

5-2021

## WHAT BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED PEOPLE EXPERIENCE WHEN THEY REQUEST WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS

Silvia Blanco

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WHAT BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED PEOPLE EXPERIENCE WHEN THEY  
REQUEST WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS

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A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Social Work

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by  
Silvia E. Blanco

May 2021

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## ABSTRACT

Workplace accommodations can be categorized as tools or processes that are needed by a person with a disability to complete their job responsibilities. Research has demonstrated that the provision of reasonable accommodations has been linked to the employability rates of people with disabilities. Considering that the passing of the ADA occurred over 30 years ago and that the persistently high unemployment rate amongst the blind and visually impaired population remains a prevalent issue, it is important to evaluate what blind or visually impaired individuals face when requesting workplace accommodations. Research on this topic will help identify any significant contributing factors that might be hindering the reasonable accommodation process and with this the employment rates of this population.

The evaluation of this research topic was accomplished by the gathering of qualitative data via the completion of six semi-structured interviews with employed blind or low vision participants. During the data analysis process, the important concepts that emerged from the data were indications that there are gaps in the reasonable accommodation process. This included inaccessible technology and having to continually remind employers of the pending or established workplace accommodations. The data also implicated that there is a deficit in awareness and training for employers. This included the employer's lack of knowledge of the Americans with Disability Act and a lack of awareness of disability-sensitive practices. The third important concept was the benefits of a

ground-up approach to reasonable accommodations (RA). The last theme was the notion of “going the extra mile”. This last theme illustrates that reasonable accommodation is one contributing factor in the adaptation and adjustment process to a disability in the workplace. These findings have the potential to guide those in the realm of social work by providing an overview of what challenges disabled clients face in the job sector. This data provides insight on the need for evaluation of the underlying factors that contribute to the issues faced by employees with disabilities and if any can be addressed through legislative advocacy on the rights of the disabled community.

Keywords: blind or visually impaired individuals, employers, workplace accommodations, reasonable accommodations, disabled

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## CHAPTER ONE

### ASSESSMENT

#### Introduction

Chapter one initially explores the focus of this research topic, which is what blind or visually impaired individuals experience when they request workplace accommodations. Subsequently, the chapter explores the post-positivist approach and the rationale for its utilization in this research project. Additionally, an analysis of existing literature on the topic will be presented. After this, a theoretical approach is established and discussed. The last topic discussed is the significant contributions this study will make to the realm of social work.

#### Research Focus

This research project explored what type of response blind or visually impaired individuals encounter when they request workplace accommodations from their employer. The study evaluated what type of accommodations were requested by the employee and the employer's response to these requests. This refers to the level of support and willingness employers have in providing the accommodations, and the employing agency's policies on providing reasonable accommodations to disabled employees. "Reasonable accommodations are any adjustments to the work environment that allow people with disabilities to enjoy equal employment opportunities" (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission,

2014, para.9). Some accommodations requested by individuals who are blind or visually impaired can include but, are not limited to assistive technology, job-related transportation needs, digital recorders, magnifiers, written material in an accessible format such as large print or braille, etc.... (EEOC, 2014). It is an employee's right and an employer's lawful duty to provide these accommodations to their employees that have a disability covered by the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). This study examined all these aspects in-depth since they are a key determining factor associated with blind or visually impaired people obtaining and/or retaining employment.

#### Paradigm and Rationale for Chosen Paradigm

Post-positivism is the approach that was utilized in this research project. Post-Positivism "concurrs that an objective reality exists but suggests that the immutable laws and mechanisms" driving that reality can never be fully comprehended (Morris, 2014, p. 41). This is why the researcher must explore this reality in a natural form by obtaining firsthand narratives of those intertwined in these everyday experiences. This world view was used to explore what occurs when a visually impaired or blind person in the current labor market experiences when they request reasonable accommodations in their worksite. This was done by collecting qualitative data that illustrates and gives insight into these experiences (Morris, 2014). This data was collected by conducting semi-structured interviews in which people with impaired vision describe their lived experience when they requested workplace accommodations. In this approach, it

is essential to keep in mind that each individual's workplace experiences are unique to themselves and their worksite, so it is the researcher's responsibility to evaluate them and formulate a conclusion that is based on the data that was collected. These personal narratives will formulate an objective reality that is based on the experiences of people with visual impairment. It is for this reason that the post-positivism worldview is the most adequate approach that will capture meaningful data that is based on the first-hand experiences of blind and visually impaired individuals.

### Literature Review

The existing data estimates that in the U.S around 2% of working-age Americans are blind or visually impaired (National Federation of the Blind [NFB], 2019). However, within this working-age population, only 29% have full-time employment (NFB, 2019). This indicates that over 70% of blind or visually impaired individuals are not fully employed (NFB, 2019). These high unemployment rates are concerning and can be the reason 27.7% of blind or visually impaired people live under the poverty line (National Federation of the Blind, 2019). A study conducted amongst unemployed visually impaired and blind vocational rehab clients indicated that this sector of the population is seeking employment and that 1/3 of them argue that their employability was compromised by the lack of adequate workplace accommodations such as transportation or accessible worksite (Anand & Sevak, 2017).

## Benefits of Obtaining Accommodations

Existing studies demonstrate how essential it is for blind or visually impaired individuals to request and obtain workplace accommodations (Dong, Oire, MacDonald-Wilson, & Fabian 2013). However, this data demonstrates the underlying barriers that keep the employee from obtaining the accommodations. Research demonstrates that there are some benefits to both the employee and the employer associated with providing reasonable accommodations (Dong, et al., 2013; Lindsay, Leck, Shen, Cagliostro, & Stinson, 2019). This is why further exploration into this matter needs to be conducted.

Reasonable accommodations if requested and provided have the potential to increase the numbers of employed individuals with visual impairment (Dong et al., 2013). Existing studies demonstrate that workplace accommodations improve job attainment and retention (Shenli, 2012, Smith, 2002). Dong and Colleagues (2016) state that aside from leveling the playing field for these employees' job accommodations can improve the likelihood of upward mobility of these employees. This is why it is essential to explore what disabled individuals experience when they request workplace accommodations. It is noted by these studies that requesting and obtaining accommodations can mark the difference between being employed and unemployed.

Job attainment and retention are just some of the benefits observed when an employee receives workplace accommodations because research also demonstrates that being employed improves the quality of life of people with

visual impairment (Lindsay, Cagliostro, Albarico, Mortaji, & Karon, 2018). The life improvements associated with the latter are increase income and physical and emotional wellbeing (Lindsay et al., 2018). However, these benefits are not being obtained by individuals with disabilities due to societal barriers.

### Barriers in Obtaining Accommodations

A barrier to obtaining accommodations in the disabled community is associated with disclosing a disability to the employer (Moloney, Brown, Ciciurkaite, & Foley, 2019). Moloney and colleagues (2019) portray the disclosure process as a “double-edged sword”. If the employee discloses, they are susceptible to the stigma and negative perceptions an employer might have towards a person with a disability. On the other hand, if they don’t disclose, they cannot request the much-needed accommodations. Due to this, some individuals are not comfortable disclosing their disability so they resort to non-disclosure. Non-disclosure impedes a person from being able to request the necessary workplace accommodations that will help them be efficient employees (Smith, 2002). A study conducted amongst women with disabilities explained that these employees encountered discrimination in their workplace in the form of microaggressions (Moloney, et al., 2019). These experiences had them doubting whether or not disclosing their disability is ideal. However, this act would inhibit the chance of receiving any workplace accommodations and this impacts their productivity and job stability. Further analysis of the experiences of the women in this study sheds some light on the fact that some people’s disabilities are visibly

obvious, so nondisclosure isn't an option. This would be the case in those people who are blind and use a white cane or guide dog.

A second barrier to obtaining workplace accommodations is related to the employer's negative perception of hiring an employee with a disability (Lindsay, et al. 2019). One of these negative perceptions is associated with the cost of providing accommodations. Employers are under the impression that providing accommodations to their visually impaired or disabled employees is costly (Dong et al., 2013). However, studies demonstrate that 50 % of the accommodations provided to employees don't cost the company a single dollar (Dong et al., 2013). And that, on the other hand, hiring individuals with different abilities can be cost-efficient because this has been associated with a company's decreased turnaround rates (Lindsay et al., 2018). Scharz, Hendricks, & Blanck (2006), state that the benefits associated with hiring people with disabilities are improvements in turnover and retention, reliability and punctuality, employee loyalty, innovation, productivity, work ethic, inclusive work culture, and ability awareness. Kurata & Brodwin (2013) further discuss that when hired, people with disabilities are dependable and productive.

However, in order to observe these benefits, it is necessary for employers to break down the negative perceptions of hiring a person with a disability. Research demonstrates that these negative attitudes are eliminated if a person has had the opportunity to interact with a person with a disability, whether it be in their personal or professional life (Kurata & Brodwin, 2013, Lindsay, et al. 2019).

Scroggins (2007) argues that it is through this interaction that people's negative perceptions of people with disabilities are decreased. Research demonstrates that these negative stigmas can also be decreased through training and awareness of employers (Gamble, Dowler, & Howler, 2004, Scroggins, 2007). This literature demonstrates that it is through the awareness and training of employers that the likelihood that a person with a disability will be successfully hired and with this decrease the unemployment rates of blind and or visually impaired individuals.

This discussion sheds some light on how this study can guide those in the social work profession on how to help individuals with disabilities both at a micro and macro level. The data collected can be utilized to further advocate for laws that protect the rights of people who are blind or visually impaired.

### Theoretical Orientation

The theoretical framework that can help explain the experiences people with visual impairment face in their worksite is "Ableism" and "Disablism" (Be, 2019). Ableism is the act of showing preference towards abled-bodied people over those with a physical disability. Disablism differs in the manner that it is the act in which people discriminate, oppress, and marginalize people with disabilities. These notions convey how people will be discriminated against due to an impairing mental or physical condition. A person's mental or physical limitation changes the person's functionality and this creating in some people an idea that the person is incompetent or inferior. These concepts further explain

how not falling within the set societal physical or mental expectations held by certain individuals can create prejudiced attitudes that are aimed against people with disabilities. And if so, how these can be contributing factors that guide an employer's response about providing accommodations or offering employment to this sector of the population.

#### Contribution of Study to Micro and/or Macro Social Work Practice

The data collected in this study can make significant contributions in the realm of social work. These contributions can be implemented both at the micro and macro levels of social work. At the micro-level, it will provide social workers with the necessary information to understand the importance of receiving workplace accommodations and the barriers associated with requesting and obtaining these. This will help the social worker better equip their clients on how to overcome any barriers or challenges they might encounter associated with requesting workplace accommodations. At the macro level, this information will evaluate the effectiveness of existing policies that protect the rights of people living with a disability such as visual impairment. And to help determine if any amendments are necessary to ensure these rights are acknowledged and respected. The latter can be achieved through advocacy and bringing awareness of these issues to the political arena.

#### Summary

This chapter covered the assessment phase of the research project. It introduced the focus topic: what blind or visually impaired individuals experience

when they request workplace accommodations?" Next, it was established that post-positivism was the worldview utilized throughout the research project. After this, a literature review was presented where it was documented that receiving workplace accommodations provides a visually impaired person greater job retention outcome. Additionally, the literature review also addressed how requesting reasonable accommodations can be beneficial to the employer and employee. This then brought the discussion to Disablism and Ableism the theoretical orientations which could help explain employer's attitudes towards visually impaired people. Lastly, it was explored how this study will make significant contributions to the profession of social work both at the micro and macro level.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ENGAGEMENT

#### Introduction

Chapter two covers various topics that include the introduction to the research site, engaging the gatekeeper in the agency where the participants were recruited, and the self-preparation steps. These topics convey the amount of planning that was implemented before this stage in this research study. Nevertheless, there was also planning that needed to take place in case issues arise, and that is addressed in the second half of this chapter. These topics are addressed as follows and these include diversity issues, ethical issues, and political issues.

#### Research Site

To understand the study focus, what occurs when blind or visually impaired individuals experience when they request workplace accommodations, it was essential to conduct several qualitative interviews with people that meet these underlying criteria. The participants in the study are members of a non-profit grassroots advocacy organization. This organization is dedicated to advocating for the blind community. The organization is devoted to assisting the blind community. They achieve this by offering scholarships, support with assistive technology, loans to purchase assistive technology, along with advocating for policies that impact blind or visually impaired individuals. As stated

before, the staff and members of this organization are blind or visually impaired and it is these individuals that were invited to participate in this research project.

### Engagement Strategies for Gatekeepers at Research Site

Engagement in this research project consisted of introducing the study to the gatekeepers of the above-mentioned agency. The study and its purpose were explained to the fullest extent to the gatekeepers. The study information elaborated on how the research purpose is to obtain a first-hand narrative of the experiences of the study participants and what was observed when they request workplace accommodations. It was also explained that this information would be retrieved via semi-structured interviews from willing participants. It was clarified to the gatekeeper that the data retrieved will help determine if any issues need to be acknowledged and addressed by professionals and agencies dedicated to providing services to the blind community. This engagement process also consisted of obtaining all the necessary knowledge of the research site and the process required to obtain consent to initiate the recruitment of study participants. This initial engagement informed the gatekeeper that all the needed information and permissions were obtained and a plan is ready to be implemented. It was also necessary to demonstrate professional and ethical behavior by indicating to the gatekeeper that all the data collected will be carefully gathered and stored and that written informed consent will be obtained from study participants.

A well-formulated research project made gaining access to the research site more probable. It was also explained to this organization that the purpose of this study is to shed some light on what blind or visually impaired people face when they request workplace accommodations and if there is any resistance from the employer. This study explored why thus resistance emerges, if it is due to misinformation, a lack of awareness, or if it is related to prejudiced views. The information gathered was used to determine what actions are necessary to address these issues.

### Self-Preparation

The preparation to conduct this study consisted of much planning and self-preparation. The researcher gained greater insight into the research topic and how it is relevant to the study participants. The acquired knowledge was related to reasonable accommodations, the ADA, types of accommodations, and the benefits and barriers related to receiving workplace accommodations. This knowledge was enhanced by the gatekeeper and further developed through the review of published scholarly articles. The acquired knowledge of workplace accommodations and visual impairment equipped the researcher with the necessary information to evaluate how the blind community is being impacted. This acquired knowledge and understanding was not shaped by the researcher's values and biases, so these were acknowledged and set aside. This preparation included acknowledging what will be the most effective strategy to engage the

gatekeeper of the agency site and subsequently the study participants, blind or visually impaired individuals.

In this study, the researcher remained mindful of the sensitivity of the subject matter and how soliciting private and confidential information can be difficult to obtain. So, providing the study participants an explanation of the research project, its purpose, the data retrieval process, and its dissemination was essential. The study participant was informed that the study's purpose is to evaluate if their employer is providing workplace accommodations to them and how these benefit the employee. The study participant was also informed that no personal or employer information will be collected to prevent any work-related issues from arising. The researcher only needed contact information from the participant. This writer also prepared for any potential difficulties that might affect the implementation of the research project and plan accordingly if any issues were to arise.

### Diversity Issues

Diversity can be a contributing factor when gauging a person's willingness to participate in the study. Certain ethnic groups are less trusting of individuals in the social work profession, so engaging these clients needs to be done in a manner where their feelings are acknowledged and respected. This was done by informing them that the information they provide will only be used to gain an understanding of their experience with requesting workplace accommodations. Another diversity issue that could have arisen is a language barrier. The

interview was offered in Spanish and English to accommodate the Spanish-speaking participants.

#### Ethical Issues

Additionally, potential ethical concerns were addressed to conduct this study. The purpose of this is to evaluate if visually impaired employees receive their much-needed workplace accommodations, so the study should be conducted in a professional manner where the participant is informed of the purpose of the study and what is going to be done with the data collected along with obtaining written consent where it is specified that their identity will be protected. Participant's personal information and employer information was not collected and were deleted from the participant's narrative. The only information that was gathered is contact information and this will be discarded as soon as the study is completed. A file containing the interview will be assigned a file number and the contact information will be kept separately. The data retrieved in the interviews were recorded in digital format and were transcribed to word format and stored on a PC with no identifying information.

#### Political Issues

An additional issue that was planned for is related to policies. A policy issue that might have arisen during the implementation of this research project is one related to set agency policies and the completion of research within their establishment. In case of this issue arising, the data was collected off-site and

the organization's information was not collected. The researcher was mindful of the implications of participating in a study in which workplace experiences are being analyzed, so the participants might be afraid of compromising their employment. It is for this reason that the participant was offered the choice of completing the interview in an alternative way such as virtual call, or via phone call.

### Summary

Chapter two covered a variety of topics all related to the engagement phase of this research project. It was discussed that the participants were recruited from a non-profit grassroots organization. Next, it was stated what approach was utilized and deemed the most effective way to engage the gatekeeper to the research site. After this, it was discussed what were the necessary steps the researcher took to prepare to complete this research project. Furthermore, in the second half of this chapter, all issues that could have arisen are addressed and discussed this includes diversity, ethical and political issues.

## CHAPTER THREE

### IMPLEMENTATION

#### Introduction

Chapter three provides an overview of the implementation phase. Initially, the study participants are described and then how the sample was gathered. Next, the data collection methods will be examined. The data collection phases will also be described along with an explanation of the data analysis portion of the research.

#### Study Participants

The pool of participants that are members of this organization was of all ages, races, and ethnicities. There was also a combination of students, job seekers, employed, unemployed, and retired blind or visually impaired individuals but those recruited fit the following criteria. The study participants are individuals over the ages of 18 that are blind or visually impaired and are receiving or have requested workplace accommodations. These participants were employed when the interview took place. They were willing to share information about their interactions with supervisors and colleagues. This information was being sought to evaluate what the participants experienced when they requested workplace accommodations. These individuals had the mental capacity to consent to participate in this study.

## Selection of Participants

In this stage of the research project, all the sample strategies were carefully analyzed to identify which would provide a purposeful sample that best meets the needs of the research study. The sampling strategies that will be utilized are Stratified Purposeful Sampling and Snowball sampling. The stratified purposeful sampling technique “is a combination of extreme case sampling and typical case sampling”. (Morris, 2014, p. 125). This sampling strategy provided the researcher with a set of participants who could provide a first-hand explanation of their experiences related to the research topic. The second sampling strategy that was used was snowball sampling. This strategy was used because this would help increase the sampling size and likelihood of participants' willingness to take part in this research study.

The evaluation of the data provided by the first-hand narratives of the participant produced insight and information into workplace interactions and if there are any foreseen shared components in these participants. The reasoning behind this decision of using this type of sampling strategy is to gain a detailed insight into the blind community and their interactions with obtaining reasonable accommodations.

In regards to recruitment, the participants were not contacted directly by the researcher. The study information was sent to the organization and they sent it out via email and posted it in their weekly newsletter. The study invitation clearly stated the participant criterion and invited all agency members to please

contact the researcher if they were interested in taking part in this research study. The invite also specified that the study participant had to be over the age of 18, currently employed, and blind or visually impaired.

### Data Gathering

The interview questions utilized in this research study explored what types of accommodations the participants requested, the process of requesting said accommodations, and the employer's willingness to provide the accommodations (See Appendix A). Post-positivism specifies three types of questions that are utilized in the interview process. These are categorized as descriptive, structural, and contrast questions (Morris, 2014). However, in this study, the questionnaire was comprised of descriptive and structural questions. Some examples of the descriptive questions that were asked to the participant are; Can you describe your workplace accommodations? Or perhaps, could you describe your workplace policies on workplace accommodation? A structural question that was added to this interview; What is your level of knowledge on the ADA and workplace accommodations? The interview had a series of open-ended and close-ended questions that provided the researcher with valuable data. The questioner that was utilized was modified from a questionnaire used in previous research (Naraine, 2005).

During the interview, the participant was engaged and further informed of the purpose of the research and how their collaboration will provide the researcher with valuable information. The participant was prompted to sign the

consent form before the interview taking place. This form clarifies their willing participation in the study and their consent for the interview to be digitally recorded. These two points were once again discussed with the participant before the initiation of the interview. At the end of the interview, the participant was thanked and was invited to contact the researcher if any concerns or questions arise.

### Phases of Data Collection

The data gathering process consisted of a series of semi-structured interviews in which the participant was asked a series of open-ended questions related to the study topic. These interviews were conducted via Zoom. At the beginning of each interview, the participant was prompted to share any comments, questions, or concerns related to the consent form. The participant was subsequently engaged via exploring how they are feeling. The next step in the interview consisted of informing the participant that the recording would initiate and that they had the right to decline to answer any question. The bulk of the interview consisted of a series of open-ended questions related to obtaining reasonable accommodations. Once the interview was completed the participant was thanked and was provided the researcher's contact information so they can reach out if any questions arise.

The research analysis process consisted of noting themes and important facts after each interview. This brief analysis was completed before the next interview and was utilized to determine if any adjustments needed to be done to

the interview questionnaire or the interview process. This process was implemented throughout the entire course of the data-gathering phase

### Data Recording

The data-gathering phase of the research study consisted of conducting interviews. These were all completed via Zoom and were digitally recorded using the recording option in this application. The interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed. The transcription was done digitally and was further evaluated to conduct any necessary corrections. This method of data collection ensured that the data was error-free. Due to the interview being recorded, additional consent was obtained from the study participants. This consent authorized the researcher to record the interview. Journals were also utilized in the data-gathering phase. One of the journals was to record and analyze data that was gathered from literature reviews. The second journal was used to reflect on the interview and take note of any important details, thoughts, or comments.

### Data Analysis Procedures

The researcher completing this project determined that the qualitative analytical framework that needed to be utilized is the bottom-up approach. This approach is used when the research questions need to be analyzed objectively to notice any emerging themes. The research topic is related to evaluating what visually impaired individuals experience when they request workplace accommodations? It has been considered that using the bottom-up approach will

discover any emerging trends amongst this population. Technology is currently playing a big part in the workplace experience of this group, so careful analysis of the data will discover other important emerging themes such as technology. Determining the qualitative analytical framework is just the first step in the evaluation stage of the post-positivism theoretical approach, especially when utilizing the bottom-up analytical tool. The next steps in this tool required the researcher to break down the narratives and set them into categories that will then be evaluated to note further emerging themes.

This step of narrative analysis is known as coding. There are three types of coding. The first is open coding. In open coding, the data from the initial interview was analyzed to note all emerging themes. and from there establish what additional questions will be addressed in the next interview (Morris, 2012). Open coding is a form of micro analyzing. (Morris, 2014). Some emerging open codes that were illustrated in the data were frustration, interactions, co-workers, purpose, and independence. Furthermore, the second set of emerging themes that arose in the initial data analysis were the ADA, accommodations, jobs, and or assistive technology. The next step in coding is axial coding. In this step, the researcher evaluated if there are any emerging themes between the categories that were found in the open coding section of the analysis. These codes were analyzed to discover how they are interconnected. Once this was completed the data analysis phase was ready for the next step of investigation.

In axial coding, some emerging topics that were present are related to job stability and job retention. The coding portion of the data analysis took place after each interview. The next step was selective coding. In selective coding, the researcher developed a theoretical statement that was applied to the data collected. This theoretical statement needed to be observed in various categories of the previous step of data analysis. This theoretical statement was then applied by the researcher in the last step of the data analysis. This is the step when the researcher applied the theoretical statement to current knowledge of the human experience. This phase is titled the conditional matrix (Morris, 2014)

### Summary

Chapter three provided an overview of the implementation phase of this research. It was discussed what the sample pool looked like and how the participants were invited to take part in this study. Then it was discussed how the data was gathered, and what type of questions were included in the interview. Next, there was an in-depth discussion that covered the various stages of analysis that include selecting the qualitative analytical framework and the various stages of data coding and analyzing.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### EVALUATION

#### Introduction

This chapter illustrates the findings of this research project. The information described includes the interviewing process, participant demographics, an explanation of the themes noted in the data analysis. The themes described include gaps in the reasonable accommodation process, an analysis of the benefits of the ground-up approach in accessible technology, along with a deficit in training and awareness for employers. The final theme discussed is the noted willpower and adaptive skills of the participants. The last section will include a discussion on the limitations of the findings, and how the data can be utilized to guide the realm of social work.

#### Data Analysis

##### Data Collection

The data was collected via virtual interviews in which the participants if needed, were provided an opportunity to ask questions regarding the consent form (this form had been provided via email before the interview). The participants were also notified that they could refuse to answer any of the interview questions. Subsequently, the interview started and the Interviewee gathered the demographic information, and a series of open-ended questions were asked (See Appendix A). The open-ended questions were focused on

obtaining information on the participant's experience when requesting reasonable accommodations in their most current worksite.

The interviews were all conducted via the virtual platform Zoom. This platform was used to digitally record the interview's audio. The participants had previously consented to the interview being digitally recorded (see consent form in Appendix A). The interview was digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed into a word document. The transcriptions were then analyzed carefully to correct any errors in the transcription process. The word document with the gathered data was edited to remove any identifying information and was saved into a password-secured Microsoft Word file. This same process was completed with each interview

The data analysis was initiated during the interview process in which important information was noted. Additionally, for the first couple of interviews, some noted changes were made to the questionnaire. This was done to enhance the data collection process. An in-depth analysis was then conducted. This was the open-coding process in which the data was analyzed and emerging themes were sought out. The next step in the data analysis consisted of axial coding. In this stage there was an analysis of the emerging themes and these were used to create a more comprehensive concept. Once this stage was completed the next step in the analysis process was selective coding where the examination consisted of finding the broader categories in the remaining data. The last step in this process was completing the conditional matrix.

### Study Participants

In this study, there was a total of six participants interviewed. In terms of gender, 66% were male and 33% identified as female. Their ages ranged from 50 years to 67 years of age. 1 participant identified as African American and the remaining 5 identified as Caucasian. Amongst the participants 3 had a Bachelor's level of education, two had completed a Master's degree, and 1 had obtained a Doctoral degree. All the participants were employed full-time. They were employed in the sectors of higher education, customer service, social service, and mental health. However, 83% of the participant's careers fully consisted or had components of assisting the blind or visually impaired community. They were also all members of a grassroots organization that is dedicated to advocating on behalf of the blind community. The participant's demographic information is presented in the table below.

Table 1. Demographic Information of Study Participants

Gender	Age	Level of education	Employment Status	Sector of Employment
1. F	67	Master's Degree	Full-time	Social Service
2. M	65	Bachelor's Degree	Full-time	Customer Service
3. M	50	Master's Degree	Full-time	Social Service
4. M	65	Bachelor's Degree	Full-time	Customer Service
5. M	59	Bachelor's Degree	Full-time	IT Services
6. F	53	Doctoral Degree	Full-time	Education Sector

#### Data Interpretation

The data findings were used to respond to the initial research question; “What do blind or visually impaired people experience when they request workplace accommodations?” This was done through the evaluation of the type of accommodations that the participants requested and how these improve their productivity. Along with exploring how supportive the employers were and if there was any resistance and if the employer provided the accommodations within a reasonable amount of time.

## Reasonable Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations provided by employers can be categorized as an essential tool that enables a person with a disability to effectively be integrated as an employee in their worksite. In the case of blind and low vision employees, this might include the use of alternate accessible technology, structural adaptations, changes to regular work procedures, and or providing equipment that gives the employee the ability to access all work-related material. This adjustment to the work environment allows a person with a disability to efficiently complete their job responsibilities

The accommodations requested by the participants in this study consisted of obtaining technology or human-based assistance that allowed them to attain documents, training material, company applications, and or software in an accessible format. The accommodations requested depended on the employees' level of functional eyesight but it ranged from; screen reading software, digital recorder, digital magnifiers, support service assistants, accessible technology (such as documents, training, company web applications, software) and, braille translating devices, (that included refreshable braille display, braille embosser, and writer,). Other accommodations requested consisted of work schedule adjustments and cell phones with accessibility functions.

During the data analysis process, the important concepts that emerged from the interviews were as follows (1) gaps in the reasonable accommodation process. (2) the deficit in awareness and needed training for employers, (3) the

benefits of a, from the ground-up approach to reasonable accommodations, and (4) the notion of “going the extra mile”. In the next sections, a detailed explanation of each theme will be discussed and examples from the interviews will be provided

### Gaps in the Reasonable Accommodations Process

The concept of gaps in the reasonable accommodation process is used to bring together significant themes that identify the notion that disparities in what should be a continual process of reasonable accommodations (RA) were experienced by some participants. In this study 4 of the 6 participants indicated having to remind their employers and staff of already established RA's This included problems with the impediment of inaccessible documents, company web applications, software, training, and or programs and the continual prompts the employee has to place on the employer to obtain pending reasonable accommodations.

Inaccessible Documents and Technology. Inaccessible technology is one issue that was illustrated by the study participants. Accessible technology is one RA that is essential for those employees that rely on screen reading software. The experiences displayed by the participants ranged from portraying a level of consideration towards the agency to being frustrated with the continual struggle of documents and company programs not being developed in an accessible format. “Dealing with inaccessible PDFs and other programs is a struggle. I have had to fight and push to have them have the accessibility put in place when the

document is being created” (Participant 1). Another participant noted, “Creating documents with accessibility functions makes the whole process less complicated and cost-efficient” (Participant2) However, as indicated, this process is not always followed and accessibility functions are not put in place even after an employee has been at an agency for several years. Participant one states in the following quote her experience when her employing company started updating the data entry programs, they used. “When everything started changing and we, you know began moving into different platforms, um, they moved without considering people who were using screen reading software, as I do” (Participant 1). The employing agency neglected to consider disabled employees in their company procedures and updates leaving the employee to deal with the problems she faces when her screen reading software is not compatible with the new website application.

Participant 1 further illustrates that inaccessible documents and programs hinder her ability to work independently and make full use of her knowledge and skills. Gaps in accessibility makes her dependent on a support service assistant’s skills and availability. She shares due to this she has to plan her workday around the support service assistant schedule and this adding unnecessary frustration. “I would spend a lot less time banging my head up against the wall and feeling frustrated which would allow me to be more independent do my work and not have to rely on someone else's skills” (Participant 1). This impediment related to inaccessibility keeps the employee from accessing needed information in an

efficient and timely manner. Due to inaccessible technology, blind or visually impaired employees (BVIE) are left with what can be a timely and frustrating process of asking that the documents/programs get converted to an accessible format. Or, as stated above, relying on the availability of a support service assistant (if one is provided). Participant 3 established having a support service assistant is not an ideal accommodation due to its limitations. “Well, there are also limits to what the person could do. This person cannot be with me 24/7 and, yeah, and they have off days or be busy doing something else.” (Participant 3). The participant discusses that having the proper equipment and or software would enable the BvIE to be self-sufficient.

Continual Prompts. The notion of gaps in the RA process also integrates the continuous reminders that BVIE’s shared they have to engage in to recap their employers or colleagues on established and or pending RA’s. Participant 6 indicates that she has to continually remind colleagues in her agency during presentations that she is unable to follow the presentation as sighted employees do. Due to her visual impairment, she cannot see what is being presented on a screen. She further indicated “That’s probably the most prevalent and pervasive, where I continuously have to remind people If you're having a program let the presenters know that they need to describe things what they are visually showing.” (Participant 6). The process of having to remind and confirm RA’s or in this case encounter situations where the lack of established RA’s becomes a constant challenge even after the employee has been working for the company

for several years can be trying. A second participant discusses having a similar issue. She shares a required training has not been converted to an accessible format even though she has to complete it each year. The following quote notes her experience.

I've been at this job for many years and I've had to renew this training every year and other blind people have been employed. It's not like I've been asking for this accommodation one time, but that's what I'm saying is that they, they don't consider it their responsibility ...to get to be ADA compliant (Participant 2).

Getting the necessary tools to efficiently complete a job duty is the underlying purpose of reasonable accommodations. Having to engage in the continual process of reminding and prompting employers notes that there is a gap in the reasonable accommodation process. This was also noted by participant 3.

I have to complete the (reasonable accommodation) paperwork and also have to remind them of my accommodation, too, because it is a big organization. So it's easy for things to get lost in the process You have to keep pushing you to have to not let go, to not give up continue asking them (Participant 3).

As noted in these quotes, receiving accommodations promptly is of the essence. Blind and or visually impaired employees need them to complete their job. The time and energy spent in reminding the employer can be utilized to fulfill their job responsibilities. Not obtaining needed accommodations impairs the

employee's ability to complete their job duties. This does not only affect the employee's productivity but will also give the employer the perception that the employee is unproductive and with this adding to existing negative views of disabled individuals in the job sector. This data illustrates how implementing a strategy that ensures all company documents, programs, software, training are developed in an accessible format can be considered as an essential component of the reasonable accommodation process. This approach to accessibility will ensure the employee has access to information promptly, and with this bridging the gap in the accommodations process.

#### A Deficit in Awareness and Training for Employers

The next theme that emerged from the data is related to a need for training and education for employers on aspects of having an employee with a disability such as blindness. This theme includes a lack of awareness and or knowledge on topics related to the ADA standards on reasonable accommodations and the development of an ability inclusive culture in the agency. In the data analysis, it was noticed that 5 of the 6 participants mentioned that they believe there is a deficit in training and awareness by either their employer, colleagues, and or the general job sector. These topics will be further discussed in the next sections

A Deficit in Disability Awareness. The study participants articulated that as an employee with a disability they can note that a deficit of disability awareness was present in their current and past employing agencies. It is shared this was

observed during regular company processes and or in casual interactions with colleagues, either way, this created moments of discomfort in which the BVIE had to advocate for themselves. Participants 1, 3, and 6 establish that there have been instances where their colleagues failed to implement disability-sensitive approaches to their company's processes. Participant 6 illustrates what occurred during a virtual meeting where the presenter did not take into consideration her well-known disability and proceeded to ask the staff to observe the screen.

Even today, I met with a group of people that I've known for many years. I've known the majority of them for several years, and the people I know started with, well let me share my screen. And as you can see, you know, you can tell. Like, well “no” actually can you share that (Participant 6).

This was noted to be a reoccurring issue where the employee has to stop and remind her co-workers that a different approach needs to be established when presentations are provided. One that can be understood even if the person is not looking at the screen. This should be the norm, where presenters properly convey the information, they are presenting (Participant 6). Developing an inclusive environment in which people of all abilities can be integrated and participate in job processes is essential to creating an inclusive work culture.

The lack of awareness not only creates instances in which the employee has to advocate for themselves and bring awareness but also can be a barrier to obtaining reasonable accommodations “The lack of understanding can shift a person’s perception of the abilities and capabilities of a disabled individual”

(Participant 3). Participant 5 shared how his experiences have made him acknowledge that a lack of awareness brings afloat preconceived biases and perceptions of employers towards disabled employees.

Unfortunately, a lot of them (employers) come into it with the mindset that, 'well if I were blind, I couldn't do it. How are they going to do it so? You tend not to get the benefit of the doubt a lot of times, and that's why we're still at 70% of the workforce not employed (Participant 5).

This lack of understanding can be one of the contributing factors in the high unemployment rate amongst people who are blind or visually impaired (Participant 5).

It was further discussed by the participants that this occurs even when companies have non-discrimination policies in place. If the person that does the hiring has a lack of disability awareness this can shift whether a person with a disability obtains a job and or the reasonable accommodations they are requesting. Participant 5 further establishes that the company's non-discrimination policies mean well but these are not always reinforced by all personnel. Participant 5 further elaborates on this notion.

It's not so much a question of honesty, but a question of awareness.

And education, because it's one thing for the company to come out with a policy that says they will not discriminate. But if the managers have not received proper disability awareness training, they're going to bring their biases to the job (Participant 5).

The negative biases and lack of disability awareness that the participants articulate they have witnessed can be a barrier in the RA process. Participant 3 argues

It is the awareness and knowledge of those that make the final decision that matters. Because a direct supervisor can be aware of your qualifications and why you need the RA's and they will usually advocate for the employee, but they don't decide whether or not an accommodation is granted (Participant 3).

Deficits in Training and Education. As discussed by the participants, employers could benefit from training that will enhance their knowledge on disability and the workplace, the rights of the disabled community, and how reasonable accommodations can be considered as a tool that ensures they complete their job responsibilities successfully. These aspects are covered in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). But as noted before, employers don't always have enough knowledge of the ADA and will fail to implement its standards, and with this making it difficult for the employee to be successful. Participant 1 elaborates on this notion in the following quote: "They don't follow ADA standards regarding font type and size. The same thing with their website they don't follow, I have to really keep pushing for them to follow ADA standards" (Participant 1).

Blind and or visually impaired individuals need accessible websites, software, and documents to be able to read and have access to this information.

Having to promote, educate, and or insist that their employer ensures that they are following ADA standards on accessible technology goes beyond their job duties. Nevertheless, these employees feel it is their responsibility to educate and bring awareness to their worksite on why they need to follow ADA standards and the importance of reasonable accommodations. Participant 4 elaborates on; this idea:

One thing that is lacking is understanding and you can already move on because people see things from different perspectives ...So many of them (employers) can only see based on what they know so we are the ones that are going into educating them (Participant 3).

It is the perspective and the preconceived negative biases that are illustrated by the participants that they have witnessed in employers and how they establish that it can be modified with the proper training on disability and the significance behind learning of the ADA and its standards on workplace accommodations. The proper training would enhance the employer's awareness of the significance of reasonable accommodations. And how these should be integrated into the company culture and with this creating an inclusive environment.

The data emphasize that having a permanent disability and the process of reasonable accommodations can create a level of frustration when an employee has to continually educate and remind colleagues and employers to consider their needs. And this is where training and education can help create an inclusive environment in which existing and potential employees can be easily integrated

into companies workforce. And with this diminish the need to continuously have to request reasonable accommodations

#### From the Ground-up Approach

It was in the interview process that a sharp contrast was noted in the experiences of the participants. This contrast emerged from the RA approach utilized by their employers. The study participants stated having the privilege of working for a company that had developed an inclusive work environment, in which an employee's disability was used as a point of reference to develop a work program in which BVIE was fully integrated into the company, and with this ensure they are successful and productive employees. These companies had implemented a 'from the grounds up approach' in regards to reasonable accommodations, and accessible technology. These participants emphasized feeling lucky in regards to experiencing a high level of support from their employer. They report being employed by an agency that had several employees who were visually impaired. They also shared that their agencies were committed to providing them their reasonable accommodations and ensuring that the software and documents were accessible. They report having minimal delays and or setbacks regarding RA's. they state this was achieved due to a continuous effort in developing the programs, software, training, and or documents in an accessible format. These participants stated this was achieved due to their employers being proactive and getting educated on accessible technology. The participants state their employer continued this process via their

knowledge of accessible technology. The employer would use their input as a guide to creating an inclusive work environment.

This notes a contrast between the experiences and perceptions of the participants who experienced gaps in the accommodations process and those that worked in an agency that had adopted a from the ground up approach to RA's. The significance of this concept is further described in participants 2 quotes.

This company was actually trying to hire blind people, but they didn't have the correct screen reader, they weren't sure as to which screen reader would be best, and we told them to use JAWS (screen reading software) and the company utilized the advice. And with this ensuring their system was accessible.

Participant 2 further elaborates on how this approach is a more efficient way to develop accessible technology.

It's far easier from an accessible standpoint to be in from the ground up so that if changes need to be made. They're made as the application is taking place. And as it's forming it's far more difficult to put those changes into effect after the applications have already been launched, making changes cost a lot more money (Participant 2).

These participants articulate how practical the from the ground up approach to accessible technology can be. It addresses some of the issues related to gaps in inaccessible technology. This approach also diminishes the back and forth an

employee has to engage in when they encounter inaccessible technology. Furthermore, it ensures the employer is creating an inclusive environment for those employees that use screen reading software. The employers using this approach will bridge the gap and lessen the barriers and challenges disabled employees experience when a discrepancy in RA occurs. The following quotes further note the sharp contrast between the implementation of the ground up approach and when it is not utilized by an agency.

After a while the company knew what accommodations needed to happen because they have checklists, they have a list on everything... because when and all of our various centers had training departments and hiring departments and they knew what the accommodations are going to be. So the employee never really even had to ask, unless it was something out of the ordinary (Participant 4).

On the other hand, these are the thoughts of a participant that has been experiencing gaps in the RA process.

Oh, well I just really would like to see someday for us not to have to be fighting these battles and for you know, if we had things built-in from the ground up instead of retrofitting we wouldn't be calling this reasonable accommodation. They would just be built into the system and everybody would be on the same level playing field (Participant 1).

These quotes illustrate the contrast in the experiences of BVIEs. The employer's efforts towards integrating this approach diminish much of the problems

associated with accessible technology. Nevertheless, the participants illustrate that they acknowledge they are lucky and that this shift in accessibility, inclusivity in informational technology is not always present in other companies.

### Going the Extra Mile

The last significant theme that emerged in this study is the concept of going the extra mile. This notion encompasses the themes of work ethic, adaptability, and the effort the participants set forward to be successful in their worksite. These participants shared the implications related to having a visual impairment and how they face certain challenges and barriers to which they have to adapt to and keep moving forward in regards to their employment. The adaptation process constitutes having to learn, memorize, and or strategize ways in which they use their strengths and capabilities to perform their job responsibilities.

Participant 3 states:

Another thing is that the employers can observe. Oh, they are ready to do the job with or without accommodations. They are more likely to notice; oh, he is not a lazy person he can do the job, let's give him a chance. Well, we need to be willing to go the extra mile (Participant 3).

The adaptability process also consists of the ways BVIEs strategize to complete a job in which they have to learn how to navigate a website and with this refine their other senses and mental capacities. The following participant

illustrates the process of navigating a customer service site, utilizing a screen-reader, and providing efficient customer service.

So, you have to learn how to move around the agency system as well as listening to JAWS (screen reader) on one ear and the guest in the other ear. While you're typing and talking and looking things up.... Most people can't do it. Most people don't have to do it. But if you're a blind person, you definitely have to do it because that's how you get your work is done (Participant 4).

Going the extra mile can be interpreted as an adaptation effort that is done by the BVIE. The effort can initiate even before they get to their job and will continue after they leave their worksite. The following participant explains his daily five-hour commute to complete an 8-hour work shift.

I'd be up at five to eat and leave at six. and I was supposed to be there at eight.... That was a two-hour ride, which would normally take anybody in a car, maybe 35 to 45 minutes, and on the way back, it was worse because traffic was worse, of course, and I would get off at 4:30 ...Sometimes I wouldn't walk in until 7:30 pm (Participant 2).

The work ethic and willingness to be successful in their worksites goes beyond the reasonable accommodations process. The ability to adapt and set presence in regards to their professional aspirations are those that are observed when the employee is going beyond their role and seeking those opportunities to enhance their skills and providing them the reasonable accommodations is just

one component that allows the employee to excel as a professional. Participant 6 illustrates this in the following quote

Well, you know I wanted that opportunity to move up. And so I was willing to do X, I was willing to work. More hours. I was willing to put in the time to earn you know the credits. I was willing to learn a whole new subject matter because that's what I needed to do (Participant 6).

Reasonable accommodations are tools used by BVIE's that allow them to use their skill sets and develop their knowledge. Once received the employee strategizes ways to adapt to their work environment and complete their job responsibilities.

## Discussion

Reasonable accommodations when provided have the potential to increase the numbers of employed individuals with visual impairment (Dong et al., 2013), and with this address the unemployment rate amongst this population. The National Federation of the Blind (2019) estimates that over 70% of this population does not have full-time employment. A study conducted amongst unemployed visually impaired and blind vocational rehab clients indicated that this sector of the population is seeking employment and that 1/3 of them argue that their employability was compromised by the lack of adequate workplace accommodations (Anand & Sevak, 2017). The data in this study reiterates the importance of obtaining workplace accommodations in a timely and efficient manner. Having an established plan where agency staff is prepared to develop

documents, company data entry platforms, training, and or agency procedures with an accessibility function and inclusivity component would bridge the gap in the accommodations process. This plan can create a more inclusive work environment, in which potential and existing staff of different abilities can be integrated as valued employees. The data in this study illustrates that the integration of a ground-up approach to accessible technology eliminates many of the barriers and challenges of inaccessible technology.

The data in this study also demonstrates that gaps in the accommodations process can be addressed through the implementation of training on disability awareness, the ADA, and creating an inclusive environment. The study participants shared their employers had a lack of knowledge on the ADA and its standards on accessible technology. It was also stated that they had to engage in educating staff and management on how to be ADA compliant. This demonstrates that the accommodations process can be improved through the implementation of training on disability awareness and reasonable accommodations.

The participants in this study indicated that another benefit of enhancing the employer's knowledge on disability awareness will also diminish negative preconceived notions related to hiring a person with a disability. The lack of disability awareness can cloud an employer's judgment. Prior research demonstrates that these negative attitudes are eliminated if a person has had the opportunity to interact with a person with a disability, whether it be in their

personal or professional life (Kurata & Brodwin, 2013, Lindsay, et al. 2019).

Scroggins (2007) argues that it is through this interaction that people's negative perceptions of people with disabilities are decreased. Research demonstrates that these negative stigmas can also be decreased through training and awareness of employers (Gamble, Dowler, & Howler, 2004, Scroggins, 2007).

And with this establishing that training and awareness have the potential to address the issues faced by disabled employees.

#### Implication of Findings for Micro and/or Macro Practice

The interpretation of the data findings provides an overview of its implications to the profession of social work. The data provides information on the barriers and challenges related to workplace accommodations and how these can be addressed both at a micro and macro level. The social workers involved in the delivery of micro-services to the blind community can utilize the information to guide them on how to best assist clients seeking employment or currently employed. The social worker can help the client increase the use of self-advocacy, through education on the Americans with Disabilities Act and the standards of reasonable accommodations. Furthermore, the social worker can also link the client to organizations such as vocational rehabilitation centers. Study participants acknowledged that working with this type of organization would have made the reasonable accommodations process run more smoothly. This agency provides clients with initial accommodations as part of their services and this makes the transition into new employment sites less stressful.

The data in this study also sheds the light on macro-level issues this population faces. Macro social workers can get involved in the legislative procedure of evaluating existing legislation such as the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act and evaluate if the issues that emerged from the data such as inaccessible technology and the deficit in training and awareness for employers, can be addressed through legislative reform.

#### Limitations of Study

The findings in this study cannot be applied to the overall population of BIVE due to some noted limitations. One of these being that only six participants were interviewed. A larger pool of participants' experiences could have helped obtain a broader narrative of BVIE's experiences when requesting workplace accommodations and would have increased the significance of the emerging themes. A second reason this study cannot be applied to the broader BVIE population is that 83 % of the participants were Caucasian and all had at least a bachelor's level of education. These demographic factors alter the experiences of individuals and due to this their experiences as an employee with a visual impairment could be different. A third limitation is related to the level of awareness the participants had on their rights related to obtaining reasonable accommodations. The participants shared having a moderate level of knowledge on the ADA and reasonable accommodations and due to this their level of confidence and comfort with requesting workplace accommodations was heightened. This level of knowledge may differ in the overall blind community.

And due to these factors, a more robust research study will provide a greater understanding of this research topic.

### Summary

This chapter covered the steps completed during the evaluation process. The information provided includes the interviewing process, participant demographics, and an explanation of the themes noted in the data analysis. The last sections include a brief discussion on the findings and the limitations of the study, and how the data can be utilized to guide the realm of social work.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### TERMINATION AND FOLLOW UP

#### Introduction

This chapter provides a brief overview of the stages of termination, follow-up, and the dissemination plan. These concepts are further discussed in the next sections.

#### Termination and Follow Up

In the termination stage, the study was presented to the School of Social Work at California State University San Bernardino. The final product was also presented to the gatekeeper of the agency. The participants were thanked by the researcher individually at the end of each interview and were informed that the final project would be provided to them.

#### Communication of Findings and Dissemination Plan

The research findings were presented to the School of Social Work at Cal State San Bernardino. This data was also shared with all the participants and the agencies that serve this population. Additionally, this information was also made accessible to all individuals and agencies that provide services to the blind community. The information will also be provided to organizations dedicated to advocating for the legal rights of this population.

APPENDIX A  
DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

## Interview Questions

### Demographic Questions

1. Age
2. Race/ Ethnic Identities
3. Gender Identity
4. Biological Sex
5. What is your employment status?
  - part-time/full-time
  - on-site/off-site
  - average of hours worked a week
6. What is your highest level of education?
7. What is your yearly income?
8. What is the cause of blindness/ visual impairment?
9. What was your age when you got diagnosed?
10. Can you describe the severity of your diagnosis?

### Interview Questions

11. How did you get your present job?
12. What are some of your main responsibilities for this job?
13. What is your current understanding of obtaining job accommodations?
14. Once you had been accepted into your present job, how did you discuss your
  - accommodation needs with your employer?
  - what was your approach
15. What are the various pieces of adaptive equipment that you requested?
  - list the equipment
  - computer
  - other-equipment
  - access technology
16. What other accommodation services or human support services did you request?
  - transportation on the job.
  - alternative format for information in print
17. How did your employer respond to your accommodation request?
  - how did they react to your request?
  - what information did they request from you?

- what did they do to provide you with accommodation?
  - how long did it take before you got all your accommodation?
18. Please comment on your company's policy on job accommodation or other
- disability-related policies?
  - how did you find out about these policies
  - what do you think of the policy on accommodation
  - how are these policies communicated within the company
19. After you had been employed at your company for some time, what additional accommodations did you request?
20. What other accommodation do you think you need to make it easier for you to do your job?
21. If you were to change jobs, what would you do differently regarding your accommodation needs and requests?
- how would you approach the employer?
  - how would you identify your needs?
  - what additional things would you include in your request
22. How would you evaluate your present accommodation/s?
- what do you think about your accommodation/s?
  - how do you feel about your work situation with the accommodation/s?
23. What is your opinion of your company's commitment to accommodating persons who are blind or visually impaired?

This interview was modified from a questionnaire used in previous research (Naraine, 2005).

APPENDIX B  
INFORMED CONSENT

**INFORMED CONSENT**

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to gain a better understanding of the experience that blind and/or visually impaired individuals have when requesting workplace accommodations. The study is being conducted by Silvia Blanco, a graduate student, under the supervision of Carolyn McAllister, MSW, Ph.D., Director, and Associate Professor, California State University San Bernardino School of Social Work. This study has been approved by the School of Social Work sub-committee of the Institutional Review Board at California State University, San Bernardino.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the experience that blind and/or visually impaired individuals have had when requesting workplace accommodations.

**DESCRIPTION:** Participants will be asked about the type of accommodations they have requested and their employers' level of willingness to provide said accommodations and how these accommodations have enhanced their productivity.

**PARTICIPATION:** Your participation in the study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the study or discontinue your participation at any time without any consequences.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** Your responses will remain confidential and data will be transcribed and stored with no identifying information.

**DURATION:** It will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes to complete the interview.

**RISKS:** Although not anticipated, there may be some discomfort in answering some of the questions. You are not required to answer and can skip the question or end your participation.

**BENEFITS:** There will not be any direct benefits to the participants.

**CONTACT:** If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. McAllister via email at [cmcallis@csusb.edu](mailto:cmcallis@csusb.edu).

**RESULTS:** Results of the study can be obtained from the Pfau Library ScholarWorks database (<http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/>) at California State University, San Bernardino after July 2021.

\*\*\*\*\*

I agree to have this interview be audio recorded:  YES  NO

I understand that I must be 18 years of age or older to participate in your study, have read and understand the consent document and agree to participate in your study.

\_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX C  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



Silvia Blanco <006270650@coyote.csusb.edu>

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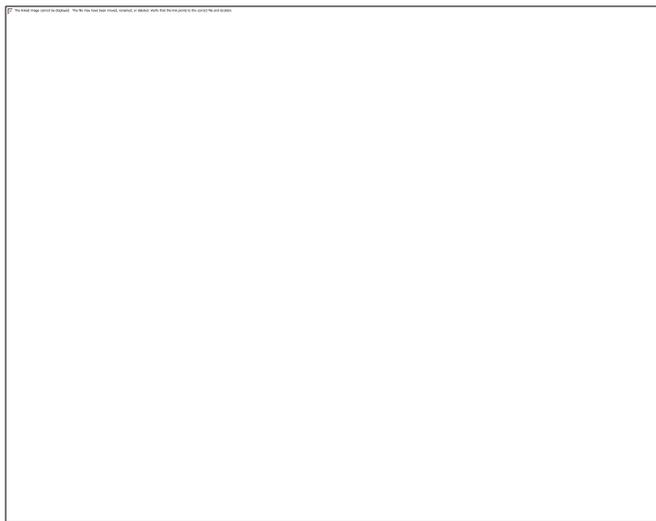
**IRB-FY2020-290 - Initial: IRB Admin./Exempt Review Approval Letter**

1 message

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**mgillesp@csusb.edu** <mgillesp@csusb.edu>  
To: 006270650@coyote.csusb.edu, cmcallis@csusb.edu

Fri, Jun 19, 2020 at 7:47 PM



June 18, 2020

**CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**  
Administrative/Exempt Review Determination  
Status: Determined Exempt  
IRB-FY2020-290

Silvia Blanco Carolyn McAllister  
CSBS - Social Work  
California State University, San Bernardino  
5500 University Parkway  
[San Bernardino, California 92407](http://www.csusb.edu)

Dear Silvia Blanco Carolyn McAllister

Your application to use human subjects, titled "What Blind or Visually Impaired People Experience When they Request Workplace Accommodations ?" has been reviewed and approved by the Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of CSU, San Bernardino has determined your application meets the federal requirements for exempt status under 45 CFR

46.104. The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk and benefits of the study to ensure the protection of human participants. The exempt determination does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required.

You are required to notify the IRB of the following as mandated by the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) federal regulations 45 CFR 46 and CSUSB IRB policy. The forms (modification, renewal, unanticipated/adverse event, study closure) are located in the Cayuse IRB System with instructions provided on the IRB Applications, Forms, and Submission webpage. Failure to notify the IRB of the following requirements may result in disciplinary action.

- Ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.
- Submit a protocol modification (change) if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your study for review and approval by the IRB before being implemented in your study.
- Notify the IRB within 5 days of any unanticipated or adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research.
- Submit a study closure through the Cayuse IRB submission system once your study has ended.

If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the Research Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at [mgillesp@csusb.edu](mailto:mgillesp@csusb.edu). Please include your application approval number IRB-FY2020-290 in all correspondence. Any complaints you receive from participants and/or others related to your research may be directed to Mr. Gillespie.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

*Donna Garcia*

Donna Garcia, Ph.D., IRB Chair  
CSUSB Institutional Review Board

DG/MG

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