario where he could avoid the need to read, which is directly connected with dyslexia. Participants 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7 did not report objective indicators that showed how they adapted to a situation in association with their struggle with dyslexia and social environments.

In conclusion, several insights can be drawn from social influence in conjunction with struggles with dyslexia and QOL experiences. First, childhood struggles with dyslexia can influence an individual's ability to develop a social network. Second, how a social group interacts with an individual with dyslexia can have long-term implications on QOL experiences. Third, the struggle with dyslexia does not directly present itself as an issue between a person with dyslexia and their social group. However, name-calling, belittling comments, and self-perceptions are secondary experiences associated with struggling with dyslexia. How an individual with dyslexia chooses to perceive those experiences has long-term implications on QOL experiences. Lastly, a supportive social group has significant implications for QOL experiences despite an individual's initial struggle with dyslexia.

Summary

The purpose of this narrative study was to explore the told stories of individuals with dyslexia to explore COEs and QOL experiences. Four environments (e.g., education, work, family, and social) were explored to provide a thorough representation of each participant's lived experience. Furthermore, Ventegodt and colleagues' IQOL theory was used to provide a thorough exploration into the QOL experiences lived out by each participant. Ventegodt's theory addressed QOL by providing emphasis on the subjective, existential, and objective perspectives. The study shed light on several aspects.

First insight: The study findings identified that educational and family environments play an integral role in the long-term implications of QOL experiences in conjunction with dyslexia. For example, out of all seven participants, the parents were the first to recognize something was wrong with each participant's ability to learn. This insight by the parents prompted the investigations and the search for solutions. The way each set of parents chose to support their child had an impact on their child's later QOL experiences. From an educational standpoint, each of the seven participants reported experiencing struggles in school because of dyslexia. How each participant learned to cope in school with dyslexia had an influence on their QOL experience. Furthermore, how the parents and the education system chose to work together to help the child/student had an influence on QOL experiences.

Second insight: The findings indicated that work and social environments were influenced by struggles with dyslexia, but to a lesser degree. When challenges came about in work and social environments later in each participant's life, adaptive strategies

had already been established to navigate new challenges. Also, each participant chose work and social environments that were tailored to their strengths rather than weaknesses. Work and social environments also did not include the same types of educational pressures as a school and/or home environment.

Third insight: The study results identified that COE experiences do occur and can have long-term implications on QOL experiences. Furthermore, COE experiences do not just stay in one environment but can cross over into other environments. Many of the stories told by participants had a web of connections within various environments and perspectives. Each experience had an influence on later experiences, which, in turn, influenced self-perceptions and QOL experiences.

Fourth insight: The findings indicated that each participant's self-perceptions had an influence on their QOL experiences. Moreover, self-perceptions were often influenced by a misinterpretation of a given scenario and held in the mind as a fact. All seven participants identified that their self-perceptions were acquired through observations of others around them. For example, Participant 5 reported a need to show his worth to society, and he compared himself to his mother and brother. However, in his own mind, he felt inferior to both. Participant 5 reported that this feeling of inferiority made him feel angry and that this anger persisted throughout high school. Participant 5 elaborated that it was not until college that he began to realize his own potential, which led him to re-evaluate his self-perceptions. Not all participants reported having a re-evaluation of their self-perceptions.

Fifth insight: The findings indicated that educational, work, family, and social environments all played a role in their QOL experiences as associated with dyslexia. All seven participants reported experiencing struggles related to dyslexia in all four environments. Furthermore, the research indicated that the cumulative experiences had long-term implications on their self-perceptions and QOL experiences. Moreover, each participant's experiences continued to shape their self-perceptions and perceived capabilities.

Sixth insight: All participants reported a draw towards activities (such as work) or social connections that were tailored to their struggle with dyslexia. This factor created inherent limitations to each participant's ability to choose. In one example, Participant 2 reported that she spent years dreaming about becoming a teacher. However, her struggles in college influenced her to take a different path. Other participants reported similar conflicts, which caused them to follow a path that met their capabilities. According to the findings, the inability to choose has long-term consequences for self-perceptions and QOL experiences.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this narrative study was to explore the QOL experiences of young adults with dyslexia. Furthermore, Ventegodt et al.'s (2003) theory of IQOL was used to provide a thorough exploration into the QOL experiences lived out by each participant. Ventegodt's theory addressed QOL by providing emphasis on the subjective, existential, and objective perspectives. Each perspective was explored within four environments (e.g., educational, work, family, and social) to encapsulate the lived experience of dyslexia.

The key findings were as follows:

1. The influence of dyslexia reaches beyond the educational environment and can alter experiences in work, family, and social environments.
2. Educational, work, family, and social environments can influence the QOL experiences of individuals with dyslexia.
3. COE experiences associated with dyslexia do occur and can have long-term implications on QOL experiences.
4. Self-perceptions about personal struggles with dyslexia influenced QOL experiences.
5. Long-term experiences with dyslexia and self-perceptions can link together to form COE experiences and influence perceived choices related to educational, work, and social environments.

6. There are three connections (direct, secondary, and tertiary) related to dyslexia and QOL experiences. Direct connections are the impeding issues (i.e., math, reading, comprehension, spelling) directly connected to dyslexia. Secondary connections are the social responses and treatment of a person with dyslexia and how a person with dyslexia perceives those experiences. Tertiary connections are the visceral negative experiences that stemmed from earlier trauma related to dyslexia but influenced by normal interactions not connected to dyslexia.

Interpretation of the Findings

The study aligned with peer-reviewed literature and reconfirmed that there are long-term implications related to the emotional, behavioral, social, and socioeconomic experiences of adults with dyslexia. For example, Beer et al. (2014) found that the impact of dyslexia increased over the course of a life, and nearly all domains of functioning were affected. Moreover, my study highlighted that people with dyslexia experience secondary and tertiary connections associated with dyslexia, lending credence to COE experiences. Previous studies have reviewed secondary connections but did not explore tertiary connections (see Beer et al., 2014; Cameron, 2016; Carroll & Iles, 2006; Claassens & Lessing, 2015; Jordan et al., 2014; Klassen et al., 2011; Leather et al., 2011; Nalavany et al., 2015; Nergard-Nilssen & Hulme, 2014; Skinner & MacGill, 2015). Furthermore, when secondary connections were explored, there was a limited emphasis on emotional and behavioral issues, such as anxiety, depression, and/or low self-esteem. Emotional and behavioral experiences, such as anxiety, depression, and/or low-self-esteem, are

associated with QOL experiences but do not account for an overall representation of QOL experiences. Generally, previous studies emphasized one or two aspects of emotional or behavioral issues but not the full spectrum (Beer et al., 2014; Cameron, 2016; Carroll & Iles, 2006; Claassens & Lessing, 2015; Jordan et al., 2014; Klassen et al., 2011; Leather et al., 2011; Nalavany et al., 2015; Nergard-Nilssen & Hulme, 2014; Skinner & MacGill, 2015).

This study expanded on that emphasis to explore the overall QOL experiences of adults with dyslexia. Therefore, a narrative approach was used because of its ability to explore a broad range of dynamics. The emotional/behavioral emphasis was expanded to incorporate all related emotions. The narrative approach further emphasized exploration of COE themes related to depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, low motivation, hostility, guilt, shame, and jealousy. Moreover, social and socioeconomic factors were explored to provide a thorough representation of QOL experiences. Likewise, situational experiences related to social mobility, career development, and how one deals with transitional moments helped to shed light on QOL experiences. Because COE themes were explored, tertiary connections were then revealed. Tertiary connections are experiences that are not directly connected to dyslexia but are experiences that can be negatively perceived by an adult with dyslexia because of previous similar experiences that are related to dyslexia.

Historically, previous studies have emphasized issues with dyslexia in conjunction with the educational environment, with some emphasis placed on the work environment (Beer et al., 2014; Bonifacci et al., 2013; Brante, 2013; Cameron, 2016;

Carroll & Iles, 2006; Casserly, 2013; Claassens & Lessing, 2015; Grills-Taquechel et al., 2012; Klassen et al., 2011; Kola et al., 2014; McNulty, 2003; Nalavany et al., 2015; Nergard-Nilssen & Hulme, 2014; Skinner & MacGill, 2015; Tsovili, 2004; Whitehouse et al., 2008). However, there was limited information on issues with dyslexia in relation to the family and social environment. In this study, I further explored issues with dyslexia and COE experiences in association in all four environments, specifically educational, work, family, and social environments. A few insights came about because of this emphasis. First, the ramifications of the struggles with dyslexia extend far beyond the educational environment. This insight highlighted and expanded upon Beer et al.'s (2014) findings that the impact of dyslexia affects nearly all domains of functioning. More specifically, all seven participants reported lifelong struggles and challenges because of dyslexia in all four environments.

Second, QOL experiences related to dyslexia stemmed from both internally and externally caused perceptions. Internally caused perceptions are the thoughts that are realized without having overt outside influence. An example of internally caused perceptions would be realizing someone else did better on a test and adopting the belief that "I am not smart." Externally caused perceptions are the thoughts that are realized due to overt outside influences. An example of externally caused perceptions would be when someone calls a person stupid. This person then adopts the belief of "I am not smart" after being called stupid. By exploring the subjective, existential, and objective perspective, both internal and external perceptions could be addressed. Through the use

of Ventegodt et al.'s (2003) IQOL theory, the research revealed that both internally and externally caused perceptions played an integral role in QOL experiences.

Third, the research indicated that the type of early intervention by parents, teachers, and/or outside resources influenced perceptions, the ability to adapt, and overall QOL experiences. Three types of interventions were explored in this study: (a) interventions that emphasized the use of tricks, tools, and others to help a person with dyslexia cover up or hide their struggle with dyslexia; (b) interventions that emphasized the avoidance of tasks that are difficult; and (c) interventions that emphasized manually learning to decipher language the way a person without dyslexia would naturally. All three methods were addressed throughout Chapter 4. Furthermore, the research revealed that each intervention type influenced common patterns of behaviors, beliefs, and overall QOL experiences amongst others who shared similar intervention approaches.

Theoretical Framework

The IQOL theory was used to address the QOL perspectives of each of the participants. The IQOL theory was chosen because it focused on levels of satisfaction, emphasizing specific areas of the subjective-existential-objective spectrum (see Ventegodt et al., 2003). Ventegodt et al. (2003) recognized that QOL had deeper implications than how satisfied a person feels. Therefore, the IQOL theory was created to fill the gaps left by other QOL theories, recognizing the complexities of what it means to have a good QOL (Ventegodt et al., 2003). In this study, I emphasized the subjective, existential, and objective spectrums to help categorize, explore, and analyze each told story. Furthermore, the IQOL theory helped to reveal long-term ramifications, COE

themes, and crossover experiences (i.e., experiences with dyslexia that crossed over and had influence in other environments). Overall, the IQOL theory paired well with this study and provided a solid foundation to address what QOL means.

Limitations of the Study

This was a qualitative study with seven participants designed to provide a rich exploration into their lived experiences and insights related to dyslexia, COE themes, and QOL. Therefore, the findings cannot represent the broader range of other people who struggle with dyslexia. Further research would need to be conducted to address the larger population of individuals with dyslexia. Furthermore, this study emphasized young adults with dyslexia. Further research with another age range might yield different QOL experiences. Lastly, a matrix design was used to explore COE themes and QOL experiences for participants with dyslexia. The matrix design incorporated the analysis of three perspectives (subjective, existential, and objective) within four environments (education, work, family, and social). This research was expansive. Limiting the emphasis to fewer perspectives and/or environments could provide deeper insight into QOL experiences.

Overall, I provided a detailed description of research procedures, data analysis, and the interpretation process to ensure transferability. Trustworthiness was accomplished through the use of audio recordings and transcriptions. Finally, I analyzed each participant's responses and used their responses to explain each COE theme and QOL experience. By using the participants' responses, I was able to minimize my own interests and/or biases to improve the study's confirmability.

Recommendations

Further research should be conducted on different age ranges. My focus was on young adults from 22 to 35. Having participants younger than this age range who have not had the same amount of time to process their inherent difficulties may present a different perspective. Likewise, having participants with an older age range, who have had more time to process through their inherent difficulties, may also present a different perspective. A longitudinal study exploring the perception shift from childhood through adulthood could also present different information about the COE and QOL experiences of people with dyslexia. Finally, a narrower study that focuses on QOL from one or two perspectives (subjective, existential, or objective) and one or two environments (educational, work, family, or social) may yield a more in-depth investigation in each category. This study emphasized all perspectives and environments, which provided valuable insight. However, because of the broad focus, less emphasis was placed on each category.

Implications

From a social change perspective, this study can influence individuals with dyslexia by providing insight into the subjective, existential, and objective perspectives of QOL experiences. More specifically, added self-awareness can lead to healthier life choices and a better QOL. Moreover, educators, employers, parents, and friends can begin to understand individuals with dyslexia as it relates to their QOL experiences. Awareness in educational, work, family, and social settings can invoke positive change by addressing potential biases, stereotypes, and prejudices. Educators, employers,

parents, and friends who have an understanding of factors associated with QOL can adapt their given environments for success and satisfaction on behalf of individuals with dyslexia. Awareness of what constitutes QOL may help family and social groups appreciate, respect, and support individuals with dyslexia, thus enhancing their QOL. New insights into QOL may emerge, allowing for additional research, a better understanding, and the possibility of positive change.

Conclusion

The exploration of QOL experiences for young adults with dyslexia was a complex study. First, understanding what QOL meant was complicated, especially as multiple angles were addressed. Second, the recognition that dyslexia was not just a school-related issue but permeated every aspect of life created a wider focus area in this study. Together, these complicated dynamics created a web of complex and interweaving circumstances that entangled each participant in a wide range of negative thoughts, emotions, feelings, and self-perceptions. All seven participants indicated that each experience left behind a lingering sense of frustration, fear, failure, and self-doubt, which influenced future choices. All seven participants also reported a desire to fit in with society, but they recognized that their struggle made them feel isolated. However, even with the plethora of negative experiences, all seven participants reported finding creative solutions throughout their lives to overcome obstacles and make connections. These creative solutions were different for every participant and had a wide range of positive influences on QOL. In general, all participants grew to understand their struggle with dyslexia to some degree. Furthermore, all participants learned to accept their struggles

and even find coping strategies through the difficult scenarios they faced. In conclusion, this study helped to demonstrate these complex experiences. Moreover, in this study, I underscored how each experience is linked together to form COEs and influence QOL experiences.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

The questions below are interview questions adapted from Kola and colleagues (2014) study on young adults living with chronic neurological conditions.

Let's begin by discussing your overall experiences with dyslexia. How has your general life experience with dyslexia impacted your educational, work, family, and social decisions?

Education:

1. Describe the experience of living with dyslexia within your educational environment?
2. Tell me about any specific difficulties within your educational environment as a result of being dyslexic?
3. Tell me about any specific challenges (ex: aspects of care) within transitional periods (changing classes/instructors/schools)?

Work:

1. Describe the experience of living with dyslexia within your work environment?
2. Tell me about any specific difficulties within your work environment as a result of being dyslexic?
3. Tell me about any specific challenges within transitional periods (new job/ promotion/ new boss/ new coworkers)?

Family:

1. Describe the experience of living with dyslexia within your home environment?
2. Tell me about any specific difficulties within your home environment as a result of being dyslexic?
3. Tell me about any specific challenges within transitional periods (school related changes/ work related changes/ other household changes)?

Social:

1. Describe the experience of living with dyslexia within your social environment?
2. Tell me about any specific difficulties within your social environment as a result of being dyslexic?
3. Tell me about any specific challenges within transitional periods (change of peers/ environmental changes)?

Closing Statements:

Thank you for participating in the interview. Before we close is there anything else you would like to share, or do you have questions before we end the interview?