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A Case Study of the Involvement of Undergraduates with Physical Disabilities
in Campus Organizations at East Tennessee State University

A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

by

Lance Travis Alexis

May 2008

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Keywords: Undergraduates with Physical Disabilities, Campus Student
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ABSTRACT

A Case Study of the Involvement of Undergraduates with Physical Disabilities in Campus Organizations at East Tennessee State University

by

Lance Travis Alexis

The purpose of this study was to examine the level of relationship that existed between undergraduates with physical disabilities at East Tennessee State University and campus student organizations. The study was designated a case study as it focused on one institution of higher education.

Interview and document review were the 2 methods used for data collection. People from 2 select groups were interviewed on a one-on-one basis. One group was people involved in recruiting for selected campus organizations geared toward undergraduates and the other group was undergraduates with observable physical disabilities.

Constitutions, bylaws, mission statements, and other documents offered by the recruiters for the select organizations were reviewed in an effort to discover references to people with disabilities.

The results of the study are intended to assist in bridging the gap between involvement in extracurricular organizations and undergraduates with physical disabilities at East Tennessee State University. It has been documented that increased campus involvement

lends itself to successful college and post-graduate careers, so it is a relevant issue to resolve. Campus organizations can benefit because their recruiters will have the opportunity to view ways to reach a new pool of possible participants. The findings could also prove beneficial to any campus experiencing a similar phenomenon.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to those who were with me physically and spiritually throughout the process of its completion. I want to give thanks to God for every conceivable reason. I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my wife, Pam, who was always by my side, my son, Lawrence, for being my boy, my daughter, Annabelle, for reminding me why, and to Isis for making me laugh.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

“Student organizations are the life blood of the campus. All ETSU students are expected to join and participate in at least one student group on campus” (East Tennessee State University Student Organization Resource Center, 2005). Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, and Associates (1991) indicated that college students who involved themselves in out-of-class activities had a more positive outlook on their collegiate experience because they were more satisfied with their environment. Those students felt more confident in their academic choices and their ability to communicate with faculty increased as their confidence and self-esteem rose. Most importantly, they were more likely to graduate and attribute some aspects of career success to their experiences outside the classroom, because extracurricular activities provided opportunities to develop leadership skills such as teamwork, decision-making, and planning (Kuh et al.). When considering the importance of student campus involvement and the emphasis placed on it by East Tennessee State University, it is important to note that students with physical disabilities at the university are not partaking in what is considered an essential experience.

East Tennessee State University boasts more than 190 student organizations. Those organizations are categorized under the headings Academic, Governance, Community Service, Greek, Honors, Religious, Sports, University Programs, Residence Life, and Special Interest (East Tennessee State University Student Organization Resource Center, 2006). Susan Lilly, a representative of the Office of Housing and Residence Life at East Tennessee State, mentioned that the number of students who live

on campus is 2200 (personal communication, November 30, 2007). Tricia Nguyen, Director of Student Activities at East Tennessee State University, (personal communication November 30, 2007) stated that there are 3871 reported students involved in campus organizations and that number is actually higher because not all the organizations reported their numbers. The fact that the number of students involved is dramatically higher than the on campus residents shows that there is a strong push to try to get all students involved. According to Linda Gibson, Disability Services Director at East Tennessee State University, (personal communication, September 15, 2005) the majority of students with physical disabilities on the campus do not participate in these organizations, and only one student organization had any significant membership consisting of students with physical disabilities.

Silent Bucs is an organization created by students with hearing deficiencies for people with hearing deficiencies or anyone interested in sign language and the deaf culture (Silent Bucs, 2006). The organization has three primary objectives. First is to work toward easing communication problems between the deaf and hard-of-hearing community and others at East Tennessee State University. Second is providing a support system for those who are deaf or hard of hearing. Third is working with people in the community who are deaf or hard of hearing (Silent Bucs). Whereas Silent Bucs does provide an extracurricular opportunity for some students with physical disabilities, it has unintentionally developed an important problem.

Gibson (personal communication, September 15, 2005) stated that Silent Bucs has developed into an exclusive club for students who are deaf or hard of hearing and has not led to interactions between students with disabilities and those without. Senelick and

Dougherty (2001) contended that interactions between people with physical disabilities and those without were essential to break down the barriers between disability and non-disability. The importance of those interactions lay in the fact that a lack of understanding, knowledge, and exposure between members of the two cultures was the primary obstacle to acceptance. According to Gibson (personal communication, September 15, 2005), the primary reasons for the absence of students with physical disabilities from the other student organizations at East Tennessee State University were grounded in students' backgrounds, limited access, disability social culture, and the social culture of the members of individual organizations.

Sax (2006), Associate Director of the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California at Los Angeles, stated that students who were more active in high school tended to be more active in college. A spirit of involvement fostered in the stages before college allowed students to carry that desire with them to higher education. Tricia Nguyen (personal communication, September 15, 2005) contended that students at East Tennessee State did not often come in contact with their peers with physical disabilities in high school and the lack of association played a role in their trepidation in approaching students with physical disabilities. Michalko (2002), a sociologist with a vision impairment, expressed that someone with a disability was often seen as an "other", and this distinction created a divide between people without disabilities and those with disabilities. According to the Center for Independent Living (2005), full inclusion and acceptance into any group can only be achieved when each person has the ability to become a productive member and be able to interact in organizations. People with physical disabilities need organizations to incorporate accommodations into their

operating procedures. Accommodations could include sign language interpreters, newsletters in Braille, or holding all meetings in accessible locations. Time and transportation often prove to be other accommodation issues (Center for Independent Living).

Nguyen (personal communication, September 15, 2005) stated that leaders and members of student organizations did not intentionally avoid recruiting students with disabilities. However, they may have unintentionally refrained from recruiting them when they saw them at an orientation or similar fair because of the fear of the unknown, fear of possibly offending the students, or a feeling that they could not relate to a student with a disability. Also, some student organizations, such as those involving outdoor recreational activities, were centered on activities that would be difficult for students with physical disabilities (Nguyen).

There are a number of reasons why students with physical disabilities at East Tennessee State University do not participate in student organizations, as well as reasons why organizational recruiters consciously or subconsciously may avoid recruiting students with physical disabilities. Delving deeper into those reasons and possibly discovering others not previously mentioned are the points of emphasis in this study.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between students with physical disabilities and campus organizations at East Tennessee State University in the hope of furthering the relationship between the two. If the relationship is strengthened, the success rate for undergraduates with physical disabilities during and after school

could increase. It would also increase the pool of possible members for campus organizations.

Research Questions

The following research questions were chosen to best guide this case study:

1. To what extent are students with physical disabilities active in student organizations on the campus of East Tennessee State University?
2. What factors are perceived to play a role in the relationship between students with physical disabilities and campus organization involvement at East Tennessee State University?
3. To what extent are students with physical disabilities recruited to join campus organizations at East Tennessee State University?
4. What measures can be taken to foster growth in the participation of students with physical disabilities and campus organizations at East Tennessee State University?

Significance of the Study

The findings generated by this case study could have a significant impact on students with physical disabilities and campus organizations at East Tennessee State University. In the statement given at this study's opening, the institution has clearly stated its stance on the importance of involvement on campus for all its students, and literature supports that stance as well as displays a connection to success during and after college to campus involvement. Identifying a gap between this important involvement and students with physical disabilities could help lead to its resolution. This would provide a direct boost to the collegiate experience and future success for students with physical disabilities at East Tennessee State University. It also would benefit the organizations as their enrollments could increase. This case study could also have broader implications.

There is currently no direct literature on the topic of campus involvement by students with physical disabilities. I researched the databases Google, Journal Storage, Scholarly Journal Archive, InfoTrac, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* electronic archive, Proquest Dissertations and Theses, and the Educational Resources Information Center using the key terms “physical disability”, “higher education”, and “campus involvement” in an attempt to locate literature, but my assumptions on the lack of literature were proven true. I also conducted a search of the Association on Higher Education and Disability and the Journal of Post Secondary Education and Disability and was only able to locate a small amount of relevant information concerning involvement. The information revolved primarily around learning disabilities, academic achievement, technology, and strategies to assist disability services providers. Because campus involvement is so important to a fulfilling higher education experience, investigating that arena for the role it plays in the lives of an often underserved population is valuable. Also, findings and recommendations from this study could apply to other institutions of higher education that experience a similar phenomenon.

Scope of the Study

This study is classified as a case study. Interviews of two separate samples and a review of documents were the data collection methods used. I interviewed undergraduates who have vision impairment, hearing impairment, or who use mobility devices. I interviewed two undergraduates who fell into each of the aforementioned categories. I also interviewed recruiters from Inter-Fraternity Council, governing body of the campus fraternities; Panhellenic Association, governing body of the campus sororities; The Well, a non-denominational campus ministry; Alpha Phi Omega, a

national service fraternity, and the Student Government Association. East Tennessee State's policy on disability was reviewed, as were the selected organizations' policies if they existed. This review helped establish the current views of campus and of the organizations. By identifying those views, the research helped supplement the information gathered via the interviews. The information obtained from the interviews and document reviews were analyzed using Glaser and Straus' Constant Comparison Method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Researcher's Biases

I have substantial personal, professional, and research-based experiences with the disability community. Based upon my experience, I have an understanding of a distinct relationship barrier between people with disabilities and those without. This knowledge gave me the direction for this topic, and the passion to pursue it.

Organization of the Study

This case study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter consists of a general introduction to the study, the intent of the study, the research questions that would guide the study, a statement of purpose, the significance of the study, the scope of the study, and any explanation of my biases. Chapter 2 consists of a review of relevant literature to help frame the phenomenon being studied. Chapter 3 consists of research design, data collection methods, data analysis methods, a section describing how the trustworthiness of the research will be ensured, and the perspective of the researcher. Chapter 4 is a presentation of the findings from analyzing the data. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the findings and conclusions as well as recommendations to improve practice and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Through my own research and in speaking with Linda Gibson, Disability Services Director at East Tennessee State University, I have concluded that little direct research exists concerning the relationship between students with physical disabilities and campus student organizations. I researched the databases Google, Journal Storage Scholarly Journal Archive, InfoTrac, The Chronicle of Higher Education electronic archive, Proquest Dissertations and Theses, and the Educational Resources Information Center using the key words “physical disability”, “higher education”, and “campus involvement”. No direct references to a study were found. I also conducted a search of the Association on Higher Education and Disability and the Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability and was unable to locate much relevant information concerning involvement. In one way this is a blessing because it is exciting to break new ground. It is also a daunting task, however, in that there is a lack of previous literature to guide my inferences. However, there is a great amount of information concerning physical disability culture and the important role student organizations and campus extracurricular activities play in the college setting and in life after one graduates, which brought together can provide an excellent framework for this study.

Physical Disability Culture

In 1990, the United States Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act, which outlawed discrimination against people with disabilities. It was a comprehensive

law meant to cover all aspects of public and commercial life such as employment and any service provided by state and local governments (Goldberg & Goldberg, 1993). Even though the Americans with Disabilities Act has been law for many years, lack of adequate accommodation is still a major problem on college campuses and in the general society. In the book *Make Them Go Away*, Johnson (2003) reported the findings from researching many news stories from around the United States concerning people involved in disability rights issues. In it the author stated that two primary reasons some people created obstacles for the Disability Rights Movement were money and social perception (Johnson). In terms of money, businesses did not want to build ramps, widen doorways, install handrails or make any other necessary changes to make their buildings accessible. Many business owners found it especially difficult to justify the expense because little to none of their clientele involved people with disabilities (Johnson).

Celebrity Influence

Johnson (2003) contended that Clint Eastwood had become a key figure in this battle as he faced a lawsuit concerning the accessibility of his Mission Ranch Hotel in Carmel, California. The national media monitored his case, and Eastwood became an advocate for all business owners who were facing similar situations (Johnson). Having a major figure take the side against accessibility had the effect of creating a base of support for business over lack of accessibility and acceptance in the court of public opinion. A haze of bottom lines and cost effectiveness could lead to clouding judgment among many business people when presented with the opportunity to create an environment of equality. Although the “almighty dollar” played a major role in the fight for accessibility and acceptance, the biggest hurdle was social perception (Johnson).

Thanks to Jerry Lewis and Christopher Reeve, many individuals with observable disabilities were seen as people who were always in need of assistance from many people without disabilities. Jerry Lewis' annual Easter Seals telethon was a parade of children with disabilities meant to tug at the heart and wallet of the viewers (Johnson, 2003). Lewis' yearly event created a picture for viewers to accept that all people with cognitive disabilities were in need of help or a cure. Whenever the issue of whether a person with a cognitive disability should live independently, seek employment, get married, or have children ever arose, the belief that these people were simply charity cases led the general public to believe that people with cognitive disabilities could not possibly help themselves or others because they were the ones in need of help (Johnson). Michalko (2002) contended that the assumption that disability was something that needed to be cured led to a group of people being viewed as diseased.

Johnson (2003) indicated that after becoming a person with quadriplegia and vowing to walk again because he refused to consider himself disabled, Christopher Reeve became a major face of disability to the nation. Michalko (2002) presented the idea that the vision of different or diseased is the perception many people had concerning disability. People with disabilities noticed how the population viewed them. "Thank God that's not me." "Daddy, what's wrong with that man?" "He's blind." These were some of the phrases heard by people with observable disabilities. These phrases meant that God had punished them and there was something personally wrong with acquiring a disability. The complete abandonment of basic social etiquette was astounding (Michalko). Senelick and Dougherty (2001) stated that when people without disabilities saw individuals with observable disabilities they viewed the disabilities, rather than the

people and saw the disabilities as tragic and as personal prisons. Michalko stated that people feared disability. Being labeled disabled was not something people wanted and seeing people with disabilities served as a reminder of the presence of disability, which rekindled that fear (Michalko). This view of disability fell under the traditional model of disability (Seelman, 2004). Based on culture, religion, social standing, and other factors, some people tended to see people with disabilities as non-human and devalued them as such. People with disabilities became outcasts and pariahs in the eyes of those who held these beliefs (Seelman). According to Johnson, advocates for disability rights became caught in this mire.

Medical Model vs. Social Model

A common model followed in the Western world when discussing disability was the medical model of disability (Seelman, 2004). This model was based upon the perception of disability as a problem in a person's body in need of medical attention. This perception of disability was unfair to those with disabilities, because it was bound by the biased view of what the medical world deemed normal or healthy (Seelman). It further proved unfair because the model objectified those with disabilities as they were viewed based on their disability rather than their personhood (Smart, 2001). Authority on disability was believed to be in the hands of medical professionals rather than those who had acquired the disabilities (Seelman). The medical professional delivered services to passive recipients who were given little information and few options (Smart). The perspectives of those being treated and adjoining social factors were not part of the model (Seelman).

Health professionals who followed this model often became relegated to viewing disability in one way, which was often different from the way the people they treated saw disability. Many of them wanted to move away from viewing themselves as patients and move into a view of being given the opportunity to live their lives as workers, students, parents, etc (Seelman, 2004). To accomplish these life goals, aspects such as accessibility and equal opportunity to participate needed to be measured. Instead, the medical model focused on measuring and studying curative measures. The medical model was devoid of social considerations (Seelman).

The social model of disability focused on the issues society had with disability. It was based on knowledge and experience of those who lived with disabilities (Seelman, 2004). This perspective displayed disability as simply a diversity in function and called those with disabilities the authorities on disability matters. Through such empowerment, they became advocates who embraced societal opportunities. The model's framework was open as it incorporated the freedom and independent thought for individuals with disabilities to choose how disabilities should be perceived. The model was limited to the notion that disability was merely something that should be viewed in a social and environmental vacuum and focused on the rights of individuals (Seelman).

Research on the social model was based upon examining the quality of life, accessibility, participation, and user satisfaction of people with disabilities in their surrounding environment. This research has helped develop many accessible communication devices and affected laws to ensure these devices were made available (Seelman, 2004). Research also led to the development of an organizational model for developing accessibility. The Center for Rehabilitation Sciences and Technology at the

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee developed the A3 model, so named because it encompassed three phases: advocacy, accommodation, and accessibility (Seelman). In the first phase, there is a large amount of advocacy needed because an organization's knowledge of disability was limited (Schwanke, Smith, & Edyburn, 1999). The second phase of accommodation showed the need to decrease advocacy while accommodation and accessibility increased. If an organization reached the final phase, it was accessible so the need for advocacy or continuing to seek accommodation decreased (Schwanke et al.). There was a growing trend in the Western world toward a shift from the medical model to the social model of disability (Seelman)

Equality

Johnson (2003) expressed the view that people with disabilities who were part of the Disability Rights Movement did not see themselves as needing to be cured. They had jobs, families, and all the other joys and stresses anyone else faced. They did not need handouts or any other form of charity. There was nothing wrong with being disabled. A person with quadriplegia or any other disability did not have to spend time seeking a cure. Instead the time should be spent living. If anyone or anything needed a cure, it was society's view of disability (Johnson).

The vast majority of people will face disabilities in their lifetimes (Johnson, 2003). It can be temporary, such as a broken leg, permanent, such as a spinal cord injury or simply the effects of getting older. Senelick and Dougherty (2001) claimed that instead of being debilitating, having a wheelchair, guide dog, or assistive technology could be a liberating experience as the opportunity for increased social interaction for people with physical disabilities became real. Johnson stated that even though disability

was a part of life, much of society still saw the disability community as different and in a subordinate role in need of help. With this in mind, the common-sense question begs to be asked: If the vast majority of people will be faced with a disability at some point in their lives, then why not make society as accessible as possible? Johnson answered this question with the point that fear could dominate common sense, and it was that fear of disability that aforementioned celebrities and many others had perpetuated that obscured more rational approaches.

Societal Perception

Shreve (2002) contended that the attitudes and behaviors that people without disabilities expressed toward those with disabilities were based on several key factors. The first factor was projection. People without disabilities became uncomfortable when thinking what their lives would be like if they had the same disability of the person with whom they were dealing (Shreve). Second was the vision of the ideal body. Thanks to countless media outlets, the ideal body became the norm and any variance from that needed to be fixed. Society had constructed what it meant to have the ideal form (Shreve). Clapton and Fitzgerald (1997) stated that the definition for the ideal form had changed over the centuries, and anyone with a body outside the norm was considered an “other”. That distinction often led to adverse consequences stemming from the need to attain the ideal form of the given generation.

Shreve (2002) continued with the third key factor, generalization. People thought that all people with disabilities were alike. They compared them to the people they saw on telethons or competing in the Special Olympics and assumed that all people with disabilities fell into those categories. Fourth was atonement. There were some who

believed acquiring a disability was punishment for a sin or being born with a disability was punishment for the sins of the parents (Shreve). The final factor was spread, a belief that if a person had one disability he must have others. Senelick and Dougherty (2001) provided the example of a waiter who asked a person without a disability dining with a person with an observable disability for that person's order because the waiter assumed a mental disability accompanied the physical, and the waiter may have spoken very loudly and slowly to the person with an observable disability (Senelick & Dougherty). Smart (2001) added other sources of prejudicial behavior of society against people with disabilities. One was economic threat. This threat was perceived as a drain on tax dollars from people with disabilities not working, using government programs, and raising insurance premiums for all. Another was a safety threat based on the perception that some disabilities led to volatile actions and antisocial behaviors and that disability could be contagious (Smart). Also included was the idea that people with disabilities should act a certain way in society. This belief was sometimes compared to the Charles Dickens character Tiny Tim, who was grateful and cheerful to be involved and considered (Smart).

Three key negative behaviors arose because of these attitudes and beliefs—avoidance, abuse, and patronization (Shreve, 2002). Clapton and Fitzgerald (1997) pointed to the preceding reasons being causes of the history of people with physical disabilities being constructed of silence and lives on the margins of society.

Marginalizing

A book that helps put into perspective how isolated and misunderstood the disability community is *beyond please and thank you: The Disability Awareness*

Handbook for Families, Co-workers, and Friends, Senelick and Dougherty (2001). The authors instructed readers on disability etiquette in several societal areas. Chapters on disability awareness in the workplace, at school, in public places, and in dating were some of the areas covered. Senelick and Dougherty recognized that one hindrance to the Disability Rights Movement was a lack of knowledge of disabilities by the general community. The lack of exposure to people with disabilities puts those without disabilities at a disadvantage when interacting with people with disabilities. In many cases, poor actions in those situations were not the fault of the person without a disability; the fault lay in the lack of knowledge. They suggested nine points for everyone to realize about people with disabilities:

- People with disabilities are people.
- People with disabilities know that they are disabled.
- A person with a disability does not have a contagious disease.
- Don't be condescending.
- But, don't hold a person with a disability in awe either.
- Adults with disabilities are just that: adults.
- People with disabilities can respond on their own.
- It may take longer for a person with a disability to get dressed or catch a bus. Be considerate!
- And, yes, people with disabilities can have—and enjoy—sex (p. 4-5).

In a textbook on disability that was intended to relay disability experiences in society from a disability perspective, Smart (2001) mentioned several effects faced by people with disabilities due to discrimination. They were stereotyped and trapped in roles by societal expectations, which led to lowered expectations. They lost privacy because their visibility increased, and they were often called on to perform as spokespersons for disability in group settings because there was often only one person with a disability in a general group environment (Smart). People with disabilities were

also viewed as being eligible for privileges such as special hiring standards making any achievements tainted. Finally people from opposite ends of the spectrum often treated them as infants or second-class citizens. Some want to care for them because they saw people with disabilities as always needing assistance as if they are in a perpetual child like state (Smart). Michalko (2002) mentioned that too many people without disabilities considered people with disabilities as needing help and cures and anyone who needed help or a cure was automatically on a different plain than personal counterparts. Others saw people with disabilities as circus acts or subhuman (Smart). Because people with physical disabilities often found disability portrayed in a negative light, they tried to retreat from a part of who they were (Michalko). This form of self-denial could lead to a retreat from friendship, kindness, love, affection, and other attributes considered positive in a social setting for fear of rejection and further separation (Firestone, Firestone, & Catlett, 2003).

Michalko (2002) spoke about his early life in terms of avoiding the idea of being considered blind. He knew at an early age that he was legally blind and that his sight would deteriorate. In the meantime, he did everything he could to avoid letting people know. He sat at the front of the room in class. He gave up baseball for football on account of the bigger ball (Michalko). He made up intricate stories about getting his license suspended. Michalko's primary motivation for trying to be something he was not was the feeling that society was his homeland. It was where his family, friends, and activities were. He did not want to leave his homeland, but as time passed he realized that his homeland had left him (Michalko).

Student Involvement

In the book *What Matters in College?*, Astin (1993) displayed the results of studying the relationships among 135 college environmental factors and 57 student involvement factors and their association with success for undergraduates. Some of those factors were faculty morale, campus focus, altruism, and social activism. In this work Astin acknowledged there were very few choices that one made that had more of an impact than whether or not to attend college. Once the choice was made to attend and where to attend, there were several aspects of the collegiate experience that had an impact on students. One of those aspects was involvement in peer groups (Astin). Anything that prevented students from interacting with their peers, e.g., living at home, commuting, full-time employment, or immersing themselves in individualized activities like watching television led to a wide spectrum of negative outcomes for college students. Students taking advantage of campus activities had a tremendous positive impact on learning, academic performance, and retention (Astin).

In a study centered on the academic success of students with disabilities at an unspecified northwestern university, Nelson, Smith, Appleton, and Raver (1993) presented the data indicating that 70% of those interviewed believed that interaction with other students was important to success. Some of the students commented that the importance of interacting with other students was more than an issue of academic efficiency. Those interactions proved an education in and of themselves as the time spent involved conversations about multiple topics. That interaction was considered an important part of personal education (Nelson et al.). The more students interacted with each other outside the classroom in student government, student organizations, or campus

and community activities, the more they felt bonded to their institutions. The goal was for students to develop a “family feel” for their institutions, making them comfortable places to live, learn, and grow (Coburn, 2005).

Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, and Associates (2005), through a compilation of several studies, discovered 12 points as institutional conditions that were important to student development. Of those 12, half had a connection to out-of-classroom activities: 1. support for students to explore human differences and dimensions of self, 2. respect for diverse talents, 3. integration of prior knowledge and experience, 4. ongoing practice of learned skills, 5. active learning, and 6. collaboration among students. Effective institutions of higher education added value to the students’ experiences by channeling students’ energies at high levels toward appropriate activities that encouraged learning and personal development (Kuh et al.).

Chickering and Reisser (1993) listed what they called the seven vectors in a college student’s development and ways to achieve a healthy transition through them. The vectors were 1. developing competence, 2. managing emotions, 3. moving through autonomy to reach interdependence, 4. developing mature interpersonal relationships, 5. establishing identity, 6. developing purpose, and 7. developing identity. Key elements in developing students through these stages were linked to the institution of higher education itself, i.e. curriculum and institutional size (Chickering & Reisser). There were also elements that were directly linked to such extracurricular activities and student organizations as friendships, student communities, and student development programs and services. Those vectors and the ways to achieve them described the major throughways college students must travel in order to achieve self-actualization while also

achieving the ability to appropriately be in communion with others (Chickering & Reisser).

Institutional Responsibility

Kuh et al. (1991) in the book *Involving Colleges* reported the results from their studies of 14 institutions of higher education classifying what was involved in a college that had a commitment to student involvement, the relationship between promoting involvement and development of students, and ways for institutions of higher education to develop involvement opportunities. The authors stated that a goal of many institutions of higher education was to mold students who achieved desirable changes in their values, intellectual capacities, and overall sensibilities. The impact of the college experience increased when students were actively engaged in a variety of collegiate activities. An effective undergraduate experience was directly linked to spending time on campus and the quality of activities undergraduates took part in while on campus (Kuh et al.).

Campuses should be broken down into smaller units, so students do not become overwhelmed (Tinto, 1993). Extracurricular activities, student organizations, and campus-wide programs are ways to help alleviate feelings of isolation by allowing the opportunity to develop social attachments (Tinto). Students who involved themselves in out-of-class activities had much more positive outlooks on their college experiences because they were often more satisfied with their social life and overall environments (Kuh et al., 1991). They felt more confident in their academic choices and their ability to communicate with faculty increased as their confidence and self-esteem rose. Most importantly, they were more likely to graduate and attributed some aspects of career success to their experiences outside the classroom as extracurricular activities provided

opportunities to develop leadership skills such as teamwork, decision-making, and planning (Kuh et al.). The excellence of an institution lay in its ability to affect the aforementioned desirable changes in students. To best achieve that goal, an institution must offer a rich campus life full of multiple opportunities for students (Kuh et al.).

Beyond the Campus

The impact of participation in campus activities extends beyond one's collegiate experience and future career. Sax (2006) stated that creating a pattern of social activism, empowerment, and community involvement during one's college years was directly linked to continuing along such roads beyond those years. A person's college years was a time linked to influencing an increase in social activism. The best way for a student to take part was to be active around campus in volunteer work, organizations, events, and services. A student tended to gain a stronger sense of social activism by being on a campus where a large portion of students were socially active and opportunities to be active were plentiful (Sax). This involvement led to a sense of empowerment as students opened themselves up to new experiences, people, and ideas. If a student did not feel empowered, the student became depressed as he began to view the institution and its administrators as a negative influence rather than a place and people of opportunity (Sax).

Involvement around campus resulted in involvement in the community. By being involved in campus organizations or other events and opportunities, students developed a sense of purpose for the community through community service activities conducted by campus organizations and through the spirit of active involvement (Sax, 2006). Kuh et al. (1991) displayed a connection between student involvement and the ability to establish the capacity for mature, intimate interpersonal relationships. Also, an involved

student became more civic minded and tended to participate in voting, political affairs, public service, and donating to his alma mater (Kuh et al.). For students with physical disabilities membership in campus organizations allows the opportunity to relate successfully with those without physical disabilities (Kissane, 1997). These organizations can also prove beneficial in developing relationships with faculty, hearing speakers, and increasing overall knowledge that could be directly related to a future career field (Kissane). According to Kuh et al., student involvement level held high importance because participation in campus activities was the only predictive factor for adult success.

Freshman Year

Upcraft, Gardner, and Associates (1990) wrote *The Freshman Year Experience*, a study of historical points, theory, and campus-wide programs that had an impact on freshman success. The authors contended that when reviewing the entire collegiate experience, it was relevant to extract the freshman year for separate study because the experiences from that year proved to be key contributing factors to effective college experiences. Much retention research along with examinations of nationwide trends overwhelmingly concluded that the experiences of the first year of college played a tremendous role in collegiate success. Freshman success was comprised of six phases, four of which had direct links to campus organizations and activities (Upcraft et al.).

Successful freshmen established and maintained interpersonal relationships. They found a group of friends and created a support system. With these people, they engaged in activities that required cooperation and interpersonal skills (Upcraft et al., 1990). This allowed them to meet and work with people from a variety of backgrounds. These

relationships helped freshmen develop their identities and integrated philosophies of life. Values, beliefs, and self-image were formed through these interactions. Finally, maintaining personal health and wellness was important to freshman success and could be attained through involvement (Upcraft et al.).

Interactions with other students in positive, growth-inspiring activities helped the physical, mental, and emotional well being of first-year students. Institutions of higher education played a significant role in ensuring that freshmen received these necessary opportunities (Upcraft et al., 1990). Sax (2006) contended that civic development was one necessary area in which many freshmen were lacking because the majority of high schools did not require any form of service or other community involvement. Helping freshmen develop a civic mindset that they would carry with them through their remaining college years and beyond required an institution's dedication to three strategies (Sax).

The three strategies were offering opportunities for volunteering, offering a wide variety of organizations and events, and providing opportunities for students of differing backgrounds to socialize and learn about other cultures (Sax, 2006). According to Upcraft et al., (1990), institutions of higher education must provide enriching extracurricular opportunities, and when planning these opportunities must take into account the diversity of freshman classes. They must create an environment where freshmen were treated with dignity and respect. Finally, institutions must have deliberate goals for freshmen and display a commitment to those goals (Upcraft et al.).

Leadership

Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, and Osteen (2005) interviewed 13 participants using three different methods—life narrative protocols, focus groups, and comparative analyses and open, axial, and selective coding to answer their research question, “What processes does a person go through to come to an awareness that he/she can make a difference and can work effectively with others to accomplish change? How does this relational leadership efficacy/identity develop?” (p.1). The researchers stated it was important for institutions of higher education to provide opportunities for their students to develop their leadership potential, and involvement was at the center of that development. In leadership development there were six primary categories: awareness, exploration-engagement, identifying the leader, differentiating among leadership styles, productivity, and integration-synthesis. One moved through these categories sequentially and the movement produced a flow from dependence to independence to interdependence (Komives et al.).

In the awareness stage, a person recognized the leadership opportunities and leaders in his surroundings, both locally and on a national level. The person was not a leader and was generally uninvolved, but affirmation and encouragement from parents, teachers, and other leaders could help build up the leadership potential, thereby taking him to the next stage (Komives et al., 2005). The exploration-engagement stage consisted of a person getting involved in some sort of productive group activity or team and taking on responsibilities within it. Personal skills were developed and strengths and weaknesses were identified. The person wanted to get involved and actively sought other groups to join. Affirmation from respected people around the developing leader

continued to be important (Komives et al.). In the next stage, a person began to define himself as a leader. This stage was the transition point from dependence to independence. The developing leader tried new roles and responsibilities and began to understand individual interests and focus on the organizations that fell into that category. The leader saw himself as someone who accomplished tasks and sought out more tasks to make the organizations more effective. After completing this stage, the developing leader moved from independence to interdependence (Komives et al.).

The first stage of interdependence saw the developing leader look outside of the self to those around him to assist in the leadership duties. A newfound belief that anyone in the group could take on leadership roles was developed, as the group was included in creating and implementing the goals of the organization. The developing leader learned to trust and value others and developed a comfort level that fostered peer relationships. A sense of team and the importance and strength of teamwork were embraced (Komives et al., 2005). The next stage consisted of the developing leader committing to a goal of helping develop others. The hallmark of this stage of leadership development was the understanding that developing the team was what sustained any organization (Komives et al.). The final stage called for the developing leader to synthesize all the other stages. The leader continued developing the self and committed to lifelong learning while continuing the commitment to help advance the potential of others. The leader saw himself as a role model and made it a priority to continue to make the organization a better place upon ending tenure. The leader wanted to leave a legacy of teambuilding and organizational and self-improvement (Komives et al.). Involvement as an undergraduate in leadership programs and in campus events and organizations was a great way for a

person to move through the leadership development stages. These opportunities involved collaboration, empowerment, teamwork, and a chance to learn from peer mentors and advisors. Engaging in leadership situations with peers especially in a setting that called for a person to take on a higher level of independence was beneficial in moving through the stages of leadership development (Komives et al.).

Summary

Through reviewing the literature on student involvement, it becomes apparent that participation in campus student organizations and activities is an extremely important part of a successful experience in college and beyond. Because involvement is important, undergraduates who do not take advantage of extracurricular opportunities could be at a disadvantage. If undergraduates with physical disabilities typically are not participating, those students are missing important opportunities.

Those students will not only miss the positive attributes of involvement but also contribute to preconceived notions displayed throughout the review of disability literature. A lack of success in higher education or an incomplete experience only feeds into the belief that those in the disability community are incapable or different. It also makes them less prepared to find success in the workplace, thus further hindering the movement to equality and acceptance.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this case study is to investigate the level of involvement of undergraduates with physical disabilities in campus organizations at East Tennessee State University. The study is qualitative and is a case study based upon the definition given by Merriam (2001): “Case studies are differentiated from other types of qualitative research in that they are intensive descriptions and analyses of a single unit or bonded systems such as an individual, program, event, group, intervention, or community” (p. 19). This chapter introduces the design of the study and ways in which the participants in the study were chosen, interviews were conducted, data were collected and analyzed, and how trustworthiness in the data was established.

Design of the Study

In order to best investigate the relationship between undergraduates with disabilities and student organizations at East Tennessee State University, a qualitative approach seemed most appropriate. Merriam (2001) stated that there were five characteristics of all forms of qualitative research—there was understanding the phenomenon of interest from the participants’ perspectives, the researcher was the primary data collecting instrument, there was usually fieldwork involved, an inductive research strategy was used, and the product was richly descriptive. This study contained all those features. Interviews were the primary data collection procedures. These interviews allowed the participants’ perspectives to be the focus. I conducted the interviews, and the interview process proved an example of fieldwork. Considering the

lack of literature on the topic, an inductive approach seemed appropriate for generating hypotheses about why students with physical disabilities at East Tennessee State University generally do not participate in campus organizations and how to generate more participation. Also, reviews of East Tennessee State University and selected student organizations' policies on disability were conducted. Using this combination of the aforementioned research methods led to a product rich in description.

Participants in the Study

The participants in the study were purposefully sampled. "Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 2001, p. 61). Each participant in the study was either an East Tennessee State undergraduate with a physical disability or a student who coordinated recruiting activities for one of the selected campus organizations. According to Gibson (personal communication, March 1, 2007), there were approximately 550 undergraduates registered with Disability Services. Of that number, there were students with differing observable physical disabilities. I interviewed undergraduates who had vision impairment, hearing impairment, or who used mobility devices. I interviewed two undergraduates who fell into each of the aforementioned categories.

The recruiters were those from popular and broadly themed organizations on campus, because those are the ones that attract a wide membership instead of organizations that are centered on a specific activity. Nguyen (personal communication, March 1, 2007) identified five organizations that would be best to use in this research: Inter-Fraternity Council, governing body of the campus fraternities; Panhellenic

Association, governing body of the campus sororities; The Well, a non denominational campus ministry; Alpha Phi Omega, a national service fraternity; and the Student Government Association. All of those organizations agreed to participate.

Before an individual interview began, the participant was given a copy of an informed consent document. This document ensured that the information the interviewees provided would be kept confidential. I composed the document, and East Tennessee State University's Institutional Review Board approved it. There was one interview conducted over the phone. That participant was read the informed consent document and e-mailed a copy. A copy of the Informed Consent Document is located in Appendix A.

Interviews

“Through qualitative interviews you can understand experiences and reconstruct events in which you did not participate... You can extend your intellectual and emotional reach across age, occupation, class, race, sex, and geographical boundaries” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 3). Because I had never been either a person with a physical disability or a recruiter for a primary campus organization, I needed to seek out those who had those experiences. It was their stories that dictated the results and recommendations concerning the phenomenon of interest. “Qualitative interviewing projects are especially good at describing social and political process, that is, how and why things change” (Rubin & Rubin, p.3).

Linda Gibson, Disability Services Director, and Tricia Nguyen, Director of Student Activities, were consulted to gain an idea of the necessary number of interviewees needed to gain the breadth and depth necessary to answer the research

questions and a listing of people who met the research criteria and would be interested in participating. The sampling criteria were undergraduates with physical disabilities and recruiters for selected campus organizations. After consulting Gibson, she identified students she believed would be willing to participate and contacted them with the information. Upon receiving confirmation of interest, interviews were arranged. A sign language interpreter was needed for two of the interviews and was arranged through Disability Services. Tricia Nguyen led me to a database of student organizations maintained by the Student Organization Resource Center that allowed me to identify the officers of the organizations of interest. I contacted the officers to explain my study and requested interviews with their organizations' recruiters. Once contacts were confirmed, interviews were arranged. Only one of the interviews was not done in person, and that exception was conducted over the phone. Rubin and Rubin (2005) stated, "Qualitative interviews are conversations in which a researcher gently guides a conversational partner in an extended direction" (p. 4). The interview script I followed when conducting the interviews helped lead them in that direction.

Interview Script

The development of the questions for the interview script was based upon my personal, literary, and professional understanding of the disability culture. My personal understanding has come from my relationship with my wife who is a person with paraplegia and the various people with disabilities I have met and spoken with in great detail through knowing her. My literary understanding can be seen in the literature review. My professional understanding has come from an internship in Disability Services at East Tennessee State University, volunteering at the Memphis Center for

Independent Living, and aiding in an attempt to establish a Center for Independent Living in Northeast Tennessee. These activities not only helped me form appropriate questions for the undergraduates with physical disabilities but also with the organization recruiters as the experiences helped me understand the ways in which people with physical disabilities are often viewed by the general population.

Four people whom I hold in high regard reviewed the questions. Two of them currently hold professional positions in Student Affairs focusing on involvement opportunities at the collegiate level, and the other two people are people with physical disabilities who have graduated from institutions of higher education and served in various roles both professionally and personally in the Disability Rights Movement. Their feedback was incorporated into revising the interview questions. The design for the questions was emergent. The script is located in Appendix B.

Document Review

East Tennessee State's and the selected organizations' policies on disability were reviewed. This review helped establish the current views of campus and the organizations concerning disability. By identifying those views, a further understanding of the level of understanding and concern was brought out, which provided additional evidence and credence to the interviews.

I searched the East Tennessee State University website and consulted the campus' Disability Services to locate and determine the University's disability policy. The disability policies of Inter-Fraternity Council, Panhellenic Association, The Well, Alpha Phi Omega, and the Student Government Association were obtained through reviewing

the websites of the organizations and asking the participants for information. A guide was used to help organize the searches. The guide is located in Appendix C.

Data Collection

When interviewing, it is important that the interviewer and interviewee develop a rapport and a conversational partnership (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). One effective strategy to help foster this partnership is the use of a recorder while interviewing instead of taking notes. Taking notes does not create a relaxed atmosphere, slows down the process, and causes the interviewee to pause during or between answers so the interviewer can keep up. The art of conversation is lost. Recording the interview allows for relaxed conversational freedom; therefore, I used a recorder when conducting my interviews and an interview script was followed. The interviews were conducted at a time and place agreed upon by the individual participant and me. One interested participant could not meet in person, so a telephone interview was arranged.

Comfort level for the students with physical disabilities was especially stressed through scheduling the interviews in locations decided upon with input from the students and Disability Services. Disability Services provided rooms in their office to conduct all of the interviews except for one, which was the one aforementioned telephone interview. This helped ensure that the locations used were completely accessible and held a level of familiarity.

Documents were located and reviewed using University websites and by asking the recruiters who participated to volunteer documentation. A document review script was used to guide the review. The constitutions, bylaws, missions, and policies of the campus, East Tennessee State's Disability Services, and the Inter-Fraternity Council,

Panhellenic Association, The Well, Alpha Phi Omega, and the Student Government Association were the focus of the reviews.

Data Analysis

Upon the completion of the interviews, a person certified by East Tennessee State's Institutional Review Board transcribed the recordings. After receiving my transcriptions, themes were identified. Those themes became the foundation of the research findings. The findings from the document reviews served to supplement the interview results.

The combination of data was analyzed using Glaser and Strauss' Constant Comparison Method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Merriam (2001) stated that the strategy of the method is to constantly compare incidents from the data. The comparisons help to create categories that can then be compared. The comparisons of incidents drawn from data and categories allow for the formation of a theory (Merriam). The process involves sorting units of information into common groupings. A unit of data can be any bit of data that could be meaningful or potentially meaningful. The researcher must then compare one unit of information with others looking for regularities and putting those together into categories (Merriam). Those categories can then be divided or combined as seen fit. Developing these categories and comparing the information within each as well as comparing the categories themselves helps to develop theory (Merriam).

Using this method, open coding was used first as the findings were read and analyzed in an attempt to establish preliminary concepts. Through comparing and contrasting the concepts, categories emerged (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I kept the number of categories to a minimum while making sure that the categories were

purposeful, exhaustive, exclusive, sensitizing, and conceptually congruent (Merriam, 2001). The process then followed the system of axial coding (Strauss & Corbin). Through this process, the categories were developed according to their properties and answers to the research questions began to emerge. The final step in coding, selective coding, was then used. A core category of information was discovered and other categories were selected to develop and refine that core (Strauss & Corbin). Following these steps allowed for the development of theories (Merriam).

In developing the theories based on the Constant Comparison Method, the methodology of grounded theory correlated because it is based on the idea that theories are grounded in the data (Merriam, 2001). That data were gathered and thoroughly analyzed throughout the process allowing the findings to drive the creation of the theories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As the theories emerged, they were appropriately applied to corresponding research questions. After identifying those connections, they were reported in the findings.

Establishing Trust

Merriam (2001) provided several strategies in creating a study that has internal and external validity and reliability, which all are important to the trustworthiness of the study. Internal validity deals with whether or not the findings are realistic, external validity is the level to which the findings can be applied to other venues, and reliability is the level to which the findings could be replicated. This study included several of the strategies presented by Merriam to ensure trustworthiness.

Triangulation, using multiple designs and methods in the research process, was used through conducting document reviews of the disability policy of East Tennessee

State University and the selected organizations and interviewing two separate groups: undergraduates with a range of physical disabilities and recruiters from a number of campus organizations. Member checks, bringing work back to participants so they can check plausibility were used. Each interviewee had the concept of member checks explained and was asked to provide a personal e-mail address before the interview. All the participants agreed to the process. After the transcriptions were completed, each interview was e-mailed to each particular participant for approval. Those who discovered discrepancies e-mailed back their concerns.

Peer examination was evident as I approached a trusted colleague, for whom I had served as an auditor, to be an auditor and committee members to review my work as I progressed. I maintained a record of my findings, both in hard copy and electronic forms, thus leaving what Merriam (2001) referred to as an “audit trail” (p. 207). The findings were recorded in a descriptive fashion and reflected the strategies known as typicality and multisite design. Typicality refers to the ability of those in the same field to compare themselves to the findings. Other institutions of higher education could find comparisons to the findings generated by this study. Multisite design refers to the ability of the findings to be applied to other situations outside of the field. Because acceptance and inclusion of people with disabilities is not strictly an issue in higher education, the findings have merit in any public arena. Finally, a statement of the position of the researcher that contains my position on the topic and explanation of biases was included.

Perspective of the Researcher

This topic is important to me for two primary reasons. First, my wife is a person with paraplegia. I met her while we were attending the University of Mississippi. After

graduation, we moved to Memphis, where she began working at the Memphis Center for Independent Living, an organization whose purpose is to promote social independence for people with disabilities. Through living life with her, I have developed a deep appreciation for the disability culture.

Second, I have developed a professional interest in Student Affairs. A primary reason I enrolled in the Doctor of Education program at East Tennessee State University was that I had no professional direction outside of wanting to work on a college campus. I accepted a fellowship, which entailed assisting Dr. Deborah Harley, Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs. My primary obligation was to advise Leadership House, a living-learning community founded on the principles of servant leadership and self-government. Secondary obligations revolved around assisting with an assortment of leadership initiatives developed by Dr. Harley and the rest of the staff. Through my fellowship, I found my professional calling.

This case study combined those two keen interests. Disability Services at East Tennessee State falls under the administrative umbrella of the department of Student Affairs, yet from my observation that appears to be the only sector of Student Affairs that undergraduates with physical disabilities are involving themselves. I believe that in the majority of cases this can be overcome. A marriage between the two is possible and would prove mutually beneficial.

Summary

The design of the research for this study was straightforward. Interviewing proved essential to gaining insight to the phenomenon of study, as there was little literature or historical perspective found for this topic. The environments for the

interviews were relaxed and welcoming, and the selected questions for the interview script were designed to illicit deep conversation while staying on subject. The overall trustworthiness of the findings should never come into question, as effective strategies were implemented. Finally, my passion and keen interest in the topic were not barriers but strong motivators.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Evaluating the involvement level of undergraduates with physical disabilities at East Tennessee State University is a beneficial undertaking. The literature review found in Chapter 2 provided a solid foundation of literature that supports the concept that involvement in extracurricular activities has a positive effect on the likelihood of undergraduates being retained, graduating, and experiencing professional success. There is also a body of literature expressed in the review that gives credence to the existence of a general society that is misinformed when it comes to people with observable disabilities. A main reason for this is the fact that many people rarely encounter people with these disabilities, so when such an encounter does occur, it proves awkward. With that in mind, getting people with observable disabilities into the mainstream is a goal of the Disability Rights Movement (Johnson, 2003). While getting people with physical disabilities out in public is an important step, it could prove even more beneficial if people with observable disabilities began to obtain prominent positions and the notoriety that goes with them within the mainstream culture.

One common road to achieving prominence is higher education, and if extracurricular activities have a significant impact on success in higher education and beyond, then checking whether undergraduates with physical disabilities are taking advantage of extracurricular activities is an important venture. The organizations involved in extracurricular activities on campus benefit as they may discover ways in which to attract these undergraduates thus deepening the pool of interested students. The

greater community of higher education can benefit as the findings from this study of East Tennessee State University could be applied to other institutions of higher education.

Research Participants

A total of 11 people were interviewed in this study. Five of the persons involved recruited for the organizations Inter-Fraternity Council, governing body of the campus fraternities; Panhellenic Association, governing body of the campus sororities; The Well, a non-denominational campus ministry; Alpha Phi Omega, a national service fraternity; and the Student Government Association. The other six were undergraduates with observable physical disabilities. Two were people with vision impairments, two were people with hearing impairments, and two were people who used mobility devices. All policies on disability maintained by the aforementioned campus organizations and by the university were also studied and used to generate results.

The interviews were conducted based upon an interview script. The script was used as a template, but there was much freedom given for differing follow-up questions to help foster the flow of conversations. Upon completion of the interviews, they were transcribed. Those transcriptions were used to compare and contrast answers to similar questions to identify common themes, and those themes guided the study.*

Involvement Level

This study is driven by the research questions. The role of the first research question is to gain a deeper understanding of the levels of involvement of students with physical disabilities at East Tennessee State University. The responses from interviews

*Protecting the total anonymity of the participants is difficult because the pool of undergraduates with observable physical disabilities and the people who recruit for specific organizations at East Tennessee State University is small. However, it will be maintained as much as possible, especially in areas where personal opinions and feelings are expressed, through avoiding the use of identifying words such as gender-specific pronouns.

that assisted in shedding light on this question came from the population of undergraduates with physical disabilities.

Research Question #1

To what extent are students with physical disabilities active in student organizations on the campus of East Tennessee State University?

There was much variation in the answers given by the undergraduates with physical disabilities when asked questions relating to this research question. Initially it appeared that there was much involvement. Only one participant did not mention involvement in any organization. The majority claimed membership in an individual organization. One participant in particular was especially excited to talk about the level of involvement:

Yes. A proud member of a fraternity Kappa Sigma. Oh and also I'm involved with the Edge Club and the Silent Bucs. So those three and hopefully I will join more as time goes on.

When asked the reason for participation in Campus Crusade for Christ, another participant stated:

I just enjoy being a part of it and it gives me something to do on campus.

Upon further inspection, the reasons behind the level of involvement began to surface, leading to a deeper understanding of the nature of the phenomenon being investigated:

I'm in the Bluegrass program. I major in broadcasting and I have a minor in Bluegrass. It's out of Appalachian Studies.

The participant was asked if there was any involvement outside of the academic program, the undergraduate acknowledged that there was no involvement outside of the academic pursuit. One student's involvement was motivated completely by others:

My residence hall nominated me as the president at Davis and I just thought that president sounded pretty good. That will impress the parents.

A comfort level motivated another participant's involvement with others with the similar disability:

I'm involved with the Silent Bucs. That's the only one.

When asked to elaborate on the reason for involvement in Silent Bucs, the answer was given:

Well, due to deaf socialization and to keep the community growing and active. Not just feeling like I was the only deaf person, just sitting around but I wanted to be involved, motivated.

Finally, the participant was asked the reasons for not getting involved with any other organizations. The answer provided displayed the antithesis of the benefit of broadening oneself provided through campus involvement:

It seems like I would prefer socializing with deaf people. Because with hearing people I could be involved with some of the organizations, but growing up in the deaf world and then having communication, socialization is different.

Perception

Perception could perhaps be classified as the greatest of all motivators. The way in which one perceives a situation is reality for that person. For the sake of this study, examining the perceptions held by the participants about student organizations and disability was worthwhile.

Research Question 2

What factors are perceived to play a role in the relationship between students with physical disabilities and campus organization involvement at East Tennessee State University?

The axis point in answering this question was the interviews provided by the undergraduates with physical disabilities. Their perceptions of involvement served an important role in discovering the reasons behind a lack of it. Because perceptions are not always factually based, excerpts from interviews with the recruiters serve the purpose of addressing those perceptions. To aid in establishing the perceptions held, questions were asked focusing on whether or not the undergraduates with physical disabilities were involved in high school and how they personally viewed and how they thought organizations viewed their disabilities. The answers received about involvement in high school displayed different levels of activity. One undergraduate was very involved in high school:

I was a cheerleader since seventh grade. I was captain of my Color Guard my senior year. I was in the SCCLA, the SC. I was in the German Club. I was the president of the chess club.

The rest of the participants were not very involved. The most common form of involvement was related to music. The musical related activities consisted of choir and band. A separate undergraduate provided an in-depth answer explaining the personal lack of involvement in high school that also serves as a tremendous transition to reviewing personal views of having a disability:

I would say zero, honestly. My school career was very strange. After a period of time because of my disease, I really didn't know whether I'm going to live or not. Of course now I know I am, but at that time I just didn't care. So, you know, my high school career was ah basically what can I get out of not doing,

any work. Most of the time I didn't go when it rained, usually I didn't go on Mondays and I didn't go on Fridays. Towards the end of my school career, high school career, I decided I didn't want to go at all. So I had the doctor write up some letter, 'I don't feel like going. I need a home bound teacher and all this.' They sent a home bound teacher and then when I was 19 I decided, 'well I want to go back to school', I want to go to my prom and all this silly stuff. And I lived alone. And I only went for like a week. They begged me not to come. They said, you need to go over to this program and I said oh no I want to come back. I was never involved in anything because I didn't make the grades to do it and I won't say a bad attitude but I had a very misinformed attitude.

Exploring the possibility that the way the undergraduates with disabilities interviewed viewed their disabilities as possible reasons for avoiding involvement based on their perceptions and the perceptions of those in charge of involvement opportunities produced two prevailing themes. The first theme was that there was an issue with perceptions. The points expressing this theme revolved around the idea that having a physical disability meant that they would be unable to fully participate and therefore would be a burden to the group. All the participants stated there was a good possibility that faculty and students without disabilities would feel uncomfortable in interacting with them. One answer gave a good summary of perceptions:

I've noticed people staring at me, some just kind of curious, some just kind of nosy. Like if someone asked me about my disability, I can tell when they ask me whether they are just nosy or whether they actually care. So depending on, how they sound is the way I react to it.

The second theme was that any issues that arose from perceiving one's disability or the ways others reacted are contingent on personal paradigms. The outlooks of all parties involved were equally important. One quote emphasizes the need for support from people without physical disabilities:

If they are open-minded enough and not ignorant like some of the older ones, they don't look at me that way. They look at me like, you can't walk and you can't see

real well but you know what, you are still one of us. You can still do the same things we do. And that's the thing man.

Another quote from a different participant provides the way in which having a positive personal outlook can be helpful:

I don't think my disability affects me at all. I feel as if I'm a normal person with my deafness, because I believe in myself. I believe that I can do anything, except hear, period. And so in that sense my disability has not influenced me at all.

Because written policy is the calling card of an organization and a source of information for interested students, a document review based upon a search for mention of disability was a good endeavor to check the perception of the organizations toward disability. The document review was conducted in a top-down approach. The University policy and the policy of East Tennessee State's Disability Services were evaluated. These policies provided a general overview of the environment being encouraged. The policies of the organizations were then reviewed. Constitutions, mission and vision statements, by-laws, and information provided by the recruiters were checked. East Tennessee State University (2007) had published statements promoting a strong sense of inclusion for all people:

The guiding principle in all we do and say at East Tennessee State University must be respect for the individual. Through our teaching, research, and public service, we must affirm the fundamental human values of courage, honor, pride, compassion, tolerance, and understanding. These values transcend time and place. They transcend technology. They rise above educational trends. They are the enduring principles that must be observed in order for the human race to flourish.

ETSU commits itself to creating and perpetuating an environment in which diversity of people and thought is respected. We embrace the belief that differences should be celebrated, and we believe that intolerance poses the single most dangerous threat to the continued existence of the race.

Our aspiration is to create a university that fully appreciates the culture and the history of its surrounding region while it seeks to understand and accept the practices, beliefs, and customs of the greater global community.

It is ETSU's role not only to teach and to train, but also to inspire those among us as we build on our individual differences to achieve a common appreciation of our humanity.

The University's Disability Services (2005) provided further detail specific to disability:

East Tennessee State University is committed to providing opportunities and accommodations in higher education to all academically qualified students with disabilities. It is the responsibility of the student to seek available assistance at the university and to make his/her needs known.

ETSU affirms that no qualified person shall by reason of disability be denied access to participation in, or the benefits of, any program or activity operated by ETSU. Each qualified person shall receive appropriate accommodations to ensure equal access to educational opportunities, programs, and activities in the integrated setting.

Disability Services is a university resource that provides educational support services and programmatic access promoting barrier-free environments (physical, program, information, attitude), which means ensuring the rights of people with disabilities and meeting its obligations under federal and state statutes.

Of the organizations, only one made a specific reference to disability:

InterFraternity Council Constitution Section 5: Non-Discrimination Clause Consistent with all applicable federal, state, local laws and University policies, this organization and its subordinate bodies and officers shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, religion, nationality or ethnic origin, or disability in its selection of member fraternities (2007).

Another organization made a reference against discrimination but did not mention disability specifically:

Section 3. Any dispute growing out of the violation of Panhellenic Association rules and regulations shall be adjudicated through arbitration principles of the National Panhellenic Conference, and may include the campus judicial process in situations where there has been a violation of ETSU policy and the Spectrum, such as hazing, alcohol, and discrimination. National Panhellenic Conference Recruitment Infractions descriptions and reporting policies will be followed as noted in the National Panhellenic Conference Manual of Information (2007).

The fact that the document review displayed little thought of disability made it even more important to discover what the recruiters' thoughts were. Answers given by

recruiters to questions about accessibility and personal outlooks helped to further the effort to create an outlook on organizational paradigms. It is in the combination of the lack of reference to disability and these thoughts that overall perception could be gained. The recruiters were approached with questions about their organizations' accessibility and personal views on contacting students with physical disabilities. All the recruiters except one said all their meetings were held in accessible locations on campus:

Some are. The individual chapter meetings are in the Pan Hellenic Dormitory, which to the best of my knowledge in the next couple of years will be made accessible. Some are held here in the Culp Center, which is accessible, so it depends on the meeting.

The interview moved onto questioning whether the organizations knew of accommodations and assistive technologies available that would allow access for a student with a physical disability. The question of whether or not they use them was also broached. When asked whether they were aware of different accommodations and assistive technologies, only one admitted that the organization was fully aware. The rest of the organizations shared the common theme of relying on experiential knowledge of either themselves or others within the organization. Some of the recruiters had classes that had a component on disability especially those in the fields of education and counseling. Another shared explanation focused on relying on the organizations' faculty advisors for help with situations on disability. Even though many of the recruiters did not have a strong knowledge of the various accommodations and technologies available, all of them said that they would make use of any if asked. That willingness was well expressed by one particular participant:

We meet in a place where they do have chairs. So if someone was in a wheelchair or needed a special type sitting arrangement, that's not an issue at all. We can easily take out a chair and a wheelchair can go right there so they are part of the

row and the chairs can be moved so, so that's not a problem. Everything that we do has words, has a screen and so the words are there. I don't know if we have ever had anyone that's blind, completely blind. I can't think if, if there is but I mean we've got a ton of music, we've got a teaching time, which all that can be heard.

After establishing an idea of whether or not a student with a physical disability would be able to be involved in the individual organizations, the abstract, yet equally if not more important, side of the possibility of involvement was examined. The recruiters were asked whether they felt comfortable approaching someone with a physical disability. The answers to the query were all affirmative, but some more than others.

Those that were confident had experiential understanding of disability:

I have more experience serving people that way. I myself have served a student in a wheelchair before. So I understand. We do meet a lot of people who have disabilities; we work at the children's hospital, at the V.A. We work at the WALK, which is an education center. Then we work with children with physical disabilities. So, I think most of our members are used to working with people with that – Boys and Girls Club, Girls Inc., things like that.

Those without experiential knowledge provided comments that held a level of

Trepidation. That feeling was best summed up in a particular quote:

I would feel comfortable approaching them and talking about it. I guess the only part I'd feel somewhat uneasy will be if there are issues that came up with the disability. If that presents a problem with the meetings we have, I guess I'd kind of wonder how do we accommodate them. I guess the people in Disability Services would help us but that is the only one I can foresee. If someone who had a sight problem, I'd be like how are you going to see this stuff when we go over it in the Senate. That would be what I'd be thinking.

Another recruiter provided a poignant statement displaying issues with not just application but also philosophy:

I think us as Americans, or us as a people in the United States we are afraid of what we don't know and we don't know how well a member like that would perform on the certain tasks we have to do or some of the roles we have to give them. And we are used to having people with all functions, their whole body functions, and it will be something we have to, I guess, run through our board, kind of get around how to do that.

Recruitment

When delving into the extent to which undergraduates with physical disabilities are recruited by campus organizations, it became an inquiry with two distinct tracks. The first dealt simply with the question of whether or not recruiters were recruiting from the disabilities population. The second dealt with whether or not undergraduates with physical disabilities wanted to be recruited.

Research Question #3

To what extent are students with physical disabilities recruited to join campus organizations at East Tennessee State University?

To begin finding answers to this research question, the ways in which the organizations recruited were examined. The organizations primarily relied on events sponsored by the University. Word of mouth, mail outs, and computer-aided recruitment were common as well. One recruiter summed it up well:

We do booths at all orientations and circulate our adverts on campus drives during the spring like 'Scoop on Service'. We co-sponsor the welcome-back picnic at the beginning of each year. There are various booths and going on that week. We hand out literature, and then a lot of it is just more subtle PR with us being on campus and letters and people seeing us more than actually going out and doing stuff.

After discovering the ways in which the organizations recruited and that those ways were accessible to any student, it was time to discover whether the recruiters had ever approached a student with a physical disability or whether any of them had been approached for information by a student with a physical disability. Of the organizations, only one recruiter had recruited a student with a physical disability:

There were all these students walking around and there was a deaf young man who was coming around. One of the girls, his interpreter that was with him, was also involved with The Well and she happened to be one of the students that I

knew so I was just able to talk to him through her, but somewhat he could read lips and was just able to have a neat conversation with him.

The same recruiter was the only one who could recall ever having a student with a physical disability make contact about the organization:

Courtney lived down the hallway when I was an RA and her boyfriend was a fellow RA. And both of them could talk but technically were considered deaf. Those two asked what would be the possibility of having an interpreter there, but I can't really think of any specifics since then.

The expressed gap in recruiting was echoed by most of undergraduates with physical disabilities interviewed. The majority of them had not been recruited to join an organization or took the initiative to seek information. There were a few participants who expressed that they had been recruited. Fraternities were the primary type of organization that recruited those that had been recruited. Campus Crusade for Christ, the Edge Club, and Silent Bucs were the other organizations mentioned. Only one participant mentioned approaching an organization for information on membership:

I was looking for a fraternity but I wasn't sure which one. My preview leader informed me about the different fraternities and said, it'd be better if you went and asked some questions and so I ended up joining Kappa Sigma, and I thought that was a good choice. I also, then did some more research on Kappa Sigma and found out they are the only one that was a national fraternity and then Gallaudet University had that one there and so that was interesting to me. Most of it was my idea to join a fraternity, not necessarily being asked to join.

The participant described the reception received from the inquiry:

Well they responded on many things. Lots of information they gave me ideas to research more about it and they let me know about Gallaudet too. That was really helpful in trying to find information out of their national organization that might be beneficial to me. And they also told me about many students who are on campus and it helped me a lot here on campus and maneuvering through.

Relationship Building

Through the interview process, a gap in involvement, recruitment, and information seeking became apparent. The participants' willingness to share their personal stories helped bring some explanation to the phenomenon. The realizations brought about by the interviews left one important question to wrap up to the sessions: What can be done to make things better?

Research Question 4

What measures can be taken to foster growth in the participation of students with physical disabilities and campus organizations at East Tennessee State University?

The interviews of the recruiters were guided in a specific direction by the interview script. The direction taken started with an examination of whether or not available methods currently offered by the University were being used. It then led to a search for new answers.

When asked whether or not any of them had attended any sort of training from Disability Services or other agency associated with disability, all the recruiters said they had not attended to seek information to better the organizations. One recruiter had attended one, but it was related to academics:

I have. It's a requirement in my major. The others, I wouldn't know. I've never asked them, but we get quite a few education majors, so they could be.

After establishing that assistance from an outside organization concerning disability was not being sought, the interviews focused on the commitment to going out and recruiting these students. This process centered around two key points. The first was to establish whether the recruiters expressed an interest in the importance of recruiting the particular population of students. The second was an inspection of ways to better recruiting

practices. Of the pool of recruiters only one was somewhat skeptical about the importance of recruiting students with physical disabilities:

For this particular organization, it can benefit anybody and it's not going to hurt. I don't know if our particular organization is one that they necessarily think about joining so much as other ones. I mean there is no reason they couldn't. There is nothing we do that would prevent them from being involved but I don't know if it's one they necessarily think of.

All the other recruiters were clear on the importance, and the stances shared the common themes of looking at everyone as people and respecting diversity:

Well, I think it's important for us to recruit students. I think if you're going to recruit students then you recruit all students. As far as singling out folks that have physical disabilities, I don't think they should be singled out as not being recruited. But I don't know that I would look for someone with a physical disability and say oh I need to pay special attention to that person. I think college is a huge learning experience for yourself and also to know folks that are different around you. And so for that aspect, I think it's important that, at The Well too, that you got a lot of variety of folks. You've got folks that are kind of like you and folks that are completely different from you so that you can learn from one another. I think it's good to have all different kind of folks because what an opportunity to have to learn from one another.

Upon discovering that everyone believed that recruiting students with physical disabilities held importance, discovering opinions on how to go about fulfilling the venture was sought. The answers given produced common themes. Those themes were grounded both in seeking service and providing service. The common theme in seeking service was accessing Disability Services. In relation to providing services, the answers gravitated toward bettering total service especially in recruiting and in application. One recruiter's answer provided a good summation:

Personally going out to them and giving them the information because to the best of my knowledge they are not coming out to our booths and asking for it. So going out to them and giving them the information and say if you need other accommodations we can make them.

To discover the students with physical disabilities viewpoints on ways to help grow involvement in organizations at East Tennessee State University, two points were approached. The first point was to discover if they thought membership in student organizations was important. The second was to hear their ideas on ways to make joining a campus organization more appealing. In answering the first inquiry, all the students thought being involved was important but there were two distinct degrees of agreement.

For instance two of the participants were extremely adamant:

I mean, honestly, I got some blind friends and it, it bothers me because I've always been more into wanting to be proactive....I want to go out and do, I want to go fishing, all these different things. And a lot of these people just sit around. They are not in college or if they are, it's like a technical school or they are doing factory work or something. It's like you got a talent, God damn use it. That's how I feel about it anyway.

The other student said:

Oh yes. I think it's very important because, especially for me I think it shows support for the fraternity but also it shows what deaf people can do, their capabilities. The positive side and even the fact that Kappa Sigma is on the Gallaudet campus gave me more incentive to be involved and support extracurricular activities, student organizations or not just to go to college and go to classes alone. That's pretty boring. I'd rather encourage people to be involved, to support all the various parts of college. I think it's very important for them to do that.

The other degree was based upon the importance of involvement being a personal

choice:

I guess it depends on the person. It really does. I mean, for me, personally it's more along the lines of 'let's get something'. I want to get it – that's why I'm doing the RHA, I want to put that down on an application or a resume. And that sounds selfish and what have you, but I'm not out to waste time. I don't have time to waste. But for other people it might be. I guess that's just a matter of personality.

Because a sense of importance was shared among the participants, it was especially beneficial to find out what they thought would make joining a campus

organization more appealing. Three themes emerged from the answers. The first was feeling a sense of welcome through being approached in a fashion considerate of their disabilities and encouraged to join. One undergraduate commented:

If there is anything that I think that maybe faculty or whomever can do better is to at least come and say, 'hey, you have this opportunity, you are more than welcome.' And at least have a plan set up in case someone did.

The second theme was that there was a need for more widespread information on the opportunities for extracurricular involvement at the university. One undergraduate responded:

I don't see anything that would be of interest to me or would be somewhere close to me on campus that I can get to and be involved in. Otherwise, I'd have to do a lot of stuff to get places. I don't leave. I'm like Quasimodo of ETSU. I'm just like stuck here. I told them when I came I'm going to be like George Washington Carver. It'll be like a hundred degrees here and I'm not going anywhere.

The third theme that emerged was wanting to know that they would have the opportunity to participate fully:

But from a disability stand point, I guess going in knowing that the awkward situations would be limited. For instance, what happens if everybody wants to go across town and wants to go with you, or go there or so forth. Is it going to be how much physical activity is there going to be in the situation? If we are doing something to all make a contribution, is there a way that I can make a contribution without getting in the way. Obviously, convenience is the most important thing. Being able to get to whatever it is and fully participate. It's disconcerting to get involved with something that's going to end up across town and what good is it going to do for me.

CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Summary of the Study

The driving force of this study was a combination of two distinct passions. I believe strongly that success in all walks of life is rooted in the ability to interact well with others. Social and networking skills are not attributes often stressed in classrooms, and those classes that do center on that type of subject matter are usually electives. It is feasible that a student can spend 4 or more years earning a degree(s) and miss out on an important cog to success, especially as distance education becomes available and used on a larger scale. The answer to providing opportunities to build those skills comes in the form of extracurricular involvement opportunities, many of which are coordinated by student organizations. These organizations are often created and run by students with the aid of faculty. When membership opportunities are taken, the chances to practice leadership and networking philosophies abound. A reference made in the literature review of this study sums it up best. Participation in campus activities was the only predictive factor for adult success (Kuh et al., 1991).

The other side of my passion stemmed from my interest in the Disability Rights Movement. People with disabilities are often marginalized in society. While blame for this fact can easily be put at the feet of society itself, those with disabilities share some of it as well by accepting the viewpoint of those who marginalize them: charity cases, inspirations, and nuisances. One particular quote given by an undergraduate with a

physical disability provides personal insight into the varying ways a person with a physical disability may view himself and the way he may envision society's view:

It boils down to am I going to go somewhere that it's going to be difficult for me to get there. People are going to be grabbing on me to moving me around and I definitely won't take any part of that. I'm too fat to do that stuff anymore and not only that, I got brothers, I got family, I always looked out for them as well. I'm not going to hamper everybody else from doing something just because I can't do something. It's just like down the street here, Subway has no ramp and just won't get my business. I'm not going to go over there and go, 'how dare you bastards, 'build a ramp'. Who cares? If they don't have a ramp, I'm not going. I'll go somewhere else. I'll go to McDonald's. There is nothing to do on campus so, I don't.

A primary issue between general society and people with physical disabilities is simply based on being seen and interacting. Many people can go through life without ever coming in contact with a person who has a physical disability, especially one in a position of professional success. Higher education is often a road to eligibility for higher-level positions. Attending institutions of higher education is also a way for students with physical disabilities to get out and meet new people, and perhaps more importantly have those new people meet and work with them. However, it is one thing to attend and another thing to succeed, and as was mentioned previously, participation in campus activities is a determinate of that success. When I investigated whether students with physical disabilities at East Tennessee State University were taking advantage of this facet of campus life, the Director of Disability Services told me that they were not particularly involved. When I heard that, I knew I wanted to study that phenomenon.

The study began by consulting with Linda Gibson, Disability Services Director; and Tricia Nguyen, Director of Student Activities, about the feasibility of the endeavor and their willingness to assist. I received affirmative answers on both counts. Tricia suggested five organizations that were popular and had broad appeal for my study, and

Linda offered to speak with some of the students she served that met the agreed upon criteria of having an observable disability. My research began at the beginning of the summer academic session, which meant that the majority of the students were not in classes. That fact made it somewhat difficult to arrange interviews. Over the course of May, June, and July I was able to arrange interviews with recruiters from the organizations that Tricia suggested. Those interviews were conducted in a face-to-face manner. A document review of the University, Disability Services, and the organizations was also conducted to supplement the interviews. Constitutions, bylaws, mission and vision statements, and any documents shared by the recruiters, requested during the interviews, were studied in the document review. The interviews with the students with physical disabilities proved to be more difficult to arrange.

Ms. Gibson was able to put me in touch with two students who met the criteria and were willing to participate. One of those interviews was conducted over the telephone and the other was face-to-face. After those were completed, Ms. Gibson told me that I would have to wait for the start of the Fall semester. As students came into Disability Services to start the new school year, individuals who met the criteria were asked to participate. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with those willing participants. The combination of interviews and document reviews led to themes for the four research questions that guided the study. Those themes led to my conclusions of the study.

Conclusions

Research Question #1

To what extent are students with physical disabilities active in student organizations on the campus of East Tennessee State University?

When first approaching answers for this question, I thought that it would be a straightforward and simple answer. However, the path proved sinuous. Only one of the undergraduates with physical disabilities was completely uninvolved, which made it seem that involvement was quite high among undergraduates with disabilities. When digging a bit deeper, it became apparent that this high level of involvement was not what it seemed.

One student attended a meeting at the residence hall of choice and was nominated by the others there to represent the hall at the Residence Hall Association. Other than that, the participant was not involved in anything else. Another student was counting membership in the University Bluegrass Band, but that membership was associated with a chosen minor in bluegrass. He was not involved in any other extracurricular organization. Another participant was only involved in Silent Bucs and the student's reasoning for joining this organization and avoiding others was to remain in the comfort level provided by being involved with people who have the same disability. That reasoning conflicts with the key principles of broadening oneself associated with involvement. The two other undergraduates were involved in extracurricular activities and displayed an interest more in line with the reasoning behind needing to get students involved. One of those students admitted to being involved in one organization, and the other in multiple organizations.

What I thought would prove to be a simple summary turned into much more. Based on the pool of participants, on the surface it would appear that involvement among undergraduates with physical disabilities is high. When delving a bit deeper it becomes apparent that involvement, using the sense of the word displayed in the featured literature, is actually quite low.

Research Question #2

What factors are perceived to play a role in the relationship between students with physical disabilities and campus organization involvement at East Tennessee State University?

In drawing a conclusion for this question, it is worth taking the direction of viewing the perceptions held by the undergraduates with physical disabilities and seeing whether their feelings hold true when viewing the answers of the recruiters. Disability played some sort of role in any motivation for joining or not joining organizations. One participant mentioned that it was an opportunity to show what deaf people could do, while another wanted to get others he knew with disabilities active. Another undergraduate expressed a sense of comfort from being around people with the same disability, which led to membership in Silent Bucs without thinking about other organizations. A separate participant said that having a disability makes school much more difficult, so there was no time for extracurricular activities. All those interviewed stated it could be important to join organizations, but it needed to be a personal choice. Most of the students also commented on the fact that they did not know much about campus organizations, as they have never been approached about them or even heard about them.

The majority of the recruiters mentioned never having been approached by or approaching a person with a physical disability. This shows that there it is reasonable to believe that students with physical disabilities are not aware of those opportunities on campus. All the recruiters admitted to not having accessed Disability Services to help establish an understanding of disability, and only one of the participants mentioned feeling that the particular organization that person served had an understanding of accommodations and assistive technology available. Considering that disability is a chief concern for the students with disabilities, if organizations do not have an awareness about disability and ways to include people with disabilities, then those undergraduates will either consciously or unconsciously avoid those opportunities. The lack of awareness is keenly expressed through the mission and vision statements, constitutions, by laws, and other documents offered by the recruiters.

These documents could provide an opportunity for an interested student with a physical disability to view whether or not there is any mention of disability to see if he would be welcome. While the University and Disability Services painted a strong picture of respect for diversity and creating opportunities for all, the organizations made little mention of it. The only mentions were anti-discrimination statements mentioned by a couple of the organizations' documents. The documents enhanced the answers expressed by the recruiters that ways in which to incorporate students with physical disabilities had not been something previously considered. However, some of the answers given by the recruiters exhibited attitudes that could lead to overcoming and perhaps changing the perceptions held by the undergraduates with physical disabilities.

All the recruiters expressed that it was important to recruit all people, no matter what their background. They also mentioned that they would be open to making use of accommodations and assistive technology if they were asked. When asked about some things they could do to make things better, a topic broached in much further detail in the conclusion for Research Question #4, most made mention of contacting Disability Services, working on advertising in alternate formats like Braille and including a statement about openness to providing accommodations and assistive technology, and approaching students with physical disabilities when they see them. These ideas show a willingness to add disability into the thought process of the organizations, thus making them more appealing and simply known to more undergraduates with physical disabilities.

Research Question #3

To what extent are students with physical disabilities recruited to join campus organizations at East Tennessee State University?

A conclusion to this research question proved rather easy to detect. Undergraduates with physical disabilities are not being recruited at a great extent. Only one of the recruiters experienced recruiting that population:

Over the years we have had a lot of deaf students who have been involved with The Well. We've only had one that served on a deeper level kind of ministry team, but she wasn't completely deaf. I don't know what the correct terminology is but she wore a hearing aid. And there were still times where it still proved to be more of a difficulty for her but she served with us when we took a group to New Orleans. And most folks didn't even know, so that is just kind of one example. We have several folks who have other disabilities. There is one young lady who comes in a wheel chair, several that come with different types of canes or braces but it's not necessarily that it doesn't bother them in any way. For me to approach someone that has some type of a physical disability, there is no reason why I wouldn't because it's not like they would not be able to participate in any thing

that we do. And if there are those limitations, then for the most part we can make special arrangements so that they get more included through the interpreter.

The lack of recruitment is not just a phenomenon that falls on the explanations of the recruiters. The students themselves play a large role.

A primary way the organizations recruit is through information booths and tables at various campus activities. These are opportunities for students to come out and search for information, and undergraduates with physical disabilities are not coming out. The same recruiter who was the only one who had recruited students with physical disabilities is the only one who had a student ever asked for information. Also, only one of the undergraduates with disabilities admitted to approaching someone concerning joining an organization. To sum up the situation, undergraduates are being recruited to join campus organizations at a minimal extent, which can be attributed to a lack of action by both recruiters and undergraduates with physical disabilities:

I haven't seen a lot of recruitment of students with physical disabilities. I have seen a lot of kids on campus with physical disabilities. I don't know if it's whether we are kind of shy and timid and not really wanting to go out and approach these members of our student body or if they - cause I mean it is pretty ah pretty stressful to have five men approach you and then all of a sudden, 'how would you like to go by the house' and they don't - I haven't seen any of them approach anybody. And I don't mean that to be safe. I'm not trying to exclude them or anything, but I haven't seen anybody with a physical disability approach me or my organization that I'm aware of.

Research Question #4

What measures can be taken to foster growth in the participation of students with physical disabilities and campus organizations at East Tennessee State University?

The answers relating to this question by both the recruiters and the undergraduates with physical disabilities shared a common overarching theme: awareness. The recruiters thought they needed to be more involved in actively approaching a particular

population of the campus that was not currently being recruited. All of them saw the importance of being open to recruiting anybody, and a common answer was that they should look to Disability Services for assistance in heightening their knowledge and in possibly providing services. They expressed a need to feel comfortable in approaching students who have physical disabilities, and then doing it. Also, adding Braille and a statement that accommodations would be made available to their advertisements was mentioned. The most elevated form of awareness was the realization that their organizations did not have students with physical disabilities and that it was something worth pondering. This was displayed throughout many of the interviews as many of the recruiters started several answers with variations of “I never thought about that.”

Awareness for the undergraduates took two distinct forms. First was a personal awareness of where involvement could fit in their lives. Some saw the importance of it as a way to get out there and do what they enjoy doing without even taking disability into consideration. Involvement was also seen as a way to get out and show others that people with disabilities are out there and want to be included. Others saw their disability as being an issue with involvement. They worried about being unwelcome, not being able to do all the activities, being gawked at, or being a hindrance. One student expressed that having a disability made course work more difficult, so time was an issue. Another pointed to communication barriers as a reason for being more comfortable around people with the same disability. All the students did give ideas about what organizations could do to make joining more appealing, and their answers correlated with the answers given by the recruiters.

The undergraduates stated that they were not being made aware of the organizations. A couple of them said that they did not know of any organizations and thought that if they simply heard more about them it would help. The majority of them said that they simply needed to feel welcome. It would go a long way if someone approached them to talk about membership and expressed an interest in making things more accessible so that they could be full participants.

Literature Review Reviewed

One hope held while researching this topic was that the results would be a worthwhile addition to the body of literature referenced in Chapter 2. That literature is one that paints the picture of a general society that suffers from a lack of knowledge of disability issues, and a community of people with disabilities who are fighting against it and some that are allowing roadblocks to harm their willingness to participate fully in society. It is also a body of literature that promotes the importance of success for all and that involvement in extracurricular activities is a determinate of success in school and beyond. I believe the findings from this study fit well into the themes of the reviewed literature and also add a new dimension to the existing body of work.

The interviews conducted and documents reviewed in relation to the student organizations were aligned with the literature. All the recruiters expressed an interest in increasing measures to include students with physical disabilities. They viewed their organizations as worthwhile opportunities for leadership development, networking, and further skill building in which all students should be encouraged to participate. The recruiters all stated it was important to recruit all people no matter what their backgrounds, and they all agreed that their organizations either has used or would use

accommodation and assistive technology if requested. The document review of East Tennessee State University and its Disability Services office displayed a desire to include all students and provide them every option to have a successful career in higher education and beyond. The recruiter interviews and document review also fell in line with the disability literature.

There is much disability literature that suggests the lack of knowledge in general society about disability proves a hindrance to people with disabilities and the gap itself or developing measures to correct that gap are not often realized. The interviews displayed that lack of knowledge, as only one of the recruiters displayed confidence that an awareness of accommodations and assistive technology was held by the organization. None of the recruiters had thought to contact Disability Services for trainings or other information. The document reviews of the organizations displayed that only one of the organizations made mention of disability and one other about general discrimination, but those were primarily legal protection pieces.

The new dimension added by this study to the literature is the direct emphasis on extracurricular involvement for students with physical disabilities. Much of the literature dealing with education and disability focused on the latest assistive technologies, classroom accommodations, legal matters, and learning disabilities. There was little referencing extracurricular involvement among students with physical disabilities. This study also showed that extracurricular involvement for students with physical disabilities is possible and welcome. Opportunities to get involved are open doors that can be used to help foster success in a world that has so many closed ones.

Recommendations for Practice

After reviewing the literature and research findings, it is my opinion that the possibility of elevating the level of campus organizational involvement of undergraduates with physical disabilities at East Tennessee State University is both simple and complex. The simplicity of it lies in two distinct ways. First is the university has an active Disability Services office that can provide the necessary resources i.e. assistive technologies and advice on how to make meetings and events accessible and accommodating.

Second, the primary need interpreted from interviewing the undergraduates with physical disabilities concerning what could make them more interested in getting involved is to be welcomed. They want to know that their disability will not in anyway prove an obstacle to being fully participatory. When asked what they could do better, the primary response from the organizations recruiters was contacting Disability Services for information and assistance and then including a statement on being accessible and providing accommodations in advertisements while making it a point to approach students with observable disabilities with the understanding and knowledge of ways their organizations are being proactive in being fully accessible. Both groups are on the same track, and my recommendations are that the recruiters implement their own suggestions. If they do, hopefully other organizations will follow the example and then undergraduates with physical disabilities will take the time to review the advertisements and attend the designated campus events where organizations advertise.

The complex part is changing mentality. The majority of the recruiters interviewed seemed as if they had never thought about the need to ensure accessibility.

Literature supports this feeling by pointing out the fact that disability in general is something left out of mainstream thought. Many of the undergraduates with physical disabilities displayed a sense of trepidation when exploring the possibility of getting involved. Due to personal perception of their disability and in some cases negative experiences when seeking opportunities to be involved, the undergraduates with physical disabilities worry about being able to participate, being a burden, feeling isolated, being singled out, and communication factors. I do not know of an easy recommendation to change peoples' mentalities. Hope lies in a few people making change and setting an example that others then follow.

No matter what it takes to increase the level of involvement, it should be a priority. Retention, graduation, and post-graduation success rates are higher for college students that get involved in campus organizations (Kuh et al., 1991), and undergraduates with physical disabilities at East Tennessee State are missing out on these opportunities. It is especially worthwhile for them to interact with people without physical disabilities for a rapport and overall comfort level increasing the awareness levels of all involved parties (Kissane, 1997). The higher degrees of success they attain would prove beneficial to efforts to attain equal treatment in society for all people with disabilities.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study serves as a good starting point for researching the phenomenon of the involvement level of undergraduates with physical disabilities, but there are different directions that could be taken. There are two primary areas that I would recommend for further study. The areas are institutions of higher education and personal disability experience.

Any institution of higher education could conduct similar studies to evaluate the involvement level on their campuses. Another aspect that all institutions could study is in depth looks at the activity and use of Disability Services offices. Finally, other campus organizations at East Tennessee State University could be researched. For instance, individual, traditional Greek organizations were one type of organization that a couple of the students mentioned recruiting them, so it could be an interesting study to look at those organizations. A final recommendation for possible research for institutions of higher education is to look at the graduation and retention rates of students with physical disabilities. As mentioned in the literature, undergraduates who are involved are more likely to be retained and graduate. If those rates for students with physical disabilities prove low, a study of the correlation of those rates and involvement level could prove beneficial.

The second area of personal disability experience could take many forms. The first is an examination of the experiences of students with different disabilities. Students with cognitive or learning disabilities would have different perceptions that would affect the way they would approach extracurricular activities. A study linking students with disabilities and non-traditional age students would also be a worthwhile venture. The participants in this study were all asked when they acquired their disabilities, and all were either at birth or at a young enough age that they did not remember life without a disability. For people who acquire a disability later in life, the time it takes to recover physically and emotionally has a significant impact. It can also put them behind academically, making them nontraditional aged students, and that aspect of disability and

involvement could be studied. All the recommended research would further enhance a topic that has been previously neglected.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

East Tennessee State University
Institutional Review Board
Informed Consent Form

This Informed Consent will explain about being a participant in a research study. It is important that you read this material carefully and then decide if you wish to be a volunteer.

PURPOSE

This case study is intended to explore the reasons behind the lack of a relationship between undergraduates with physical disabilities and student organizations at East Tennessee State University and discover possible ways to improve that relationship.

DURATION

You will be asked to engage in a one-on-one interview with the principal investigator for approximately one hour.

PROCEDURES

The principal investigator will contact you concerning an interview. Arrangements will be made concerning a time and place to conduct the interview. The interview will be audio recorded, and you will be provided with a copy of the interview in a timely manner. The information you give will then be used in the investigator's dissertation.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES/TREATMENTS

If you are more comfortable with answering the interview questions over the telephone or through e-mail, those options are available.

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

There are no anticipated risks or discomforts.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS

The findings generated by this case study could have a significant impact on students with physical disabilities and campus organizations at East Tennessee State University. Identifying a gap between involvement and students with physical disabilities could help lead to its resolution. This would provide a direct boost to the collegiate experience and future success for students with physical disabilities at East Tennessee State University. It also would benefit the organizations as their enrollments could increase.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this research experiment is voluntary. You may refuse to participate. You can quit at any time. If you quit or refuse to participate, the benefits or which you are otherwise entitled will not be affected. You may quit by calling Lance Alexis, whose phone number is (423) 794-8851. You will be told immediately if any of the results of the study should reasonably be expected to make you change your mind about staying in the study.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS

If you have any questions or problems at any time, you may call Lance Alexis at (423) 794-8851 or Dr. Terrence Tollefson at (423) 439-4430. You may call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at (423) 439-6054 for any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject. If you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone independent of the research team or you can't reach the study staff, you may call an IRB Coordinator at (423) 439-6055 or (423) 439-6002.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every attempt will be made to see that your study results are kept confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in the principal investigator's home for at least 10 years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a subject. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the ETSU IRB, and personnel particular to this research (Lance Alexis and the Department of Educational Research and Policy Analysis) have access to the study records. Your records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Interview Questions for Undergraduates with Physical Disabilities

- 1) Could you please tell me when you acquired your disability?
- 2) Do you belong to any student organizations at ETSU? If so, which ones and why? If not, why?
- 3) To what extent were you involved in student organizations in high school?
- 4) Have you ever been recruited to join a student organization on campus?
- 5) Have you ever requested information or approached a student or faculty member about joining a campus student organization? If so, what response did you receive?
- 6) Do you think your disability has affected the way you perceive membership in campus student organizations? If so, how?
- 7) Do you think your disability has affected the way students or faculty view recruiting you? If so, how?
- 8) Do you think membership in student organizations is important? If so, how?
- 9) What would make joining a campus student organization more appealing for you?

Interview Questions for Organizational Recruiters

- 1) Could you please describe the methods you use to recruit new members?
- 2) Have you ever recruited a student with a physical disability? If so, what was the result? If not, why?
- 3) Are your meetings held in accessible locations? Please elaborate.
- 4) Do you feel comfortable approaching a student with a physical disability? Why or why not?
- 5) Has a student with a physical disability ever approached you for information on your organization at a recruitment fair or other time? If so, what was the result?
- 6) Is your organization aware of the types of accommodations and assistive technology that can be utilized to fully incorporate students with physical disabilities? Please explain.
- 7) Have you ever attended a training provided by Disability Services or other agency regarding accommodating students with physical disabilities? If so, what benefit was it? If not, why?
- 8) Do you make use of accommodations and assistive technologies or would you if asked? Why or why not?
- 9) Do you think it is important to recruit students with physical disabilities? Could you elaborate?
- 10) What are some ways you think you could better recruit students with physical disabilities?

APPENDIX C

DOCUMENT REVIEW GUIDE

- 1) Is there a documented disability policy? If so, what is it?
- 2) Are there any references to involvement opportunities or recruiting practices related to students with physical disabilities?
- 3) Is there a policy on offering accessibility and accommodations for people with physical disabilities? If so, what is it?

VITA

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