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Faculty Perceptions About Instructional Accommodations for Students with Social Anxiety Disorder

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Walden University

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Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

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Jessie F. E. Tudor-Tangeman

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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the review committee have been made.

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2024

Abstract

Faculty Perceptions About Instructional Accommodations for Students with

Social Anxiety Disorder

by

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

August 2024

Abstract

The problem examined was that post-secondary faculty experience challenges related to providing responsive accommodations to post-secondary students who self-identify with a diagnosis of social anxiety disorder (SAD). The purpose of this study was to investigate post-secondary faculty's perceptions of their ability to make responsive instructional modifications beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD. The conceptual framework that grounds this study was Clark and Wells' (1995) cognitive model of social phobia. The research questions focused on the perceptions of post-secondary faculty in relation to their ability to make responsive instructional modifications for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD. A basic qualitative design was used in which a convenience sample of 13 individuals were recruited from the faculty population from a mid-west university. Data were collected via semistructured interviews. Four themes emerged related to the participants' perceptions of their abilities to make instructional accommodations: participants have varying levels of experience engaging with post-secondary students experiencing SAD, experience making instructional accommodations meant to mitigate a student's hesitancy to participate in class, conveyed a lack of awareness of available applicable professional development opportunities related to SAD provided by the university, and conveyed the existence of barriers that hindered their abilities to make instructional accommodations. This study may contribute to positive social change by providing a greater understanding of post-secondary faculty's perceptions of their abilities to address the issue of SAD via responsive instructional modifications.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Michael. Your unwavering support, in all things, has meant the absolute world to me, and I will never be able to express to you how grateful I am. Thank you.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my husband. To my husband, your constant and steady presence in my life has allowed me to achieve this accomplishment, and therefore, it is just as much yours as it is mine.

I would also like to thank my sister, brother-in-law, niece, two nephews, and friends for their unwavering support.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to Study

The topic addressed in this study is the post-secondary faculty's perceptions of their ability to make responsive instructional modifications beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing social anxiety disorder (SAD). SAD presents as a consistent fear of unfamiliar social situations in which an individual believes they will be scrutinized by others and, in turn, will exhibit anxiety symptoms that result in the individual feeling embarrassed or humiliated (National Institute of Mental Health, n.d.). SAD, depending on the severity of its presentation, may qualify as a psychological disability, which would have implications for academic accommodation requirements (Fink et al., 2009). There has been an increase in research conducted regarding the potential effects of SAD on the post-secondary student population, with a particular focus on academic performance (Bolinski et al., 2021). While such research denotes a correlation between SAD and poor academic performance, there is a gap in the literature regarding post-secondary faculty's perceptions of their ability to make responsive instructional modifications beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD.

As the reported rates of SAD amongst post-secondary students continue to increase, and as there is data that suggest that the COVID pandemic may have further increased the prevalence of SAD, there is a sense of urgency in relation to identifying a

holistic best practice approach to academic accommodations that will include instructional strategies (Son et al., 2020). This study investigated post-secondary faculty's perceptions of their ability to make responsive instructional modifications beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD.

This study contributes to positive social change by exploring SAD in the post-secondary environment by examining the perception of the faculty member and contributes to the existing body of literature regarding best practice approaches to instruction. College-aged young adults experience SAD at a disproportionate rate as compared to other age strata of the population (National Institute of Mental Health, n.d.). As a result of most individuals who report experiencing SAD being college-aged individuals, this population consists of many individuals who may face the challenge of coping with SAD while also being in classroom environments that necessitate public engagement (Ozturk et al., 2020). Engaging in such a public manner in the classroom likely exacerbates problematic behaviors that are the hallmark of SAD (Ozturk et al., 2020). With reported cases of SAD among the post-secondary student population continuing to rise, it is imperative to examine this issue more closely and devise instructional strategies to address this issue as part of a multi-pronged approach (The University of Texas at Austin Counseling and Mental Health Center, n.d.). In devising instructional strategies to address the issue of SAD among the post-secondary student population, the academic challenges associated with SAD can be mitigated and, in turn,

prevent students experiencing SAD from missing important opportunities to engage with their peers, instructors, and course content (Wiest & Treacy, 2019). Moreover, in effectively addressing SAD in the post-secondary classroom environment, more students will have access to a learning environment conducive to their psychosocial needs and one that fosters their academic success (Wiest & Treacy, 2019).

This chapter includes the study's background, focus, and scope. Secondly, the problem statement, purpose, research questions, and conceptual framework are stated. Finally, the nature of the study, applicable definitions, assumptions, delimitations, limitations, study significance, and summary are included.

Background

This study focused on post-secondary faculty's perceptions of their ability to make responsive instructional modifications, beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services, for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD. SAD presents as a consistent fear of unfamiliar social situations in which an individual believes they will be scrutinized by others and will subsequently exhibit anxiety symptoms that result in the individual feeling embarrassed or humiliated (National Institute of Mental Health, n.d.). An estimated 7.1 % of adults, or approximately 40 million individuals, in the U.S. reported experiencing SAD in the past year with the disorder effecting females more than males (National Institute of Mental Health, n.d.; The University of Texas at Austin Counseling and Mental Health Center, n.d.). According to the National Comorbidity Survey Replication, 12.1 % of adults in the

U.S. will experience SAD at some point in their lifetime (National Institute of Mental Health, n.d.). Young adults, aged 18 to 29, account for the majority of cases of SAD (National Institute of Mental Health, n.d.).

With a disproportionate number of college-aged individuals experiencing SAD, colleges and universities have become increasingly cognizant of the need to address this disorder in the student population as it can adversely impact a student's academic success (The University of Texas at Austin Counseling and Mental Health Center, n.d.). College students experiencing SAD are more prone to avoid aspects of course curriculum that mandate they engage publicly or interpersonally. Thus, such students are more likely than their college peers not experiencing SAD to miss class sessions, not complete assignments, withdraw from courses, fail courses, and drop out of academic programs completely (Hadwin et al., 2016). It is of further note that SAD, depending on the severity of its presentation, may qualify as a psychological disability, which would have implications for academic accommodation requirements within the post-secondary environment (Fink et al., 2009).

A substantial body of literature denotes the academic challenges associated with SAD within the post-secondary student population, as well as research related to the perspective of the post-secondary student's experience with SAD. However, there is a gap in the literature as it relates to faculty understanding of SAD as well as faculty perceptions related to their ability to create and implement instructional strategies to mitigate the academic challenges associated with SAD among post-secondary students

(Ozturk et al., 2020). Moreover, there are indications, at the local level, of a gap in practice related to addressing SAD via instructional strategies. Additional research is necessary to foster a better understanding of the critical role post-secondary faculty members have in mitigating the academic challenges of SAD within the post-secondary student population. The critical role of post-secondary faculty members appears to be an overlooked variable in the existing literature when examining best practice approaches to mitigating the academic challenges associated with SAD. This study may aid in closing the gap in existing literature and practice regarding SAD in the post-secondary environment by investigating post-secondary faculty's perceptions of their ability to make responsive instructional modifications for post-secondary students experiencing SAD. This study informs best practice approaches to mitigating the academic challenges associated with SAD via responsive instructional strategies. The scope of the data collected was limited to one geographic location and conducted via either face-to-face or virtual interviews. Data were collected from 13 faculty members from one four-year university. Faculty participants were selected via a convenience sample.

Problem Statement

The problem examined in this study was that post-secondary faculty are experiencing challenges related to providing responsive accommodations to post-secondary students who self-identify with a diagnosis of SAD that goes beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services. Post-secondary students are more likely to experience SAD than any other portion of the U.S. population

(Seah et al., 2020). SAD, which is a measurable phenomenon, via The Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS) as well as numerous other instruments, presents within individuals via a persistent sense that they are being scrutinized within social situations. Thus, in perceiving that they are being scrutinized, individuals experiencing SAD avoid social or public engagement with others as a coping mechanism (Hedman et al., 2013). In avoiding such engagement, post-secondary students are more likely to avoid aspects of curricular course requirements that mandate they publicly engage with their instructors and peers in the classroom environment via classroom discussions, small group discussions, group projects, oral presentations, and one-on-one discussions with instructors (Ozturk et al., 2020). Not meeting portions of curricular requirements that involve public engagement thus makes post-secondary students experiencing SAD more likely to withdrawal from or fail courses that necessitate such engagement (Ozturk et al., 2020). Depending on the severity of its presentation, SAD may qualify as a psychological disability which would have implications for academic accommodation requirements (Fink et al., 2009).

This study builds upon existing research that notes the need to provide greater accommodations beyond those currently mandated to mitigate the academic challenges of SAD in the post-secondary student population, including instructional strategies (Ozturk et al., 2020). There is existing literature that denotes the increasing prevalence of SAD in the post-secondary student population and a need to effectively address SAD as it relates to the impact the disorder has on an individual's academic performance. However, there is a gap in the literature as it relates to the faculty's perceptions about the disorder, how

the instructors believe the disorder impacts the classroom environment, a student's academic performance, and the instructor's knowledge of how to create and implement responsive instructional strategies to mitigate the adverse impact of SAD on academic performance (Huang et al., 2018).

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative study aimed to investigate post-secondary faculty's perceptions of their ability to make responsive instructional modifications beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD. Data were collected via semistructured interviews. As this study explored a social phenomenon that included the understanding and perception of post-secondary faculty, it was well suited to the qualitative research tradition.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study are as follows:

RQ 1: What are the perceptions of post-secondary faculty in relation to their ability to make responsive instructional modifications, beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services, for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD?

RQ 2: What kind of training do post-secondary faculty perceive would be necessary to enhance their ability to make responsive instructional modifications, beyond

the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services, for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD?

Conceptual Framework

At a macro level, a conceptual framework is utilized in research to help explain the relationship between concepts specific to the phenomenon to be examined (Silver, n.d.). At a micro level, the conceptual framework serves as a function for interpreting and developing an understanding of qualitative research findings (Barbour, 2014). The conceptual framework that supports this study is the seminal work of Clark and Wells' (1995) cognitive model of social phobia. Clark and Wells' (1995) cognitive model of social phobia (also known as SAD) describes a phenomenon in which an individual with this phobia references past negative social experiences and then believes that the same negative experience will be replicated in nearly every other similar social experience in the present and future (Clark & Wells, 1995). As a result, should the cycle of continued negative experiences persist, an individual with social phobia employs avoidance of what they perceive to be negative social experiences as a coping strategy (Clark & Wells, 1995).

The use of Clark and Wells' (1995) cognitive model of social phobia served as the conceptual framework for this study as a means of researching, investigating, and understanding the problem of SAD in the post-secondary student population. Specifically, the cognitive model of social phobia provided the framework to investigate the post-secondary faculty's perceptions of SAD within the post-secondary student

population and the faculty's perceptions regarding their ability to create and implement responsive instructional strategies. The focus of this research is applicable to the cognitive model of social phobia as Clark and Wells (1995) noted that it becomes key to intervene in situations of SAD in a manner that can alter one's perceptions of situations that had once caused them discomfort. As applied to the focus of this study, such an alteration could result via the creation and implementation of instructional strategies that make student engagement less anxiety-provoking and, in turn, a more positive experience. Thus, interrupting the previous problematic cycle via instructional strategies may encourage active student engagement and, in turn, may make it less likely that the student will opt to avoid academic activities.

It is of additional note that the use of the cognitive model of social phobia provides an appropriate framework for investigating each of the research questions within the qualitative research tradition. Specifically, the cognitive model of social phobia is meant to foster an understanding of SAD, how it presents, and methods for mitigating its negative impact on the experience of the individual experiencing the disorder. The research questions align with the conceptual model of social phobia as each serves to derive responses that will provide a greater understanding of SAD within the post-secondary environment by investigating the faculty's perceptions of SAD, as well as proposed institutional methods that could be adopted to better prepare faculty for effectively addressing SAD via instructional strategies.

Nature of the Study

A basic qualitative design was utilized to explore post-secondary faculty's perceptions of SAD within the post-secondary student population and their perception of their ability to utilize instructional strategies to mitigate the academic challenges associated with SAD. This study engaged with 13 post-secondary faculty members who are course instructors at one university in the mid-west of the United States. Faculty participants were selected via a convenience sample and taught in various disciplines, including education, math, cultural studies, language arts, social sciences, and humanities. This study collected data via semistructured interviews. An inductive analytic process was used to examine the data collected. Patterns derived from data analysis informed the creation of codes and subsequent themes.

A qualitative research approach was appropriate for this study as the nature of the study is in line with the tenets of qualitative research methods. The qualitative research approach is meant to engage with participants to examine their experiences with and individual perceptions of specific phenomena (Austin, 2014). The qualitative research approach can foster a greater understanding of an individual and how the individual experiences the world around them (Austin, 2014). As the researcher utilizes the qualitative research approach, the researcher will collect qualitative data that, once coded and analyzed, can be used to derive meaning from the emerging patterns related to a given phenomenon (Austin, 2014). Such patterns may then inform how a given phenomenon is managed either via the development of intervention strategies, program or

policy changes, the development of best practice approaches or may provide support for current processes.

Definitions

Terms that may need clarification within the context of the study are discussed here.

Academic Performance: The level to which a student meets standards established by governmental and/or institutional bodies (Bell, 2022).

Instructional Strategies: Techniques utilized by teachers that foster student engagement and subject matter comprehension (Bolt-Lee, 2021).

Phobia: A relentless, disproportionate, and irrational fear of an inanimate object, individual, animal, or situation. (LeWine, 2022).

SAD: An unrelenting fear of specific and/or general social situations in which the person must publicly engage in an unfamiliar environment and believe they believe they will be scrutinized in a manner that will result in personal embarrassment and/or humiliation. (National Institutes of Health, n.d.).

Student Accommodations: A change of or to an environment, curriculum, technology or equipment that provides an opportunity for an individual with a disability to gain greater access to academic content (University of Washington, 2021).

Assumptions

In conducting this study, I made two assumptions that I believe would be true, but it is of note that I could not prove them to be true. The assumptions made were critical to

this study as these assumptions could affect the validity of the study results. One assumption made was that faculty members interviewed for this study would provide accurate responses and would not hesitate to respond truthfully. I believed it was reasonable to make these assumptions because I wanted to ensure participant anonymity and confidentiality throughout this study and thus assumed that the faculty members would believe it was safe to provide candid, accurate and truthful responses. The additional assumption related to this study was that the faculty members would accurately describe their experience as it relates to SAD in the post-secondary environment.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study was narrowed to specifically investigate the post-secondary faculty's perceptions of SAD within the post-secondary student population as well as the post-secondary faculty's perception of their ability to accommodate this student population via instructional strategies. This specific focus was selected because there is a gap in existing literature related to exploring SAD within the post-secondary learning environment from the perspective of faculty members. Furthermore, existing literature suggests the need for additional research as it relates to the critical role of faculty members in developing responsive instructional strategies to address the academic challenges associated with SAD (Mamboleo et al., 2020)

The scope of this study included 13 post-secondary faculty members who are instructors charged with creating instructional strategies within their assigned courses. This study was delimited to one university in the United States's mid-west region.

Faculty participants were selected via a convenience sample and taught in a variety of disciplines to include education, math, cultural studies, language arts, social sciences, and humanities.

Utilizing the qualitative tradition to investigate this phenomenon and collecting data from a small sample at one university provided greater insight into SAD within the context of the research site and may also be useful to other post-secondary environments. Specifically, the information resulting from this study will likely be generalizable as the way SAD presents in a student population is rather universal regardless of institution. Thus, findings from this study that can inform recommendations for best practice approaches can be generalized to most institutions and post-secondary student populations in which individuals are experiencing SAD.

Limitations

There are three key limitations to consider concerning this study. First, it is critical for a researcher to be aware of bias within the research process, as biases can have a notable impact on credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2019). As a higher education administrator for twenty years, as well as a guest lecturer in the post-secondary environment, I have witnessed instances in which students have reported being significantly affected by what they have described as episodes of anxiety. Such students have further described the extent to which such experiences with anxiety have prevented them from being fully engaged in critical aspects of the course curriculum. In tandem with such student experiences, I have also experienced as a lecturer and anecdotally heard

from other instructors what is perceived to be an increase in situations in which students become hesitant to participate in aspects of the curriculum that require public engagement. Furthermore, via conversations with the instructors and a review of applicable literature, there appears to be a lack of practical instructional and curricular interventions that could be implemented to mitigate the adverse effects of SAD in the post-secondary student population.

The knowledge of and experience with SAD within the post-secondary student population can cause bias. It is with this acknowledgement that I realize this could potentially be a weakness in this study and could affect the trustworthiness within the final analysis of the data collected. I, therefore, implemented strategies to mitigate such bias including selecting participants from a variety of disciplines and tenures and avoiding chain referral sampling; I engaged in reflexivity exercises and maintained the traditions of the research method described in Chapter Three.

An additional limitation to be considered was the participant sample size. As the sample size for this study was 13 faculty participants, one may not assume that the study results will be representative of the larger post-secondary faculty population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The post-secondary faculty population is considerable and, thus, likely to contain a wide variety of perspectives; therefore, it would be inappropriate for the consumer of this study to believe the results are transferable. It is of note, however, that according to Creswell and Creswell (2018), a small sample size aligns with qualitative studies such as the one conducted. A qualitative study is designed to derive more detailed

and nuanced data, rather than large quantities of data and thus strives for depth over breadth. Having a small participant sample allows the researcher to potentially spend more time interviewing the participant and uncover a more thorough understanding of the participant's experience (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Subjectivity is another potential limitation associated with the qualitative research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). There is the thinking that such subjectivity can influence the accuracy of the study results. In order to address the issue of subjectivity and a concern for accuracy, all semistructured interviews were recorded and captured in a written and detailed account of the research participant's responses.

Significance

This study addressed a gap in practice, as noted in the literature, within the post-secondary environment by focusing specifically on the post-secondary faculty's perceptions of their ability to make responsive instructional modifications beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD. While there is existing literature that examines the adverse academic effects associated with SAD in the post-secondary environment, mainly from the perspective of the student experience, there is little research that has been done that examines this phenomenon from how the faculty member perceives SAD (Huang et al., 2018). This study collected data that provides a greater understanding of the post-secondary faculty member's perceptions of their experience with SAD in the post-secondary learning environment. Gaining such an

understanding of this phenomenon can foster the development of best practice approaches for addressing SAD within the post-secondary environment. As SAD is one of the leading mental health issues experienced by post-secondary college students and can create significant barriers to learning, such research, once applied to the post-secondary environment, can serve to provide greater access to responsive learning opportunities for this student population.

Summary

This chapter included an overview of this study that investigated post-secondary faculty's perceptions of their ability to make responsive instructional modifications beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD. Included in the chapter was a synopsis of the study problem statement in which I included the need to research the critical role post-secondary faculty play in addressing SAD within the post-secondary academic environment and the aligned purpose of this study. Also included are the research questions this study examined to better understand the experience of SAD within the post-secondary environment from the faculty's perspective. The nature of the study was reviewed, and the rationale for the research design was presented. Additionally, the conceptual framework, relevant definitions, assumptions, scope, delimitations, limitations, and study significance were provided. Chapter 2 will contain a more thorough examination of the research process, including a review of the methods used for

identifying applicable literature, a review of the literature related to the conceptual framework, and the key variables and concepts related to this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem guiding this study was that post-secondary faculty are experiencing challenges related to providing responsive accommodations to post-secondary students who self-identify with a diagnosis of SAD that goes beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services. The purpose of this study was to investigate post-secondary faculty's perceptions of their ability to make responsive instructional modifications beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD. The literature reviewed stated that a holistic approach that goes beyond existing mandates is necessary to effectively address the academic challenges that post-secondary student experiencing SAD face in the post-secondary learning environment (Hadwin et al., 2016). When the academic needs of post-secondary students experiencing SAD are not addressed, the literature noted the increased risk of such students missing class sessions, failing to complete assignments, withdrawing from courses, failing courses, and dropping out from academic programs completely (Hadwin et al., 2016).

There is also existing literature that examines the adverse academic impacts associated with SAD in the post-secondary environment mainly from the perspective of the student experience (Huang et al., 2018). However, little research has been conducted that examines this phenomenon from the perspective of the faculty member (Huang et al., 2018). Existing literature recommends the need for additional research as it relates to the

critical role of faculty members in developing responsive instructional strategies to address the academic challenges associated with SAD (Mamboleo et al., 2020).

In this chapter, existing literature relevant to this study is reviewed and synthesized. Methods of conducting a literature search on applicable topics, as well as the databases used to conduct this research, are discussed. Clark and Wells' (1995) cognitive model of social phobia serves as the conceptual framework and was utilized to examine the key concepts in the study in an in-depth manner. The key concepts uncovered via the literature reviewed include academic accommodations within the post-secondary environment, perceptions of disabilities in the post-secondary classroom environment, SAD within the post-secondary environment, the faculty member's role in engaging with the post-secondary student experiencing SAD and recommended best practices. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of the derived conclusions and a summary.

Literature Search Strategy

The sources utilized during the research process included ERIC, ProQuest, Academic Search Premier, The Ohio State University's library portal, and the Walden University library portal. These library portals were utilized because each allows extensive access to a broad range of peer-reviewed journals and periodicals. The keywords used to identify applicable articles and information included *social anxiety in college students*, *social anxiety and academics*, *social anxiety and education*, *post-secondary instruction methods and student accommodations*, *college and student accommodations*, *developing instructional strategies in universities*, *college teaching*

strategies and accessibility, SAD in the college classroom, professional development among college professors, student perceptions of college instruction, mental health accommodations in college instruction, university student services and student accommodations, teaching pedagogy and student disability, universal design for learning, and the needs of college students with disabilities. The key terms were utilized independently and in combination. The major themes derived via this search strategy included the following: SAD within the post-secondary environment, the role of faculty members in addressing SAD in the post-secondary environment and recommendations to inform best practices. There were 65 total sources examined for this study. All resources were published between the years 2018 and 2022 except for the seminal work of/or related to Clark and Wells' cognitive model of social phobia.

Conceptual Framework

Clark and Wells' (1995) cognitive model of social phobia is the conceptual framework that guided this study. Clark and Wells' (1995) cognitive model of social phobia (also known as SAD) explores a phenomenon in which an individual with social phobia references past negative social experiences and holds a belief that the same negative experience will be replicated in nearly every other similar social experience in the present and future (Clark & Wells, 1995). As a result, should the cycle of continued negative experiences, as perceived by the individual, persist, an individual with social phobia employs avoidance of social experiences as a coping strategy (Clark & Wells, 1995).

Research related to the treatment of SAD noted the efficacy of cognitive therapy methodologies based on the principles of Clark and Wells' cognitive model of social phobia (Leigh & Clark, 2018). Leigh and Clark (2018) cited seminal work conducted in which Clark and Wells' cognitive model of social phobia served to inform strategies for mitigating the adverse impact of SAD. Specifically, Leigh and Clark (2018) noted that devising strategies that intervene and break the cycle of thinking that occurs within the course of a SAD episode, as suggested by Clark and Wells' (1995) cognitive model of social phobia, can serve to reorient how an individual perceives social situations.

Ranta et al. (2014) also examined seminal research in which Clark and Wells' cognitive model of social phobia was used within the adult population. Upon review of the existing research, Ranta et al. (2014) found that researchers determined conclusively that Clark and Wells' cognitive model of social phobia was effective in addressing the adverse effects of SAD within the adult population. With such consensus regarding the efficacy of Clark and Wells' cognitive model of social phobia among researchers, Ranta et al. (2014) conducted their research to determine the efficacy of Clark and Wells' cognitive model of social phobia within the adolescent population. Again, Ranta et al. (2014) cited previous research examining the adolescent population which denoted the efficacy of Clark and Wells' cognitive model of social phobia as well as provided evidence from their own study that supports previous findings.

There is extensive research that has been conducted in which Clark and Wells' cognitive model of social phobia has been effectively applied to not only the adult

population but also the adolescent population. As college students, developmentally, fall within both stages of the lifespan, Clark and Wells' cognitive model of social phobia applies to the research setting of this study. It is also important to note that research supports the principles of Clark and Wells' (1995) cognitive model of social phobia, specifically, the importance of providing opportunities for positive social engagement for individuals experiencing SAD so that the existing cycle of avoidance behaviors can be mitigated and eventually eliminated. To this latter point, as faculty members find it challenging to identify and implement effective strategies for addressing SAD within post-secondary student populations, having an accessible model such as the cognitive model of social phobia available to inform instructional strategies would be beneficial.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

The topic addressed in this study is the post-secondary faculty's perceptions of their ability to make responsive instructional modifications beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD. Applicable literature was reviewed, and key concepts related to SAD in the post-secondary environment emerged. The identified key concepts served to organize the literature examined into sections. The first section will provide a review of existing literature related to academic accommodations within the post-secondary environment, including its progression and efficacy. The second section will provide a review of existing literature related to the perceptions of disabilities in the post-secondary classroom environment. The third section will provide a review of

existing literature related to SAD within the post-secondary environment to include definitions, presentation within individuals, and effects on academic performance. The fourth section will provide a review of existing literature related to the role of the faculty member specific to engaging with post-secondary students experiencing disabilities, to include SAD. It will include challenges in developing responsive instructional strategies. The fifth section will provide an overview of existing literature related to recommendations for addressing SAD in the post-secondary environment, including suggested best practices. The final section will be a review of the literature that denotes the status of applicable practice at the local level.

Academic Accommodations within the Post-Secondary Environment

Literature abounds regarding the emerging acknowledgment within the post-secondary environment that there is an essential need to address the academic considerations of students with disabilities more effectively (Dalton et al., 2019). In recent years, what has precipitated this increased sense of responsibility to better serve students with disabilities is the significant rate at which students who self-identify as being disabled are engaging in post-secondary education (Parson et al., 2021). From the years 2010 to 2019, the percentage of post-secondary students reporting disabilities, including the psychological disability SAD, more than doubled, with rates ranging from 11% to 22% of the post-secondary student population (Parson et al., 2021; Womack, 2017). The number of post-secondary students seeking applicable services and accommodations also doubled (Parson et al., 2021). Furthermore, the literature denoted

that not only has there been an increase in demand for applicable services and accommodations for post-secondary students with disabilities, but there has also been a call to provide a greater diversity of such services beyond what is currently mandated (Womack, 2017).

Prior to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, few universities in the U.S. addressed the needs of students with disabilities, with such accommodations being enacted in response to the influx of World War II disabled veterans enrolling in colleges and later in response to student protests during the civil rights era (Womack, 2017). In formalizing the mandate for accommodations for post-secondary students with disabilities via the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (with rights expanded via the Americans with Disability Act in 1990), students with disabilities are ensured, in theory, equal rights and access to the same university services and programs that their non-disabled peers had as well as a prohibition of discrimination based on their disability status (Womack, 2017; Dalton et al., 2019; Sigh, 2019).

In practice, supporting a student experiencing disability and ensuring their equal rights means the post-secondary institution will provide, and are only required to provide, reasonable accommodations (Womack, 2017; Sassu, 2018). The post-secondary institution can determine, based on its own resources, what reasonable accommodations can be made that will ensure the rights of the student experiencing disability (Womack, 2017). Such accommodations can vary greatly from one institution to another (Womack, 2017). Accommodations may include allowing students with disabilities additional time

to complete an exam and providing a quiet physical space, free of distractions, for students to complete their exams as the minimum accommodations provided (Womack, 2017). Some post-secondary institutions may decide and be able to provide a greater number of accommodations, including note-taking support, attendance and deadline modifications, reduced course loads, access to assistive technology and media, sign language interpretation and transcription, adaptive transportation and recreation services, accessible classroom furniture, and consultation and advocacy services (The Ohio State University Office of Student Life, 2022).

What is known in the literature is that the number of accommodations provided seems to positively correlate with the academic success of students with disabilities who engage with said accommodations (Parson et al., 2021). Parson et al. (2021) conducted a retrospective cohort design study to examine the efficacy of academic support services for post-secondary students with disabilities. Participants were selected and fell into two groups, with one group consisting of first-year post-secondary students with cognitive disabilities that had an Individualized Education Plan in high school but received fewer academic accommodations during their freshman year of college and the second group consisting of first-year post-secondary students without cognitive disabilities. Parson et al. (2021) found that post-secondary students with cognitive disabilities who did not receive the same academic accommodations or support they had in high school were more likely to fail their classes or to drop their classes as compared to their peers without cognitive disabilities.

Huang, et al. (2018) derived similar findings in their study in which they conducted a meta-analysis examining the efficacy of extensive academic accommodations for post-secondary students with common mental health problems (CMHPs) that qualified as disabilities. Specifically, Huang et al. (2018) found that in those academic programs that moved beyond the minimum accommodations for post-secondary students with CMHP disabilities, established instructional protocols based on psychological principles such as Cognitive Behavioral Theory (CBT) and that varied in a manner that would meet the diverse needs of the student, resulted in students with cognitive disabilities performing better academically than those individuals that did not have the benefit of extensive academic accommodations.

Terras (2020) examined the effect of academic accommodations on student academic performance in the post-secondary online environment. Terras (2020) conducted semistructured interviews with post-secondary students enrolled in online courses that self-identified as having a psychological and/or cognitive disability as well as students who did not identify as having a psychological and cognitive disability. Terras (2020) focused the questions in the semistructured interview around disability and accommodations, attitudes toward accommodations and receiving accommodations. Like the findings of Huang et al. (2018) in which the availability of a variety of accommodation strategies was found to be most effective in addressing the needs of student with psychological and/or cognitive disabilities, participants in Terras' (2020) study reported having to develop a greater number of strategies for achieving their

academic goals than those participants without psychological and/or cognitive disabilities. Terras' (2020) findings suggest the need for more academic accommodations as well as *diverse types* of accommodations to support academic success (Terras, 2020).

Biebel et al. (2018) conducted three case studies in which they examined the efficacy of academic accommodations for post-secondary students with psychological and/or cognitive disabilities. Biebel et al. (2020), similar to Terras (2020), Parson et al. (2021) and Huang et al. (2018), determined that those post-secondary environments that provided the greatest number of academic accommodations to students with psychological and/or cognitive disabilities reported having the most success in relation to student retention and academic success within that student population. Furthermore, Biebel et al. (2020) found that the inclusion of academic accommodations that fostered one-on-one engagement between the student and support service professionals was particularly successful.

Perceptions of Disabilities in the Post-secondary Classroom Environment

There are two types of accommodations that are frequently made in post-secondary environments, those that make accommodations related to physical accessibility and those related to academic accessibility (Deckoff-Jones & Duell, 2018). Deckoff-Jones et al. (2018) noted that the type of disability a student has may affect the extent to which accommodations are perceived to be appropriate by the post-secondary institution. Specifically, those disabilities that are considered visible or noticeable by the observer via a mobility aid, physical disfigurement or symptom are the disabilities most

likely to be perceived as appropriate for receiving accommodation (Deckoff-Jones & Duell, 2018). In the case of invisible disabilities or those that do not provide a visual cue to the observer which include psychological and cognitive disabilities, there is a tendency for post-secondary institutions to question the legitimacy of providing accommodations (Deckoff-Jones & Duell, 2018; Lopez-Gavira et al., 2021). As the number of students in the US that self-identify as having a disability appropriate for accommodation is significant and as the academic success of such individuals is highly reliant upon the availability of accommodations, investigating the factors that contribute to whether a student has access to appropriate accommodations is imperative (Druckman et al., 2021).

Deckoff-Jones et al. (2018) examined the likelihood of post-secondary students with psychological and/or cognitive disabilities receiving appropriate accommodations in post-secondary environments. Via a questionnaire administered to post-secondary students designed to gain a better understanding of student perceptions regarding the appropriateness of receiving accommodations, Deckoff-Jones et al. (2018) determined that disability type did influence perceptions. Specifically, Deckoff-Jones et al. (2018) administered a questionnaire which provided hypothetical vignettes that described disability symptoms of eight fictional students. Participants were asked to read the vignettes and respond to corresponding questions related to the appropriateness of providing accommodations (Deckoff-Jones & Duell, 2018). Upon analysis of the participants' responses, Deckoff-Jones et al. (2018) found that participants were more

likely to believe accommodations were appropriate for those fictional students with visible disabilities than those fictional students with invisible disabilities.

Lopez-Gavira et al. (2021) arrived at a similar conclusion as Deckoff-Jones et al. regarding the importance of perception in their study that examined the perceptions of disabilities in the post-secondary environment with specific focus on the perceptions of faculty and student support staff. Via the use of semistructured interviews administered to support staff and students in a post-secondary environment, Lopez-Gavira et al. (2021) determined that the attitudes towards and perceptions of students with disabilities by faculty and student support staff had a considerable influence on the academic performance of students with disabilities. Specifically, when faculty members and student support staff appeared to the students to show an authentic interest in ensuring students with disabilities had access to accommodations, to include modifications to instructional strategies and learning materials, students were more likely to gain access to such accommodations and in turn perform better academically (Lopez-Gavira et al., 2021).

Like Lopez-Gavira et al. (2021), Druckman et al. (2021) also examined the effect of the perceptions of post-secondary student disability services staff has on the availability of accommodations for students with disabilities as the authors specifically looked to uncover existing biases. Druckman et al. (2021) administered an online anonymous survey to 2,380 professionals employed in student disability service departments, charged with the responsibility of determining the appropriateness of student accommodations, within US post-secondary institutions. The survey administered

to study participants inquired about the process the participants move through to determine the appropriate academic accommodations for students (Druckman et al., 2021). Upon analysis of the participants' responses, Druckman et al. (2021) noted that there appeared to be negative bias as it related to the type of disability and corresponding perceptions about a student's work ethic as well as a racial bias. Druckman et al. (2021) concluded, like Lopez-Gavira et al. (2021), that student disability services are comprised of individuals that bring their own unique perspectives and perceptions to their work and without formal training to address potential biases, students engaging with such services are likely to have varied experiences.

Like Lopez-Gavira et al. (2020) and Druckman et al. (2021), Wada et al. (2019) also examined perspectives and perceptions as they relate to post-secondary students' experiences with mental health issues. Wada et al. (2019), however, examined this phenomenon from the perspective of post-secondary students and specifically the stigma associated with seeking mental health-based services, to include academic accommodations. Wada et al. (2019) specifically wanted to explore the way such perceived stigma could not only prevent students from seeking mental-health services but how not doing so could subsequently impact the student's academic progress. Wada et al. (2019) determined that students perceived the university climate as one that is ability driven and thus did not encourage students to seek help addressing mental health issues without stigma and thus Wada et al. (2019) suggested that universities should do more to normalize seeking such assistance. Wada et al. (2019) noted the importance of

normalizing student accommodations to include instructional and curricular interventions for students with mental health considerations.

Like Wada et al. (2019) Turetsky and Sanderson (2018) examined the impact that an increased awareness of mental health and student support services had on reducing the stigma associated with accessing such services in the post-secondary environment.

Turetsky et al. (2018) recruited college undergraduate students to participate in a variety of student service-based programs to determine the efficacy of such program engagement and if such engagement then increased awareness of mental health issues, access to applicable university mental health services, other related support services, and reduced the stigma associated with seeking mental health services. Similar to Wada et al., (2019), Turetsky et al. (2018) found that decreasing the stigma associated with seeking mental health services, in this case, via the participation in interventions, increased the likelihood that participants would seek mental health services as well as reduced the perceived stigma attached to doing so.

Ho, et al. (2020), like Turetsky et. al. (2018) and Wada et al. (2019) also examined the influence of perspective and perception within the post-secondary environment as it relates to accommodations but did so with a focus on faculty disabilities. Via meta-analysis, Ho et al. (2020) explored disabilities within the post-secondary environment from the unique perspective of faculty members experiencing disability. Ho et al. (2020) found that faculty members with disabilities report the desire of the post-secondary community to neutralize their disability (or pretend it does not

exist) as well as an overwhelming sense that the community does not understand (or desire to understand) the experience associated with their disability. Ho et al. (2020) argued that both findings support a perception within the post-secondary environment that post-secondary institutional culture tends to ignore disability and in turn may be less likely to make responsive accommodations for any of the post-secondary institution's members. Ho et al. (2020) noted that because of the neutralization of disability in the post-secondary environment, not only do those that identify as having a disability go without necessary accommodations, but the entire post-secondary community misses a learning opportunity.

SAD within the Post-secondary Environment

SAD presents as a consistent fear of unfamiliar social situations in which an individual believes they will be scrutinized by others and in turn will exhibit anxiety symptoms that result in the individual feeling embarrassed or humiliated (National Institute of Mental Health, n.d.). College students experiencing SAD are more prone to avoid aspects of course curriculum that mandates they engage publicly or interpersonally and thus such students are more likely than their college peers not experiencing SAD to miss class sessions, fail to complete assignments, withdrawal from courses, fail courses as well as drop-out from academic programs completely (Hadwin et al., 2016). As the number of post-secondary students report experiencing SAD, there has been a corresponding increase in research conducted regarding the potential effects of SAD on the post-secondary student population with a particular focus on academic performance

(Bolinski, et al., 2021). Such research emphasizes the importance of developing holistic approaches to support the academic success of post-secondary students experiencing SAD which are informed by experts in the field psychology, related therapeutic traditions, neuroscience and education.

Perez et al. (2019) utilized a longitudinal database that provided the authors data points related to sociodemographic, school performance, and health insurance/labor statistics in Sweden to assess the effect of SAD on academic success across the lifespan. In comparison to individuals without SAD symptomology, the data collected and analyzed by Perez et al. (2019) indicated that individuals with SAD were more likely to fail some or all their first year of compulsory education, were more likely not to have the prerequisite qualifications to attend vocational or secondary school, were less likely to complete their secondary education or be accepted to or enter a post-secondary degree program. Additionally, Perez et al. (2020) determined that individuals with SAD were less likely to enroll in or complete postgraduate degree programs. Perez et al. (2020) suggested the implications of such analysis are significant from a social justice perspective as should the population comprised of individuals with SAD symptomology go without responsive academic intervention, large portions of the population will not have the same opportunities as their non-SAD peers to achieve academic success and possibly experience the same quality of life over the course of their lifespan.

Like Perez et al. (2020), Archbell and Coplan (2021) completed an extensive study examining the impact SAD has on the academic success of post-secondary

students. In guiding 1,073 post-secondary student participants through self-reporting processes, Archbell et al. (2021) gathered information regarding how participants experienced SAD and specifically how SAD impacted their communication with faculty members and peers. Upon analysis of the resulting data, Archbell et al. (2021) found, similar to the research findings of Perez et al. (2020), Archbell et al. (2021), that SAD negatively affected nearly all aspects of the participant's academic experience to include overall academic performance and more discretely, the participant's ability to communicate with faculty members and peers in a manner that not only adversely impacted their academic performance but also their ability to make interpersonal connections.

Ozturk, et al. (2020) conducted a quantitative study in which the authors examined the importance of creating instructional strategies grounded in psychological therapies to address SAD in the post-secondary environment. Ozturk et al. (2020) found a potential correlation between “elevated empathic abilities and impaired theory of mind” and a SAD diagnosis in study participants, thus, indicating comorbidity. As a result, Ozturk et al. (2020) suggested that when developing instructional and curricular interventions for post-secondary students experiencing SAD, those interventions must be created in a way that is cognizant of the possibility that students may have additional mental health considerations that may influence their academic engagement. Ozturk et al. (2020) emphasized that with a holistic approach to developing and implementing instructional and curricular interventions that takes the diverse and sometimes multiple

needs of the student into consideration, students may be more likely to achieve academic success.

Seah et al. (2020) examined the impact negative emotion differentiation (NED) has on rumination among college age individuals with SAD. Seah et al. (2020) notes that an individual's ability to employ NED, a strategy meant to disrupt the rumination cycle, a hallmark symptom of SAD, can prevent individuals from allowing the negative thought processes to become uncontrollable. As Ozturk, et al. (2020) indicated the importance of utilizing instructional strategies to mitigate the adverse academic impacts associated with SAD in the post-secondary student population, the research of Seah et al. (2020) supports the findings of Ozturk, et al. (2020) in suggesting that integrating instructional exercises into curriculum that fosters the disruption of rumination can in turn mitigate such adverse effects.

Like Seah et al. (2020), Moradi et al. (2020) also examined the extent to which psychological therapies can mitigate the adverse academic effects of SAD. Specifically, Moradi et al. (2020) examined the influence of Behavioral Activation/Inhibition Systems on social anxiety presentation and the former's ability to serve as a regulation strategy in post-secondary students. Moradi et al. (2020) research results suggested that there is a neurological/biological role (i.e. the Behavioral Activation/Inhibition Systems) in social anxiety presentation. Moradi's et al. (2020) research conveyed the importance of post-secondary environments being cognizant of the need for a multi-pronged approach to

providing responsive instruction, informed by applicable biological research, to post-secondary students experiencing SAD.

Like Seah et al. (2020) and Moradi et al. (2020), McCarty and Faulkner (2020) examined a novel approach to reducing the adverse effects of SAD within the post-secondary student population that was informed by tried therapeutic practices. Specifically, McCarty et al. (2020) examined the benefits of integrating journaling exercises into post-secondary calculus curriculum. McCarty et al. (2020) determined that study participants, post-secondary students enrolled in a calculus course, that engaged in the journaling exercises subsequently reported that such engagement resulting in the students enjoying the process of learning calculus as well as aided in reducing student anxiety. Similar to the findings of Seah et al. (2020), Moradi et al. (2020), McCarty et al. (2020) found that the integration of exercises in the curriculum, informed by therapeutic practices, can positively affect the experience of the student as they engage with the course material.

Unlike Seah et al. (2020), Moradi et al. (2020), and McCarty et al. (2020), Lei, Brosnan et al. (2020) examined the efficacy of providing external opportunities for students to find interpersonal support in the post-secondary environment as a means to mitigate the adverse effects of SAD. Lei et al. (2020) examined experiences of first year university students on the Autism spectrum as well as those deemed “typically developing” with a specific focus on the students’ ability to gain friends and develop a support network within the university. Lei et al. (2020) found that participants were able

to create a support network for themselves in their first year of college, however, despite such social gains and a subsequent reported reduction in social anxiety symptomology, participants reported the need to find additional ways in which to increase their interpersonal connections. Lei et al. (2020) suggested that their research supports the need for post-secondary environments to create and implement robust strategies for addressing social anxiety in the student population to include providing additional opportunities for students to make interpersonal connections perhaps through instructional strategies.

Like Lei et al. (2020), Foroughi et al. (2021) examined methods for post-secondary students to build interpersonal connections as a strategy for reducing the adverse effect of SAD. Specifically, Foroughi et al. (2021) examined the influence of social media on university students' experience with social anxiety and the subsequent impact social anxiety may have on the university student's academic performance. Foroughi et al. (2021) found that the extensive use of social media may lessen a university student's experience of depression, social anxiety, and social isolation. The findings of Foroughi et al. (2021) support other research, such as that conducted by Lei et al. (2020), that suggested the importance of interpersonal connection among post-secondary students experiencing SAD as a means to reduce the adverse effects of SAD and thus, creating opportunities, within the classroom environment, for post-secondary students to make such connections is considered a valuable approach to mitigating SAD symptomology.

Unlike Foroughi et al. (2021), Panova, Carbonell, Chamarro, and Puerta-Cortes (2020) found that constant accessibility of social media and other forms of media via smartphone usage among post-secondary students had varied impacts on the individual's experience with anxiety. Panova et al. (2020) found that the type of activity post-secondary students engaged in via their smartphones either resulted in an increase in anxiety or was protective. Panova et al. (2020) thus suggested the importance of post-secondary students having opportunities for *certain* types of interpersonal connections to aid in the reduction of anxiety. Specifically, Panova et al. (2020) noted those activities that post-secondary students engaged in via their smartphones that were considered competitive in nature, to include gaming, resulted in post-secondary students reporting an increase in anxiety symptoms. Transversely, Panova et al. (2020) noted that engagement that was supportive in nature, to include one-on-one interaction or communication, served as a protector against anxiety symptoms. Panova et al.'s (2020) research suggested that integrating opportunities into instructional strategies that allow for interpersonal connections that are supportive in nature may foster a reduction in anxiety symptom presentation.

Zhou and Yu (2021) examined an emerging subset of the topic of SAD and the disorder's impact on post-secondary education by researching the effect of COVID-19. Specifically, Zhou et al. (2021) examined the protective factor of online social support during the initial lockdown phase of the pandemic may have had on SAD within the post-secondary student population. Zhou et al. (2021) administered a questionnaire to 2481

post-secondary students who conducted all their coursework online during the initial lockdown phase of the pandemic to gain a greater understanding of how online social supports effected their SAD symptomology. Similar to the findings of Lei et al. (2020) and Foroughi et al. (2021), Zhou et al. (2021) found that with increase engagement with online social support, participants reported a reduction in SAD symptomology.

The Role of the Post-Secondary Faculty Member

The number of individuals enrolling in post-secondary education that report having a disability continues to increase and in turn so too has the awareness within post-secondary institutions that there is an increasing call to address the needs of these students via responsive pedagogy (Cotan et al., 2021). While the need for responsive pedagogy is acknowledged within the post-secondary environment and while post-secondary faculty members are increasingly developing and implementing inclusive teaching practices, literature denotes that there remain challenges to doing so in a consistent and effective manner (Cotan et al., 2021).

Mamboleo et al. (2020) examined elements that contribute to a university student's likelihood to access academic accommodations related to their disabilities and found that disclosing disabilities to their professors can be difficult for students. Mamboleo et al. (2020) determined that a student's previous experience disclosing disabilities to a professor and the subsequent reaction of the professor to the disclosure impacted their likelihood to do so in the future. The research findings of Mamboleo et al. (2020) indicated the importance of how faculty members react to the disclosure of a

disability from a student with the authors suggesting that critical importance of applicable training for faculty to include how to communicate with a student regarding their needs for accommodations as well as how to make appropriate modifications to instructional strategies.

Via a meta-analysis approach, Wiest and Treacy (2019) examined the variety of ways post-secondary students with mental health issues experience challenges to receiving student support services to include academic accommodations. Wiest et al. (2019) provided evidence-based approaches to addressing student mental health issues at the university administrative level as well as via faculty engagement. Wiest et al. (2019), like Mamboleo et al. (2020), noted the important role faculty can have in making sure students are aware of the available university student support services as well as reducing the stigma often associated with accessing such services and requesting academic accommodations. By openly discussing such services in the classroom and thus modeling such behavior, Wiest et al. (2019) noted that faculty can foster an environment in which access to accommodations is normalized.

Like Mamboleo et al. (2020) and Wiest et al. (2019), Cotan et al. (2021) examined the role post-secondary faculty have in providing academic support for students experiencing mental health issues. Cotan et al. (2021) examined pedagogical methods used by post-secondary faculty to effectively meet the varied academic needs of their students. Cotan et al. (2021) identified those faculty members whose students reported being effective in creating an inclusive and responsive learning environment and

administered a semistructured interview to determine the methods used. Cotan et al. (2021) determined the two essential actions taken by the faculty member to create an inclusive learning environment included learning about disabilities that may be impacting their students' academic success and in turn allowing such knowledge to positively impact their attitude and perceptions toward making academic accommodations. Secondly, successful faculty members actively pursued opportunities to learn how to create an inclusive learning environment via curricular and instructional strategies (Cotan et al., 2021). Cotan et al. (2021) emphasized, however, that despite the success the faculty interviewed had as it related to developing an inclusive learning environment, it was not without significant challenges to include the lack of information and training available within their own organizations. Such a lack of internal resources caused participants to report that they initially experienced insecurity regarding their abilities to create an effective and inclusive learning environment for their students with disabilities (Cotan et al., 2021).

Like Mamboleo et al. (2020), Wiest et al. (2019), and Cotan et al. (2021) examined the role post-secondary faculty have in providing academic support for students experiencing mental health issues, Ortiz et al. (2021) also examined the importance of this role. However, Ortiz et al. (2021) examined this phenomenon by investigating the perceived ability of adjunct faculty members in the community college environment to effectively engage in pedagogies of care. Pedagogies of care, as noted by Ortiz et al. (2021) are those teaching approaches that consider the whole student and thus

provides a holistic approach to instruction. Via a photovoice project in which eighteen community college adjunct faculty participated, Ortiz et al. (2021) attempted to gain a greater understanding of the methods used to implement pedagogies of care to include responsive instructional strategies for students with disabilities. Upon analysis of the resulting photos, Ortiz et al. (2021) determined that faculty members engaged in pedagogies of care exhibited an understanding of the complex needs of their students, conveyed empathy, took every opportunity to bolster their student's self-esteem through praise, were mindful to provide opportunities for students to engage with them outside of the classroom and remained in contact with students once the courses concluded. It is of note that Ortiz et al. (2021) found that while the faculty participants were effective in delivering pedagogies of care, it was not without its challenges. Specifically, Ortiz et al. (2021) noted that participants reported it being initially difficult to find a balance as they engaged in pedagogies of care with the other requirements of their professional and personal lives. Ortiz et al. (2021) noted that while pedagogy of care can be quite effective, faculty members and post-secondary institutions must be mindful of some of the challenges associated with its implementation.

Recommendations for Best Practices

As previously noted, the number of post-secondary students who self-identify with a disability continues to increase and as a result, research related to best practices meant to effectively address the academic needs for students is gradually emerging (Costello-Harris, 2019). Existing literature touts promising approaches that can aid post-

secondary institutions as they attempt to form strategies to effectively address the diverse needs of the post-secondary student population. The best practice approaches are quite varied and include utilizing technology in new ways, the inclusion of animal therapy, implementing reflective practice, making academic consultation available, strengthening existing student services, and utilizing existing student services in novel ways. Engaging with such research can aid in creating a foundation for post-secondary institutions to begin to create their own strategies for delivering responsive instruction.

In relation to utilizing technology in ways that can mitigate the adverse impact of SAD, Kahlke et al. (2019) examined the efficacy of internet and mobile based self-help interventions in lessening the impact of social anxiety among college students. Kahlke et al. (2019) determined that the use of internet and mobile based self-help interventions were effective in mitigating the adverse symptoms associated with SAD among the participants as well as other mental health-based issues. Kahlke's et al. (2019) further noted that universities could enter into agreements with such self-help applications and provide access to their students in a relatively cost-effective manner thus increasing student access. Kahlke's et al. (2019) further suggested that in providing access to these additional services, post-secondary institutions ease the task of addressing SAD in the classroom for faculty members.

Like Kahlke et al. (2019), Bolinski et al. (2021) also examined the use of technology in addressing mental health issues within the post-secondary environment. Bolinski et al. (2021) conducted a meta-analysis of existing literature to determine the

extent to which e-mental health-based interventions can impact academic performance among college students. Bolinski et al. (2021) determined that students experiencing mental health related issues to include anxiety benefited from engaging with e-mental health-based interventions, to include improvement in academic performance. Like Kahlke et al. (2019), Bolinski et al. (2021) found the e-mental health-based interventions provided a straightforward way in which post-secondary students experiencing mental health-based issues could easily access assistance.

House et al. (2018), like Kahlke et al. (2019) and Bolinski et al. (2021), examined novel approaches to providing support to post-secondary students experiencing mental health issues. Specifically, House et al. (2018) examined the efficacy of a university-based animal assisted exposure therapy intervention, led by faculty and staff, designed to decrease stress among college students. House et al. (2018) surveyed student participants engaged in the intervention to determine the ways the students believed participating in exposure therapy improved their mental health. Students who engaged in the animal assisted exposure therapy reported feeling less stressed, less homesick, experienced a decrease in anxiety, believed the program helped reduce the stigma related to mental health issues and reported being more likely to report mental health-based concerns to student support services and faculty. House et al. (2018) determined that since the animal assisted exposure therapy intervention was beneficial to the students participating in the program, this research supports the efficacy of implementing novel interventions in the post-secondary environment.

Button et al. (2019) conducted a case study in which they examined the efficacy of the academic consultation model for post-secondary students with disabilities. Academic consultants provide a variety of services and resources to students with disabilities to include assistance with time management, note taking, reading comprehension, establishing goals, developing self-advocacy skills, practicing stress management techniques and interpersonal skills (Button et al., 2019). Button et al. (2019) determined that engagement with academic consultants resulted in improved academic performance for post-secondary students. Button et al. (2019) further noted that the more customized the services were to the specific student, the more effective the engagement became for the student.

Like Button et al. (2019), Sanchez-Rodriguez, and LoGiudice (2018) investigated the impact of student engagement with another student support service, the library, on academic performance. Sanchez-Rodriguez et al. (2018) conducted a case study in which the authors examined the way forming a more dynamic relationship between a university library and the university student disability services office foster greater access to learning resources for students with disabilities. Through the evolving relationship between the university library and the university student disability services office, librarians learned how to create a more inclusive learning environment for students with disabilities within the library (Sanchez-Rodriguez & LoGiudice, 2018). Sanchez-Rodriguez et al. (2018) noted that because of the collaboration between the library and student disability services office, the library staff has become more knowledgeable

regarding the needs of students with disabilities and ways in which to effectively address those needs and in turn students report an improvement regarding access to the important learning resources available through the library.

Gaps in Local Practice

The data collection site for this study is a liberal arts university located in central Ohio. In reviewing materials readily available to the public, it appears as though the university acknowledges a need for and desire to create and implement instructional strategies that are responsive to the varied learning needs of the student population. Moreover, in reviewing past announcements regarding information and/or training sessions, the data collection site has made efforts towards providing its faculty members with some opportunities to learn about SAD, its presentation, and ways in which to address SAD via pedagogical strategies. However, in reviewing the literature specific to the data collection site that relates to academic accommodations, SAD and related topics, there appears to be a gap between what the university desires would happen versus what may be happening in practice.

In a section of the university's (2021) student handbook, it is noted that the university and faculty should acknowledge the need for a variety of academic strategies for students experiencing documented disabilities beyond what is mandated and advised by the Academic Resource Center. This section of the university Student Handbook (2021) supports the focus of the research proposed here as while the university notes the importance of providing a variety of academic strategies for students experiencing

documented disabilities, it does not provide examples of such strategies that could help inform faculty attempts to do so.

In the “Faculty Teaching Related Responsibilities” section of the university (2021) Faculty Handbook, it is noted that the faculty are responsible for implementing formative evaluation strategies to assess the effectiveness of their instruction. In utilizing the formative evaluation strategy, the university (2021) expects faculty to consistently assess the learning needs of their students and modify their instructional methods accordingly. This cited section of the university (2021) Faculty Handbook informs the research proposed here as it acknowledges that on an individual faculty level, modifications to instructional methods are necessary to accommodate the varied learning needs of students.

On the university’s (2021) webpage which provides instructions for students on how to document disabilities that qualify for academic accommodations, it is noted that the university process is structured to only facilitate the base requirements for accommodations and furthermore, the responsibility of gaining any additional accommodations falls on the student to negotiate with their instructors. This citation notes a lack of any other structured process for accommodations for students as well as any guidance for faculty regarding how to make such accommodations. This citation thus supports the premise of the research proposed here, that while the university acknowledges that additional accommodations, beyond what is mandated, may be

necessary, there is little if any structure in place to support faculty in doing so in an informed manner.

In an online article produced by the university (2019), the university acknowledges the need for more holistic and responsive support services for student wellness, to include those that support mental health-based needs. University students were interviewed for this online article and asked what practices they would like implemented on campus that would support their individual wellness and students noted their desire for such practices to include those within the classroom environment as well as throughout campus. The information found within this article indicates that the university is attempting to gain a greater understanding of what students believe will support their individual health and in turn such findings suggest that students want instructional practices implemented as a part of that overall plan.

In an additional online article produced by the university (2021), the university noted the work they have done with The Jed Foundation, an organization “that exists to protect emotional health” of young adults, to help advise the university on methods that could be implemented within campus culture to support student mental health. In the article, it is noted that The Jed Foundation advises academic institutions to employ a multi-pronged approach to fostering student mental health, to include, developing applicable instructional strategies. Via this work with The Jed Foundation, the university underwent a climate assessment, and it was suggested that a more robust strategy be created and implemented that would support student mental health to include applicable

faculty training and academic modifications. Such findings support the need for the research proposed here as it may serve to inform best practices as they relate to developing instructional modifications for students experiencing SAD.

The university (2016) hosted a faculty workshop, conducted by a social psychologist, to address developing instructional strategies that are more responsive to the varied needs of today's college student, to include those experiencing mental health related issues. In hosting this faculty workshop, the university is acknowledging that instructional modifications, beyond those that are mandated, are necessary to meet the diverse learning needs of students as well as the need to provide information to faculty on how to create responsive instructional modifications. Such acknowledgement supports the need for this research as it will inform institutional best practices as they relate to creating responsive instructional modifications for post-secondary students experiencing SAD.

In 2017, the university (2017) hosted a faculty workshop in which information was provided regarding the varied mental health and physical disabilities that can impact student academic performance. One of the primary goals of the workshop was to instruct faculty on methods for "holding students accountable to essential course components" while also being mindful of instructional methods that could be employed to accommodate students. In providing this workshop, the university acknowledges that it can be difficult for faculty to know the most prudent methods for making instructional

accommodations for students experiencing disabilities that may impact their academic performance.

Summary and Conclusions

Key concepts derived from the literature review were discussed to include accommodations in the post-secondary environment, perceptions of disabilities in the post-secondary classroom environment, SAD in the post-secondary environment, the role of the faculty member in the post-secondary environment, recommendations for best practices, and gaps in local practice. The literature reviewed suggests that there are some and rather varied strategies in place in post-secondary institutions meant to address the academic needs of post-secondary students with disabilities, to include those students experiencing SAD.

Furthermore, the literature conveys those post-secondary institutions appear to have a desire to effectively address the academic needs of post-secondary students experiencing disabilities. However, the literature reviewed also denotes that the strategies currently in place within post-secondary institutions are not enough to adequately address the diverse academic needs of post-secondary students with psychological and/or cognitive disabilities to include SAD. This study seeks to fill the existing gap in literature as it relates to exploring how faculty members perceive SAD in the post-secondary environment. In the review of the existing literature, how faculty perceive SAD in the post-secondary environment and how the faculty perceive their ability to create and implement effective instructional strategies to address SAD in the post-secondary

environment are absent and yet the literature denotes the important role faculty have in relation to this phenomenon.

The next chapter will include a detailed description of the research design and methodology. Additionally, chapter three will include a discussion regarding the participant selection process. Finally, chapter three will include a discussion of internal and external validity, the role of the researcher and the plan for data analysis as well as the manner in which research data will be managed and will conclude with a chapter summary.

Chapter 3: Research Method

This qualitative study aimed to investigate post-secondary faculty's perceptions of their ability to make responsive instructional accommodations beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD. This chapter discusses the role of the researcher, the research method and design used, and the validity of the research. Additionally, the participant recruitment process will be discussed, including participant selection strategies. The plan for data analysis will be discussed, including a more detailed description of the internal and external validity. Finally, a discussion regarding ethical considerations and procedures will be included. Chapter three will conclude with a summary.

Research Design and Rationale

A basic qualitative research design was utilized to examine the research questions: (RQ1) What are the perceptions of post-secondary faculty about their ability to make responsive instructional modifications beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD? and (RQ2) What kind of training do post-secondary faculty perceive would be necessary to enhance their ability to make responsive instructional modifications, beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services, for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD? The central phenomenon examined in this study is SAD within the post-secondary learning

environment from the perspective of the faculty member with a specific focus on post-secondary faculty's perceptions of their ability to make responsive instructional accommodations beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD.

A qualitative research design was deemed appropriate for this study for its alignment with the nature of the research. Specifically, as this study attempted to describe human phenomena via the value-laden data collected, a qualitative research design is most appropriate (Teherani et al., 2015). As this study focused on an individual's perceptions of the phenomena to be examined, the way data were collected via the qualitative research design produced vivid recollections of personal experiences (Teherani et al., 2015). Through the data analysis process, in examining participants' recollections, one gains a greater understanding of real-world phenomena and, in turn, greater insight into how to effectively address such phenomena via the subsequent creation of best practices (Teherani et al., 2015).

Role of the Researcher

Within the qualitative research design tradition, the researcher serves as the mechanism by which data is collected and analyzed (Sutton & Austin, 2015). In the case of qualitative research, the data collected are the thoughts, perceptions, and feelings of research participants (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Thus, the researcher can have a significant influence on the research process as they must engage with participants in a manner that will create an environment in which the former will feel comfortable divulging their

thoughts. With the important role of the researcher in mind, and in this case, as an observer, it was essential that I, the researcher, was consistently mindful of my influence over the research process. Specifically, as I was the individual recruiting study participants and interacting with them via the interview process, I remained aware of my personal and professional biases that could have affected such interactions and, in turn, was clear and open about my potential for subjectivity.

As a part of my effort to be consistently aware of my potential biases, I acknowledged my personal and professional roles and how they may influence my interaction with research participants and the analysis of the data collected. In my professional role as an administrator in a post-secondary environment, as well as a guest lecturer, and a current student in a doctoral program in which I am studying the post-secondary environment, I remained aware that I entered this research endeavor with acquired knowledge and established perspectives and biases. Additionally, in my role as the researcher and as the individual who interpreted the data collected, I employed strategies to prevent misleading or biased interpretations of the data. To ensure that I consistently self-checked as I moved through this study and attempted to consistently remain mindful, I engaged in recommended reflexivity exercises including journaling, discussions with my dissertation committee, note-taking and review, and internal contemplation.

Another means by which I addressed the potential for bias was to remain aware of confirmation bias, specifically, and in turn, plan my interactions with participants

accordingly. Creswell et al. (2018) denote that confirmation bias occurs during interactions between the researcher and study participant when the researcher acts in a manner that may lead the respondent to agree with the researcher's own beliefs. To prevent confirmation bias, it was essential for me to create a semistructured interview in a manner that omits certain language or question design that may lead the respondent to answer in a way that would support my own perspective or beliefs about the phenomenon being examined (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Inclusion of open-ended questions, providing an opportunity for participants to clarify their responses, being mindful not to relay my own opinions, as well as implementing a sound data analysis process aided in ensuring the authenticity of the participants' responses.

In reference to potential relationship with the participants, it is of note that participants were recruited from a university in which I currently did not work. I therefore had no professional relationship nor experience any power differential with the participants. It should be noted that there was the potential that I may know some of the participants personally.

Methodology

This section includes a discussion of study participants with a specific focus on sampling strategy and participant criteria for eligibility, sample size, recruitment, and methods for participants to exit the study. Additionally, this section will address the basis of the data collection instrument, the way it was created, and the content validity established. This section will also include an explanation of the data analysis plan and

subsequent trustworthiness. Finally, this section will address the ethical considerations and data management protocols.

Participant Selection

A specific participant pool and associated criterion for participation selection were determined for this study. Concerning sample size, and as this is a qualitative study, data saturation was likely to occur with a small number of participants. Thus, a sample size of 12 to 15 was determined to be appropriate (Saunders et al., 2017). The participant population used for this study was comprised of 394 post-secondary faculty members teaching at a 4-year post-secondary institution. The criteria used to identify suitable study participants included: (a) the faculty member teaches in a four-year post-secondary institution, (b) the faculty member works at a specific university identified as the data collection site for this study, and (c) the faculty member has worked at the data collection site for at least one academic year. The criteria selected aligned with this study's purpose and problem statements. Upon approval from Walden University's IRB, I recruited study participants via a convenience sample. Potential participants were identified upon review of the university's online faculty directory, including the tenure of potential participants and their university email addresses. Potential participants, for inclusion in the study's convenience sample, were contacted via an email message that detailed the purpose of the study, why the participants are being contacted for possible participation, what type of participation will be asked of them to include time requirements, scheduling processes, interview settings and sample questions that will guide the semistructured interview as

well as a mention of the voluntary nature of their participation and the confidentiality of their participation.

Instrumentation

A researcher-created semistructured interview protocol was developed to guide the semistructured interviews and served as a data collection instrument. The researcher-created questions (see Appendix B) were informed by the literature review with a specific focus on literature that suggested gaps in practice related to faculty perceptions of SAD in the post-secondary environment and faculty perceptions regarding their abilities to create responsive instructional strategies to mitigate the adverse academic effects of SAD within the post-secondary student population and areas recommended for further research. Additional consideration was given to the conceptual framework selected for this study, which further informed the questions that guided the semistructured interview protocol.

To begin the semistructured interview, I inquired about the participant's area of scholarly practice, instruction, and teaching tenure. At this time, I allowed a moment for the participants to elaborate, if they chose to do so, about any other facet of their professional background that they believed applicable to the study. The next phase of the interview process consisted of me asking the participants questions related to their experiences encountering SAD within the post-secondary student population. This phase of questioning guided the participants to discuss their perceptions regarding their abilities to create instructional strategies to mitigate the adverse academic effects of SAD within the post-secondary student population. The fourth and final set of questions made

inquiries about participant perceptions regarding what resources they believed they would need to effectively create and implement instructional strategies to mitigate the adverse academic effects of SAD within the post-secondary student population. Each set of questions created to guide the semistructured interview was designed to allow for participant discussion and elaboration and, when possible, were open-ended. Additionally, each set of questions aligned with the research questions denoted in this study. The duration of each interview was approximately 60 minutes and were conducted either face-to-face or via a virtual meeting. When necessary, a follow-up session was scheduled with participants.

Basis for Instrument Development

The semistructured interview questions and interview structure were researcher-created with the efficacy of the interview protocol informed by existing published qualitative research studies and related sources (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019; Jamshed, 2014; Newcomer et al., 2015; Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Kallio et al., 2016). Newcomer et al. (2015) endorsed semistructured interviews, as within the qualitative research design tradition, they are considered an accessible approach to data collection. Specifically, Newcomer et al. (2015) denoted that the semistructured interview is time efficient not only in its development but implementation, is cost-effective, and is well suited to a research design that has a basis in subjectivity and benefits from dialogue that is fostered by open-ended question within a relatively unexplored context. Newcomer et

al. (2015) further emphasized that establishing a structured process for developing semistructured interviews is essential to supporting the efficacy of the interviews.

Kallio et al. (2016) used a process for structuring and conducting semistructured interviews, supporting Newcomer's et al. (2015) premise. Specifically, Kallio et al. (2016) moved through a 5-step process in which the authors (1) established the validity of using the semistructured interview as well as (2) identified the applicable literature to serve as the basis for the questions, (3) created the initial draft of the semistructured interview to be tested, (4) tested the semistructured interview via pilot engagement and (5) make any needed modifications to the semistructured interview protocol and then administering the protocol.

Similar to Kallio et al. (2016), Castillo-Montoya (2016), outlined a process for developing a semistructured interview protocol via the author's Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) framework. Castillo-Montoya (2016) created the IPR framework to support the reliability of qualitative research methods such as semistructured interviews. The IPR framework emphasizes developing the questions that will guide the semistructured interviews to ensure alignment with the study's research questions (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). I utilized both the processes outlined by Castillo-Montoya (2016) and Kallio et al. (2016) to guide the creation of my semistructured interview questions. Additionally, the researcher-created semistructured protocol was reviewed by five subject matter experts.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Upon the receipt of IRB approval for this proposed study, participants were recruited via a convenience sample approach. Thirteen participants were recruited from a specified four-year post-secondary institution. Participants were identified as meeting the eligibility criteria via a review of the university's online faculty directory. Eligible participants received an introductory email correspondence from this researcher that included a detailed description of the purpose of the study, time requirements associated with initial participation and follow-up, interview setting, participant's volunteer status, consent process, management of collected data, and confidentiality for participants.

In the initial participant recruitment phase, I sent the introductory email to thirty prospective participants. Those individuals who agreed to participate in the study received, via email, a letter of consent that they were instructed to review, sign, and return to me should they agree with the terms therein. Potential participants were also informed that should they either cease corresponding with me or express their unwillingness to proceed with their engagement in the study, they would be formally removed from the study.

When conducting the semistructured interviews, each interview was manually transcribed as well as recorded via transcription software. In utilizing both processes, I implemented a data collection strategy that allowed for the data collected to be cross-checked for accuracy (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019; Jamshed, 2014; Newcomer, et al., 2015). Participant identities were protected via the use of a confidential identifier.

At the conclusion of the initial interview with individual participants, participants were reminded that, upon review of their responses, I may need to contact them again with follow-up questions to help clarify their answers and would do so within two weeks of the initial interview. Once the interview process was completed, participants received an email from me stating that the interview process was completed and that I would provide them with a copy, via email, of the final study.

Data Analysis Plan

I engaged in an iterative data analysis process. To follow is the data analysis process that was utilized for this study as outlined by O'Connor and Gibson (n.a.).

1. All data were collected in the form of interview notes and transcribed participant responses were organized into individual folders and labeled with participant confidential identifiers.
2. An excel spreadsheet was created that would allow for the organization of data collected with a specified tab for each respondent.
3. Data were organized by interview question with the corresponding research question noted.
4. Word frequency was analyzed to determine codes and emerging themes.
5. A review of the developed categories occurred to determine if any could be merged into broader themes.
6. The final step in the data analysis process was to ensure the reliability and validity of the data analysis via attempts at identifying outliers, potential

researcher effect on respondents, and confirmation of the accuracy of the responses via participant feedback.

The use of excel software was essential to the data analysis process for this study as it allowed for the management and organizing of large amounts of data which could then be categorized in way to derive meaning (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2020). To begin the analysis process, I created designated spreadsheets for each respondent that would be identified by a tab with the respondent's confidential identifier. Each spreadsheet consisted of headers that denoted the semistructured interview question asked of the respondent along with the corresponding research question the data gathered would inform. In the cells under each header, are the transcribed responses of the participants.

I initiated in-depth analysis with the collected data via inductive coding, or more specifically, I reviewed and interpreted the raw data first and then assessed the data for emerging themes (Chandra & Shang, 2019). As the data analysis process evolved and as initial broad themes were identified, subcategories emerged that in turn provided support for such themes (Chandra & Shang, 2019). As I moved through the data review process, the process was iterative in nature and consisted of a continuous cycle in which the data were reviewed repeatedly to ensure recurrent phrases, words or terms were noted (Allen, 2017). Data collected was reviewed to determine if there was any that was discrepant, or that did not seem to fit within any of categories that emerged during the data analysis process (Creswell & Poth, 2016). No discrepant data were discovered.

Trustworthiness

When referencing trustworthiness within the context of qualitative research, the researcher is addressing the extent to which a study's results have been derived via a thorough, consistent, and meticulous manner (Nowell et al., 2017). In qualitative research, the researcher must employ research processes that will support the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the subsequent study findings (Nowell et al., 2017). To follow are the strategies utilized in this study to foster the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study's results.

Credibility

Credibility denotes the extent to which the researcher is confident that the study's findings are truthful (Nowell et al., 2017). To ensure the credibility of the results of this study, my primary focus was on the accuracy of the data collected via the semistructured interviews. First, I established an interview protocol to support such accuracy to include creating clearly stated questions to guide the interview, administering follow-up questions to provide respondents with the opportunity to make any clarifications to their statements, to repeat back to the participants their responses in the event I needed clarification or confirmation of their responses, taking notes during the interview for reference, conducting follow-up interviews with participants should I have needed further clarification of their responses post-interview, and finally, relaying study results to participants for their review and feedback (Beeman, 1995).

Secondly, I utilized strategies for identifying my own potential biases, assumptions, and preferences as they relate to the research phenomenon to ensure they are not unduly influencing the accuracy of the research findings. Specifically, I engaged in self-reflection exercises to remain aware of my engagement in the study as not only a researcher but as an individual that came to this project with my own beliefs. I journaled throughout the research study and reviewed entries for potential conflicts and in turn remained mindful of how any could have influenced the research process. Additionally, as previously mentioned, I took notes while I was interviewing the participants and reviewed such notes to again attempt to identify any explicit or implicit assumptions I may have made during the process to ensure personal awareness (Yarborough, 2022).

Finally, as previously noted, I employed a protocol for managing discrepant data. The protocol for managing discrepant data consisted of me reexamining the data collected, ensuring that I have connected the data to the appropriate interview question and if further clarification is necessary, I followed-up with the respondent and requested that they clarify their response.

Transferability

In qualitative research, the researcher strives for a high degree of transferability. Transferability denotes the extent to which the results of a study may be applied to different research settings and/or population than that used in the original study (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). In the case of this study, the recruitment criteria for participant eligibility included: (a) the faculty member must teach at a 4-year post-secondary

institution, (b) the faculty member must work at a specific university identified as the data collection site for this study and (c) the faculty member has worked at the data collection site for at least one academic year. It was anticipated that utilizing a qualitative research design to study the phenomenon of SAD in the post-secondary environment will produce rich descriptive data. With such nuanced data resulting from this study, it was further anticipated that the consumer of this research would be able to determine what aspects of the findings may be applied to a different setting or population and thus judge the extent of transferability (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014).

Dependability

An additional consideration that lends to the trustworthiness of qualitative research findings is dependability. Dependability refers to the reliability and consistency of the research findings as well as the extent to which a third party may understand, audit and provide a critique of the research process utilized (Moon et al., 2016). An audit trail was established and maintained throughout the duration of this study to support the dependability of the subsequent results. An audit trail consists of a clear description of each step implemented by the researcher throughout the research process to include the study's initial development, implementation, data analysis and reporting (Carcary, 2020).

The audit trail protocol for this study included a written description of the step-by-step research process employed in relation to the literature reviewed, the creation of the data collection instrument and the process for organizing and analyzing the data. Additionally, the audit trail protocol included the maintenance of all data collection

methods and subsequent data collected in a locked and secure physical space for 5 years post completion. Finally, the audit protocol for this study included the results my self-reflection exercises to include journals and notes.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which a researcher has remained neutral and objective in their interpretation of the study's findings (Nyirenda et al., 2020). The audit trail protocol supported the confirmability of this study. In including an audit trail protocol, I provided a transparent description of the research processes followed to include the reasons why particular data collection instruments were selected and data analysis approaches were utilized. The audit trail protocol provided a mechanism for ensuring transparency, neutrality, and accountability (Nyirenda et al., 2020).

Ethical Procedures

A request for Internal Review Board (IRB) approval was submitted and approval granted prior to any engagement with potential participants regarding this study. The IRB serves as a gatekeeper to ensure that the research to be conducted is ethically sound and that any such research will be conducted in a manner that will not jeopardize the health and well-being of the participants. In completing the IRB application process, I was mandated to provide a detailed description of the study to include the participant recruitment process, considerations for vulnerable populations that may be participating in the research, an example of the informed consent document that each participant will

receive, the data instrument to be utilized, and the methods for managing and protecting the resulting data.

Only upon receipt of the IRB approval to conduct my study did I begin contacting potential participants. Once participants agreed to engage in the study, I provided the participants with a detailed description of the study to include purpose, participant confidentiality, the type of data to be collected and the method used, time requirements, any associated risk in participating, their status as a volunteer and their ability to withdraw from the study at any time as well as an informed consent form for their review and signature. The IRB approval process did not uncover the use of any vulnerable populations nor any power differentials between me and the participants.

Treatment of Data

All correspondence and data collected throughout the research process was and continues to be maintained in a secure location. For hardcopy documentation, all such documentation was and continues to be stored in a locked cabinet in my home, and I am the sole key holder. For all electronic documentation, all such documentation was and continues to be stored on a password protected hard drive located in my home and I am the sole individual that has the password. Confidential identifiers will be given to each participant to protect the anonymity of participants. I will maintain all hardcopy and electronic documents for the mandated 5 years post research and will shred hardcopy documents and delete electronic documents at that time.

Summary

This chapter examined the participant selection, data collection and data analysis process for this study. Additionally, the importance of trustworthiness was discussed as it relates to producing sound qualitative research with a particular emphasis placed on strategies for fostering credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Finally, this chapter outlined the process that will be followed to ensure the ethical prowess of this study as well as the sound maintenance and securing of all data collected.

The next chapter will include a detailed description of the research setting to include any relevant information that may influence the data collection and analysis process. Additionally, chapter four describes the data collection process to include the number of participants, the location, the frequency in which data were collected, how data were recorded, and any variations in the data collection plan. Chapter four will also provide a description of the data analysis process and the subsequent results. Finally, chapter four will provide an assessment of the trustworthiness of the study's findings.

Chapter 4: Results

The problem examined in this study was that post-secondary faculty are experiencing challenges related to providing responsive accommodations to post-secondary students who self-identify with a diagnosis of SAD that goes beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services. The purpose of this study was to investigate post-secondary faculty's perceptions of their ability to make responsive instructional modifications beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD. This study was driven by the two research questions.

RQ 1: What are the perceptions of post-secondary faculty in relation to their ability to make responsive instructional modifications beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD?

RQ 2: What kind of training do post-secondary faculty perceive would be necessary to enhance their ability to make responsive instructional modifications beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD?

The efforts to answer both research questions are further described in this chapter. This chapter includes a description of this study's setting and participant information. Additionally, a brief description of the data collection, thematic coding, and the data

analysis processes are thoroughly described. I will also address evidence of trustworthiness. A summary concludes this chapter.

Setting

This study's participant population comprised 394 post-secondary faculty members teaching at a 4-year post-secondary institution. The criteria used to identify suitable study faculty participants included the following: (a) the faculty member teaches in a 4-year post-secondary institution, (b) the faculty member works at a specific university identified as the data collection site for this study, and (c) the faculty member has worked at the data collection site for at least one academic year. Potential faculty participants could teach any discipline. The semistructured interview questions were created and administered with the objective of gaining greater awareness of the participant's experiences with teaching post-secondary students who have self-identified as experiencing SAD with a specific focus on the participant's perceptions of their ability to make responsive instructional modifications beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services (see Appendix A).

Demographics

I interviewed 13 individuals recruited from my data collection site. It is of note that a detailed demographic description of the individuals interviewed is not provided in this chapter. As the data collection site is rather small, as are the departments within it, providing detailed demographics of participants would easily identify said participants.

Without the risk of identifying participants, I can note that participants teach within the following disciplines:

- Sociology
- Cultural Studies
- Political Science
- Education
- Math
- Modern Languages
- Literature
- History

I can also note that I interviewed six female faculty members and seven male faculty members.

Data Collection

This study was conducted by analyzing qualitative data collected via semistructured interviews with participants. Upon IRB approval from Walden University (Walden IRB approval number 11-29-22-0099457), 13 participants were recruited from a specified 4-year post-secondary institution. Participants were identified as meeting the eligibility criteria via a review of the university's online faculty directory that noted each participant's tenure with the university. Potential participants received an introductory email correspondence from me that included a detailed description of the purpose of the study, time requirements associated with initial participation and follow-up, interview

setting, participant's volunteer status, consent process, management of collected data, and confidentiality for participants.

I sent the introductory email to thirty prospective participants in the initial participant recruitment phase. I then sent additional introductory emails to additional prospective participants until I successfully recruited 13 individuals who agreed to participate in the study. During this phase of the recruitment process, I answered any applicable questions presented by the prospective participants. Those individuals who subsequently agreed to participate in the study received, via email, a letter of consent that they were instructed to review, sign via email stating "I consent," and return to me once they agreed with the terms therein.

When conducting the semistructured interviews, each interview was manually transcribed and recorded via Zoom transcription. In utilizing both manual transcription and software transcription, I implemented a data collection strategy that allowed the data collected to be cross-checked for accuracy (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019; Jamshed, 2014; Newcomer et al., 2015). Participant identities were protected via a confidential identifier. Specifically, each participant was assigned a numeric identifier.

Interviews were conducted over 9 months. Recruiting participants and scheduling interviews did present a challenge as interviews took place during a busy academic year and during summer break, with the latter being a time at which most faculty members travel extensively. Based on the participants' preferences, each study participant took part in either an in-person semistructured interview or a remote Zoom semistructured

interview. I suggested that participants schedule their interviews at a time and location that was convenient for them, and I encouraged them to keep privacy in mind when selecting a location for a remote interview. All interviews were conducted in a private location to ensure confidentiality. Each semistructured interview lasted between 35 and 60 minutes in length. At the start of each interview, I asked if the participants had any questions regarding the objectives of the study, the types of questions that would be utilized to guide the interview, and the contents of the consent form, as well as asked their permission to record and transcribe the interview.

Upon completion of the interviews, transcripts, accompanying notes, and video recordings were critically reviewed to determine the accuracy of each. I noted no variations amongst these resources during this review process. Additionally, I followed up with participants to clarify any questions I had and to elaborate on any specific responses. When it was determined that the data collection methods produced the type of data that aligned with this study's objective, I proceeded to begin the manual iterative coding process. I created a spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel, with an individual tab for each participant, that included the RQs and corresponding semistructured interview questions meant to address each RQ as well as the transcribed participants' responses. This process provided the foundation for coding participant responses that would result in themes. These themes would, in turn, address the RQs and thus were in alignment with the process previously outlined in this work.

As noted, 13 participants were recruited to participate in this study. As I progressed through the interviews, I realized that data saturation occurred within the first five interviews. Saturation was determined when the conclusion of the eighth interview extracted no new relevant data. I determined that saturation occurred when participants repeatedly relayed similar experiences, perceptions, and responses to my guided interview questions. Upon review of the interview transcripts, I noticed such repetition by the fifth interview. However, to ensure the diversity of the data collected, I conducted an additional eight interviews to further support that saturation had occurred. No unusual circumstances were encountered during the data collection process.

Data Analysis

A thematic analysis of the data collected was conducted. Specifically, as dictated by thematic analysis, a multi-stage process was utilized to include familiarizing myself with the data that were collected by reviewing and re-reviewing the interview transcriptions, notes, and videos, as well as authenticating the data collected via participant follow-up, creating a spreadsheet in which I summarized the data collected per participant, and subsequently identifying codes and resulting themes, mapping the relationships amongst the emerging themes, and finally, interpreting how the resulting information addressed the RQs (Adler, 2022).

I engaged in an inductive data analysis process. To follow is the data analysis process used for this study, as supported by O'Connor and Gibson (n.a.).

1. All data were collected in the form of interview notes and transcribed participant responses that were, in turn, organized into individual folders and labeled with participant confidential identifiers.
2. An Excel spreadsheet was created to organize the data collected with a specified tab for each participant.
3. Data were organized by an interview question, the corresponding research question, and participant response noted for each.
4. Word frequency (either exact or similar in meaning) was analyzed to determine emerging themes, patterns, and/or concepts, which were then organized into response categories.
5. A review of the developed categories took place to determine if any could be merged into broader themes.
6. The final step in the data analysis process included ensuring the reliability and validity of the data analysis via attempts at identifying outliers, potential researcher effects on respondents, and confirmation of the accuracy of the responses via participant feedback.

Excel software was essential to the data analysis process used for this study as it allowed for the management and organizing of data, which could then be categorized in a way to derive meaning (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2020). To begin the analysis process, I created designated spreadsheets for each respondent, identified by a tab with the respondent's assigned number or confidential identifier. Each spreadsheet consisted

of headers that denote the semistructured interview question asked of the respondent along with the corresponding research question the data gathered would inform. In the cells under each header were the transcribed responses of the participants.

I initiated an in-depth analysis of the collected data via inductive coding derived from a review of the semistructured interview transcripts. More specifically, I reviewed and interpreted the raw data first and then assessed the data for emerging codes and subsequent themes (Chandra & Shang, 2019). As I moved through the data review process, the process was iterative and consisted of a continuous cycle in which the data were reviewed repeatedly to ensure recurrent phrases, words, or terms were noted. Upon completing the inductive coding process, I manually moved through the open coding process to identify any additional codes that were repeatedly presented and had not been initially discovered. This resulted in codes in which data that appears related inform emerging categories and themes (Allen, 2017). Such recurrent phrases, words, or terms found in the transcribed responses were underlined, put in bold type in the spreadsheet, and then coded. Identifying emerging codes represented by keywords aids in gaining a greater understanding of what the data means. Via the initial round of open coding, I determined that the respondents conveyed similar ideas in response to the interview questions. For example, concerning the first interview question, “Do you have an understanding of SAD,” respondents repeatedly noted their “experience” with SAD; thus, “faculty experience” became a code. Through this open coding process, five codes emerged to include faculty experience, student disclosure, faculty actions, professional

development, and barriers. Without exception, each participant expounded in a manner that informed each of these codes. As the data analysis process evolved, themes emerged and were identified (Chandra & Shang, 2019).

Four themes were determined that relate to the participants' perceptions of their abilities to make instructional accommodations and included: participants have varying levels of experience engaging with post-secondary students experiencing SAD, participants have experience making instructional accommodations meant to mitigate a student's hesitancy to participate in class, participants conveyed a lack of awareness of available applicable professional development opportunities related to SAD provided by the university, and participants conveyed the existence of barriers that hindered their abilities to make additional instructional accommodations, specifically, faculty willingness to engage in such efforts to make accommodations, the lack of time for faculty to attend professional development related to learning how to make instructional modifications for students with SAD, and the stigma related to students asking for such accommodations.

Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate post-secondary faculty's perceptions of their ability to make responsive instructional modifications beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD. This study was grounded by the two research questions RQ1: What are the perceptions of post-secondary faculty in relation to their

ability to make responsive instructional modifications, beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services, for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD? and RQ 2: What kind of training do post-secondary faculty perceive would be necessary to enhance their ability to make responsive instructional modifications, beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services, for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD? Four themes emerged which aligned with the research questions examined in this study as well as with the conceptual framework, Clark and Wells' (1995) cognitive model of social phobia. The following is a discussion of each theme and the corresponding applicable responses provided by the participants.

Theme One: Faculty Experience with SAD in the Post-Secondary Student

Population

Theme one informs RQ1 as it relates to the respondents' perceptions of their ability to make responsive instructional modifications because it explores the respondents' experience doing so. Based on the perspectives shared by the faculty participants interviewed for this study, all faculty participants had experience teaching post-secondary students with some variation of SAD. More specifically, when asked during the semistructured interview "Have you had any experience with students in your classes that have disclosed to you that they have been diagnosed with SAD?", all 13 participants reported that they have had experience teaching post-secondary students who either disclosed to the faculty member that they have received a formal diagnosis of

SAD, conveyed that they experience anxiety, and/or students relayed that they get anxious when fulfilling certain academic requirements. The way students disclose their experiences with anxiety, either having had a formal diagnosis, having experience with anxiety (not formally diagnosed), or noting they feel anxious appears to influence the extent to which faculty participants were able and/or willing to make the university mandated instructional modifications or any additional instructional modifications.

With a formal diagnosis, faculty respondents noted fulfilling the university required instructional accommodations to include providing an optional physical space for test taking and providing more time to complete tests and/or other assignments. Moreover, faculty respondents noted that such required accommodations were easy to administer and did not disrupt or alter their instructional strategies. With no formal diagnosis disclosed and in turn no required accommodations, when students informally self-identified as experiencing anxiety or feeling anxious, faculty respondents attempted to make instructional modifications based on the individual needs of the student.

Participant One stated:

I have not had any students disclose they have a clinical diagnosis but have had students who informally disclosed issues with anxiety and public engagement. In those situations, I am careful about how and when I call on those students because I would notice that certain types of engagement would seem to produce anxiety. I noticed the students would be more likely to participate when it was voluntary. I also am sure to thank these students for participating.

Participant Two stated:

Yes, I have had one student tell me they had a formal diagnosis but I never saw any documentation and the student never went to student services. I have had some students refer to a 'test anxiety'. I think too, I have had students that are overachievers and could get quite anxious about how they were doing in my course. If students ask for help or I think they need it, I try to address the issue by giving them advice about how to prepare for class so they are less anxious. I try to be empathetic. I think this is an increasing issue with this particular age group.

Participant Five stated:

I have had a lot of students tell me that they are dealing with anxiety. This has been increasing over the 20 years I have been teaching. I hear from students that they can't come to class because of anxiety. I think they get triggered by the workload, their personal life, world events. This is not uncommon. There are a few students every semester. I will not cold call on students and I will tell them I will not. I offer the students different options. They can send me questions beforehand and then ask them in class. We have discussion boards and I try to boost their confidence in my feedback there. I work with students to set goals in terms of 'how will you participate?', 'how will you prepare to participate?', think of others who participate in a way you admire and try to emulate them. We can talk about deeply personal topics in class so that can be challenging in terms of engagement.

In summation, all 13 respondents conveyed that they have had experiences related to students disclosing their experiences with some form or iteration of SAD that would or could have an impact on the student's ability to engage academically. Additionally, all 13 respondents noted devising their own instructional strategies for responding to the needs of these students. Each of the 13 respondents noted that these instructional strategies evolved based on experience engaging with students that necessitated such instructional modifications rather than being devised based on engaging in any related formal professional development opportunities.

Theme Two: Faculty Perceptions of their Abilities to Make Instructional Modifications for Post-Secondary Students Experiencing SAD

Theme Two also informs RQ1 as it relates directly to the respondents' perceptions of their ability to make responsive instructional modifications. In response to the question "How do you perceive your professional abilities to effectively address the instructional needs of students that have been diagnosed with SAD?", all 13 of the respondents addressed how they make instructional modifications while also emphasizing that the methods they use are based on the faculty's experience in engaging with this student population and not based on engaging in any formal training or professional development derived from evidence-based practice. Faculty respondents noted a variety of approaches to making instructional modifications and noted that developing and administering instructional strategies occurred on a case-by-case basis in an attempt to determine the most effective approach for a particular student.

Participant Two stated:

I think I do what I can to put the students at ease. I am self-effacing and I think that helps ease the anxiety a bit. I understand that I have the role of the authority in the classroom but I think if the student see me in a way that is not perfect all the time or can be flexible with them that it helps. I maintain boundaries but also try to be personable.

Participant Three stated:

I build relationships with the students from day one. I can do the input but not the output. The students have to do the output so if a student seems to be having difficulty in class, I encourage them to meet with me one on one and we can determine how well they are preparing before class and could that be one of the issues. If they need it, I will allow them to present one on one and then work up to bigger engagement.

Participant Four stated:

I try to adapt in a way that that I think supports pedagogy and anxiety issues. What has helped is working in small groups and telling stories. We have the chairs in a circle. There is reflection time in between the rounds. The students practice and do repetition. I think this helps reduce the feeling of it being a performance. I think when you have tenure and you are more experienced, it is easier to be flexible and more comfortable in making changes in the classroom. This then is a more student-centered approach and less content centered. I do have

some personal experience, so I am also empathetic. I have conversations with students to try to learn differences so we can develop a plan together.

Participant Six stated:

I don't want my class to cause anxiety. I acknowledge that it may happen. I think it is important to be transparent in your pedagogy. I explain to the students why I want them to do what they are expected to do. I think them knowing the reasoning helps lower anxiety. I think things being predictable helps too. There are no switching due dates and instructions are clear. I think this builds trust in the classroom. I use humor too.

Participant Seven stated:

I am conscientious of who I ask to engage in class and how. For example, I will make sure students take turns in terms of who leads during a group presentation. I check on people now that I am more aware that someone may be anxious in class. I try to make sure there is a balance of how much students engage publicly. I also have the students do their own self-assessment of their own engagement and this gives me an idea about how they perceive their engagement and how they feel about engagement. I think my strategies have been successful, but I may need more awareness and training.

In summation, all 13 respondents conveyed that they have had experience in developing instructional strategies designed to address the needs of students they have encountered that disclosed experiencing some form or iteration of SAD. Again, as

previously noted in the analysis of Theme One, each of the 13 respondents noted that these instructional strategies evolved based on experience engaging with students that necessitated such instructional modifications rather than being devised based on engaging in any related formal professional development opportunities.

Theme Three: Awareness of Available Training Related to Social Disorder in the Post-Secondary Student Population Provided by the University

Theme Three informs RQ2 as it addresses the respondents' perceptions regarding the training required to foster their development of responsive instructional strategies related to SAD in the post-secondary classroom. Upon analysis, there was one prevailing sentiment identified related to the faculty participants' awareness of available training or professional development provided by the university based on the responses to the following two questions, "Have you had an opportunity to engage in professional development related to addressing the instructional needs of students with SAD?", and "Do you believe your university provides enough professional development opportunities that could assist you in being able to create responsive instructional modifications for students diagnosed with SAD?". Specifically, the prevailing sentiment conveyed by all 13 of faculty participants was that faculty respondents had varying levels of awareness regarding university efforts to provide training or professional development opportunities related to making instructional modifications, beyond those mandated by the university, for post-secondary students experiencing SAD (or some form of anxiety with or without a formal diagnosis). Participant One stated:

Not any that I have been made aware of. There may have been some made available but not any that I remember recently.

Participant Two stated:

No, I haven't but there could have been opportunities that I was not aware of or there have been times when that type of training has been offered at times that are not very convenient for faculty like during winter break when a lot of people leave campus and travel. I cannot remember there being any so I guess 'no'. I would prefer some that are geared towards current issues. I would also want them to hire more mental health counselors to support students.

Participant Three stated:

There are opportunities but there should be more related to the topic of student accommodations. What happens if you can't make accommodations? Do I make separate assignments? I have noticed that ARC seems to be increasing what it provides but nothing else is happening on campus.

Participant Four stated:

The Center for Teaching and Learning offers some training but I find that learning on my own is more productive and speaking to colleagues. My perception is there are not a lot of opportunities. ARC encourages faculty to reach out to them.

Participant Seven stated:

I think with the last two years there has been an increase in students experiencing anxiety, perhaps due to COVID. Based on the notices I get about accommodations, it seems like there is a higher %age of students with disorders. There have probably been some available, I just may not have been aware of them.

In summation, all 13 respondents noted a perceived lack in either availability and/or awareness of formal training provided by the university related to developing instructional strategies to address the unique academic needs of students experiencing some iteration of SAD in the post-secondary classroom. It is of note that across the 13 participants, there appeared to be a varying degree of interest in engaging in such formal training as well as other barriers related to engaging (i.e. not enough time to do so) and thus this could have impacted individual respondents' awareness of such training opportunities being made available by the university as well as the individual respondents' ability or willingness to do so.

Theme Four: Faculty Barriers Related to Addressing SAD in the Post-Secondary Student Population

Theme Four informs both RQ1 and RQ2 as it addresses barriers that could influence the respondents' perceptions of their abilities to develop responsive instructional strategies. Specifically, Theme Four provides insight into the barriers that respondents may believe are impeding them from developing and implementing responsive strategies to address the unique academic needs of students experiencing some iteration of SAD in the post-secondary classroom. In responding to the question "Do you

perceive that there are any particular university (i.e. institutional, cultural etc.) barriers that would prevent you from gaining access to resources or training related to creating and implementing responsive instructional modifications for students diagnosed with SAD?”, there was a consensus among all 13 faculty participants that there were existing barriers. Faculty participants noted that the existing barriers were substantial enough to prevent them from having access to and/or engaging in training related to making responsive instructional modifications for post-secondary students experiencing SAD. Faculty participants noted the following barriers to engaging in such training: a lack of faculty willingness to engage in the work associated with addressing SAD in the classroom, faculty bias regarding what they believe to be the unimportant nature of developing instructional modifications, difficulty prioritizing engaging in this type of professional development, having a lack of time to pursue this type of professional development, and the stigma associated with engaging in work related to mental health.

Participant One stated:

I think the university not having real numbers in terms of how prevalent this issue is. I think also personal bias among faculty, administration and students plays a part. This can lead to stigma and some not believing that a student may actual need accommodations.

Participant Two stated:

I think there could be some push back from faculty. I think there are faculty that do not want to engage in anything that has to do with mental health. I think the barriers that exist don't have easy solutions. You have to consider legal issues. What faculty should and should not be doing. There is also the way that faculty are evaluated. There is no real incentive to invest our time into learning more about some of these issues even though it is worthwhile to do so.

Participant Three stated:

I think time is a barrier. Faculty have to pick what professional development opportunities are offered based on how much time they have. Prioritizing attending training over all of the other responsibilities is difficult. I think with the way in which student needs are changing, Gen Z students as well as the impact of COVID, there will need be a way that we can attend training.

Participant Four stated:

I think faculty and the university do want to facilitate student success. I think it is difficult for faculty to prioritize participating in training because they do not have the time.

Participant Five stated:

Faculty are being asked to do a lot and to try to balance additional training with things we are already required to do is difficult.

Participant Six stated:

Faculty time is a barrier. I think we need more awareness too about what area of college deals with these types of issues. There is an assumption that student services deals with it but I don't think faculty are completely aware.

Participant Seven stated:

There seems to be an urgency. Faculty are not trained to handle this in the classroom and it is yet another thing we are asked to do. Time is an issue. They should make more of an effort to hire enough personnel to support the students. Faculty should be given more time to participate in this kind of training and be compensated in some way. Maybe it could be included under teaching, service or professional development during annual reviews.

Participant Eight stated:

I think there is a cultural barrier. I don't think they want to acknowledge the extent of the mental health issues. The new wellness center is a strong statement though. There is a lack of time. The administration is vocal about mindfulness, and it should be made part of teaching. Some faculty say there is no issue. There are some faculty that know it is important but are not sure how to make adjustments. I think one way to address it in the classroom is to give the students a choice about how they want to fulfill course requirements. This way, the student is 'customizing' the course, that faculty do not have to do it.

In summation, the respondents noted significant institutional barriers that would prevent them from gaining access to resources or training related to creating and

implementing responsive instructional modifications for students diagnosed with SAD. Specifically, three respondents noted a perception of an existing bias and stigma related to SAD that suggests that some members of the university community do not perceive it to be an issue worthy of addressing. Additionally, two respondents noted a perception that there are faculty members that do not want to engage in any issues related to mental health within the classroom environment as they believe that is well outside of their purview.

Furthermore, nine respondents noted their perception that engaging in applicable training would be too time consuming as they further note a persistent battle in which they must balance an increasing list of demands on their professional time. Finally, two respondents also relayed that they perceived that the university has not done enough to convey that the administration acknowledges that SAD is an issue worthy of dedicating time and resources to address.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness

When referencing trustworthiness within the context of qualitative research, the researcher is addressing the extent to which a study's results have been derived via a thorough, consistent, and meticulous manner (Nowell et al., 2017). In qualitative research, the researcher must employ research processes that will support the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the subsequent study findings (Nowell et al., 2017). To follow are the strategies that were utilized in this study to

establish the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study's results.

Credibility

Credibility was established through my focus on the accuracy of the data collected via the semistructured interviews. Specifically, I first established an interview protocol that supported such accuracy via the creation of clearly stated questions to guide the interview, administered follow-up questions to provide respondents with the opportunity to make any clarifications to their statements, repeated back to the participants their responses in the event I needed clarification or confirmation of their responses, took notes during the interview for reference, conducted follow-up interviews with participants when I needed further clarification of their responses post-interview, and finally, relayed study results to participants for their review and feedback (Beeman, 1995).

Secondly, I utilized strategies for identifying my own potential biases, assumptions, and preferences as they related to the research phenomenon to ensure they did not unduly influence the accuracy of the research findings. Specifically, I engaged in self-reflection exercises to remain aware of my engagement in the study as not only the researcher but as an individual that came to this project with my own beliefs. I tracked my experiences while conducting the research via a journal throughout the research study and reviewed entries for potential conflicts. Additionally, as previously mentioned, I maintained notes while I was interviewing the participants and reviewed said notes to again attempt to identify any explicit or implicit assumptions I may have made during the

process (Yarborough, 2022). Finally, I employed a protocol for managing discrepant data. The protocol for managing discrepant data consisted of me reexamining the data collected, ensuring that I have connected the data to the appropriate interview question and when further clarification was necessary, I conducted a follow-up with the respondent and requested that the respondent clarify their response.

Transferability

In qualitative research, the researcher strives for a high degree of transferability. Transferability denotes the extent to which the results of a study may be applied to different research settings and/or population than that used in the original study (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). In the case of this study, the recruitment criteria for participant eligibility included: (a) the faculty member must teach at a 4-year post-secondary institution, (b) the faculty member must work at a specific university identified as the data collection site for this study and (c) the faculty member has worked at the data collection site for at least one academic year. Transferability was established through the use of a qualitative research design to study the phenomenon of SAD in the post-secondary environment in a manner that would produce rich descriptive data in which the consumer of this research will be able to determine what aspects of the findings may be applied, or transferred, to a different setting or population (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014).

Dependability

An additional consideration that lends to the trustworthiness of qualitative research findings is dependability. Dependability refers to the reliability and consistency of the research findings as well as the extent to which a third party may understand, audit, and provide a critique of the research process utilized (Moon et al., 2016). Dependability was established through the creation of an audit trail that was maintained throughout the duration of this study to support the dependability of the subsequent results. The audit trail consisted of a clear description of each step implemented by the researcher throughout the research process to include the study's initial development, implementation, data analysis and reporting (Carcary, 2020).

The audit trail protocol for this study included a written description of the step-by-step research process employed in relation to the literature reviewed, the creation of the data collection instrument and the process for organizing and analyzing the data. Additionally, the audit trail protocol includes the plan for the secured maintenance of all data collection methods and the subsequent data collected for no less than five years post completion. Finally, the audit protocol for this study includes the results of my self-reflection exercises to include journals and notes.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which a researcher has remained neutral and objective in their interpretation of the study's findings (Nyirenda et al., 2020). Confirmability was established through the audit trail protocol utilized in this study.

Including an audit trail protocol, I provided a transparent description of the research processes followed to include the reasons why particular data collection instruments were selected and the data analysis approaches that were utilized. The audit trail protocol will provide a mechanism for ensuring transparency, neutrality, and accountability (Nyirenda et al., 2020).

Summary

Chapter four summarized the interview, data collection, analysis and results of this study. The purpose of this study was to investigate post-secondary faculty's perceptions of their ability to make responsive instructional modifications beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD. The data analysis conducted resulted in four themes that align with the conceptual framework of this study and answered RQ1: What are the perceptions of post-secondary faculty in relation to their ability to make responsive instructional modifications, beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services, for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD? and RQ 2: What kind of training do post-secondary faculty perceive would be necessary to enhance their ability to make responsive instructional modifications, beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services, for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD?

Chapter five includes a discussion of the possible implications of the study results. Additionally, a discussion related to this study's limitations as well as recommendations for future research related to this topic will be included. Finally, opportunities for social change will be identified as well as suggestions for next steps and conclusions.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The problem examined in this study was that post-secondary faculty are experiencing challenges related to providing responsive accommodations to post-secondary students who self-identify with a diagnosis of SAD that goes beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services. The purpose of this study was to investigate post-secondary faculty's perceptions of their ability to make responsive instructional modifications beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD. This study was driven by two research questions:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of post-secondary faculty in relation to their ability to make responsive instructional modifications beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD?

RQ 2: What kind of training do post-secondary faculty perceive would be necessary to enhance their ability to make responsive instructional modifications beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD?

The nature of this study examined the perceptions of post-secondary faculty members via a phenomenology-based qualitative research design that employed semistructured interviews with said faculty study participants. A phenomenological

approach was utilized as it aligns with the focus of this study, which is designed to better understand one's own experience with a given phenomenon (Neubauer et al., 2019).

The conceptual framework of the study was Clark and Wells' (1995) cognitive model of social phobia. The use of Clark and Wells' (1995) cognitive model of social phobia served as the conceptual framework for this study to research, investigate, and understand the problem of SAD in the post-secondary student population. Specifically, the cognitive model of social phobia provided the framework to investigate the post-secondary faculty's perceptions of SAD within the post-secondary student population and the faculty's perceptions regarding their ability to create and implement responsive instructional strategies. The focus of this research applies to the cognitive model of social phobia, as Clark and Wells (1995) noted that it becomes key to intervening in situations of SAD in a manner that can alter one's perceptions of situations that once caused them discomfort. As applied to the focus of this study, such an alteration could result via the creation and implementation of instructional strategies that make student engagement less anxiety provoking and in turn a more positive experience. Thus, interrupting the previous problematic cycle via instructional strategies may encourage active student engagement, and may make it less likely that the student will opt to avoid academic activities.

There were 13 individuals interviewed from the data collection site. A detailed demographic description of the individuals interviewed was not made available as the data collection site is rather small, as are the departments within. Therefore, providing the detailed demographics of participants would easily identify said participants. Without the

risk of identifying participants, participants teach within the academic disciplines of sociology, cultural studies, political science, education, math, modern languages, literature, and history. Additionally, it can be noted that six female faculty members and seven male faculty members were interviewed for the study.

The findings of this study support existing literature, which notes the strategies currently in place within post-secondary institutions are not enough to adequately address the diverse academic needs of post-secondary students with psychological and cognitive disabilities including SAD. More specifically, a key area that appears to be missing within this process, as noted by the literature and supported by the findings of this study, is the effect of faculty perception of SAD and the faculty's perceived ability to create and implement effective instructional strategies to address SAD.

The analysis of the data collected via the semistructured interviews resulted in the development of four themes and answering the research questions. Additionally, this study has the potential to create positive social change as the knowledge gained could be transferred to other post-secondary institutions. Thus, the understanding gained from this study can give those institutions greater insights into the elements needed to effectively create more responsive instructional strategies for post-secondary students experiencing SAD.

Interpretation of the Findings

The data collected and analyzed from the semistructured interviews provided answers to the RQs for this study. The derived themes aligned with the peer-reviewed

literature related to SAD and similar phenomena. Specifically, the literature reviewed for this study supports the findings that noted a lack of a holistic and consistent approach to addressing SAD within the post-secondary student population (Wiest et al., 2019). In this section, I will provide my interpretations of the findings of this study and will note the supporting literature.

Theme One: Faculty Experience with SAD in the Post-Secondary Student

Population

Post-secondary education needs a more consistent way of approaching and managing SAD via instructional modifications. More specifically, as noted by study participants, there is a need for an established university protocol to support faculty in the classroom as they attempt to address the varied experiences, diagnosis types (formal or informal), and presentations of SAD. While there are accommodation mandates, study participants and existing literature noted that the current accommodation mandates are insufficient in addressing the diversity of student and faculty experiences related to SAD presentation in the post-secondary classroom (Dalton et al., 2019). This theme is further supported by existing literature that notes a precipitous increase in the number of post-secondary students requesting academic accommodations (Dalton et al., 2019). Additionally, the literature further notes that as the number of post-secondary students requesting academic accommodations for diagnoses that impact their academic performance increases, so too have faculty voicing concerns regarding a lack of guidance

from university administration regarding how to make necessary accommodations that exceed those currently mandated (Druckman et al., 2021).

Theme Two: Faculty Perceptions of Their Abilities to Make Instructional Modifications for Post-Secondary Students Experiencing SAD

There is a need for a more concerted effort from the university administration to provide opportunities for faculty members to gain the knowledge and skills they need to address SAD in the post-secondary classroom effectively. While all 13 study participants noted having experienced developing and implementing instructional accommodations for post-secondary students presenting with some form of anxiety, and as many reported their instructional accommodations as being effective, all study participants noted that they would feel more confident in their efforts if they formally learned evidence-based approaches to developing applicable accommodations. The literature reviewed supports the need for post-secondary institutions to provide such opportunities to their faculty to ensure that pedagogical best practices are implemented and available to students in a consistent manner (Costello-Harris, 2019).

Theme Three: Awareness of Available Training Related to Social Disorder in the Post-Secondary Student Population Provided by the University

There is a need for university administration to make professional development opportunities available for faculty and, second, improve how they communicate these opportunities to faculty. The prevailing sentiment conveyed by all 13 faculty participants was that faculty had varying levels of awareness regarding university efforts to provide

training or professional development opportunities related to making instructional modifications beyond those mandated by the university for post-secondary students experiencing SAD (or some form of anxiety). Existing literature notes the need for an informed and skilled faculty to be aware and capable of delivering responsive instructional strategies (Parson et al., 2021). The literature further notes that the means for fostering such abilities within the faculty would include universities developing and implementing accessible training opportunities for faculty regularly (Biebel et al., 2020).

Theme Four: Faculty Barriers Related to Addressing SAD in the Post-Secondary Student Population.

There is a need for universities to address the existing barriers prohibiting faculty members from learning about and implementing responsive instructional accommodations for post-secondary students experiencing SAD. There was a consensus among all 13 faculty participants that there are existing barriers related to their abilities to implement instructional accommodations for post-secondary students experiencing SAD (or some form of anxiety). Faculty participants perceived the existing barriers as substantial enough to prohibit the consistent implementation of responsive instructional modifications. Faculty participants noted the following barriers to engaging in work related to SAD and instructional modifications: a lack of faculty willingness to engage in the work associated with addressing SAD in the classroom, faculty bias regarding what they believe to be the unimportant nature of developing instructional modifications, difficulty prioritizing engaging in this type of professional development, having a lack of

time to pursue this type of professional development, and the stigma associated with engaging in work related to mental health.

The supporting literature is in alignment with the responses from study participants. For example, Lopez-Gavira et al. (2020), Druckman et al. (2021), and Wada et al. (2019) noted the significance of stigma related to mental health-related issues as a barrier to students receiving responsive instructional strategies. Cotan et al. (2021) noted a lack of available training for faculty as a barrier to addressing SAD-related academic issues in the post-secondary classroom.

Limitations of the Study

There are limitations related to this study. Many of the limitations can be associated with the methodology used to conduct this study. Qualitative studies can be limited as they are time-consuming to implement, present challenges related to verifying results and causality, and interpreting results can be restricted to one researcher's interpretations.

Additionally, the sample size utilized for data collection was small. Moreover, the participants were recruited from a small liberal arts post-secondary institution via a convenience sample; thus, being able to transfer or generalize the findings of this study to other populations or settings must be given consideration. Due to the specificity of the participant group, it is worth noting that the recruitment of more participants and the recruitment of participants from various post-secondary institutions may yield different findings. An additional limitation is time. The data collection process for this study took

place over 9 months; thus, the findings are limited to the perceptions and experiences of the faculty during a small timeframe. A fourth limitation is related to the accuracy of participant recall. While every effort is made to reaffirm participant responses via follow-up questions and attempts for clarification and confirmation of responses, there is no real way to completely verify the accuracy of the participant responses.

Finally, there is the potential for participant and researcher bias when conducting research. When conducting the interviews for this study, every effort was made to mitigate biases via standardized questions and participant follow-up, researcher self-reflection, and careful data analysis and interpretation procedures.

Recommendations

There are three recommendations for additional research based on the findings of this study. First, it is recommended that further research be conducted to determine methods for providing greater access to a formal SAD diagnosis to the post-secondary student population. As noted in this research, participants had varied experiences in terms of students having a formal SAD diagnosis versus disclosing a “self-diagnosis” of what the student believed to be some form of anxiety. Faculty participants reported that their instructional responses differed due to the type of diagnosis disclosed, as a formal diagnosis would mandate that they follow university accommodation policies. In contrast, an informal diagnosis would not mandate any accommodations. With greater access to the resources necessary for a formal diagnosis, faculty could implement instructional accommodations more consistently.

The second recommendation would be for additional research to be conducted specifically on the approaches post-secondary faculty have employed to provide responsive instructional strategies to post-secondary students experiencing SAD or some form of anxiety that may interfere with their academic performance. Through the research conducted here, it was determined that the study participants had developed a variety of instructional methods for addressing the academic needs of students experiencing SAD or some form of anxiety. Anecdotally, faculty participants conveyed their varying success levels with the methods they devised, mostly through a trial-and-error process. Research that examines these methods more closely to determine efficacy and potential best practices could be beneficial.

Finally, a third recommendation would be to conduct research identifying best practice approaches for creating professional development programming that encourages post-secondary faculty engagement. This study determined that there were barriers related to faculty engaging in professional development programs that could aid in their abilities to create responsive instructional strategies. Such barriers included faculty perceiving that they did not have enough time to engage in such professional development, a lack of awareness of the availability of such professional development, and a lack of institutional incentives for participating in professional development as significant barriers. Conducting a study to identify methods for mitigating these barriers would also be beneficial.

Implications

In investigating the experiences and perceptions of faculty participants as they relate to SAD in the post-secondary classroom, I was able to form a clearer understanding of this phenomenon and the various elements that influence a faculty member's perceived ability to effectively address the unique academic needs of those students experiencing SAD (or other forms of anxiety). Moreover, this research process also allowed the participants to contemplate their own experiences as faculty members. All 13 participants noted that via their engagement in the semistructured interview process, they were given, for the first time, an opportunity to thoroughly consider this issue in a nuanced manner. Specifically, through the interview process, they considered their exchanges with students experiencing SAD more thoughtfully, as well as their own abilities and strategies for addressing the academic needs of these students, their own professional development needs, the complex barriers that they perceive to be preventing them from engaging in this work more responsively, and finally, what strategies they believe the university should employ to improve the situation for both the faculty and the students. Additionally, in providing the findings of this study to the data collection site, the university will achieve a more thorough understanding of the effects of SAD on post-secondary students and the experiences of the faculty charged with providing responsive instructional strategies to these students.

The emerging knowledge from this study can have positive social change implications. This study addressed a gap in practice, as noted in the literature, within the

post-secondary environment by focusing on the post-secondary faculty's perceptions of their ability to make responsive instructional modifications, beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services, for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD. While there is existing literature that examines the adverse academic affects associated with SAD in the post-secondary environment, mainly from the perspective of the student experience, little research has been done that examines this phenomenon from the way in which the faculty member perceives SAD (Huang, et al., 2018). This study collected data that provides a greater understanding of the post-secondary faculty member's perceptions of their experience with SAD in the post-secondary learning environment. Gaining such an understanding of this phenomenon can foster the development of best practice approaches for addressing SAD within the post-secondary environment. As SAD is one of the leading mental health issues experienced by post-secondary college students and in turn can create significant barriers to learning, such research, once applied to the post-secondary environment, can serve to provide greater access to responsive learning opportunities for this student population.

Conclusions

This qualitative study examined the post-secondary faculty's perceptions of their ability to make responsive instructional modifications, beyond the preliminary accommodations mandated by university disability services, for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD. Data were collected from 13 post-secondary faculty members teaching at a 4-year post-secondary institution through semistructured

interviews. The data analysis identified four themes related to the participants' perceived abilities to make responsive instructional modifications for post-secondary students who self-identify as experiencing SAD.

There are three recommendations for additional research based on the findings of this study. First, it is recommended that further research be conducted as it relates to determining methods for providing greater access to a formal SAD diagnosis to the post-secondary student population. The second recommendation would be for additional research to be conducted that would focus specifically on the approaches post-secondary faculty have employed to provide responsive instructional strategies to post-secondary students experiencing SAD or some form of anxiety that may interfere with their academic performance. Finally, a third recommendation would be to conduct research that identifies best practice approaches for creating professional development programming that encourages post-secondary faculty engagement.

The results of this study provide a greater understanding of the post-secondary faculty member's perceptions of their experience with SAD in the post-secondary learning environment. A more thorough understanding of this phenomenon can foster the development of best practice approaches for addressing SAD within the post-secondary environment. SAD is currently one of the leading mental health issues experienced by post-secondary college students and can create significant barriers to learning. This research, once applied to the post-secondary environment, can serve to provide greater access to responsive learning opportunities for this student population.

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Appendix A: Email Invitation to Participants

Participant Recruitment Invitation (Email)

Hello (Name of Participant),

My name is Jessie Tudor-Tangeman and I am an EdD doctoral student at Walden University. I am currently conducting research within the post-secondary education environment and would like to request your participation in the study.

The purpose of this study is to examine how post-secondary faculty members perceive their abilities to make instructional accommodations for students experiencing SAD.

Should you agree to participate in this study, we would determine a convenient time to meet either in person or via Zoom so that I may conduct a confidential interview in which I ask you questions related to SAD within the post-secondary student population and how you perceive your abilities to make instructional accommodations for these students.

If you are interested in participating, please respond to this email by (insert date) and I will promptly follow-up with you. At such time, I will provide you with a consent form, respond to any questions you may have regarding your role as a participant of this study and schedule your interview should you agree to participate in this study.

I look forward to your response.

Thank you,
Jessie Tudor-Tangeman, PhD

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Conceptual Framework	Applicable RQ & Focus	Interview Question
Clark and Wells (1995) cognitive model of social phobia	RQ1 & RQ2: The influence of existing knowledge on perceptions	<p>Do you have an understanding of SAD?</p> <p>If 'no'—provide definitions and examples of presentations of SAD in the post-secondary classroom environment.</p> <p>If 'yes'—ask participant to elaborate regarding their understanding of SAD.</p>
Clark and Wells (1995) cognitive model of social phobia	RQ1 & RQ2: The influence of previous experience on perceptions & perceptions regarding the participant's abilities to make responsive instructional modifications	<p>Have you had any experience with students in your classes that have disclosed to you that they have been diagnosed with SAD?</p> <p>If 'yes'—How did you manage those situations as they related to the student's academic performance?</p> <p>Do you believe your approach was effective. If 'yes'—ask participant, why?</p> <p>If 'no'—ask the participant, why?</p> <p><i>If participant reports not having any experience with students in their classes that have disclosed a diagnosis of SAD, move on to the next question.</i></p>
Clark and Wells (1995) cognitive model of social phobia	RQ1 & RQ2: The influence of perception as it relates to the participant's perceived abilities	How do you perceive your professional abilities to effectively address the instructional needs of students that have been diagnosed with SAD?

Conceptual Framework	Applicable RQ & Focus	Interview Question
Clark and Wells (1995) cognitive model of social phobia	RQ2: Exposure to previous training opportunities related to engaging with students experiencing SAD in the post-secondary environment	<p>Have you had an opportunity to engage in professional development related to addressing the instructional needs of students with SAD?</p> <p>If 'yes'—request that the participant elaborate regarding whether they participated in the training and/or their experience with the training.</p>
Clark and Wells (1995) cognitive model of social phobia	RQ2: Access to professional development opportunities related to creating instructional modifications	Do you believe your university provides enough professional development opportunities that could assist you in being able to create responsive instructional modifications for students diagnosed with SAD?
Clark and Wells (1995) cognitive model of social phobia	RQ1 and RQ2: Participant perceptions regarding what kinds of resources or training they believe would be necessary	What type of university resources or training do you perceive you would need access to so that you could create and implement responsive instructional modifications for students diagnosed with SAD?
Clark and Wells (1995) cognitive model of social phobia	RQ1 and RQ2: Participant perceptions regarding what kinds of resources or training they believe would be necessary	Do you perceive that there are any particular university (i.e. institutional, cultural etc.) barriers that would prevent you from gaining access to resources or training related to creating and implementing responsive instructional modifications for students diagnosed with SAD?

Probes to be used when applicable:

- Please elaborate.
- Can you provide an example?

Concluding Questions:

- Are there any other insights you would like to share as they relate to your experiences with SAD among the post-secondary student population?
- Are there any other comments you would like to make?
- Do you have any questions for me at this time?