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**PLACE OF RESIDENCE AND ITS IMPACT ON COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH  
DISABILITIES**

by  
Jonathan A. Tarbous

A Thesis

Submitted to the  
Department of Educational Services, Administration, & Higher Education  
College of Education  
In partial fulfillment of the requirement  
For the degree of  
Master of Arts in School Psychology  
At  
Rowan University  
May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013

Thesis Chair: Terri Allen, Ph.D.

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## **Dedication**

*I would like to dedicate this manuscript to my parents, Albert & Kathy Tarbous.*

*Thank you for supporting me throughout my college career.*

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express the greatest appreciation possible to Dr. Roberta Dihoff and Dr. Terri Allen for giving me the opportunity to achieve a Master level degree and guiding me through the process of writing a thesis.

## **Abstract**

Jonathan A. Tarbous

### **PLACE OF RESIDENCE AND ITS IMPACT ON COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

2012/2013

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Master of Arts in School Psychology

The purpose of this study was to test whether the academic performance and quality of life of students with disabilities at the post-secondary level would be higher for students who reside on campus full time or commute to class. Participants were given a survey and responded to questions regarding their disability, quality of life, academic performance, and place of residence. Data analysis revealed that there is no significant relationship between students with disabilities at the post-secondary level who reside on campus and a higher level of academic performance or quality of life when compared to those who commute to class. Implications of the data and considerations for future research are discussed.

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## Chapter 1

### Importance of Exploring Place of Residence

It is of upmost importance to both the individual and society that we continue to improve upon the education of our students. While the main areas of interest in most educational improvement studies focus on student achievement and teaching methods, the integration of improvement studies for students with disabilities is on the rise. As our understanding of students with disabilities increases, we have the opportunity to use our knowledge to help improve their chances of achieving academic success.

It is often the case that parents of students both with and without disabilities raise questions of how they can best help their children succeed academically. In the past, questions regarding classroom placement, duration of tests, and specialized study programs are a few among many that have led to improving academic achievement among students with disabilities. There are currently questions that have not been fully investigated regarding what kind of impact the location where college students with disabilities reside has on their academics and level of happiness.

The purpose of this study is to explore the importance of the place of residence of students with disabilities in a college setting and the impact it has on both the student's academic performance and level of happiness. By determining whether or not there is an academic advantage for students with disabilities in living on campus, families of these students will be more informed about the importance of the choice of where the student lives. If integration into a full campus life can improve the student's academic and overall welling being, families who are initially hesitant may decide to go through with allowing their children to live on campus. This has led to the hypothesis that if a student with

disabilities resides on campus and is integrated as a full time resident, then that student will perform academically at a higher level and lead a more satisfied life when compared to students with disabilities who do not reside on campus.

There are however some limitations to performing this study. First and foremost, some students with disabilities may not be able to live on campus due to the nature of their disability. This would apply mostly to students with physical disabilities and disabilities that often need medical treatment and exposure to specific equipment. Additionally, this study is limited to a set amount of students that live in the north eastern part of America. This affects both the number of the sample size and the some of the cultural factors that occur in north east America. While the academic levels may be consistent, the constraints of happiness may not be consistent in north eastern American students as it is in other parts of the country.

In the following chapter, a literature review will cover academic achievement expectations of both typical college students and students with disabilities. In addition to this, the current understanding of the levels of happiness among students with disabilities will be discussed. A scale used to measure the level of happiness of people with disabilities will also be introduced. In further chapters, the methodology and results of the study will be detailed as well as a discussion of the results and related opportunities for future research.

## Chapter Two

### A Look into College Students with Disabilities

#### Students with Disabilities and Accommodations

It is well documented that students with disabilities perform at a lower academic level than their typically developing peers (Munkholm & Fisher, 2008). Due to the importance of education and the passing of IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), accommodations have been made available to students with disabilities and many early intervention plans have been designed to help improve academic achievement (Reschly, 2005). These accommodations are especially important for students with disabilities at the postsecondary level of education as the content and difficulty of classes continue to become more complex and rigorous (Bernard-Brak, Davis, Tate, & Sulak, 2009).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law that mandates that children with disabilities are entitled to a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment possible (Semrund-Clikeman & Ellison, 2009). IDEA also mandates that a child must receive their education regardless of their disability and allows for both parent involvement and due process to dispute the accommodations their children are receiving (Semrund-Clikeman & Ellison, 2009). However, IDEA only mandates that students are ensured a successful education in the K-12 school environment (Semrund-Clikeman & Ellison, 2009). This leaves many college students with disabilities and their families responsible to seek out the services that are provided by their university (Bernard-Brak, Davis, Tate, & Sulak, 2009).

While the number of students with disabilities enrolled in college is increasing each year, many students with disabilities are not graduating on time when compared to their typically developed peers (Stodden, Whelley, Chang, & Harding, 2001). Research has shown that students who have requested for accommodations at the college level perform at a higher academic level than students who do not request accommodations (Jefferson-Wilson, 2000). The cause behind why some students with disabilities take advantage of their accommodations while others do not has been a topic of interest in recent years. Studies have shown that many students are unaware of both the accommodations they are entitled to and the course one must take to receive them (Bernard-Brak et al., 2009).

In addition to a lack of information, self-determination plays a role regarding students with disabilities' frequency of requesting accommodations (Thoma & Getzel, 2005). Many students with disabilities are determined to succeed at the college level without their accommodations (Thoma & Getzel, 2005). Due to the lack of accommodations, many of these students struggle with their academics, and only once they begin to struggle tend to seek out the help they need (Thoma & Getzel, 2005).

As Lombardi and Murray (2011) explain “although students with disabilities can receive accommodations, the instructional demands and learning expectations are not modified in postsecondary settings”. While this is true, it may be that some instructors are unaware of the proper accommodations and teaching methods that are most beneficial to students with disabilities (McGuire, Scott, & Shaw, 2003). Currently, a project called the Universal Design (UD) has been implemented in some postsecondary schools' education plans in attempt to improve instructional programs for students who need

accommodations and hopefully reduce the accommodations needed (Lombardi & Murray, 2011). The UD uses principles that are targeted to improve the range of efficiency in teaching including principles such as ensuring the education design is useful to people with diverse abilities, the design is easy to understand despite the user's experience or knowledge, and the design can communicate information to the user effectively regardless of the users sensory abilities (Lombardi & Murray, 2011).

### Transition Periods for Students with Disabilities

Major life transitions are important periods in an individual's life and can affect an individual's cognitive functioning (Santrock, 2011). The transition between high school and college for both typically developing students and students with disabilities can be very stressful as it comes with a large increase in responsibilities (Janiga, 2002). Some of these responsibilities needed to be successful at the college level include requesting for accommodations, self-advocacy, self-management, and organizational skills (Janiga, 2002). While these responsibilities can cause a great amount of stress, help from people such as parents, peers, professors, and academic advisors can help ease a student through the transition period (Smith & Pidi, 2009).

Research suggests that relationships with parents have an impact on both the student's transition to college and psychological well being (Kenyon & Koerner, 2009). In a study conducted by Beyers and Goossens (2003), it was found that a student's level of independence from parents and positive separation feelings were the highest predictors for smooth adjustments to college. Additionally, Smith and Pidi (2009) cite that "first-generation students are at greater risk for a difficult transition from high school to college

and students who are academically and socially involved experience a smoother transition to college and are more likely to return for their sophomore year” (p 643).

While it is easy to see that the transition from high school to college can be a difficult process for some people, it is often much more complicated for students with disabilities (Smith, English, & Vasek, 2002). Because many students with disabilities are unaware of the additional difficulties that they will undergo it is important that students with disabilities become conscious of these difficulties so they can prepare and begin refining the skills necessary to achieve academic success. (Smith, English, & Vasek, 2002). Eaton and Coull (1998) have compiled research and created the ten most common difficulties faced by students with disabilities when transitioning to college. This list includes: (1) being unprepared for responsibility; (2) managing free time; (3) overwhelming workload; (4) time management skills; (5) making new friends; (6) missing academic support of parents; (7) telling others of disability; (8) inability to focus; (9) failing classes; and (10) being realistic about how their disability affects their goals and ambitions (Eaton & Coull, 1998).

One of the most important factors in creating a smooth transition to college for students with disabilities is the communication between high school and college (Smith, English, & Vasek, 2002). Smith and Pidi (2009) have reported that “high schools and colleges should work together to ensure that college bound students...receive the academic assistance they need to make a smooth transition to college” (p. 655). In addition to this, research has lead McGuire and Williams (1998) to explain that “the key is for counselors to know what the high schools have prepared their students for. Transition is all about communication between the high school and college”.

In addition to communication between high school and college, it has been found beneficial for students with disabilities to begin integration into college before they leave high school (Hall, Kleinert, & Kearns, 2000). There are currently some programs that allow high school students with disabilities the opportunity to take remedial college courses during the week by providing staff, transportation, and materials for the students (Hall, Kleinert, & Kearns, 2000). Research has shown multiple benefits from these early integration programs which include improvements in peer interaction, an expansion of interests through the college level courses, and an improved relationship between the high school, college, and parents of students with disabilities (Hall, Kleinert, & Kearns, 2000).

It may come as no surprise that research has shown that students who reported experiencing the easiest transitions into college are the students that reported the highest level of social and academic involvement in their school (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004). However, high levels of involvement do not always lead to completely positive outcomes. When regarding social involvement, early peer interaction has a strong positive influence on a student's transition to college, but can also lead to negative outcomes such as lack of interest in studying (Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996). It has been found that "students need to become more selective about who they become friends with, to what degree they are influenced by them, and about what they do together" (Smith & Pidi, 2009).

## Well Being of Students with Disabilities

While acquiring a satisfying level of quality of life is a highly researched and frequently sought goal of many individuals in the world, there is only a small pool of data concerning the quality of life in students with disabilities (Sacks & Lee, 2008). One issue regarding quality of life is no single definition or fully agreed upon guideline that can be followed to measure quality of life (Sacks & Lee, 2008). Research done by Graham, Stevenson, & Flynn (1997) suggests one definition of quality of life:

The individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards, and concerns. It is a broad-ranging concept affected in a complex way by the person's physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, and their relationship to salient features in their environment (p. 657).

Other researchers, such as Stevanovic (2011) believe that it is possible to measure quality of life based on simple self-reported surveys that target the factors that lead to a high quality of life. Stevanovic (2011) endorses the use of the Quality of Life Enjoyment and Satisfaction Questionnaire (Q-LES-Q) which measures aspects of a person's life such as overall enjoyment and satisfaction with physical health, mood, social and family relationships, and sexual health.

Due to the fact that most research regarding the quality of life of people with disabilities has historically focused on adults, only recently has a focus on youth and young adults with disabilities been on the rise (Watson & Keith, 2002). Watson and Keith (2002) explain that "it is evident that quality of life is a major goal of services delivered to people with disabilities; however, little is known about the quality of life of school age children with disabilities as measured by quality of life scales" (p 305). Recently, an



interest towards increasing the quality of life of students with disabilities through program planning has been established (Watson & Keith, 2002). However, research has shown only a limited amount of teachers actually implement quality of life measures in their IEPs, in spite of the increased interest (Agran, Snow, & Swaner, 1999).

While the data pool regarding quality of life of students with disabilities is small, valuable information still exists in the studies that have been done. Although previous research has shown that students with disabilities in middle and high school have reported a lower quality of life than students without disabilities (Edwards, Patrick, & Topolski, 2003), there is a lack of similar studies regarding the quality of life of students with disabilities compared to students without disabilities in the university setting. While the development of the brain, particularly the frontal lobes and striatal regions, can continue into a person's early to mid twenties (Semrud-Clikeman & Ellison, 2009), changes in cognition are likely to occur between the years a student is in secondary and postsecondary schools. Due to these cognitive changes, students with disabilities that are enrolled in college may have a different perspective regarding their quality of life compared to when they were in high school.

One significant way that has been found to increase the level of happiness in teens and young adults is spending time with friends (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003). When measuring the level of happiness people experience depending on the people they spend time with and activities they are involved in, Csikszentmihalyi (2003) found that "in terms of companionship, youth experience the lowest levels of happiness when they are alone, with teachers, and with classmates, while being with friends corresponds to the highest level of happiness" (p 191 & 192). Csikszentmihalyi (2003) also found that

being with siblings leads to slightly above average happiness and being with parents leads to mediocre happiness. The importance of friends improving the level of happiness on youth and young adults is significant because of the opportunity to make friends in a college setting and the affect happiness has on academic achievement.

It has been found that people with learning disabilities often have fewer friends and social relationships when compared to their typically developed peers (Moore & Carey, 2005). Research has also shown that peer intervention programs where peers are trained to interact with a student effectively has shown a high level of success for both parties (Moore & Carey, 2005). The data suggests that not only do the students with disabilities benefit from both an increased level of happiness and experience of interacting with peers, but the typically developing students often report genuine friendship with the student after intervention programs are complete (Moore & Carey, 2005). As Moore & Carey (2005) reported, “Students participating in the social network intervention were asked to rate their relationship with the peer with disabilities, before, during and after intervention. Prior to the study, 22% of the peers categorized the relationship as friendship. After the intervention, 89% categorized the relationship as friends” (p. 25).

A study conducted by Chang and Furnham (2002) regarding predictors of loneliness and happiness in youth found a significant relationship between happiness and academic achievement. It was found that both high academic achievement and high levels of self-confidence were predictors for high levels of happiness (Chang & Furnham, 2002). However, a limitation of academic achievement and self confidence predicting happiness lies in the autonomy of the student (Miquelon & Vallerand, 2006). Research

has shown that a higher level of happiness occurs in students who set their academic goals as their own choice when compared to students who have had pressure to set their goals (Miquelon & Vallerand, 2006). Because of this, if students with disabilities are motivated enough to set their own goals, it is likely that we will see an increase in the students overall happiness due to their own actions (Miquelon & Vallerand, 2006).

### Current Attempts at Improvement

In addition to providing students with accommodations, many programs have been used to help students with disabilities achieve academic success. Studies show that many students with disabilities that struggle in certain areas of academics lack the motivation to push through their curriculums demands (Melekoglu, 2011). Programs such as the READ 180, a program designed to help students who struggle with reading, have been implemented to help bring high school students with disabilities to the national average and increase motivation (Melekoglu, 2011). This is important as research has shown that academic motivation often leads to positive academic outcomes (Sideridis, Mouzaki, Simos, & Protopaps, 2006).

Some research has lead to the idea that students with disabilities will perform the best academically and later in life when they receive a personalized curriculum with goals that pertain to maximizing independence and highest possible quality of life (Knowlton, 1998). The core of Knowlton's (1998) research is coming up with the appropriate curriculum that applies longitudinal, person-centered educational plans. A problem with this lies in creating a program that both maximizes independence and highest possible quality of life, but also integrates an education plan that is aimed towards

students with disabilities (Knowlton (1998). When creating a program to increase the chance of academic achievement for high school students with disabilities, Knowlton (1998) explains:

“This dilemma's sensible resolution lies within a personalized curricular supports plan that is rational with respect to its reliance on current performance data and future projections, responsible insofar as compliance with statutory policies and ethical principles is concerned, and responsive to immediate and long-term issues in the life of the student, and to preferences on the part of the student and her or his family members. These "Three Rs," rationality, responsibility, and responsiveness predicate meaningful and effective planning of curricular supports and, frankly, they are as fundamental to schooling for students with developmental disabilities as reading, writing, and arithmetic, in the strict academic context, are for students who do not experience disabilities” (p. 96).

One study that has been found to be extremely relevant regarding academic improvement for students with disabilities in the college setting was performed by David Allsopp, Esther Minskoff, and Les Bolt in 2005. The study is entitled “Individualized course-specific strategy instruction for college students with learning disabilities and ADHD: Lessons learned from a model demonstration project” and consisted of implementing one on one strategy instruction of the course of a semester to students with learning disabilities and ADHD (Allsopp, Minskoff, & Bolt, 2005). Allsop et al. (2005) explain that current research suggested “the need to evaluate the effectiveness of course-specific strategy training for the increasing number of students with learning disabilities and ADHD who are accessing, but not meeting the demands of postsecondary education” (p 104). Because of this, the purpose of the study was to present a course-specific strategy training and evaluate the effect it had on the academic success of the students (Allsop et al., 2005).

The strategy instructions took on four unique characteristics: (1) Informal assessment of a student's individual learning needs; (2) Select learning strategies that meet the unique needs of each student based on the results of the informal assessment questionnaire; (3) Teach learning strategies using systematic explicit instruction; and (4) Evaluate the impact of the individualized strategy instruction model using qualitative and quantitative analysis (Allsopp et al., 2005). Once the strategy instructors were trained, they worked one on one with participants to determine their specific instructional needs and the demands of the courses that were being addressed (Allsopp et al., 2005). After such was determined, "strategy instruction was prioritized, with problems in organization given highest priority, followed by problems in study skills, test taking skills, and note taking, and finally difficulties with reading and writing" (Allsopp et al., 2005, p. 113). Over the course of the semester, instructors refined specific strategies and used modeling and scaffolding techniques to guide participants into using their specific strategies without assistance (Allsopp et al., 2005). After the training was complete, data of the students achievement in the targeted areas were collected and analyzed (Allsopp et al., 2005).

Results showed that 25 of the 46 participants experienced significant improvement in their targeted areas as a direct result of the intervention strategies while an additional 10 of the 46 improved their GPA even though analysis showed the intervention strategies may not be the direct cause of improvement (Allsopp et al., 2005).

Alsopp et al. (2005) explain:

"Overall, participants in this project viewed their learning experience positively, valuing the individualized nature of the intervention and the supportive relationship developed with their strategy instructor. Participant comments suggest that having someone who is both interested in them as

individuals and who possesses the knowledge to develop learning strategies that meet their unique learning situations is important. (p.114)”

Some limitations of this study include that 13 of the participants that received intervention strategies continued for two semesters while the rest of the participants only received one semester of the training (Allsopp et al., 2005). Additionally, while the results of the course-specific intervention strategies were very favorable, the recourses needed to provide all the students with disabilities one on one time would be costly.

As stated earlier, it has been found that students with disabilities who are most academically involved are those who have reported the highest quality of life, academic achievement, and easiest transition into the college setting (Smith & Pidi, 2009; Pascarella et al., 2004). Using these types of academic intervention programs, as found in the study above, not only shows favorable results, but also increases the amount of academic involvement that the students are participating in (Allsopp et al, 2005). The more academic accommodations and communication between high school and college will allow for an increase in academic involvement, and in turn may improve the academic achievement, quality of life, and transition to college for students with disabilities (Smith & Pidi, 2009; Pascarella et al., 2004).

In further chapters, the methodology and results of the study will be detailed as well as a discussion of the results and related opportunities for future research.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

The participants for this study were randomly selected and gathered from the Disabilities Resource Center at a north eastern American university. The participants included nine females and fifteen males ranging from eighteen to thirty two years of age and averaging 4.04 years of post secondary schooling. As students with disabilities at the college level were the only participants considered, the most common disabilities among the participants included attention deficit hyper activity disorder at 25% of participants, specific learning disabilities at 29.2% of participants, and traumatic brain injury at 8.3% of participants (See table 1 & 2 for more demographics).

**Table 1.** Age, employment, & term of college study

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	18	32	22.90	3.239
Hours Working / Week	0	24	7.00	9.075
Years Enrolled in College	1	8	4.04	1.738

**Table 2.** Disability Frequency

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
ADHD	6	25.0	25.0	25.0
TBI	2	8.3	8.3	33.3
Specific LD	7	29.2	29.2	62.5
Other	9	37.5	37.5	100.0

The survey that was completed by participants was a simple one page survey that was compiled using questions that regarded the participant's disability, academic status, residential information, and quality of life (See appendix A). Quality of life questions included questions regarding the participant's perceived happiness and frequency of feeling depressed. Type of disability, current GPA, current employment, and general demographics were among other questions to be completed on the survey. Participants received either an electronic copy of the survey through the Disabilities Resource Center's email network or a physical copy during an academic coaching session. Participants completed the survey and submitted it back to the Disabilities Resource Center or the academic coach.

Once the data was collected, the first step of analysis included splitting the participants up into two separate groups. The first group contained participants who currently live or had lived on campus for majority of their college tenure. Participants who moved off campus with peers were counted among the on campus group. The second group consisted of students who had never or only briefly lived on campus during their college tenure. The data was then analyzed using a nonparametric correlation. Additionally data of the perceived happiness of the subjects when compared to current college level GPA, amount of hours spent working each week, and amount of time spent with friends each week was also analyzed using a nonparametric correlation.



## Chapter 4

### Results

The present study tested whether students with disabilities at the post-secondary level performed better academically and lived generally happier lives depending on if they live on campus or commute from home. After running an analysis of the data, it was found that there was a lack of association between higher academic performance and living on campus among college students with disabilities ( $p = .728$ ). It was found that the average GPA for students with disabilities who lived on campus was 3.07 while the average GPA for students who commuted to school from home was 3.08. While there is a .01 difference between the two, it is simple enough to see that there is no significant difference between in academic achievement between students with disabilities who live on campus versus those who live off campus.

There were also analyses that were run to test the general perceived happiness and frequency of depression. The analysis found that there was no significant relationship between the students place of residence and those who reported finding themselves often depressed ( $p = .356$ ). Additionally, it was found that there was no significant relationship between the students place of residence and the students who perceived themselves as generally happy people ( $p = 1.000$ ).

In addition to the analyses ran concerning place of residence with academic performance and quality of life, an analysis was run to test if there was a significant relationship between quality of life and academic performance. The results showed that there was a significant relationship between the students who reported themselves as generally happy people and academic performance ( $p = .015$ ).

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

As stated, the purpose of the present study was to test whether it would be more beneficial for students with disabilities at the post-secondary level to live on campus or commute to class from home when regarding their academic achievement and quality of life. The data suggests that when regarding academic achievement there is no real significant difference between living on campus and commuting to school. This is surprising as there are many reasons to believe that students who live on campus would perform better academically such as increased opportunities to take advantage of accommodations and an increased amount of support from other peers on campus. It was found in previous research that students who have an easier transition period from high school to college often have higher academic achievement and involvement (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004). It may be that students who commute found academics easier to cope with due to a transition of less intensity than students who moved out of their home and onto campus.

It was also found that when regarding that when regarding the quality of life of students with disabilities at the post-secondary level that there is no significant relationship with living on campus. Students who reported to be frequently depressed and students who reported to be generally happy people both had no significant relationship with living on campus. This is also surprising as prior research shows that students at the post-secondary level find most of their happiness with their peers. Previous research has found that students with disabilities benefit from high levels of happiness when interacting with peers (Moore & Carey, 2005). By living on campus, students with

disabilities would have more opportunity to spend time with their peers than students who lived at home as they are surrounded by other students living on campus.

One interesting part of the results showed that in this sample, half of the people who reported that they had lived on campus reported they were generally happy people and half of the people who reported they had not lived on campus also reported being generally happy people. This led to a perfect ( $p = 1.000$ ) correlation. This is interesting as it is not a common occurrence that a sample will have an equal share of data on both sides of the analysis. This may be due to the small sample size of students with disabilities in the current study. Regardless of cause, it is fascinating that a group of randomly selected students reported a portion of data by seemingly tossing a coin and reporting their answer.

After the analyses were run, it was found that there was a significant relationship between the students who reported to be generally happy people and those who had a greater success at academic achievement. This is no surprise as it was found that both high academic achievement and high levels of self-confidence were predictors for high levels of happiness in typically developing students (Chang & Furnham, 2002). There are many reasons as to why we can speculate students who report higher levels of happiness also achieve higher academic scores. Some students may be generally happier at the time of filling out the survey due to their current academic standings. It could be that students who are happy have the drive and motivation to finish the work that is needed in order to have more academic success while the students who are not as happy do not put in the effort to finish all the necessary work. This could be a venue to explore in future research to determine if there is casual relationship between the two variables.

While the information that was accrued during the course of this study was insignificant and was in direct opposition of the hypothesis that was stated at the beginning of the research, there is however an important piece of information that has come to light. Since it is well documented that students with disabilities at the post-secondary level do not achieve the same academic success as their typically developing peers, this study has shown that the lower level of academic success may not be due to the place of residence. Therefore, we must look to other avenues of possibilities as to why students with disabilities have lower academic success than their typically developing students. These could include factors such as awareness and use of accommodations, lack of communication between high schools in universities, or problems in targets areas that are bringing overall GPAs down.

There were some significant limitations to the present study. The most impacting factor was the small amount of participants in the study. With only twenty four participants, the data may be skewed in a different direction than it would typically have if more participants had been acquired. Another significant limitation is the lack of interest in accommodations in the present study. Prior research has shown that students with disabilities at the college level perform at much higher academic level when they take advantage of the accommodations that are available to them. The participant's accommodations were not taken into account during this study.

#### Considerations for the Future

After the completion of the present study, there are some areas that may be of some consideration for future research. A study linking the frequency of use of

accommodations of students with disabilities at the post-secondary level could be of substantial use when determining the cause of low academic achievement levels. As stated earlier, it was found that both high academic achievement and high levels of self-confidence were predictors for high levels of happiness in typically developing students (Chang & Furnham, 2002). Another consideration for future research would be testing to determine why students with disabilities at the post-secondary level who reported to be generally happy people perform academically better than their peers who do not find themselves to be generally happy.

Students with disabilities at the post-secondary level are not nearly as often researched as students with disabilities in the K-12 setting. This is likely due to the government mandated laws in protecting students with disabilities at the K-12 setting such as IDEA. It is important that we conduct research to better understand students with disabilities at the post-secondary level and help pave the way into their respective fields of study and careers.

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## Appendix A

### Survey

Gender: F  M

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

How many years have you been enrolled in college? \_\_\_\_\_

Yes

No

Do you currently or have you ever lived full time on campus? If yes, for how long? \_\_\_\_\_

Is there a specific reason why you decided to live on or off campus? If so, why?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you been diagnosed with a specific learning, physical, developmental or other disability? If yes, please specify.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you consider yourself a generally happy person?

Do you often find yourself depressed?

Do you believe you are in good physical health?

Are you currently employed? If yes, how many hours per week do you spend working?

\_\_\_\_\_

What is your current college GPA?

\_\_\_\_\_

About how many hours do you spend studying or doing academic related work outside of the classroom per week?

0-2 hours

3-5 hours

5-10 hours

More than 10 hours

About how many hours do you spend with friends per week?

0-2 hours

3-5 hours

5-10 hours

More than 10 hours