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The Experiences of Resident Advisors (RAs) Facilitating Social Justice Interactions in the Residential Curriculum Model

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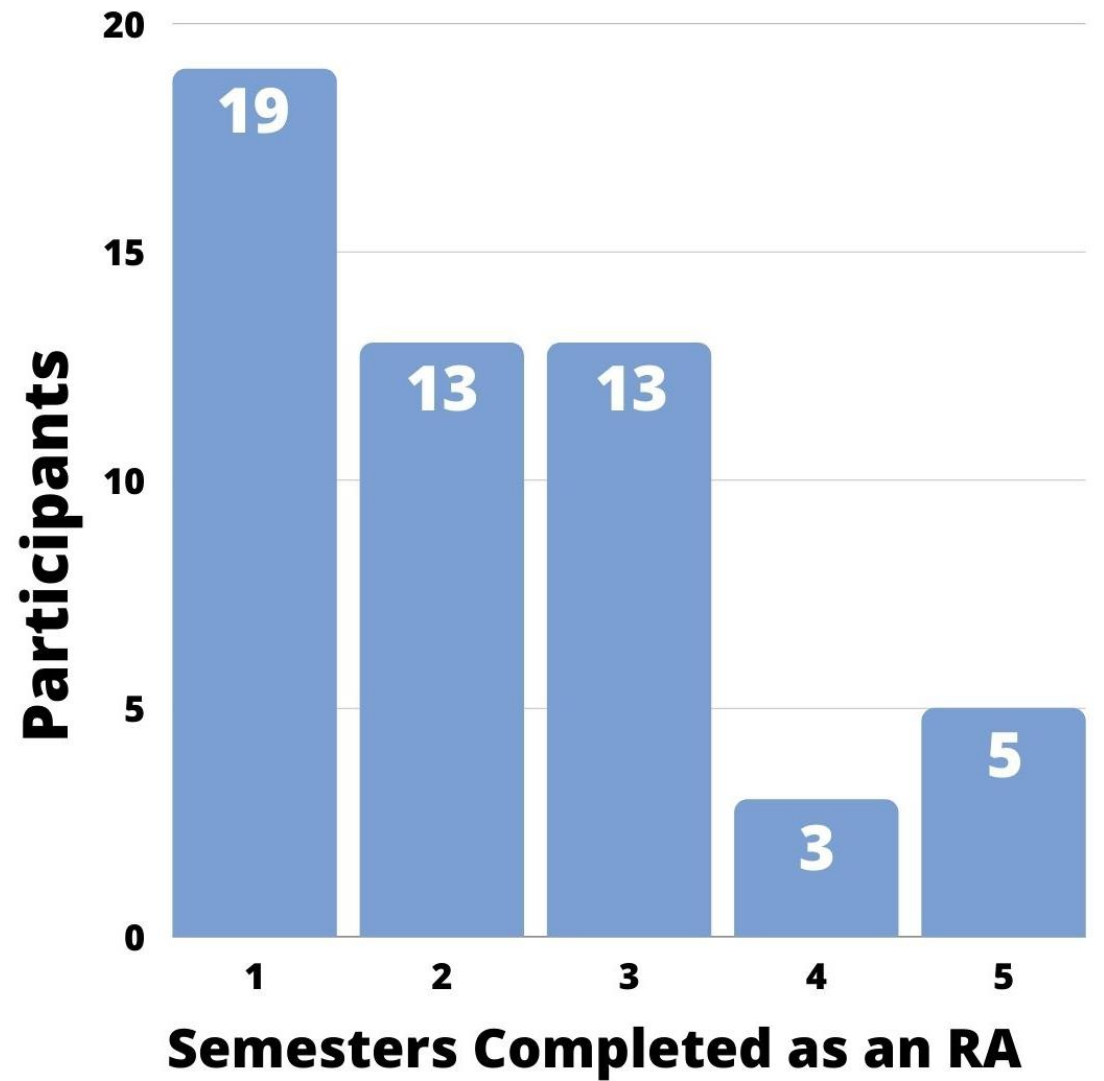
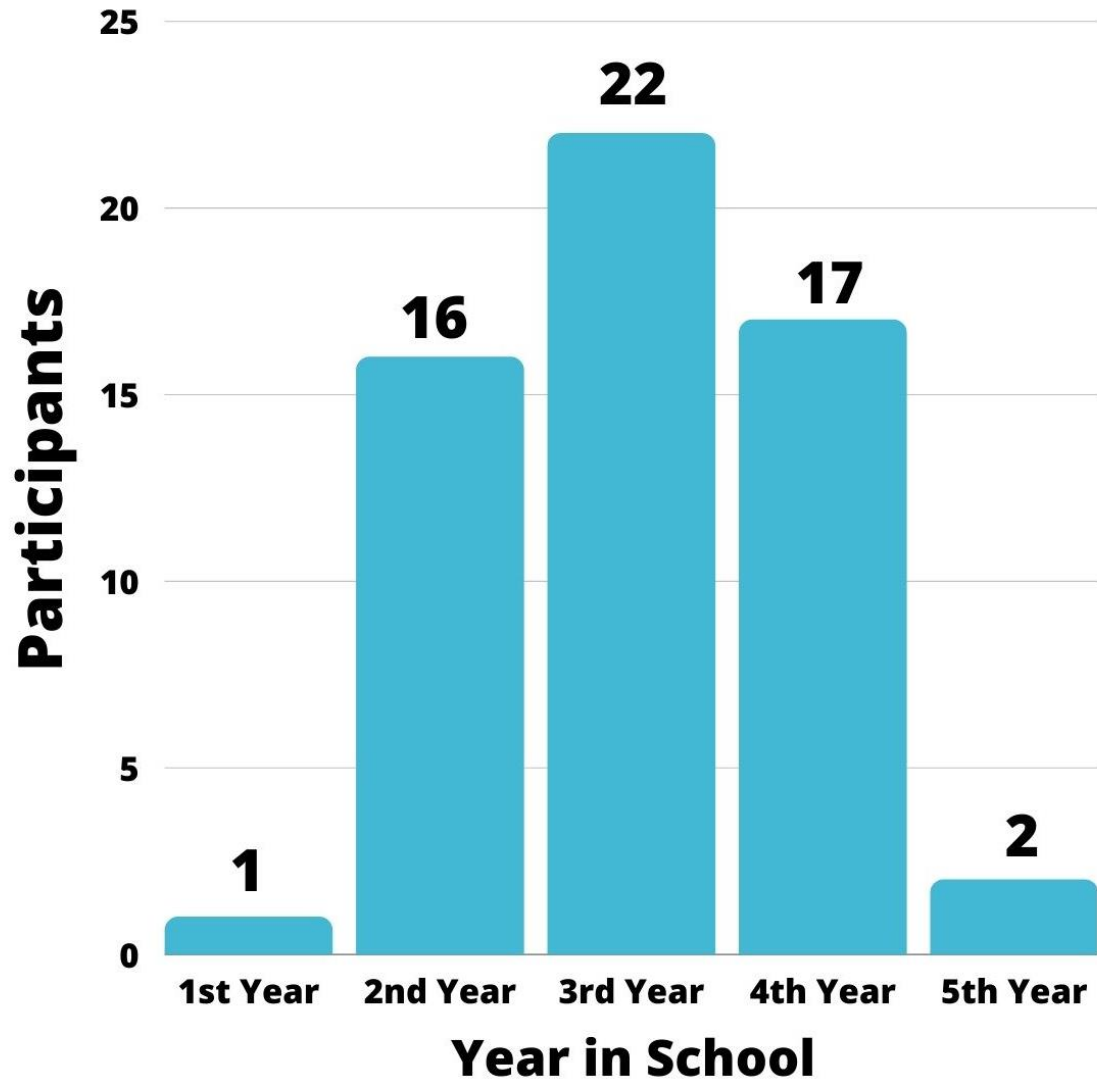
Research Questions

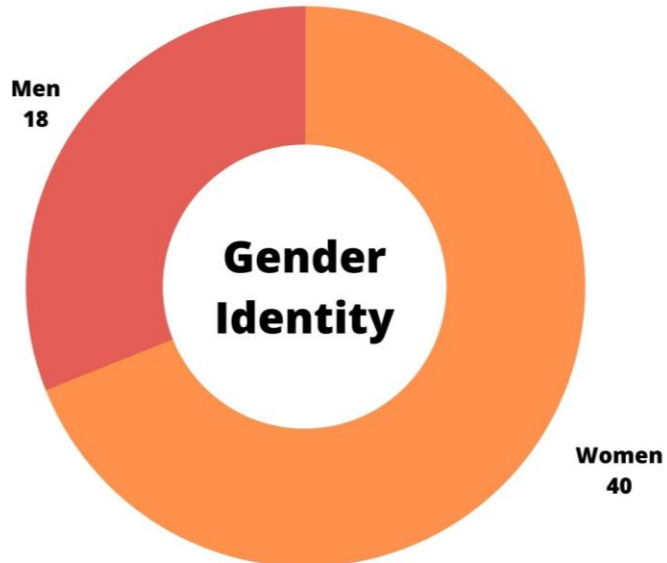
- What are the lived experiences of RAs when delivering and implementing resident interactions with social justice/diversity outcomes in a residential curriculum?
- How do RAs understand the purpose of resident interactions with social justice/diversity learning outcomes in a residential curriculum?
- What are RA's perceptions of their own skills to execute the RCM interaction strategies to promote social justice and inclusion?

Data Collection

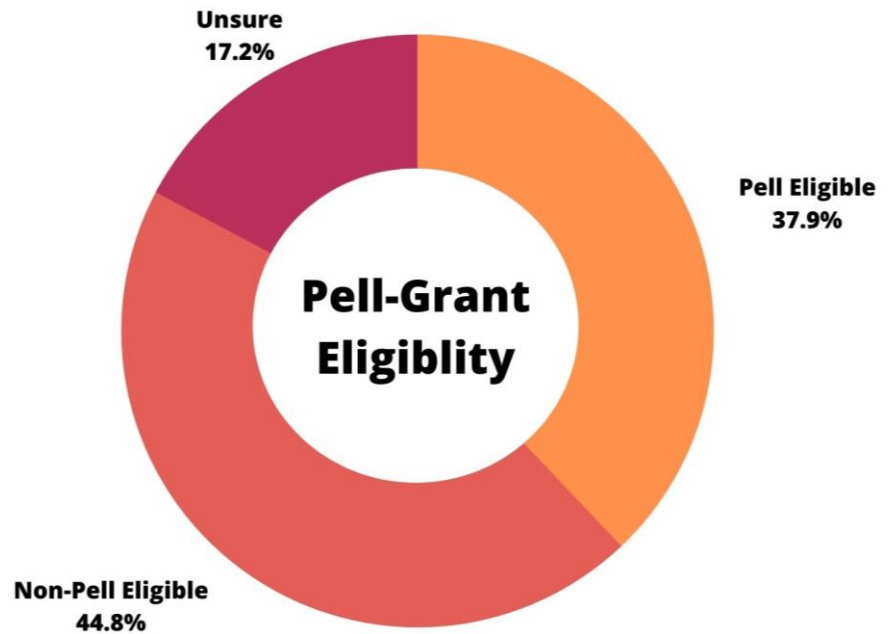
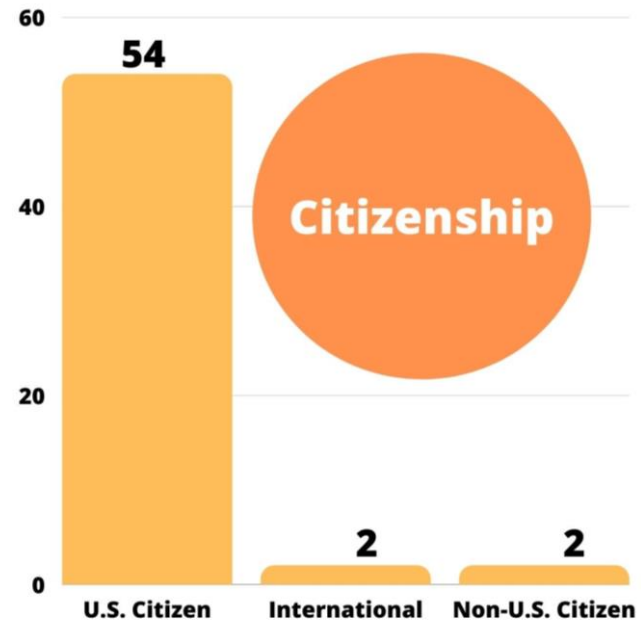
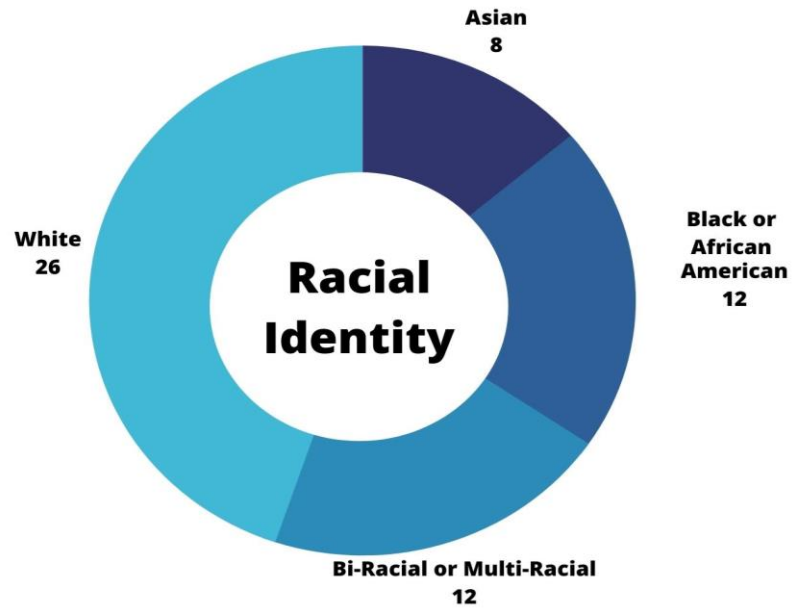
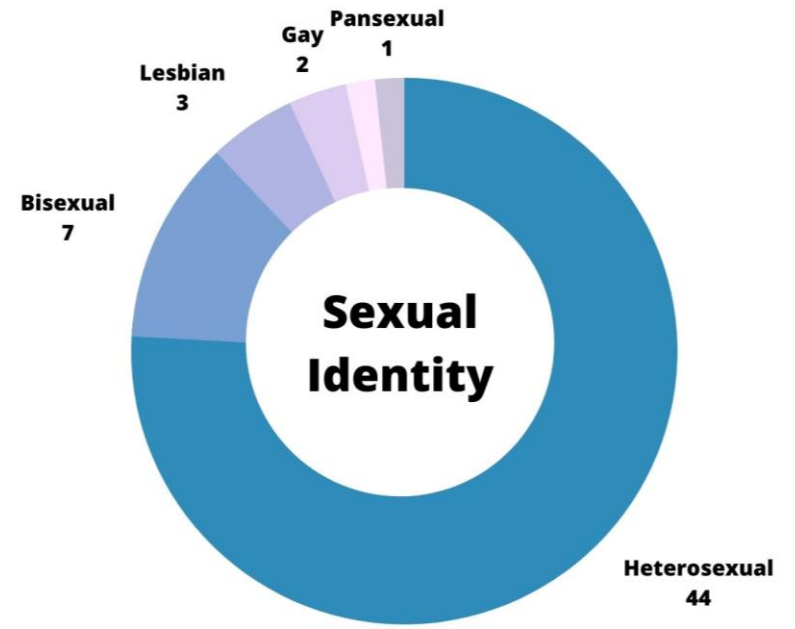
- 3 Focus Groups in person (approximately 1 hour each)
- 7 Focus Groups virtual (approximately 75 minutes each)
- General call for campus participation through Residential Curriculum Model Facebook page and networks
- Focus groups transcribed by a 3rd party vendor and analyzed using open coding methods by two researchers
- Pandemic influence (paused data collection for 2 years; resumed virtually)







All students identified as cisgender



Lived Experience of RAs in Social Justice Residential Curriculum

- **RA Self-Efficacy**
 - Differing levels of knowledge of social justice issues and how to facilitate the conversations; RAs who were more knowledgeable about social justice issues because educators for their peer RAs as well as their residents
- **Managing Differences in Resident Interest, Knowledge, and Commitment to Social Justice and Inclusion**
 - RA's recognize the varying levels of social justice knowledge, understanding, and commitment based on previous exposure to the topics
- **Influence of Institutional Culture and Environment on Social Justice in the RCM**
 - Context/culture/environment of campus influences the RA SJ RCM experience



Lived Experience of RAs in Social Justice Residential Curriculum

- **Effective Structures and Approaches**
 - Common understanding, but implementation varies by building
 - Social justice conversations put pressure on RAs and residents in intentional conversation structure
- **Learning Experience for RAs**
 - RAs are students who are still learning these concepts as well, but also being tasked with facilitating them; some feel pressure to be experts on social justice topics
 - RAs are still developing their own skills in neutrality and facilitation as they are tasked with this responsibility

Purpose of Social Justice Residential Curriculum

- **Plant the Seed**
 - Cultivate awareness of and desire to continue learning about social justice issues
- **Opportunity to Develop New Perspectives**
 - Learn about diverse experiences and concepts of privilege and oppression
- **Gain Knowledge about Self and Others**
 - Explore own identity
 - Understand how to address and interact with those from different identities
- **Create and Provide a Safe Environment in the Residential Community**
 - Human connection promotes learning about difference
- **Become Empowered to Act**
 - Learn how to have conversations about challenging topics
 - Facilitate conversations about social justice topics without RA's involvement
 - Engage with involvement opportunities related to social justice
 - Advocate for self and others on campus and in society



RA Skills Needed to Execute Social Justice Residential Curriculum

- Active listening so that residents feel heard and understood
- Calling in, not calling out; to continue the conversation; understanding social justice learning is a process
- Being aware of their own bias and personal experiences
- Self-awareness to understand that they needed to respect their own boundaries
 - RA's from marginalized identities realized the need to ask for assistance from others if the issue is related to their underrepresented identities to reduce battle fatigue
 - RA's from majority backgrounds realized their lack of knowledge and experience and being careful to work within their own level of knowledge

Recommendations

- Provide on-going diversity, equity, and inclusion education to RA staff throughout the year to support different knowledge levels of staff
- Provide multiple approaches to social justice education for residents to engage with the content in whatever way they are comfortable (passive, active, etc.)
- Provide structure for conversations and programming to RAs who are less familiar or comfortable with the content, but also allow RAs who are comfortable the opportunity to bring in their creativity and knowledge
- Ensure flexibility in the RCM that allows for personalization and individualization of the content based on the individuals' and the community's unique needs
- Set expectations with residents about what their role in the RCM will be so that they are expected to engage around topics of difference with their RA and peers

References

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