



“Giving Them Grace:” Lived Experiences of Resident Advisors and Inclusion Assistants in the Social Justice Residential Curriculum

Authors



PATTY WITKOWSKY

Associate Professor
Department of Leadership,
Research, and Foundations
University of Colorado,
Colorado Springs
pwitkows@uccs.edu



MEGAN BELL

Executive Director,
Student Union
California State University,
Los Angeles
mbell27@calstatela.edu

THE ADOPTION OF CURRICULAR APPROACHES to strengthen student learning is spreading rapidly in student affairs. Because residence halls are the spaces where on-campus students spend most of their time, the development and implementation of the Residential Curriculum Model (RCM) throughout the United States is worthy of exploration. Many RCMs have social justice and inclusion learning outcomes, and resident advisors and inclusion assistants provide direct delivery of the curriculum, thus serving a pivotal role in the learning process. In order to inform training and supervisory practice, this hermeneutic phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of resident advisors and inclusion assistants involved in the delivery of a residential curriculum model, with a particular focus on resident interactions related to social justice and diversity outcomes. Specific observations were made of resident advisor and inclusion assistant self-efficacy, their recognition of residents' developmental differences, the influence of their identities on their social justice role, and their learning experiences. Recommendations for practitioners developing the residential curriculum model and for hiring, training, and supervising the residential staff in these communities, along with social justice and inclusion learning goals, are provided.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: This research was funded in part by the Association of College and University Housing Officers-International (ACUHO-I) and the ACUHO-I Foundation to improve our understanding of the housing and residence life profession. Thank you to Bailey Southard and Kristen LaRoy for their contributions to this project.

By bringing together students from diverse backgrounds in intensely close environments, residence life facilities and programs provide opportunities for students to learn and practice skills they will use throughout their personal and professional lives (Shields, 2009; Vetere, 2010; Wagner et al., 2019; Whitt, 2006). With increasing accountability required to demonstrate learning in student affairs structures (Keeling, 2004), the Residential Curriculum Model (RCM) emerged in the early 2000s as an intentional, learning-focused cocurricular approach (Kerr & Tweedy, 2006) and has since expanded across residential education programs in the United States (Kerr et al., 2017; Stauffer & Kimmel, 2019). One essential element of a residential curriculum is that it contributes to students' achievement of their institution's overall learning goals (Kerr et al., 2017). Because the learning outcomes for many higher education institutions include students' ability to interact with difference (American Association of Colleges & Universities [AAC&U], 2002), many RCMs have learning goals focused on social justice and inclusion. Although professional staff rather than

student staff are generally called upon to design a student learning curriculum (Kerr et al., 2017), resident advisors (RAs) and inclusion assistants (IAs) maintain key roles in direct delivery of the curriculum to residents. Understanding student staff's experiences in delivering a social justice and inclusion curriculum can help improve the training and ongoing supervision of these key human resources in the achievement of RCM outcomes. Regardless of how well designed this curriculum may be, ultimately the effectiveness of RAs and IAs impacts residents' learning experiences.

Colleges and universities are increasingly adopting RCMs because of their value in demonstrating the impact of residential education on student learning, though empirical research about the model remains limited to studies of single institutions (Lichterman, 2016; Lichterman & Bloom, 2019; Pernotto, 2021; Sanders, 2018; Scheibler, 2021), with most publications focused on documentation of RCM development and processes (Brown, 2018; Kerr et al., 2017; Stauffer & Kimmel, 2019). Only a few studies have examined stakeholders' lived experiences with the RCM (Lichterman, 2016; Pernotto, 2021; Scheibler, 2021) or the key role that RAs and IAs play in their success (Lichterman, 2016; Stauffer & Kimmel, 2019), but they have not specifically included discussion of RA and IA commitment to the learning goals of social justice and inclusion. Given that these goals are included in many residential models and that the interactions of residents and their RAs and IAs are integral to the delivery of the RCM curriculum, their experiences should be central to any study of residential curriculum models.

The purpose of this nation-wide phenomenological study was to highlight the lived experiences of resident advisors and inclusion assistants involved in the delivery of the social justice and inclusion curriculum and to develop approaches to support them in this pivotal role. The following research question guided the study: *What are the lived experiences of RAs and IAs when delivering and implementing resident interactions with social justice and diversity outcomes in a residential curriculum?*

OVERVIEW OF THE RESIDENTIAL CURRICULUM MODEL

First documented in 2006 by Kerr and Tweedy, the residential curriculum model, now named the curriculum model (CM), "is a strategic way to be proactive with designing, executing, and assessing student learning" (Lichterman & Bloom, 2019, p. 54). Although the exact number of residential life units choosing to employ an RCM is not documented, there is evidence of increasing participation in the Institute on the Curricular Approach (ICA), the training ground for institutions seeking to implement and improve their curriculum models (Kerr et al., 2017).

Kerr and colleagues' (2017) "Ten Essential Elements of a Curriculum Model for Learning Beyond the Classroom" provides a framework to align the learning goals of a department with its institutional context. Each curriculum is developed specific to its institutional context and includes "developmentally appropriate learning outcomes grounded in research" (Stauffer & Kimmel, 2019, p. 31). To help achieve these goals, professional staff educated in student development create facilitation guides for

One of the most impactful learning experiences college and university students can have outside of the classroom is interacting with peers with different social identities.

student staff to utilize in their delivery of the curriculum (Kerr & Tweedy, 2006; Whitt, 2006). Most relevant for this study, “a fundamental tenet of the CM is that students are not educational content and pedagogy experts, so campus educational experts should not give them the responsibility of designing learning experiences without proper support and guidance” (Kerr et al., 2017, p. 28).

One important element of the curriculum model is the recommendation that student staff are utilized in roles appropriate to their skill development (Kerr et al., 2017). In the sole peer-reviewed publication to date about the residential curriculum model, Lichterman and Bloom (2019) found that the guiding manual for the RCM at the institution in their study “provided positive structure and resources for the student staff members’ efforts to foster residential environments that were aligned with the curricular approach” (p. 60). Although scholars have found that the benefits of the RCM include better direction, structure, and inclusion of stakeholder voices, challenges have included concerns about whether or not a singular curriculum fits all residents and if student staff understand the language used in the documents guiding the model’s implementation (Lichterman & Bloom, 2019).

SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION IN RESIDENCE LIFE

One of the most impactful learning experiences college and university students can have outside of the classroom is interacting with peers with different social identities (Hurtado, 2001), which happens even more intensely in residential communities as “campus housing communities are a microcosm of our larger campus climate and societal context” (Howard & Kerr, 2019, p. 81). Personal exposure to difference can contribute to critical thinking skills and an openness to diverse perspectives (Chang et al., 2006; Hurtado, 2001; Pascarella et al., 1996). Although social justice learning outcomes in an RCM have not yet been the focus of empirical research, Earnest and Pernotto (2019) documented that social justice living-learning communities can effectively bring students together in communities centered on principles of equity and inclusion. Along with the increasing complexity of the position, there have also been concerns that RA training is generally more focused on safety and security issues and less on diversity and social justice education (Koch, 2016). Although both are necessary, the knowledge that student staff have of social justice is critical for community development and is one of the most effective ways to enhance the experiences of belonging for diverse populations.

According to Hornak and colleagues (2019), the increased commitment to social justice education in residence life can be realized with the implementation of new student staff positions called inclusion assistants, whose role is “to better support students with marginalized identities and create a more welcoming campus climate . . . as part of a residential curriculum” (p. 2). In this same study, many inclusion assistants

revealed that they felt overburdened by the new responsibilities for diversity and inclusion education and sought more consistent support from both their RA peers and professional staff supervisors (Hornak et al., 2019). Despite a history of social justice education and staff structures to support this learning in residence life settings, diversity and inclusion education remains consistently difficult to implement because ultimately engagement is voluntary for residents (Fassett & Kimmel, 2017; Quaye & Harper, 2014).

ROLE OF THE RESIDENT ADVISOR IN SOCIAL JUSTICE AND INCLUSION LEARNING GOALS

The multifaceted roles and responsibilities of paraprofessional staff in residence life have been well documented in the literature (Benjamin & Davis, 2016; Blimling, 2011; Johnson & Kang, 2006; Manata et al., 2017; McLaughlin, 2018). Although their role is continually evolving (Lichterman, 2016), RAs remain an integral component of the RCM because they contribute to the delivery of the curriculum. Even before the advent of the residential curriculum model, RAs were a pivotal part of the effectiveness of residence life (Blimling, 2011; Johnson & Kang, 2006), and their importance has not changed under the RCM. Formerly, RA roles included a focus on two central responsibilities: building community and planning educational and social programs (Benjamin & Davis, 2016; Blimling, 2011; Manata et al., 2017). Now, the residential curriculum model has transformed the traditional RA role, requiring different skills that focus more on student development (Boone et al., 2016) and facilitating interactions with residents, which involves critical counseling and listening skills, particularly if the outcomes are related to social justice. Given this increasingly complex set of skills, it is important to recognize that RAs are undergoing their own process of personal development while at the same time contributing to the development of their peers (Earnest & Pernotto, 2019; Johnson & Kang, 2006).

Only a few studies have been conducted on the role of RAs in the residential curriculum model. Brown (2018), for one, discussed how to transform RA position descriptions, selection processes, and training approaches to best meet the challenges of implementing the model. Lichterman (2016) explored how RAs perceive the transition to the RCM, and Sanders (2018) examined the impact of a curriculum model on student learning and how critical a part RAs play in this process. Benjamin and Davis (2016) examined how RAs contribute to their residents' learning, while also increasing their own knowledge of social justice and inclusion issues and of how to facilitate challenging conversations.

METHODOLOGY

Using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach (Van Manen, 1990), this study explored the lived experiences of RAs involved in the delivery of the residential curriculum model, with a focus on resident interactions related to social justice and diversity. Hermeneutic phenomenology (Van Manen, 1990) was most appropriate for this study

because the goal was to increase the understanding of individual RA experiences of a phenomenon (delivery of social justice education in an RCM) through the consciousness of the experiencer (Van Manen, 1990; Van Manen & Van Manen, 2021). Because the lived experiences of RAs and IAs who are involved in meeting learning goals related to social justice and inclusion have received little attention, hermeneutic phenomenology was a useful methodological foundation for the study (Donalek, 2004). In alignment with phenomenology, RAs’ and IAs’ perceptions of their experiences were centered throughout the data collection, analysis, and discussion.

Site Selection

Recruitment for institutional sites included two approaches: first, a representative from ACPA (College Student Educators-International) sent out a call for participating institutions from the previous ICA (Institute on the Curricular Approach) attendee lists, and, second, we posted an announcement about the study to the Residential Curriculum and Curricular Approaches Facebook group, which yielded five initial sites. The criterion-based selection process (Patton, 2002) for sites required residential living programs that had implemented an RCM with social justice and inclusion learning goals in their curriculum within three to five years of the time of data collection. The rationale for this selection method is that all participants would only have experience in the RCM (not the transition to the RCM) and have sufficient experience (at least one semester) of working in the RCM. The purpose of this broad selection approach was to achieve geographic representation in the United States and then to achieve diverse participant representation across institutional types. Due to the pause in data collection because of the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the original five sites did not continue in the study, and an alternative fifth site was identified in the second phase through network sampling after another call to the Facebook group did not yield a fifth site (see Table 1).

TABLE 1

Site Characteristics

	Region	Size and type	Racial demographic	Campus setting
Institution 1	Mountain West	Mid-sized, public	Predominately White	Suburban
Institution 2	Midwest	Mid-sized, private	Predominately White	Urban
Institution 3	Northwest	Mid-sized, public	Predominately White	Suburban
Institution 4	Midwest	Large, public	Predominately White	Urban
Institution 5	West	Large, public	Diverse (more than 51% racial ethnic minoritized students)	Suburban

Participant Recruitment

Once the residence life sites confirmed that they met the study criteria, we invited all RAs and IAs from the five institutions to participate in the study. We gained access to them through gatekeepers (Andoh-Arthur, 2019), who were full-time residence life professionals who served as assistant directors or directors. The gatekeepers shared participant recruitment materials with their student staff and encouraged participation by allowing RAs and IAs to serve as members of the focus group in lieu of attending a staff meeting. They also provided us with the RCM documents used for student staff training from their institution to ensure that we were using the institution-specific wording in the interview protocol. The gatekeepers' role was to support participant recruitment, not to gather or analyze data.

Participant Demographics

Our study included 56 resident advisors and two inclusion assistants (*see Table 2, pages 17-21*) from five different institutions across the United States (only one of the institutions had the IA position). We sought geographic diversity and yielded participants from the West Coast, Northwest, Mountain West, and Midwest. As is typical in RA and IA roles, all but one participant were past their first year in college, with 16 second-year students, 22 third-year students, 17 fourth-year students, and two fifth-year students. A total of 22 participants had completed one semester as an RA at the time of data collection, followed by 13 past their first year as an RA or IA, 13 with at least three semesters of experience, four with at least two years of experience, and five with five semesters of experience. The participants included 40 women and 18 men; 44 identified as heterosexual or straight, and 14 identified as either gay, lesbian, bisexual, or pansexual, with no participants identifying as transgender. A total of 26 participants identified as White, 12 as Black/African American, 12 as multiracial or biracial, and eight as Asian American. Participants included 14 first-generation college students and 44 continuing generation students; in terms of socioeconomic status, using Pell eligibility as the metric, 26 of the sample were not Pell eligible, 22 were Pell eligible, and the remaining participants were unsure. The overwhelming majority (54) were U.S. citizens, and the sample also included two undocumented students and two international students.

... the residential curriculum model has transformed the traditional RA role, requiring different skills that focus more on student development and facilitating interactions with residents, which involves critical counseling and listening skills, particularly if the outcomes are related to social justice.

TABLE 2

Participant Demographics

Pseudo-nym	Gender	Race	Sexual identity	U.S. citizenship	First-generation	Pell Grant eligible	Political affiliation	Religion	Semesters as an RA	Year in school
Addie	W	White	Heterosexual	U.S. citizen	No	No	Democrat	Evangelical Lutheran	1	2nd year
Amy	W	Asian, multiracial	Heterosexual	U.S. citizen	Yes	Yes	Democrat	Agnostic	2	3rd year
Amelia	W	Multiracial	Heterosexual	U.S. citizen	Yes	Unsure	Democrat	Roman Catholic	3	3rd year
Ally	W	Multiracial	Heterosexual	U.S. citizen	No	Unsure	Independent	Roman Catholic	3	3rd year
Adam	M	White	Straight	U.S. citizen	No	No	Democrat	Jewish	3	3rd year
Arelie	W	Asian	Heterosexual	U.S. citizen	No	No	Democrat	Hindu	3	3rd year
Ashley	W	Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific islander, White	Heterosexual	U.S. citizen	No	No	Democrat	Agnostic	3	3rd year
Amanda	W	White	Heterosexual	U.S. citizen	No	No	Democrat	Roman Catholic	5	4th year
Anabelle	W	Multiracial	Bisexual	U.S. citizen	Yes	Yes	Democrat	Agnostic	2	3rd year
Anne	W	Multiracial	Straight	U.S. citizen	No	Yes	Democrat	None	3	4th year
Cadence	M	White	Heterosexual	U.S. citizen	Yes	Yes	Independent	Atheist	1	2nd year

Table 2 continues on page 18

TABLE 2 (continued from page 17)

Participant Demographics

Pseudo-nym	Gender	Race	Sexual identity	U.S. citizenship	First-generation	Pell Grant eligible	Political affiliation	Religion	Semesters as an RA	Year in school
Connor	M	Multiracial	Straight	U.S. citizen	Yes	Yes	Moderate	Roman Catholic	2	5th year
Camille	W	Black or African American	Heterosexual	U.S. citizen	No	Yes	Democrat	Roman Catholic	1	2nd year
Cade	M	Multiracial	Heterosexual	U.S. citizen	Yes	Yes	Undecided	Agnostic	4	5th year
Claire	W	Black or African American	Heterosexual	U.S. citizen	No	Yes	Democrat	Christian	1	4th year
David	M	White	Heterosexual	U.S. citizen	No	No	Republican	Jewish	2	3rd year
Dawn	W	Black or African American	Hetero-demisexual	U.S. citizen	No	No	Democrat	Protestant	3	4th year
Damon	M	White	Straight	U.S. citizen	No	Unsure	None	Agnostic	5	4th year
Devon	M	Black or African American, White	Bisexual	U.S. citizen	No	Yes	Independent	Atheist	2	2nd year
Emily	W	White	Heterosexual	U.S. citizen	No	No	Independent	Lutheran	5	4th year
Elsa	W	White	Heterosexual	U.S. citizen	Yes	Yes	Independent	Baptist	1	3rd year
Etta	W	White	Bisexual	U.S. citizen	No	Unsure	Democrat	Agnostic	3	4th year
Eden	W	Black or African American	Heterosexual	U.S. citizen	No	Yes	Democrat	Protestant	1	2nd year

Table 2 continues on page 19

TABLE 2 (continued from page 18)

Participant Demographics

Pseudo-nym	Gender	Race	Sexual identity	U.S. citizenship	First-generation	Pell Grant eligible	Political affiliation	Religion	Semesters as an RA	Year in school
Epic	M	Asian	Straight	International student	No	Unsure	Non-American	Non-religious	5	3rd year
Harley	M	Asian	Gay	International student	Yes	No	N/A	Atheist	3	2nd year
Ivy	W	White	Heterosexual	U.S. citizen	No	No	Democrat	Roman Catholic	1	3rd year
Iris	W	Multiracial	Bisexual	U.S. citizen	No	No	Independent	Agnostic	4	4th year
John	M	Black or African American, multiracial, White	Straight	U.S. citizen	No	Unsure	Democrat	Protestant	1	3rd year
Jane	W	White	Heterosexual	U.S. citizen	No	Yes	Democrat	Unitarian Universalist	4	4th year
Jumbo	W	Asian	Heterosexual	U.S. citizen	No	Yes	Independent	Mono-theistic	2	4th year
JoAnne	W	White	Lesbian	U.S. citizen	No	No	Democrat	Roman Catholic	1	2nd year
Julia	W	Asian	Straight	U.S. citizen	No	No	Democrat	Roman Catholic	3	3rd year
Kaitlin	W	Asian	Bisexual	U.S. citizen	No	Unsure	Democrat	Agnostic	2	3rd year
Kameron	W	Black or African American	Pansexual	U.S. citizen	No	Yes	Independent	Christian-Baptist	1	4th year

Table 2 continues on page 20

TABLE 2 (continued from page 19)

Participant Demographics

Pseudo-nym	Gender	Race	Sexual identity	U.S. citizenship	First-generation	Pell Grant eligible	Political affiliation	Religion	Semesters as an RA	Year in school
Keaton	M	Black or African American	Straight	Non-U.S. citizen	Yes	Yes	Democrat	Atheist	2	2nd year
Kelly	W	White	Heterosexual	U.S. citizen	No	No	Democrat	Protestant	2	4th year
Lana	W	White	Lesbian	U.S. citizen	Yes	Yes	None	Atheist	1	2nd year
Liam	M	White	Straight	U.S. citizen	No	No	Democrat	Buddhist	1	3rd year
Lacey	W	White	Straight	U.S. citizen	No	No	Independent	Christian	2	4th year
Lorraine	W	Multiracial	Heterosexual	U.S. citizen	No	No	Democrat	Spiritual	2	2nd year
Lucy	W	Asian	Heterosexual	U.S. citizen	Yes	Yes	Democrat	Agnostic	2	3rd year
Leticia	W	Black or African American	Bisexual	U.S. citizen	No	No	Independent	Protestant	3	3rd year
Landon	M	White	Straight	U.S. citizen	No	No	Republican	Roman Catholic	1	2nd year
Maggie	W	White	Lesbian	U.S. citizen	No	Unsure	Independent	Roman Catholic	4	4th year
Margie	W	White	Straight	U.S. citizen	No	Unsure	Independent	Agnostic	1	4th year
Miles	M	White	Heterosexual	U.S. citizen	No	No	Independent	Roman Catholic	1	2nd year

Table 2 continues on page 21

TABLE 2 (continued from page 20)

Participant Demographics

Pseudo-nym	Gender	Race	Sexual identity	U.S. citizenship	First-generation	Pell Grant eligible	Political affiliation	Religion	Semesters as an RA	Year in school
Maker	M	Black or African American	Heterosexual	U.S. citizen	No	Unsure	Democrat	Protestant	3	3rd year
Monica	W	Black or African American	Straight	Non-U.S. citizen	No	No	None	Protestant	1	3rd year
Monique	W	White	Straight	U.S. citizen	No	No	None	Roman Catholic	1	2nd year
Madison	W	White	Heterosexual	U.S. citizen	No	No	Democrat	Protestant	1	2nd year
Rob	M	Black or African American	Gay	U.S. citizen	Yes	Yes	Democrat	Agnostic	1	3rd year
Rodrigo	M	White	Straight	U.S. citizen	No	No	Democrat	Roman Catholic	5	4th year
Sage	W	White	Bisexual	U.S. citizen	No	No	Democrat	Agnostic	1	3rd year
Suzan	W	Asian	Heterosexual	U.S. citizen	No	Yes	Democrat	Sikh	3	3rd year
Taken	W	Black or African American	Straight	U.S. citizen	Yes	Yes	Democrat	Christian	2	2nd year
Tad	M	White	Straight	U.S. citizen	No	No	Independent	Non-religious	1	2nd year
Yoselin	W	White	Heterosexual	U.S. citizen	Yes	Yes	Democrat	Roman Catholic	1	1st year
Zuri	W	Black or African American	Straight	U.S. citizen	No	Yes	Democrat	Christian Methodist	5	4th year

Data Collection

The first step in the data collection process involved gathering information about the participants' social identities and work experience through a demographic survey (the participants chose pseudonyms to maintain anonymity). Participants were offered an incentive to then take part in a 60–90-minute focus group and were offered two different time options for this. Two researchers were present at the focus groups to serve as facilitators, note takers, and logistic coordinators, and a third-party vendor recorded and transcribed the sessions. We followed a structured focus group protocol but also used follow-up questions to encourage participants to expand on relevant issues. The data collection procedures were altered mid-study due to the pandemic travel restrictions, and the differences between the two approaches are listed in Table 3.

TABLE 3

Two Approaches to Data Collection Due to COVID-19 Pandemic

	Pre-COVID-19 pandemic (in-person focus groups)	During COVID-19 pandemic (virtual focus groups)
<i>Number of focus groups</i>	4 in-person (2 institutions)	6 virtual (Zoom; 3 institutions)
<i>Completed demographics sheet</i>	At the start of the focus group on paper	Via an online survey completed before the focus group
<i>Incentives</i>	Free meal during the focus group	\$25 Amazon gift card

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

We employed Van Manen's (1990) four-step data analysis approach in line with phenomenological research: "transcription," "bracketing and phenomenological reduction," "listening to the interview for the sense of the whole," and "delineating units of general meaning" (Hycner, 1985, pp. 281–282). All focus groups were recorded and transcribed for data analysis purposes. Utilizing an open coding approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), both researchers independently coded the data and then collaborated by using focus coding to make connections between related ideas (Charmaz, 2006). The combined codes led to the development of four themes (Saldaña, 2021).

Trustworthiness was promoted using several approaches throughout the study. First, we provided a positionality statement so that readers could understand the researchers' backgrounds. Next, we used member checking (Lather, 1986), whereby the participants had the opportunity to provide feedback or confirmation of the findings generated from the data. By explaining the procedures employed to collect data for this study, the researchers established credibility (Patton, 2002). Confirmability was supported through the inclusion of data to support the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Researcher Positionality

It is necessary to inform readers of the professional and social identities that inform our worldview, research agendas, and practice. This research was conducted by a faculty member in a student affairs preparation program with past student affairs administrative experience in residence life, but not with RCMs. She identifies as a White, cisgender, heterosexual woman who has worked at Predominantly White Institutions of all sizes, as well as a Hispanic-Serving Institution, in a variety of functional areas before becoming a faculty member. The second researcher is an upper-level student affairs professional with experience developing and implementing an RCM. She identifies as a multiracial Latina/White, cisgender, straight woman who has worked at both Predominantly White and highly diverse public institutions.

LIMITATIONS

The interruption to our data collection caused by the COVID-19 pandemic served as a limitation to this study because we were unable to gather data in a consistent manner with all participants. Additionally, given the topic of study, much changed in terms of social justice and inclusion in the U.S. before and after the pandemic, which could have potentially altered the data gathered at the research sites before the pandemic. Finally, the participants were selected based on a departmental leader providing access to their RA and IA staff. While we found great diversity and candor in participants' responses about their experiences, institutions that were not confident in their RCM structure may have chosen not to volunteer their RAs and IAs for participation in the study, thus influencing the participants' experiences.

FINDINGS

The findings of this study are organized into four main thematic areas: RA and IA self-efficacy, recognition of residents' developmental differences, the influence of their identities on their social justice role, and their learning experiences.

Self-Efficacy of Resident Advisors and Inclusion Assistants

Though participants understood their role in the delivery of the social justice and inclusion components of their RCM, they experienced differing perceptions of self-efficacy related to their ability to fulfill that responsibility. Perceived self-efficacy "is a judgment of one's ability to organize and execute given types of performances" (Bandura, 1997, p. 21). Some RAs recognized their lack of knowledge about issues of diversity, but those who felt they were more knowledgeable became peer educators not only for their residents, but also for their fellow student staff.

Participants who felt unsure about their abilities facilitating conversations with residents that were focused on social justice revealed that they felt intimidated, apprehensive, and uncomfortable. Their lower self-efficacy resulted from both gaps in knowledge and their perceptions of how their social identities would be viewed by

residents. Kelly described her expectations for what she should be able to do in her role to facilitate the social justice curriculum.

You're a step above a resident. So, you should be the one who's knowledgeable and guiding the conversation and just feeling like you might not have the knowledge to conduct the most meaningful conversation as possible, it can definitely make having the conversation intimidating.

This feeling of incompetence was echoed by Lana but was more specifically related to her identity as an RA who is White:

Okay, I really dislike having these conversations sometimes. But as being the facilitator to those conversations, because I can only go so far being who I am. I'm White, so I can't and I don't want to talk on other people's cultures. I want them to share that. So that they're the ones giving it and I'm not just here on my high horse being like, this is what it's actually like.

Those RAs who viewed their role not just as providers of information, but also as facilitators of conversations noted how social justice conversations required a high level of skill as well. As Lucy explained,

I think another challenge on top of having issues with turnout is keeping the residents who do come engaged with the topics because a lot of times people feel really uncomfortable talking about social justice. And in large group settings there's always a fear of saying something wrong or not being knowledgeable enough to share, so I think that is something that's super challenging like trying to make people feel comfortable enough to share their ideas.

In addition to the perceived challenges of limited knowledge about how to lead conversations about diversity, some participants acknowledged concerns that peer RAs were not committed to social justice education. As Adam noted,

And so, and I know that there's some people on my staff who don't care about it, believe in it. And so, I think that's something that is a challenge that perhaps I wasn't expecting. Even if you don't necessarily care about it or are passionate about it or want to act on it, I think just being willing to engage in that conversation, perhaps even explain why you don't think it's important.

Agreeing that fellow RAs were not prepared for social justice and inclusion work, Iris shared her desire to contribute more to support her peer RAs in those responsibilities.

I think coming into it, even from my own peers, I was like "Oh yes, fellow RAs, you're going to be educated like I am." And then I was painfully taken aback sometimes by my peers, which is probably why I wanted to get into the social justice role and be that educator for not only residents, but also like my coworkers as well.

The perceptions of self-efficacy in facilitating social justice education varied among the participants due to differing levels of interest, knowledge, and facilitation skills, as well as the perception of how their own social identities made them qualified to educate others.

RAs and IAs with historically marginalized social identities were challenged by the responsibility of educating others while personally experiencing their own feelings of oppression.

Recognition of Residents' Developmental Differences

In addition to differences in their own abilities to facilitate social justice interactions in the RCM, the participants recognized differences (based on their previous exposure to the topics) in their residents' desire and ability to engage in social justice learning in the residential setting. Thinking about social justice from a learning perspective, participants at all sites perceived that many residents simply lacked an awareness of and exposure to diversity. This group of unengaged learners either demonstrated a passive lack of desire to engage in diversity learning or were actively resistant to learning. The RAs also described two other groups: residents who lacked knowledge but expressed some openness to learning and those who were both eager to continue learning about social justice and prepared to begin advocating for change and disrupting issues of inequity on their campus. The participants discussed how these different groups of residents impacted their experiences in delivering the social justice curriculum.

Unengaged learners. For RAs and IAs who took their role with the social justice curriculum seriously, the unengaged learners were the most challenging because they seemed to lack a sense of awareness, comfortability, courage, or interest. As David stated,

In general, especially with [the social justice] conversation, it has more or less met my expectations that my residents don't really want to talk about it. They don't think they have privilege; they don't understand why we have to do this.

For Tad, the difficulties arose due to residents' lack of exposure to diversity topics.

The residents on my floor, they come from backgrounds where they probably didn't have much outside exposure to certain groups of people. So, trying to make sure that they keep the environment safe for groups of people they may have not interacted with in the past is a conversation I've had. And it's kind of difficult just to have that conversation. Because they just haven't seen certain things about the world before besides on the internet.

Ultimately, some RAs came to recognize differences in residents' developmental readiness to engage with social justice learning and found ways to incorporate these differences into their approaches. Jumbo shared,

And I think some of the challenging parts is we can't expect all of our residents to have the same amount of knowledge as we do because we're trained to have this knowledge. And all these people have come from different places, and so we don't necessarily know their educational background and also sometimes you will get frustrated. Because we can't change their minds, or we can't make them believe something that they don't believe because they're all adults now.

Iris identified a group of residents as those most in need of the social justice curriculum and thus altered the outcomes of the curriculum in order to accommodate them:

Having residents who don't want to get into it yet is why it's really important to have those first steps of facilitation and being like "Hey, I need you to think about it this way." And then that way maybe they'll hear it again. We call it planting seeds.

Like Iris, Monique sought to create an environment that residents would perceive as a safe place to ask questions but noticed that some feared the appearance of being unaware, which would inhibit their engagement with the curriculum.

I would hope I'm at least making residents more comfortable talking about it because there's obviously a lot of stigmas around a lot of different topics. So, I'm pretty much, I'll talk about anything to anybody. So having that demeanor and showing my residents that "Hey, you can have these conversations and you can ask questions." I think it's an issue people have when they don't know something. They don't want to ask because they don't want to look stupid or whatever.

In response to unengaged learners who resisted their attempts to achieve RCM social justice and inclusion learning outcomes, the RAs and IAs tempered their expectations about their influence, which was a demonstration of their own learning.

Open learners. Fortunately, RAs and IAs noticed a second group of residents who were open to learning about social justice but may not have previously engaged with the issue. David recalled his experience with these residents: "The biggest thing for me is that a lot of people came in very closed-minded saying, 'What is social justice? What is privilege?' And by the end they were kinda thinking about it a little bit." Similarly, Anabelle recognized that she was making a difference. "I love watching them think critically. Like genuinely, I literally had this during a one-on-one conversation. So, they would say 'Oh, I just haven't thought about how that impacts me or I've never really thought about it.'"

Activist learners. Although less frequently described, Suzan recognized a third type of resident who was highly engaged with social justice issues, and she appreciated these interactions because they revealed important information about her residents' identities and experiences.

That's crazy that I can have these conversations with them and they're so in tune and aware of what social justice issue impacts them. Some of these conversations would be two hours long because they would be so passionate and they had so much to share, and I thought that was amazing. And so eye-opening to see where our residents come from.

As these narratives reveal, the developmental differences in residents' awareness of and comfort with social justice learning greatly influenced the approaches RAs and IAs took to achieve the RCM's social justice learning goals.

Influence of Their Own Identities on Their Social Justice Role

Participants had learned to recognize how their own salient social identities, particularly their race or ethnicity, impacted conversations with their residents. The participants who identified as being from historically marginalized communities understood that the expectation to facilitate conversations around diversity had different implications for them. Cade, for example, expressed initial distrust regarding his role in educating residents about social justice:

I was extremely skeptical when I got into it. Just because I was looking at it. I'm like, I'm a Latino man, and all my bosses are White. I'm like, how are they gonna' know what it's like? So, I did let my bias get to me with that. But once I actually got in, and we have other staff come and talk to us about cultural stuff. And we actually get into further depth with it. I started to be like, "Okay, I can see it actually working out."

Other participants with historically marginalized identities recognized both the benefits and challenges of their role in facilitating these conversations. As Annabelle noted, being marginalized herself was an advantage in her ability to connect with residents.

And, it's helped me a lot that I'm so outspoken about my own identities and also the thing that I'm passionate about because then I have residents with those identities coming up to me feeling much more free to talk about them.

Maker, on the other hand, perceived his identities as a barrier in discussions where residents were so concerned about saying the correct thing that they would avoid engaging in the content.

And it's not because they don't have their own opinions or their own understanding of the world and diversity; inclusion and social justice is because me being in this is the actual situation that happened like being in a Black studies class or being in like a group, where I'll be the only African-American or LatinX person in the room and we're talking about this and everyone's just kind of like looking at me like okay. It's okay to say or and it's like you can say your opinions and it's just I guess the challenges helping them understand that it is a safe space. To be understood, to be heard and like I don't expect everyone to know specifically what's perfect to say, what not to say, what's offensive, what is not offensive.

Iris recognized that the pressures and expectations associated with her identities and her responsibility for educating others led her to make decisions about how to fulfill the role while maintaining her own well-being.

Especially like having marginalized identities in our role, knowing when, so I don't wanna say like pick and choose our battles, but sometimes we just mentally cannot handle it and so sometimes putting those boundaries up and being like I cannot handle the situation right now, especially when it's a situation that's related to one of your identities and then understanding that, especially in the social justice roles, knowing when to take that step back to take care of yourself.

RAs and IAs with historically marginalized social identities were challenged by the responsibility of educating others while personally experiencing their own feelings of oppression. For this reason, supervisors must be able to acknowledge the challenges faced by student staff by recognizing that the role of social justice educator can cause additional stress or harm.

RA and IA Learning Experiences

Like their residents, RAs and IAs are students in the process of learning about their identities, and their role in promoting the RCM's social justice learning outcomes served as an opportunity to recognize their own areas of personal and professional growth. Many of them indicated, for example, that they had learned to engage their active listening skills. As Ashley explained,

I would just say listening to understand rather than listening to respond. Because I want to hear their thoughts on things, and I want to give them feedback in a way that might give them some ideas to look into. But it's not my place to push my opinion on them. It's more that I want them to develop their ideas for themselves and giving them the resources to help them do that.

Zuri learned to recognize that active listening sometimes requires the ability to infer deeper meaning in the communication:

And then actively listening because sometimes you kind of have to know what the resident is saying when they're not actually saying it and kind of like pick up the pieces and what they're trying to say because they don't always have the language.

In addition to recognizing what she refers to as “the value of silence,” Kelly noted how the simple skill of listening improved her facilitation skills.

I think for myself that patience and knowing the value of silence was something that I had to learn really well and incorporate during the conversations because I don't like a room to sit in quiet. But these are really heavy topics. And sometimes you have to let people think or let them ramble before they can find where they're going.

Beyond specific tangible skills, some participants developed new behaviors. Iris learned patience and grace, which proved to be a useful approach with her residents.

So I think that my viewpoint on where people are coming from and their backgrounds and how that influences their education on social justice has changed because I have a better understanding and more patience and giving them grace, but still being more like a calling in rather than calling out when educating people about social justice related topics.

Educating students in residential settings about identity, diversity, and inclusion is critical to their ability to become citizens prepared to address issues of power, privilege, and oppression in the larger world.

Many participants commented on noticeable improvements in their ability to be empathetic, patient, and understanding. As Emily said, “Because if somebody doesn’t know something, instead of getting frustrated, trying to see it through their eyes.” This empathy and patience also applied to their becoming more open to understanding their own biases during social justice conversations. Monique saw the learning as reciprocal:

It’s a two-way street. And so I caught myself when we’re doing the identity activity and talking about different things. They would check different parts and I would make an assumption and then I listened to what they said, and I’d realized that I had made that assumption. And so, I was catching myself there too. So, it was really beneficial both ways.

Maker echoed Monique’s experience as he recognized the potential of personal biases to affect his objectivity:

The interactions with my residents with regard to the topic has given me the ability to differentiate between my own biases and then actually what the situation is about. So, I don’t go into this situation with the mindset or seeing this situation through the lens of my own experiences with that specific group or with that specific community.

In general, though at times the social justice work was challenging, the RAs and IAs appreciated the skills they learned from their experience.

DISCUSSION

Educating students in residential settings about identity, diversity, and inclusion is critical to their ability to become citizens prepared to address issues of power, privilege, and oppression in the larger world. These are responsibilities shared by both professional and student staff; in the residential curriculum model, professional staff trained in developmental theory design the learning experiences (Kerr et al., 2017), while RAs play a key role in facilitating the plans. Not surprisingly, several RAs reported varying levels of preparedness for this role, and some felt intimidated by the challenge or were unsure of their abilities. Although they received training about how to facilitate the social justice discussions and address incidents of bias in their residential communities, many remained uncertain about their abilities until they began to actually practice their skills. Having experience in the real context of their positions increased their self-efficacy and their confidence in being able to continue engaging with social justice education. Other studies have shown that student staff frequently experience increases in self-efficacy related to their response to crises (Benjamin & Davis, 2016) but are challenged by the responsibility of teaching interpersonal skills while at the same time learning about themselves (V. Johnson, 2003; Johnson & Kang, 2006).

RAs and IAs developed strong internal resources and recognized that they were growing alongside their residents (Earnest & Pernotto, 2019; Johnson & Kang, 2006); being unsure of how to facilitate social justice conversations led to the development

of new skills and behaviors and an examination of their own biases. Because of the delicate balance involved in ensuring that student staff feel prepared as social justice facilitators while being simultaneously challenged because of their lack of experience and knowledge, professional staff must provide a high level of support.

Participants also recognized and respected that residents differed in their levels of social awareness—which ranged from being uninvolved to being open and even becoming activists—and were thus encouraged to develop different approaches to educating each group. These views aligned with Lichterman and Bloom's (2019) finding that the curriculum should be designed to meet residents where they are developmentally, as opposed to setting predetermined outcomes that may be unachievable.

Participants recognized that their own social identities influenced their experiences in educating residents. RAs and IAs with historically marginalized identities needed to maintain a sense of balance by also taking care of themselves and preserving their own mental well-being while performing what is often referred to as emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983), especially if they were students of color at Predominantly White Institutions (Foste & Johnson, 2021; S. Johnson, 2022). One way that RAs and IAs with marginalized identities managed the stress of their work was to call upon supervisors or peer staff for support. Peers and supervisors with privileged identities should be particularly attuned to this experience so that they can provide additional help, though the level of understanding needed to support RAs and IAs with underrepresented identities can be difficult to achieve (Haywood & Sewell, 2016; Quaye et al., 2020).

For RAs and IAs with nonmarginalized identities, challenges remained as they questioned their ability to educate residents while they themselves were still learning; this uncertainty reflects what Helms (1990) referred to as the “pseudo-independence” and “immersion” stages of the White racial identity development model (p. 56). Some White RAs in the study noted that they felt anxious or hesitant to speak about social justice issues when educating residents about specific racial identities other than their own (Cook & McCoy, 2017; Foste & Irwin, 2023; Foste & Ng, 2022; S. Johnson, 2022). However, these challenges can be overcome; understanding how the social identities of RAs and IAs influence their unique ability to support residents' social justice learning must be at the forefront of the support provided by professional staff (Soria & Roberts, 2022).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Based on the findings in this study and previous literature, recommendations for selection, training, and supervision of RAs and IAs are provided in order to ensure that student staff are prepared to facilitate discussions focusing on social justice in their residential communities.

Hiring and Selection

Social justice education requires both knowledge of diversity and inclusion topics and specific skills to reach residents who demonstrate varying levels of engagement with the

Like their residents, RAs and IAs are students in the process of learning about their identities, and their role in promoting the RCM's social justice learning outcomes served as an opportunity to recognize their own areas of personal and professional growth.

learning. This education should begin during the hiring and selection process, when the purpose of the RCM and the role of RAs and IAs in the social justice educational component can be made clear to applicants (Johnson & Kang, 2006). The commitment of future staff should be assessed early on because “advancing diversity and inclusion in the residence halls requires all staff to be invested in the work” (Hornak et al., 2019, p. 6). Based on the learning areas indicated by participants in this study, selection processes could be more intentional about including evaluation of a candidate's active listening skills and empathetic behaviors. Even before the selection process, departments should clearly identify the skills and perspectives needed to facilitate conversations with residents about their social identities, support students from various identities, and address bias incidents (Stauffer & Kimmel, 2019). Then those skills and perspectives should be assessed throughout the selection process in multiple ways, such as written responses, oral responses, and approaches to case studies (Berg & Stoner, 2016).

Given the increasing complexity of RA roles, if some aspects of the social justice and inclusion work cannot be given the necessary attention, departments should consider creating IA positions specifically staffed by students prepared to fulfill these responsibilities (Hornak et al., 2019; Williams et al., 2021). This strategy could also be helpful in addressing the existing inequities in hiring RAs from minoritized backgrounds (Healea & Hale, 2016). As demonstrated in the present study, RAs and IAs demonstrated enhanced passion and commitment to the social justice role in the RCM, as well as advanced content knowledge and skills.

Training

Robust training is needed to enhance the competency and confidence of RAs (Koch, 2016; Lichterman, 2016; Stauffer & Kimmel, 2019), and participants agreed that the training process can enhance their feelings of efficacy by providing scenario-based experiences that allow them to practice necessary skills in facilitating social justice education. If RAs feel intimidated by any part of their role or if they feel that some conversations are just too “challenging” or “scary,” they should be assured that they are supported. Once training is completed, ongoing diversity, equity, and inclusion education and opportunities for skill development should be provided to RA and IA staff throughout the year (Foste & Irwin, 2023; Stauffer & Kimmel, 2019).

Supervision

In terms of ongoing supervision, professional staff should explore each staff member's comfort with and knowledge of the outcomes intended for their residents (Stauffer & Kimmel, 2019) and then provide additional support as needed. Some RAs will

require ideas for passive programs, whereas others will need additional experience in role-playing scenarios. Others may need help in identifying and responding to symptoms of racial battle fatigue that can result from residents over-relying on them to be proponents of social justice (Quaye et al., 2020).

Ensuring that RAs continue to receive feedback as they develop their communities, professional staff can share the assessment data they gather as part of the social justice components of the RCM (Stauffer & Kimmel, 2019). This practice will ensure that RAs have a clear map of what areas of social justice learning are most critical and can help normalize the idea that social justice requires continual, intentional practice for everyone working with college and university students.

CONCLUSION

RAs and IAs who are implementing social justice education in the RCM face several challenges in developing critical facilitation skills and maintaining a balance between their dual roles as educators and learners. This study can inform future areas of research related to their responsibility in social justice education. Because they play such pivotal roles in residents' learning and interactions, their own unique experiences and voices should be highlighted in order to continue ensuring that they are a part of guiding RCM practice. ■

REFERENCES

- American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U). (2002). *Greater expectations: A new vision for learning as a nation goes to college*. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED468787>
- Andoh-Arthur, J. (2019). Gatekeepers in qualitative research. In P. Atkinson, S. Delamont, A. Cernat, J. W. Sakshaug, & R. A. William (Eds.), *Sage research methods foundations*. Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526421036854377>
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. W. H. Freeman/Times Books/ Henry Holt & Co.
- Benjamin, M., & Davis, L. (2016). "What haven't I learned?" Learning resulting from the resident advisor role. *The Journal of College and University Student Housing*, 42(3), 12–25.
- Berg, S. A., & Stoner, J. C. (2016). Selecting resident assistants: The relationship between candidate assessment and job performance. *The Journal of College and University Student Housing*, 42(3), 26–36.
- Blimling, G. S. (2011). *The resident assistant: Applications and strategies for working with college students in residence halls* (7th ed.). Kendall/Hunt.
- Boone, K. B., Davidson, D. L., & Bauman, M. (2016). The evolution and increasing complexity of the resident assistant role in the United States from colonial to modern times. *The Journal of College and University Student Housing*, 42(3), 38–51.
- Brown, P. G. (2018). *Developing a co-curricular learning model: Residential curriculum and curricular approaches in student affairs and residence life work*. Roompact. <https://paulgordonbrown.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/developing-a-co-curricular-learning-model-residential-curriculum-and-curricular-approches-fourth-edition-1.pdf>
- Chang, M. J., Denson, N., Sáenz, V., & Misa, K. (2006). The educational benefits of sustaining cross-racial interaction among undergraduates. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 77(3), 430–455. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2006.11778933>
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Sage. <https://www.scrip.org/reference/referencespapers?referenceid=1690485>
- Cook, K., & McCoy, D. L. (2017). Messages in collusion: Resident assistants and White racial identity development. *The Journal of College and University Student Housing*, 43(3), 68–79.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research*. Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452230153>
- Donalek, J. G. (2004). Phenomenology as a qualitative research method. *Urologic Nursing*, 24(6), 516–517.
- Earnest, K., & Pernotto, E. (2019). Social justice learning communities. *New Directions for Student Services*, 168, 51–60.
- Fassett, K. T., & Kimmel, D. E. (2017). Backward design. *Talking Stick*, 35(2), 26–29, 64. http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/acuho/talkingstick_20171112/index.php#28
- Foste, Z., & Irwin, L. N. (2023). Race, whiteness, and student life in on-campus housing: A case study of three universities. *American Educational Research Journal*, 60(4), 735–768. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312231175643>
- Foste, Z., & Johnson, S., Jr. (2021). Diversity cupcakes and white institutional space: The emotional labor of resident assistants of color at historically white universities. *Journal of College Student Development*, 62(4), 389–404. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2021.0043>

- Foste, Z., & Ng, J. (2022). "Didn't mean to mean it that way": The reduction of microaggressions to interpersonal errors of communication among university resident assistants. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 15(5), 548–559. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000297>
- Haywood, J., & Sewell, S. (2016). Against all odds: Implications for low income African American male students seeking a college degree at a Predominately White college. *Race, Gender & Class*, 23(3/4), 109–128. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26529211>
- Healea, C. D., & Hale, P. J. (2016). Reaching out: Challenges and opportunities of recruiting a diverse staff of resident assistants. *The Journal of College and University Student Housing*, 42(3), 66–79.
- Helms, J. E. (Ed.). (1990). *Black and White racial identity: Theory, research, and practice*. Greenwood Press.
- Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling*. University of California Press. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.4050030365>
- Hornak, A. M., Kolek, E. A., Johnson, M. R., Ampaw, F., Gardner, K., & Williams, S. (2019). *Using inclusion assistants within a residential curriculum to improve the experiences and success of historically marginalized populations*. Association of College & University Housing Officers-International.
- Howard, J. L., & Kerr, K. G. (2019). Building for the future: Reflection, resources, and recommendations. *New Directions for Student Services*, 168, 81–92.
- Hurtado, S. (2001). Linking diversity and educational purpose: How diversity affects the classroom environment and student development. In G. Orfield (Ed.), *Diversity challenged: Evidence on the impact of affirmative action* (pp. 197–203). Harvard Education Publishing Group.
- Hycner, R. H. (1985). Some guidelines for the phenomenological analysis of interview data. *Human Studies*, 8, 279–303. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00142995>
- Johnson, S., Jr. (2022). *Exploring racialized experiences of Black resident assistants at Predominately White Institutions* (Publication Number 29210727) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Kansas]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
- Johnson, V. D. (2003). Cultural group perceptions of racial climates in residence halls. *NASPA Journal*, 4(1), 114–134. <https://doi.org/10.2202/1949-6605.1308>
- Johnson, V. D., & Kang, Y. (2006). Assessing differences in resident assistant confidence in addressing issues of cultural diversity between three predominantly White universities. *The Journal of College and University Student Housing*, 34(1), 31–42.
- Keeling, R. P. (Ed.). (2004). *Learning reconsidered: A campus-wide focus on the student experience*. National Association of Student Personnel Administrators.
- Kerr, K. G., & Tweedy, J. (2006). Beyond seat time and student satisfaction. A curricular approach to residential education. *About Campus*, 11(5), 9–15.
- Kerr, K. G., Tweedy, J., Edwards, K. E., & Kimmel, D. (2017, March/April). Shifting to curricular approaches to learning beyond the classroom. *About Campus*, 22(1), 22–31. <https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.21279>
- Koch, V. A. (2016). Current practices in resident assistant training. *The Journal of College and University Student Housing*, 42(3), 80–97.
- Lather, P. (1986). Issues of validity in openly ideological research: Between a rock and a soft place. *Interchange*, 17(4), 63–84. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01807017>
- Lichterman, H. (2016). *Organizational perspective on implementing the residential curriculum approach: An ethnographic case study* [Doctoral dissertation, University of South Carolina]. scholarcommons.sc.edu.
- Lichterman, H., & Bloom, J. L. (2019). The curricular approach to residential education: Lessons for student affairs practice. *College Student Affairs Journal*, 37(1), 54–67.

- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.
- Manata, B., DeAngelis, B. N., Paik, J. E., & Miller, V. D. (2017). Measuring critical aspects of the resident assistant role. *Journal of College Student Development*, 58(4), 618–623. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2017.0046>
- McLaughlin, W. G. (2018). Overloaded and overlooked: Improving resident advisors' self-care. *Journal of American College Health*, 66(8), 831–833. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2018.1440573>
- Pascarella, E. T., Edison, M., Nora, A., Hagedorn, L. S., & Terenzini, P. T. (1996). Influences on students' openness to diversity and challenge in the first year of college. *Journal of Higher Education*, 67(2), 174–195. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2943979>
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Sage.
- Pernotto, E. (2021). *Embracing the role of educator: The experiences of housing and residence life staff in implementing a curriculum model* [Doctoral dissertation, Clemson University]. Tiger Prints All Dissertations.
- Quaye, S. J., & Harper, S. R. (Eds.). (2014). *Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203810163>
- Quaye, S. J., Karikari, S. N., Carter, K. D., Okello, W. K., & Allen, C. (2020). "Why can't I just chill?" The visceral nature of racial battle fatigue. *Journal of College Student Development*, 61(5), 609–623. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2020.0058>
- Saldaña, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative research* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Sanders, L. A. (2018). *The influence of residential curriculum on first-year residential students in higher education* [Doctoral dissertation, The University of Alabama]. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2056457967?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true>
- Scheibler, D. L. (2021). *Home sweet home: A phenomenological case study exploring the lived experiences of residential students in curricular environments* [Doctoral dissertation, Wilkes University]. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2594711935/8F090E9A2D2>
- Shields, C. M. (2009). *Courageous leadership for transforming schools: Democratizing practice*. Christopher-Gordon.
- Soria, K. M., & Roberts, B. J. (2022). The effect of serving as a resident assistant on undergraduates' prosocial behaviors. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 60(2), 236–249. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2022.2041427>
- Stauffer, C., & Kimmel, D. (2019). A framework for increasing housing and residence life staff capacity and confidence to develop and implement a residential curriculum. *The Journal of College and University Student Housing*, 45(3), 29–41.
- Van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching the lived experience: Human sciences for an action sensitive pedagogy*. The Althouse Press.
- Van Manen, M., & Van Manen, M. (2021). Doing phenomenological research and writing. *Qualitative Health Research*, 31(6), 1069–1082. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10497323211003058>
- Vetere, H. R. (2010). Housing and residence life. In D. H. Cox & C. C. Strange (Eds.), *Achieving student success: Effective student services in Canadian higher education* (pp. 77–88). McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP.
- Wagner, R., Boettcher, M. L., Howard, J. L., & Cawthon, T. W. (2019). Social justice in housing. *New Directions for Student Services*, 168, 9–16. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20327>
- Whitt, E. J. (2006). Are all your educators educating? *About Campus*, 10(6), 2–9.
- Williams, S., Kolek, E. A., Ampaw, F., Johnson, M. R., Hornak, A. M., & Gardner, K. (2021). Using inclusion assistants within a residential curriculum to improve the experiences and success of students with underrepresented identities. *The Journal of College and University Student Housing*, 47(2), 44–61.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Ongoing support through supervision is mentioned as one of the key components to ensuring that inclusion assistants (IAs) feel adequately prepared to navigate conversations about social justice. As a department, how do you show your commitment to social justice when major events are directly impacting your student community? (For example, a newsletter might help in continuing the conversation with students.)
2. Every student is at a different level of knowledge about social justice. When a resident advisor (RA) or an IA is navigating a conversation that results in a potential bias incident, what policies and procedures are in place for the staff member to reestablish community after harm is done?
3. How is student progress or development tracked after engaging with social justice material from RAs or IAs?
4. The article mentions changes in viewpoints about social justice before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. With this came an increased use of social media. How do we prepare staff to address instances of misinformation or misrepresentation?
5. What strategies as supervisors do we use to help staff reaffirm their abilities to facilitate conversations about social justice?

Discussion questions developed by Paige Daniels, University of North Texas