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Access and Integration: Perspectives of Disabled Students Living on Campus

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Access and Integration: Perspectives of Disabled Students Living on Campus

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DISABLED STUDENTS MAY FACE ABLEIST CHALLENGES in the campus residential environment. Although campus housing plays a critical role in retention by promoting social integration, little is known about what promotes the engagement of disabled students in campus living environments because the literature about these students focuses on legal topics or accommodations. In this study, we wanted to understand how disabled students experienced living on campus and how the residential experience promoted social integration. We employed a critical constructivist case study approach, framing disability from a social justice perspective. Data for this study come from interviews with 24 students attending four highly residential liberal arts colleges. Students reported that the degree of accessibility, flexibility, use of accommodations, and staff disability awareness and responsiveness influenced their social integration and residential experience. Implications for practice include providing disability-specific staff training, tailoring accommodations to individual students, conceptualizing access broadly, using single rooms creatively, and viewing dining services as part of the housing experience even if the administrative locations are different.

Campus housing professionals play critical roles in facilitating accommodations and fostering social integration, yet practitioners have reported that they lack knowledge about accommodations, legal requirements, inclusive language, and hidden forms of impairment.

Disabled students are an integral part of college and university communities; 11% of college students self-identify to their postsecondary institution as having a disability (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016), though an additional 65% of students who received special education services in high school choose not to self-identify to their college (Newman & Madaus, 2015). As a result, some postsecondary institutions are intentionally fostering practices designed to support disabled students (Evans, Broido, Brown, & Wilke, 2017). Institutional factors that influence the retention of disabled students include accommodations (Kim & Lee, 2016),

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disability training for staff (Murray, Flannery, & Wren, 2008), and social integration, which DaDeppo (2009) defined as the "interaction between the individual and the social systems of the institution, including peer groups, faculty, and administrators, and extracurricular activities" (p. 124). Social integration describes the extent to which students feel connected with, and cared for by, other people in the campus community. DaDeppo found that, after controlling for GPA and other common characteristics, social integration remained a significant predictor of intent to persist for disabled students.

In the broader student population, campus housing plays a critical role in retention by promoting social integration (Mayhew, Rockenbach, Bowman, Seifert, & Wolniak, 2016). However, some authors (Patton, Harper, & Harris, 2015; Stewart & Nicolazzo, 2018) have demonstrated how concepts in higher education that are typically perceived as valuable (e.g., student engagement, high impact practices) have roots within White power structures and therefore may be inaccessible to diverse student populations. Specifically, living in campus housing may pose ableist challenges; for example, disabled students reported doing considerable emotional work to make non-disabled students feel comfortable during social interactions (Myers & Bastian, 2010). Other than one study indicating that living on campus was a significant predictor of first-to-second-year retention (Mamiseishvili & Koch, 2011), there is little research on social integration for disabled students (Leake & Stodden, 2014). Rather, the literature on the intersection of campus housing and disabled students has focused primarily on legal topics (e.g.,

> The physical facilities of the four colleges in this study contributed in important ways to students' perceptions of their accessibility (or inaccessibility).

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Bauman, Davidson, Sachs, & Kotarski, 2013), the perspectives of student affairs practitioners (e.g., Vaccaro & Kimball, 2018), and specific disabilities (e.g., Ackles, Fields, & Skinner, 2013). The perspectives of disabled students, particularly regarding campus housing and social integration, are absent from the literature on students' out-of-class experiences.

We conducted this research in order to understand factors that promote integration of disabled students (Evans et al., 2017). Specifically, we wanted to know how disabled students experienced living on campus. We were particularly interested in understanding how campus housing promoted integration for these students. Thus, we also explored how they viewed housing accommodations and perceived interactions with residential staff.

CAMPUS HOUSING AND ACCOMMODATIONS

The vast majority of literature on disabled students centers on the provision of accommodations. The Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA, 2008) requires that postsecondary institutions provide accommodations to ensure that disabled students have equal access to services and programs. Although accommodations are often thought

of as academic, they also entail modifications to living environments (Davidson & Bauman, 2013). Examples of housing accommodations include specialized environments (e.g., single living spaces), personal care assistants, emotional support animals (Evans et al., 2017), and service animals. Under the ADAAA, accommodations are only provided to students who disclose their disabilities to their postsecondary institutions (Orr & Hammig, 2009). Requirements that students self-identify and self-advocate are substantive changes from K-12 education where the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) stipulates that parents and educators make most of the decisions and the school has the responsibility to identify and implement accommodations. Thus, disabled students may not know they need to disclose their disability to the postsecondary institution and may have very little prior experience self-advocating (Evans et al., 2017). When asked why they did not use accommodations, 36.2% of students participating in a study of 17 institutions implicated system-level factors (e.g., challenges associated with navigating disability services) and 16.8% said faculty or staff contributed to challenges

While accessibility is generally considered to relate to the physical structure of buildings, proximity to faculty and conditions such as cleanliness, room temperature, and building materials are also important considerations.

associated with using accommodations (Bolt, Decker, Lloyd, & Morlock, 2011). Additionally, some students found the stigma associated with disability disclosure to be a barrier to requesting accommodations (Bolt et al., 2011). The process of accessing accommodations can be time-consuming as accommodations are determined by disability resource officers on a case-by-case basis and then must be communicated to officials who implement the changes (Evans et al., 2017). To offset this inconvenience and better ensure equity of services, some institutions use universal design principles to modify campus facilities and programs so they are proactively accessible to all students, with and without disabilities (Evans et al., 2017).

Campus housing professionals play critical roles in facilitating accommodations and fostering social integration, yet practitioners have reported that they lack knowledge about accommodations, legal requirements, inclusive language, and hidden forms of impairment (Murray et al., 2008). They also articulated that the concept of reasonable accommodations was unclear, viewing accommodations as involving competition with the needs of nondisabled students, struggling with the "ethical dilemma" of when a "single room was a reasonable accommodation rather than simply a preference" (Vaccaro & Kimball, 2018, p. 7), and seeing service and emotional support animals as challenging.

METHOD

Although it is important to understand institutional processes and practitioners' experiences related to disability, the perspectives of disabled students regarding campus housing are

notably absent from the literature. Therefore, three research questions guided this study: (a) How do disabled students describe their residential experiences? (b) How does the residential experience promote social integration? (c) How might the residential experience be modified to support disabled students?

We employed a critical constructivist multisite case study methodology. The goal of a case study is to "understand an issue or problem using the case as a specific illustration" (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). We sought to understand how the residential experience of disabled students influences their experiences of social integration. Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2014) described the case study as having an "intensive focus on a *bounded* system" (p. 93); we concentrate on the student experience and delimit boundaries by institution type and geographic location. The study included participants from 4 of the 14 institutional members of the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM) consortium. The ACM consortium limits the case study to small, selective residential liberal arts colleges while expanding the research beyond a single institution. Disabled students made up 10% to 22% of the student population at the four institutions in this study. These colleges focus on undergraduate education, enroll fewer than 3,000 students, and enroll predominantly White students.

Our approach is critical in that we center the construct of ableism, "a form of oppression that occurs on societal, cultural, institutional, and individual levels by valuing able-bodiedness, independence, and creating environments that are hostile to people whose abilities fall outside the scope of normalcy" (Brown, 2017, p. 102). We used the social

justice model of disability as a theoretical framework to guide this study. Social justice adherents view disability as a social construction, center the influence of ableism, reject the privileging of typical ways of functioning (Ostiguy, Peters, & Shlasko, 2016), and promote the development of positive disability identity (Evans et al., 2017). This framework emphasizes that all people have the right to enriching and successful educations in settings where they are respected as unique individuals with complex and varied identities (Evans & Herriott, 2009).

The primary data for this study came from interviews with 24 participants who attended four different colleges (see Table 1). Interviews lasted 60–75 minutes. Participants were compensated for their time with gift cards; the funding for these cards was provided through an ACUHO-I grant. We prioritized the participants' preferred method of communication (e.g., in-person interview, real time text, Skype interview). Participants shared aspects of their social identities during the interviews, and we followed up with a short written questionnaire soliciting additional demographic data. Most of the participants ($n = 18$) were juniors or above; only five were first- or second-year students. Only one of the 24 participants identified as a first-generation college student. Ten participants reported multiple disabilities, most often a psychological disability in combination with another type of disability. Fourteen participants reported psychological disabilities, 11 learning disabilities, 3 Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and 2 autism. Seven participants indicated that they had physical disabilities (typically non-apparent chronic illnesses).

Table 1

Participants

Name	College	Year	Gender	Disability identity	Race/ ethnicity	Sexual orientation	First-generation
Lee	W	4	Woman	Mental	White	Queer	No
Garrett	W	3	Man	Learning/ADHD	White	Gay	No
Rainy	W	3	Woman	Mental/physical	White	Heterosexual	No
Stacy	W	2	Woman	Physical	White	Heterosexual	No
Sam	W	3	Non-binary	Mental/physical/ ASD	White	Asexual	No
Caleb	X	2	Woman	Learning	White	Heterosexual	No
Alicia	X	1	Woman	Physical	White	Bisexual	No
Anna	X	4	Woman	Learning	White	Heterosexual	No
Rae	X	3	Man	Learning	White	Heterosexual	No
Sara	Y	4	Non-binary	Mental	Afro-Latino	Bisexual	No
Victoria	Y	2	Woman	Mental	Asian	Heterosexual	No
Sintysa	Y	5	Gender fluid	Mental/physical/ learning	White/Jewish	Lesbian	No
Rachel	Y	2	Transgender	Mental/ASD	Ashkenazi Jew	Queer	No
Brynn	Y	3	Woman	Learning	White	Attracted to females	No
Eliza	Y	4	Woman	Mental	White	Heterosexual	No
Allie	Y	4	Lady	Mental/physical	White/Jewish	Bisexual	No
Danny	Z	4	Woman	Mental	Caucasian	Heterosexual	No
Alexis	Z	4	Woman	Learning	Caucasian	Heterosexual	No
Lloria	Z	4	Woman	Learning	African American	Heterosexual	No
Sally	Z	3	Woman	Mental/learning	White	Bisexual	Yes
Natalie	Z	3	Woman	Mental/learning /ADHD	Asian	Bisexual	No
Ronald	Z	5	Man	Mental/ADHD	White	Heterosexual	No
Will	Z	3	Man	Mental	White	Heterosexual	No
Cal	Z	2	Man	Physical/learning	White	Heterosexual	No

As a case study approach does not have a defined data analysis strategy, we followed the procedures of generalized inductive methodology (Liu, 2016; Maxwell, 2005). In the first review, each author was randomly assigned six to eight transcripts to code. We identified meaningful statements in each transcript and applied descriptive codes, concurrently building a coding system. Following our theoretical framework of social justice, we coded for instances of ableism at the individual, institutional, systemic, and social-cultural levels (Hardiman, Jackson, & Griffin, 2007). Then we clarified definitions, combined and reworded codes to eliminate redundancy, and began to create categories from codes. We employed a second review of each transcript's coding, reading different transcripts than we had initially, to verify the prior coder's decisions. Then we met to identify themes that addressed each research question.

This study had several delimitations. The four institutions were highly selective; as a result, the backgrounds, goals, and experiences of our participants may be different than those of students at less competitive colleges. Additionally, data represent participants' views at one point in time. Data in this study were limited in important ways. Only one first-generation student participated in this study, and our findings might differ if students from a wider range of educational and socioeconomic backgrounds were included. Nineteen of the 24 participants were White; disabled students of color are likely to experience racial prejudice not felt by White students (Abes & Wallace, 2018). All students in the study reported having non-apparent disabilities. Factors affecting students with non-apparent disabilities differ meaningfully from factors

> One student . . . indicated that he was unaware of the process for asking for housing accommodations, highlighting a notable gap in institutional communication as all students in this study were recruited through the Disability Resources Office.

influencing those with mobility impairments (Evans et al., 2017).

PARTICIPANTS' PERSPECTIVES ABOUT LIVING ON CAMPUS

Our analysis of the interview data indicated that the degree of accessibility, flexibility, use of accommodations, and staff awareness of disability and their responsiveness influenced the students' social integration and residential experience. Students appreciated efforts that were made on their behalf and articulated areas where institutions could improve.

Accessibility

Students perceived accessibility as a broad, overarching concept that included access to aspects of campus life as well as physical facilities. Several students with learning disabilities indicated that living on a small campus supported their academic success. Lloria elaborated that it was easy to arrange meetings with her professors, and she did not have to cook, shop, or clean—activities that would take time away from her studies. The physical facilities

of the four colleges in this study contributed in important ways to students' perceptions of their accessibility (or inaccessibility). Structural limitations and lack of resources to repair and update residence halls was a concern of students, particularly at College Y. As Allie explained, "I think the problem is that they want to be more accommodating than they are, but the dorms . . . are all kind of old and run down."

Allie added that College Y was generally unfriendly for students with mobility impairments and that the air vents were clogged with dust, which affected students with allergies and ear problems, such as herself. The lack of air conditioning in his College W residence hall particularly affected Garrett, whose medication increased his body temperature. Sintysa, who had many co-occurring disabilities, also noted, "All the cinder block walls kind of raised my anxiety. It just isn't a comfortable place to be." While accessibility is generally considered to relate to the physical structure of buildings, proximity to faculty and conditions such as cleanliness, room temperature, and building materials are also important considerations, as these students pointed out. If the study had included more participants with ongoing mobility impairments, it is likely that more physical accessibility concerns would have been mentioned.

Flexibility

Students indicated that institutions could improve flexibility in housing options and housing policies. Rigid room selection policies discouraged social integration. Policies that gave room preference to students who indicated they wished to be roommates created problems for some students, such as Caleb, who could not find another student willing to share

a room with her in a more accessible hall. Additionally, a policy requiring first-year students to live in suites with four people at College Z was stressful and unsettling for Sally and Will, both of whom had psychological disabilities. Policies requiring students to live on campus were also problematic. According to Allie, less stringent policies regarding living off campus would have been helpful to students like her who had several co-occurring disabilities. Allie's disabilities included problems with her knees, allergies, panic disorder, and OCD, which made finding a suitable residence hall room very difficult, especially since her college's (Y) residence halls lacked elevators and were not well insulated from noise.

> Staff disability awareness and responsiveness helped to create a caring atmosphere that addressed many of the problems mentioned by students, while unresponsive staff were additional barriers to students' social integration.

Although campus dining is not always part of campus housing, students in this study viewed these two entities as coupled. Participants indicated that policies requiring all students to eat in the dining hall and not allowing them to take food back to their rooms were problematic. For instance, Rainy, who had an eating disorder, found it very difficult to eat in front

of other people. Other students were critical of policies that required all students to have a meal plan. Danny, who identified as having anxiety, said that it had "been very difficult to deal with . . . having a restricting meal plan." Sintysa, who had Celiac disease, explained that gluten-free options were limited in the main dining hall and non-existent in other eating establishments on her campus; she noted that if they were available she "would probably have more energy and be better able to focus on my work."

A few participants identified flexible housing policies that supported their social integration. Sally, who attended College Z, was able to select a single in a hall that had many singles, which gave her the feeling of being "normal and not so special." This option promoted Sally's social integration by providing an environment that addressed her functional limitations and did not make her feel as isolated because very few people on her floor had roommates.

Accommodations

Some students described accommodations as part of their residential experience. Accommodations included two emotional support animals, one single room with air conditioning, one single room with a sink, three room transfers to single rooms, and one room on a quiet floor. The majority of these accommodations were reactive: Lee and Sintysa requested emotional support animals after spending some time on campus, and Victoria, Allie, and Rainy received room changes after their original living situations were not suitable environments for their disabilities.

Only 8 of the 24 participants in this study requested housing accommodations. For multiple reasons, participants who might have benefited from accommodations did not

> . . . it was not merely the presence of accommodations or on-campus living but rather well-thought out and individually tailored accommodations and living environments that supported students' social integration.

request them. One student, Ronald, indicated that he was unaware of the process for asking for housing accommodations, highlighting a notable gap in institutional communication as all students in this study were recruited through the Disability Resources Office. Lloria, who identified as having a learning disability, chose to be independent rather than ask for housing accommodations, although she realized she probably would have done better with accommodations. Both Rainy and Allie believed that their colleges could do nothing to accommodate their disabilities in the residence halls.

Four students who were eligible for single room accommodations thoughtfully considered their decisions but chose not to accept them because social factors were more important at that moment in their collegiate experience. Stacy and Eliza thought it was important to have a roommate. Stacy thought a roommate was so important that she found someone who was migraine friendly to live with, brought ear plugs and a face mask, and reserved a study room in the library to create a quiet and dark

space when she experienced a migraine. Lee wanted to live with friends in a co-op that had a sense of community, and Victoria decided to live in a sorority where she knew she would receive support. In these situations, students faced a Catch-22 of wanting social integration but knowing that this was not always possible in the specific housing environment best suited for mitigating the impacts of their disability.

Like Stacy, some students created their own solutions to barriers in the college environment. Brynn, who identified as having several learning disabilities, including an auditory processing disorder, did not feel that College Y could meet her needs for quiet spaces and decided to live at home and commute rather than face the noise challenges of living on campus. Sintysa brought her own refrigerator and microwave to campus to address her Celiac disease by preparing her own food rather than asking for an accommodation to live off campus because it was "really important" for her to live on campus where it was easier to interact with people.

Staff Disability Awareness and Responsiveness

Staff disability awareness and responsiveness helped to create a caring atmosphere that addressed many of the problems mentioned by students, while unresponsive staff were additional barriers to students' social integration. For instance, Victoria, who received a quick room change when her roommate was harassing her about her disability, stressed that knowing she could always count on her RA and other residence life staff for support contributed significantly to her success in college.

Anna, who identified as having learning disabilities, worked as a resident assistant. She appreciated her supportive supervisor, who understood when her paperwork was turned in late because she needed to study. However, Caleb, Eliza, and Anna received little or no help from their RAs when they had problems with roommates or other aspects of their living experiences. During her first year, housing staff moved Caleb, who identified as having a learning disability, out of a triple and into a single room against her will; they told her, "It would probably be better for you to be in a single anyway, so you won't have the distractions"—a particularly paternalistic response. Rainy noted a lack of disability awareness and explained that it took a lot of emails to justify her request for a single and to clarify the type of environmental modifications that would enable her to have a successful residential experience. From the students' viewpoint, responding promptly to problems and offering flexibility were supportive actions, whereas not trusting students as experts in their own lives was perceived as a barrier.

Student Suggestions for Modifying the Residential Experience

Six participants spread across the four colleges advocated for increased flexibility regarding policies and building spaces. In addition to the ideas described above, students suggested moving in early to get settled before classes start for those who take longer to adjust to new environments, using a room selection process that allows students to choose compatible housing without identifying a roommate, creating a less stressful housing process by providing assistance in identifying a room-

mate, providing sensory break spaces with sound proofing to provide respite for students with migraines or autism, offering more single room options in a variety of halls so students could live near their friends, and cleaning the halls (including air vents) to improve accessibility for students with allergies.

Participants also made suggestions regarding the knowledge and responsiveness of residence life staff. Danny urged that staff receive more training on mental health issues to gain greater sensitivity to the types of environments that worked best for students with psychological disabilities. Both Lee and Rachel, who attended different colleges, noted that clearer and more accessible information about how to get accommodations related to housing was necessary. Four students, who identified with a variety of disabilities (i.e., physical/LD, physical, LD, mental/physical/ASD) and attended three different colleges, indicated that they were pleased with the residential environments at their colleges and offered no suggestions for improvements.

DISCUSSION

Housing professionals described the accommodations process as reactive (Vaccaro & Kimball, 2018) and students in this study agreed. Literature indicated the importance of accommodations (Kim & Lee, 2016) and on-campus housing (Mamiseishvili & Koch, 2011) in supporting the retention of disabled students. While these points were echoed in the narratives of several participants, it was also clear that it was not merely the presence of accommodations or on-campus living but rather well-thought out and individually tailored accommodations and living environments that

supported students' social integration. When accommodations were not individually tailored, students experienced conflict.

Similar to research that focuses on the voices of other minoritized student populations in campus housing (e.g., Wagner, Marine, & Nicolazzo, 2018), students in this study conceptualized accessibility broadly, called for greater staff training and better communication about how to access accommodations, and drew attention to how policies affected their residential experiences. Rigid application of policy was designed to treat all residents equally but did not always equitably support the disabled students in this study.

Students also believed that some accommodations came with trade-offs in social integration. Single rooms afforded respite to manage symptoms of psychological disabilities, had fewer distractions to exacerbate learning disabilities, and allowed for privacy when carrying out medical treatments. However, participants felt like they had to choose between a single room and the ability to make friends more easily when they had a roommate.

Previous research has suggested that disabled students frequently ask for emotional support animals (ESAs) as accommodations (Evans et al., 2017); however, only two students in our study had done so. We believe this is because many students attending the institutions in our sample come from geographic locations far from the campuses. Students employing ESAs as an accommodation would likely need to arrange for air transportation, which is becoming more difficult as airlines tighten up ESA regulations.

Dining has not been central to prior discussions of housing accommodations, but several

students saw the dining halls as an extension of the residential environment, and their views of how well their eating disorders or food allergies were accommodated influenced their residential experience. While institutions that compel students to eat on campus have a legal obligation to meet dietary requirements (*United States of America v. Lesley University*, 2012), limiting options to one dining hall, prohibiting the removal of food, or failing to create systems to monitor cross-contamination restricted students' ability to eat with their peers or eat at all. For example, while Rainy and Sintysa were offered dining accommodations in place of a release from the meal plan, both felt that the accommodations were generic and did not fit their specific situations. Both students pointed out it was not only the food items available but also the density of other students, faculty, and staff using the dining spaces that made the accommodations ineffective. Sintysa explained that cross-contamination caused by both students and untrained dining staff created difficulties and negated any gluten-free entrées that were available. Therefore, it is imperative that residence life staff encourage institutional leadership to review dining policies, designate allergy-free spaces as well as food options, and create disability training specifically for campus dining staff.

All the participants in the study identified as having disabilities that were non-apparent. Most of the students identified as having psychological disabilities, learning disabilities, and/or chronic health issues. As noted in the literature, non-apparent disabilities often lack legitimacy (Evans et al., 2017; Evans & Herriott, 2009), which could explain the reluctance of some residence life staff to provide accom-

modations, while fear of rejection and stigma could explain why so few students in the study asked for accommodations.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Residential accommodations need to be flexible and creative. Students with similar disabilities may respond differently to the same accommodations, and many students with co-occurring disabilities may require tailored accommodations. Residence life staff must be willing to work individually with disabled students to determine what type of environment works best for each of them and how to create such an environment while also addressing students' need for social integration.

Students require clear and readily accessible information about the types of accommodations that are available and how to apply for them. Residence life staff should send such information to all students prior to their enrollment in order to ensure that disabled students who may not have contacted the Disability Resources Office are informed of their options. Ideally, a meeting with each student requesting more information about accommodations could be conducted before the student arrives on campus to ensure that their housing option is ready for them and appropriate to their situation.

For some disabled students, such as those with chronic migraines or auditory processing issues, single rooms may be imperative for providing the quiet environment their disability requires. Although the demand for single rooms often exceeds current institutional capacities (Vaccaro & Kimball, 2018), it is important that

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institutions offer a variety of options for single rooms to support social integration. Institutions could have several singles in one area of a building to allow students in this area to socialize with other students who live in singles. It is imperative to have singles in all halls, not just upper-division halls, so that disabled first-year students housed in singles can live with their peers and develop friendships with other students new to campus. Additionally, housing options such as theme housing or co-ops should be evaluated for accessibility. These programs should be flexible enough to be moved from one location to another to enable disabled students to take advantage of them.

Institutional leaders must recognize that students view both dining and housing as part of their residential experience, even if these two services are organized as separate departments. Our findings highlight the importance of open communication between the Disability Resources Office, residence life, and campus

dining staff about trends related to disability and policies that allow students to change living and dining situations without undue burden. Staff in charge of professional development should implement comprehensive and effective disability training for residence life and campus dining staff so that practitioners have the knowledge to be socially just disability allies.

The concepts of accessibility, flexibility, and staff responsiveness, which were identified in this study as major factors in the experiences of disabled students in residence halls, must be viewed and acted upon through a social justice lens. All students, including those with disabilities, deserve to be listened to, respected, and treated equitably—concepts that go beyond providing generic accommodations. When possible, accommodations,

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. . . .

developed in collaboration with the student, should be made proactively rather than in reaction to a crisis. When crises do occur, necessary changes should be carried out quickly and flexibly to address the situation. Students in this study wanted to be around other people who cared about them in a genuine and non-paternalistic manner. Having opportunities to

be with others who share common interests, engage in group activities, and make friends is as important to disabled students as it is to those who are not disabled. Staff who view disabled students as experts in their own lives by treating them as people who understand how their bodies and minds function best should be able to make accommodations and policy decisions that center the student as expert and encourage social integration.

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Discussion Questions

1. How might institutions better communicate with disabled students prior to their arrival on campus?

2. In what ways does the residential experience promote social integration and retention for disabled students?

3. What are some reasons a student may not choose to disclose their disability to their institution? How might residence life/housing and other departments collaborate to increase students' willingness to disclose (and thus gain greater access to helpful services and supports)?

4. What actions taken by professional staff and campus leaders on your campus might be perceived as barriers to disabled students?

5. To what extent would easing the accommodation request process ensure that disabled students submit requests?

6. According to the author, perceived lack of legitimacy is a barrier to providing requested accommodations. What are some ways to ensure that students get what they need and still feel valued and validated?

Discussion questions developed by Courtney Enderline, Jacklyn Erb, and Danielle Jones, graduate students in the College Student Affairs program at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania, with assistance from Denise Davidson, associate professor