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**THE CHALLENGES OF LIVING WITH A ROOMMATE: THE IMPACT ON
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES' RESIDENTIAL EXPERIENCE**

by

Ashley M. Payne

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Services and Leadership
College of Education
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at
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Thesis Chair: Burton Sisco, Ed.D.

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Abstract

Ashley Payne

THE CHALLENGES OF LIVING WITH A ROOMMATE: THE IMPACT ON STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES' RESIDENTIAL EXPERIENCE

2016–2017

Burton Sisco, Ed.D.

Master of Arts in Higher Education

The purpose of this study was to explore the challenges that students with disabilities face while living with a roommate. These were explored to determine the impact those challenges have on their experience living on campus. Students with disabilities come to college with a unique set of challenges from their disability and navigating living with a roommate can add to the difficulty of their collegiate experience. A survey was adapted from a study on living with a roommate and a study on the supports for college students with disabilities. This survey gathered information on the student's class year, their experience with a roommate, and their experience with residence life staff. From the data collected, it was concluded that students with disabilities have overall negative experiences with roommates and they do not feel supported by residence life staff.

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Chapter I

Introduction

As colleges and universities have evolved, students with disabilities have been given greater support and resources to allow them to thrive in the collegiate atmosphere. Supports are given to students if they advocate for their needs or if someone intervenes on their behalf. This intervention could include parental involvement, administrative faculty referral, or a professor's referral to the department that is responsible for managing accommodations. Often times if the referral comes from faculty or staff at an institution, it is often because the student's actions have caused concern amongst that faculty or staff and they reached out to the department responsible for disability resources for further review (Johnson, Zascavage, & Gerber, 2008). Once a student is given an accommodation, these resources focus on what a student needs to be successful in his/her classes; however, students often are not given the support they need to learn how to live independently or live with a roommate.

This study investigated selected students with disabilities and how their residential experience was impacted by the level of support that student was given to learn how to live with a roommate. During the 2016-2017 academic year, there were 114 students with disabilities that live on-campus at Rowan University. Of those students, all but three students live in a housing assignment with a roommate ("The Housing Director"). These students are specifically students registered with the Academic Success Center to receive accommodations and as such that does not include students with disabilities that have not registered with the department. These students have to navigate their transition to living away from home as well as the transition of having to live with a

roommate, whom they often did not know until they moved into their on-campus housing assignment.

Statement of the Problem

Students with disabilities often have difficulty interacting with their peers due to a self-imposed stigma, the perception their peers have about their disability, or due to the limitations of their disability (Baker, Boland, & Nowik, 2012). When a student that is already pre-disposed to have difficulty with social interactions is placed in a housing assignment with a roommate, he or she may be unprepared to communicate, compromise, and advocate for personal needs with his or her roommate. Most resources available to students with disabilities are focused on their academic needs and rarely address other needs (Barnard-Brak, Lechtenberger, & Lan, 2010). While a student's academic progress should be the priority of both the institution and the student, the factors that can impact a student's academic performance need to be considered. A student with a roommate conflict due to difficulty communicating with that roommate or advocating for their needs may have a significant negative effect on their academics (Emerson, 2008).

Hypothetically, students should have the support of Residential Learning and University Housing staff at Rowan University; however, I have found as a Residential Learning and University Housing staff member that minimal training is given to staff about working with students with disabilities, which limits their ability to sufficiently support and assist these students. This adds to the difficulty a student may have with living with a roommate if they feel they cannot go to the individuals responsible for aiding them with their roommate conflict.

Both the challenges students with disabilities face while living with a roommate and the lack of support they can receive from Residential Learning and University Housing staff have the potential to impact their residential experience. There is little research on the impact living with a roommate has on a student with disabilities which has created a large gap in the knowledge base. This study aimed to narrow that gap and provide insight into that impact. A study such as this has never been conducted at Rowan University so it is essential to learn more about this demographic of students to better support them at this institution.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact living with a roommate has on a student with disabilities' residential experience. A focus of the study is how supported these students felt by staff and what challenges they faced while living with a roommate. There is limited research on this topic at Rowan University, so the study also hopes to provide insight into the population of students with disabilities and make determinations about what staff can do to better support the students they are working with. By surveying students that live on campus in a housing assignment with one or more roommates, the study will collect valuable information about what the students need to succeed in a residential setting.

Significance of the Study

As a topic with little to no research conducted, this study is essential for the growth and development of faculty to be able to better support all of their students, including students with disabilities. The findings of the study may provide valuable

information about the challenges a student with disabilities faced while living with a roommate and how supported they felt by staff to overcome those challenges.

Students with disabilities are held to the same standards as a student without disabilities; however, they often are not given the proper support to meet those standards outside of the classroom. A student with disabilities may have difficulty understanding policies or there may be a disconnect from what they are trying to communicate with their roommate and what they are actually communicating with their roommate. Rather than encouraging their growth and development in those areas, these students are told that they are expected to already have that understanding.

Assumptions and Limitations

This study makes several assumptions both about the subjects of the study and about the content of the study. The study assumes that all questions included on the survey were answered truthfully and thoroughly by the subjects selected for the study. The study also assumed that all students were able to take the survey and understood the focus of each question. The study assumes that students were comfortable answering the questions and were able to openly communicate any challenges they faced while living with a roommate.

The study also assumes that the survey successfully measured the impact living with a roommate has on a student's residential experience. It also assumes that the students that were selected came from various demographics and were representative of the different types of disabilities students registered with the office possess.

There were several limitations to this study. One limitation is the population that was used in the study. These students may have had difficulty participating in the survey

depending on the nature of their disability. This may have reduced the amount of responses and the quality of responses that were received.

The study was limited to the residents registered with the Disability Resource Center at Rowan University. This sample did not include students that were not registered, students that lived off campus with roommates, or students that were assigned to a space they did not share with a roommate.

The study was limited by the length of the study and the lack of time to conduct follow up studies. Ideally, there would have been time to implement some changes based on the data collected and conduct a follow up study with those same subjects to compare the success of those changes.

A significant limitation to the study was the lack of foundational research that has been conducted on students with disabilities living with a roommate. There is a large amount of research on students with disabilities and there is a variety of research on the impact living with a roommate has on a student's wellness; however, there is little to no research that combines those two topics.

Another limitation is the potential for researcher bias. I worked for the Residential Learning and University Housing department as a graduate Resident Director during the time of data collection. I also conducted my internship in the Academic Success Center, specifically with the Disability Resource Center during the time of data collection. This made it possible for me to be biased towards a specific result before the data were collected.

Operational Definitions

1. Accommodations: A support or resource provided that aids a student in being able to physically, mentally, and intellectually succeed in an educational atmosphere (Barnard-Brak, Lechtenberger, & Lan, 2010).
2. Americans with Disabilities Act: Legislation passed that prohibits discrimination based on an individual's disability in any public job.
3. Chickering's Seven Vectors of Identity Development: A theory created to represent the various identities a student can develop. Chickering believed that students go through seven vectors. Students do not progress through these vectors in the order they are listed; however, they will embody each vector as they develop their identities. The seven vectors are developing competency, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).
4. Developmental Disabilities: A chronic disability that is often caused by mental impairments. A developmental disability causes an individual to have difficulty in areas such as language, learning, and independent living. The individuals with developmental disabilities have not developed at the same rate as their peers (Taylor & Colvin, 2013).
5. First-year Students: Students in their first year at Rowan University whether they are a first-time student or a transfer student that has not accumulated the 24 credits needed to be considered an upper-class student.

6. Hettler's Model of Wellness: A theory centered around six dimensions of wellness that contribute to an individual's ability to thrive. The six dimensions are physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, occupational, and social. In order for a person to feel good about themselves, they need to reach a level that is sufficient for them in each of those dimensions (Hettler, 1976).
7. Learning Disabilities: A disability that makes it difficult for a student to process and retain information at the expected level of their peers. A learning disability is caused by a neurological disorder where an individual's brain cannot process and communicate the proper information to that individual (Sparks & Lovett, 2009).
8. Live-off Positions: Residence life staff at Rowan University that reached a level in the department where they are no longer provided on campus housing.
9. Live-on Positions: Residence life staff at Rowan University that are given university housing to fulfill the responsibilities of their position including participating in an on-call rotation, providing support to students, integration into the campus community, and crisis response.
10. Physical Disabilities: A disability that causes a physical limitation including but not limited to sensory impairments, mobility issues, dexterity or stamina. Any disabilities that impact a person's daily functioning would be classified here including respiratory issues, sleep disorders, or severe diseases (Denbo, 2003).
11. Psychiatric Disabilities: A disability that impacts an individual's emotions. A wide range of emotional conditions are covered under psychiatric disabilities including anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, and many others (Salzer, 2012).

12. On-Campus Resident: A student who elected to live in one of the designated residence halls or apartment complexes staffed by Residential Learning and University Housing on Rowan University's campus. A first-year resident lives in one of the ten first-year residence halls at Rowan University while an upperclassman resident lives in one of the six apartment complexes or the one upperclassman residence hall available for on-campus assignments.
13. Residential Experience: The community a resident was a part of while living on campus at Rowan University and how supported they felt by residence life staff when a conflict arises or when they need to advocate for their needs.
14. Residents: All students that lived in a residence hall or apartment complex staffed by Rowan University employees during the academic year. There were approximately 5,800 residents in the residence halls on campus at Rowan University during the 2016–2017 academic year (“The Housing Director”).
15. Roommate: An individual that occupied the same bedroom or apartment as another resident at Rowan University during the 2016–2017 academic year.
16. Rowan Choice Students: Students that were enrolled in classes at Rowan College of Gloucester County, but had been assigned housing on the Rowan University main campus during the 2016–2017 academic year.
17. Schlossberg's Transition Theory: A theory that represents the transitions a person may go through throughout their life. The theory is founded on the belief that there are three primary types of transitions. Those transitions are unanticipated transitions, anticipated transitions, and non-events (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006).

18. Upper-class Students: Students that have completed a year at Rowan University or through the accumulation of at least 24 credits, are not considered first-year students.

Research Questions

There were four research questions that guided this study which are:

1. What impact does living with a roommate have on a student with disabilities' residential experience?
2. Is there a significant relationship between living with a roommate on a student's residential experience and their class status (e.g. freshman to senior)?
3. What challenges did students with disabilities face while living with a roommate?
4. Does the level of support students receive from staff impact how prepared they are to communicate and negotiate with roommates?

Overview of the Study

Chapter II of this study includes a review of relevant literature as well as the applicable theories. The literature review outlines how students with disabilities have gained access to higher education. The literature also details the different types of disabilities that a student may have and how that impacts their day-to-day functioning. The challenges of living with a roommate are explored in depth as a factor that could heavily impact a student's residential experience. This was tied to students with disabilities who are already transitioning to a new atmosphere, and the potential for additional difficulties to their transition due to living with a previously unknown roommate were explored.

Chapter III details the methodology of the study which first explores the context of the study including where it was conducted and all information relevant to students with disabilities living in an on-campus facility. The demographics of that population of students were also explored. An electronic survey was adapted from a survey on living with a roommate and an interview for students with disabilities. This instrument included both qualitative and quantitative items that were distributed to Rowan University students living on campus and registered with the Academic Success Center using a full population sample. How the data gathered were analyzed was also explored in this chapter to determine how it would best answer the research questions.

Chapter IV presents the results of the data that were collected. This section analyzes each item on the survey and relates it to the research questions that the study was created to answer. Statistical analysis was used for the quantitative data collected and narrative analysis was used for the qualitative data collected. The data are displayed in this chapter using various tables and narrative representation.

Chapter V summarizes the study and analyzes the findings presented in Chapter IV. Conclusions are made based on the data that were gathered from the study. Based on the conclusions that were drawn, recommendations for future practice and further research are suggested to promote the increased knowledge base on students with disabilities that live in on-campus facilities with roommates.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Introduction

Students with disabilities have been given many resources to succeed at their college or university. Some of these resources are mandated through legislation that has been passed, such as the *Americans with Disabilities Act* or *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act* (Denbo, 2003). Others are resources that the Disability Resource Center on their campus has specifically designed to meet the needs of the unique student population. Different colleges may offer a variety of services ranging from guest speakers, workshops, programs, skills groups, and coaching for the students that utilize their services (Johnson, Zascavage, & Gerber, 2008).

Students with disabilities enter college with a unique set of challenges depending on their disabilities. Four common types of disabilities are physical, developmental, learning, and psychiatric. Those disabilities, whether they be invisible or visible, have an impact on a student's experience at their college or university. An invisible disability is a disability that cannot be distinguished by an individual's physical appearance or actions. A visible disability is a disability that can be recognized by an individual's appearance or actions (Baker, Boland, & Nowik, 2012).

While students with a disability are transitioning to college and assimilating to the new level of academics, they may also be transitioning to living with a roommate. This transition can continue past their first year for as many years as they live with a roommate that they do not have an established relationship with. There are many challenges that come from living with a roommate including figuring out how to properly

communicate with one another, navigating roommate conflicts, and establishing how to share a space effectively. If these challenges are not overcome, living with a roommate can have a significant negative effect on a student's overall college experience (Hanasono & Nadler, 2012).

There are many theories that can help represent and support students with disabilities living with a roommate. The theories that best model the stages of development that students are in while living with a roommate are Schlossberg's Transition Theory, Chickering's Identity Theory, and Hettler's Model of Wellness. These theories represent different areas of a student's life, whether it be their disability, the environment of living with a roommate, or the various transitions that occur throughout their collegiate experience (Coccaelli, 2010).

Background on Students with Disabilities in Higher Education

Students with disabilities have a long history in higher education. In 2003, 98% of public institutions reported that they had students enrolled with some type of disability (Johnson, Zascavage, & Gerber, 2008). This is a drastic change from the early years of higher education where it was almost unheard for a student with a known disability to attend an institution of higher education. In fact, until Gallaudet, a specialized school for the deaf, opened a college for students with disabilities in 1864, there were no options for these individuals (Lang, 2015).

After that institution, there were more specialized schools that were created; however, there were no higher education options that integrated students with disabilities with students without disabilities. This included individuals with physical, cognitive, mental, and psychiatric disabilities. In 1963, the *Community Mental Health Act* was

passed which increased access to medical services, education, and work opportunities for individuals with psychiatric disabilities. While it did not specifically address higher education needs for students with disabilities, it included essential anti-discrimination clauses that increased access for these students (Moran, 2013).

The *Community Mental Health Act* was the first of many pieces of legislation that created anti-discrimination laws and increased accessibility for students with disabilities in higher education. In 1973, the *Rehabilitation Act* was passed. *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act* specifically addressed students with disabilities and included strict anti-discrimination laws regarding those individuals (Denbo, 2003). The passing of this act saw an influx of students with minor, non-debilitating disabilities enrolling in institutions of higher education as colleges and universities could no longer deny them admission due to those disabilities. While *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act* prevented a student from being denied admission due to their disability, it did nothing to ensure their rights once they got to that institution, at least not without potential further intervention from the courts (Denbo, 2003).

The *American with Disabilities Act*, passed in 1990, focused on making a student's education accessible, not just their admission to the institution. Within reason, colleges were now required to offer accommodations to students with physical, cognitive, mental, and psychiatric disabilities. Furthermore, any buildings built after the passing of the *American with Disabilities Act* had to be in compliance with the law's regulations which include, but are not limited to wheelchair accessible entrances, hallways, office spaces, and classrooms; signs that include braille; access to a ramp, a lift, or an elevator if there are stairs to the entrance of the building. There are regulations for carpet height,

how much force is needed to open a door, parking and drop off areas, and any area that could impact a student's ability to access or navigate a building. For all buildings built before 1990, they have to be in compliance with the *American with Disabilities Act* as much as possible and have to be able to accommodate a student with a disability if they have a class or reside in a non-compliant building (“Americans with Disabilities Act,” 1990).

Especially after the passing of the *Americans with Disabilities Act*, it became very important for colleges and universities to have a center for the students that were enrolled in their institutions with a disability. This center became a place for students to register, become familiar with the services that were available to them, and became a way for the institution to ensure they were meeting the standards of the law (Denbo, 2003). Many of these disability resource centers have programs for students of varying demographics to help them develop skills that are essential for their success at the college level (Barnard-Brak, Lechtenberger, & Lan, 2010).

One of the primary functions of the department is to encourage students with disabilities to register their disability so they can begin to get the appropriate supports and accommodations. Due to the stigma and fear of identifying as a student with a disability, many students go through postsecondary education without disclosing a disability which can have significant, negative impacts on their collegiate experience (Baker, Boland, & Nowik, 2012). Another goal of the department is to prepare students to advocate for their needs. Students often come to college lacking the advocacy skills to properly communicate what their needs are and many departments try to improve those advocacy skills through programming and workshops (Johnson, Zascavage, & Gerber, 2008). The

goal of the department is to be a service to all students, regardless of their type of disability.

Types of Disabilities

There are several different types of disabilities that a student can be diagnosed. The main categories for disabilities are physical, developmental, learning, and psychiatric. While those are the main overarching categories, a student may have more than one disability that may put them in more than one of those categories and may cause them to be in need of different supports to comfortably live on a college campus and attend their classes. Furthermore, these students may face different stigmas, both self-created and spread by their peers that can create an additional barrier to an education.

Physical disabilities. Colleges and universities are required by law to provide students with disabilities access to the same education as their able-bodied peers. This includes all aspects of their education included housing, classes, and access to all services that an institution offers (Denbo, 2003). Students with physical disabilities fall on a spectrum of ability depending on several factors including whether they have a visible or invisible disability; whether they have a cognitive, mental, or psychiatric disability; and how their disability impacts mobility.

A visible disability physically manifests itself in a person's body or impacts their actions in a way that is recognizable without medical or academic testing. A person in need of a supplementary aide to assist them in their mobility such as a walker, a wheelchair, or a cane; or a person that has undeveloped or missing limbs. A visible disability can cause tense social situations as it can unintentionally become the focal point during interactions with an individual with a visible disability (Taub, Blinde, &

Greer, 1999). Students without disabilities may also make the assumption that students with a visible physical disability are physically incompetent or incapable of participating in certain activities. In an attempt to be helpful, they may unintentionally hinder a student's ability to complete their day-to-day activities (Baker, Boland, & Nowik, 2012).

An invisible physical disability is not recognizable like a visible one. It can usually only be diagnosed through various medical testing. Due to the nature of the disability not being recognizable, students with this type of disability can go the entirety of their higher education career without anyone knowing about the disability unless they choose to disclose it. Disabilities such as a hearing impairment or health concerns such as asthma and diabetes are examples of invisible disabilities. Depending on the level of severity of the disability, depends on the impact they have on a student's experience. Once disclosed, students have reported their disability having a greater impact on their social interaction; however, that also depends on how noticeable the disability can be during those interactions (Baker, Boland, & Nowik, 2012).

There are several accommodations that students with physical disabilities may be eligible to receive if they are living on campus. If they get the proper doctor's approval, a student may be eligible for an apartment instead of a residence hall room, air conditioning, a room on the first floor, or a room with more than one entrance. While those are some examples of residential accommodations, students can get many different accommodations if a doctor approves and if it is within reason for an institution to provide assistance to them (Barnard-Brak, Lechtenberger, & Lan, 2010).

Developmental disabilities. A developmental disability is a disability that causes difficulties in many areas of a student's life including language, self-help, and

independent living. The most common developmental disabilities in students on a college campus are Autism Spectrum Disorder and Asperger's Syndrome. Until 2012, Asperger's Syndrome was considered a high-functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder diagnosis. In 2012, Asperger's Syndrome became a stand-alone condition and the criteria for the diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder changed (Taylor & Colvin, 2013).

There are several accommodations a student with a developmental disability may be eligible to receive. Due to the nature of the disability, students may be able to request certain supports like scheduled check-ins after disruptions to their routine in the residence hall. Such disruptions may include a fire alarm, a conflict in the residence hall, or a student emergency that affects them. Students with developmental disabilities may be eligible for residential accommodations such as having specific number of roommates, having a room with a bathroom, or having an apartment over a residence hall. Similarly to a physical disability, if a student gets approval from a doctor for a reasonable accommodation, the college or university needs to honor that (Barnard-Brak, Lechtenberger, & Lan, 2010).

Learning disabilities. Learning disabilities are diagnosed when there is a discrepancy between a student's achievement threshold, as determined by a variety of instruments, and their performance. This discrepancy suggests that students are capable of learning the material, but they may be in need of additional supports or accommodations in order to fully process the information they are being taught. These supports bridge the gap between where a student is performing and where their potential to perform is (Sparks & Lovett, 2009).

Most accommodations for learning disabilities specifically apply to the classroom; however, if a student's learning disability is a sensory impairment they may have an accommodation for their on-campus housing as well. The biggest impact that a student's learning disability may have on their on-campus experience is with the associated stigma. Students with learning disabilities reported that their peers would harass them. Common things these students would hear is that they were not smart enough to go to college, that they were getting special treatment, and that they never would graduate. Sometimes the students were even threatened with violence (May & Stone, 2010). Being exposed to that level of harassment and intimidation is going to have a significant impact on a student's experience. When they are already coming to school with the added challenge of having a disability that they need to work with, it may be enough to cause a student's academics to suffer or to cause a negative impact in other areas of their life (Sparks & Lovett, 2009).

Psychiatric disabilities. More commonly classified as mental illness, psychiatric disabilities are one of the most common forms of disability on a college campus. Psychiatric disabilities include anxiety, depression, personality disorders, schizophrenia, and many others that could compromise a student's judgement when they are in crisis or their comfort level in seeking help (Salzer, 2012). Psychiatric disabilities also have a significant impact on the adjustment of a student first coming to school, transitioning between years, or experiencing some type of unanticipated transition during their collegiate education (Horne, 2014). Psychiatric disabilities also have the potential to affect students that do not directly have a psychiatric disability. If a student has severe

depression or anxiety, someone close to them may also feel the impact of that disability (Salzer, 2012).

There are many accommodations a student with a psychiatric disability may be eligible for; however, due to the nature of psychiatric disabilities, the most common is an emotional support animal. Emotional support animals can be approved for a student with a psychiatric disability if they have the proper approval from a licensed clinician.

Emotional support animals provide a variety of benefits to students with psychiatric disabilities including a coping mechanism, sensory stimulation, and a constant companion (London-Nunez, 2015). One of the challenges of having an emotion support animal comes when a student with a psychiatric disability lives with a roommate. Having to navigate balancing the needs of a pet and a roommate can be a challenge for a student with a psychiatric disability who may have difficulty communicating personal needs (Salzer, 2012).

Challenges of Living with a Roommate

Residents can live with a roommate in many different capacities. Some halls house multiple residents in a single bedroom, while other halls have single bedrooms in a shared unit. When there is a shared space amongst multiple residents, there is a unique set of challenges that comes from navigating that shared space. A resident's experience on campus is often directly related to their experience living with a roommate (Hanasono & Nadler, 2012). If a resident had a negative experience with a roommate, it tends to have a negative impact on personal involvement, academics, and overall feelings towards that institution. Whereas, if a resident has a positive experience with a roommate, it tends to

have a more positive impact on involvement, academics, and feelings towards the institution (Hanasono & Nadler, 2012).

When roommates first meet and begin living together, they have to learn about the most appropriate way to communicate with a roommate. Some students struggle with communication, preferring to keep things to themselves; however, communication is an essential part of living with a roommate as students need to communicate about issues that arise in the space, what items in the space are shared, and boundaries of the roommate relationship (Hanasono & Nadler, 2012). Different types of students communicate in different way. Some students prefer face-to-face communication while others may prefer a less confrontational form of communication. As roommates communicate, they may learn more about what makes their roommate the most receptive to a conversation (Emerson, 2008). If communication does not happen or does not happen in the proper way, it can cause a potential roommate conflict.

When a roommate conflict occurs, roommates go through a unique period where they have to redefine the boundaries of their shared space and often have to reestablish relationships. Depending on the severity of the roommate conflict, residents may not be able to negotiate those boundaries and the only solution may be removing them from that space and separating them from a roommate. If a roommate conflict is not severe enough to merit a room change it must be addressed in a timely manner or it will begin to have an impact on other areas of a student's experience such as academics (McEwan & Soderberg, 2006). Once a roommate conflict is resolved and the roommates come to an agreement about whatever the issue was, they have to navigate recreating the trust they once had in their roommate relationship. Reestablishing that relationship is an essential

part of being able to continue living together as roommates. Roommates do not need to be friends, but there needs to be a certain level of trust in order for them to peacefully live together (Emerson, 2008).

An important aspect of living with a roommate is establishing how to share a space effectively. For residents in a traditional residence hall this may be their actual bedroom and a shared bathroom or lounge. If a resident lives in an on-campus apartment complex, they may have their own bedroom, but may have to establish guidelines for a shared kitchen, living room, or bathroom. Within these shared spaces, residents have to make decisions about when shared spaces can be used, what types of activities can be done in the shared spaces, and if the shared spaces can be used by all roommates at the same time. Figuring out how to share a space can ease the transition of living with a roommate and allows for peaceful coexistence with their roommates (Emerson, 2008).

Review of Relevant Theory

Students with disabilities experience a unique change when they go away to school. Not only are they transitioning to a more intensive course load, but they are also transitioning to the responsibility of living away from home, managing a disability, living with a roommate, and many other things. There are many theories that represent the growth that these students experience over the course of a college career while they navigate living with a roommate and living away at school.

Chickering's seven vectors. Chickering established a theory of identity development that focuses on seven vectors a student will develop as they establish personal identity (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). For students with disabilities who have lived and been educated in an extremely structured environment,

moving away for college may be their first opportunity to determine what their identity of having a disability means to them (Sparks & Lovett, 2009).

Chickering's first vector is developing competency. There are three competency areas that a student develops: intellectual, physical, and interpersonal (Evans et al., 2010). As a student living with a roommate, a resident is primarily going to develop the interpersonal vector as they interact with a roommate and develop that relationship. A student can also develop physically as they work on their artistic abilities, wellness, or athletic abilities or intellectually as they pursue mastery of content (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The second vector is managing emotions. In this vector, students become increasingly aware of personal emotions and gain more control over them. The purpose of this vector is not to eradicate emotions, but to become aware of them and to be able to manage them when they feel overwhelming (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). For students with disabilities, this vector is most applicable during roommate conflicts when they may need to retain a calm demeanor in order to come to a swift resolution. The third vector is moving through autonomy toward interdependence. This is where a student begins to take responsibility for themselves and establishes personal independence while respecting the independence of others (Evans et al., 2010). A key aspect of this vector is a student's freedom from the constant need to get reassurance from others to validate their own actions (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Students with disabilities transition to this vector when they begin to live independently.

Chickering's fourth vector is developing mature interpersonal relationships. This occurs when students accept the differences in their peers and become tolerant of different lifestyles (Evans et al., 2010). Another aspect of this vector is developing a

capacity for intimacy that allows students to develop relationships built off of appreciation of differences and flaws (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Residents begin to develop these relationships when they are living with a roommate and they become exposed to different types of people. The fifth vector is establishing identity. In this vector a student determines personal comfort with who they are physically, sexually, intellectually, mentally, and interpersonally. This vector in particular is interrelated with the others as it directly depends on the growth a student experiences from those vectors (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Students with disabilities have the opportunity to determine what their disability means to them and how they want it to fit in with their other identities.

The sixth vector is developing purpose. This vector is where a student is able to make intentional goals that line up with a specific purpose whether that be academic, career, or interpersonal (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). This vector will primarily evolve through a student's experience both within and outside the classroom as he/she discovers what their passions are. The final vector is developing integrity. This is where a student establishes personal beliefs and consistently upholds them (Evans et al., 2010). This vector plays a particularly big role in how a student interprets and learns from personal experiences (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). A student will develop this vector throughout the collegiate career as he/she meets new people that expose them to new beliefs.

Schlossberg's transition theory. Schlossberg identified three types of transition that students experience: anticipated transitions, unanticipated transitions, and nonevents. An anticipated transition is something that students know are coming, which allows them to prepare for that change (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). For students with

disabilities, some anticipated transitions they may experience are transitioning to advocating for their disability rather than having a parent or teacher advocate for them, transitioning to living with a roommate, transitioning to living away from their parent or guardian, or transitioning to the academic demands of college (Coccaelli, 2010).

An unanticipated transition is one that students do not know are coming and therefore may take longer to recover from or adapt to. Many unanticipated transitions such as those onset by natural disasters or violence have the potential to impact individuals not directly part of the community effected by the transition (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). This transition is especially difficult for students with psychiatric disabilities who are predisposed to be sensitive to change or emotional events (Salzer, 2012). Examples of unanticipated transitions may be the loss of a family member, failing a test, or a conflict with a roommate.

A non-event is when students expect something to happen that did not. Coping strategies are especially important for non-events due to the emotional impact of that transition (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). This can often lead to disappointment and students may have a period of time where they have to accept that they did not get what they wanted. Examples of a non-event are if a student tried to get into a fraternity or sorority, but did not get a bid; if a student expected to do well on a test, but instead failed; or if a student expected to get a job, but did not receive that position (Coccaelli, 2010).

Hettler's model of wellness. Hettler identified six dimensions of wellness that contribute to an individual's ability to achieve full potential and be fully satisfied with their life. If an individual does not have a healthy balance in one of the dimensions it can

cause them to feel deeply dissatisfied and unsettled about where they are in life (Mareno, 2009). Many of the dimensions directly apply to students with disabilities living with roommates.

The first dimension is social where individuals feel supported and cared for by the people that they have relationships (Mareno, 2009). Individuals promote communication by role modeling that themselves, cooperate with the other members of their community, and work for mutual respect amongst all members of the community in this dimension (Hettler, 1976). For residents, this dimension may represent the relationship they have with a roommate. If residents do not have a good relationship with a roommate, they may not feel satisfied with this dimension. The second dimension is occupational where an individual is taking appropriate steps to work towards work that they find satisfying and meaningful (Hettler, 1976). For students with disabilities, this may be particularly difficult as many students may struggle to explore different things and learn more about what they may be passionate about (May & Stone, 2010). The third dimension is spiritual where an individual determines what is important to them, whether that be religion, faith, or belief in themselves. Students will establish their own belief system and will consistently uphold that and hold themselves accountable to that system (Mareno, 2009). This dimension will widely be satisfied outside of the residence halls; however, it could be impacted if a student is living with a roommate that is not tolerant of their beliefs.

The fourth dimension is physical which is achieving a regular physical activity and a balanced, nutritious diet. Hettler emphasized spending time each week to improve the functions of the body (1976). This dimension primarily impacts students that do not feel fulfilled in this dimension. Students with physical disabilities may be predisposed to

struggle in this dimension. There is also the potential for students to feel dissatisfied in this dimension if a roommate is in a drastically different state of the dimension. For example, if a resident's roommate is extremely fit and works out multiple times a week, he or she may feel dissatisfied with this dimension when they otherwise would not have (Mareno, 2009). The fifth dimension is intellectual where an individual is able to take on a more self-directed and accountable level of learning. Rather than having someone else be responsible for the knowledge they are receiving students are making their own intellectual decisions (Hettler, 1976). The first time many students experience freedom in this dimension is when they choose a major in college. For students with some disabilities, this dimension is very difficult to feel satisfied. They are predisposed to struggle academically. Supports from the Disability Resource Center become very important to help students feel like they are succeeding to their highest potential (Johnson, Zascavage, & Gerber, 2008). The sixth dimension is emotional where an individual is aware of personal emotions and is accepting of them. This dimension is especially prevalent during roommate conflicts. When a resident feels particularly upset over a conflict, he/she may be less aware of personal emotions and less likely to accept them (Mareno, 2009). An important aspect of this dimension is the ability to accept conflict as being a healthy and integral part of a relationship (Hettler, 1976).

Summary of the Literature Review

Students with disabilities have been given much support and have access to a range of accommodations to ensure their success in the classroom and in the residence halls. While they have that support, they sometimes lack the skills to advocate for themselves and navigate what it means to be responsible for while living away at school.

These transitions are intense for many students and can become overwhelming when the added challenge of academics and a roommate are added.

While there is a significant amount of research on students with disabilities and residence life as individual topics, there is minimal to no research on the two topics together. The topic of students with disabilities living with a roommate is one that is in need of more research, because of the additional challenges their disabilities pose. Many students are unprepared to properly communicate with a roommate and it is important to know about the other challenges they face so residence life officials can properly support them through that process.

Chapter III

Methodology

Context of the Study

The study took place at Rowan University in Glassboro, NJ. It specifically focused on students with disabilities that lived on campus in a residence hall or apartment complex. In 1923, the Glassboro Normal School was founded. There is a long history that brought the institution from Glassboro Normal School to its university status in 1997. Starting with its first name change to New Jersey State Teaching College in 1937, the name was revised to be Glassboro State College in 1958. In 1992 after a generous donation from Henry Rowan and his family, the school adopted Rowan College of New Jersey as its official name. After attaining university status in 1997, the institution became Rowan University. In 2013, Rowan University became the second four-year research institution in the State of New Jersey and the institution continues to expand and look for further opportunities for development (“From Normal to Extraordinary”).

There are approximately 16,100 students enrolled at Rowan University in a bachelor’s program, a master’s program, or a doctoral program. Approximately 5,800 students reside on campus including a mix of Rowan University students and Rowan College at Gloucester County students (“The Housing Director”). There are 15 housing options for those students living on campus. Traditionally, upperclassmen are located in Rowan Boulevard Apartments, Whitney Center Apartments, Townhouses Complex, Triad Apartments, Edgewood Park Apartments, and the seven story section of Holly Pointe Commons. First-year students are placed in traditional residence halls which include Chestnut Hall, Magnolia Hall, Willow Hall, Mimosa Hall, Mullica Hall,

Evergreen Hall, Oak Hall, Laurel Hall, the International House, and the four story section of Holly Pointe Commons.

There is a team of residence life staff that oversees all of the complexes on campus. This team consists of live-off positions for the Director of Residential Learning, the Assistant Director of Residential Learning, the Director of Housing Systems and Logistics, the Assistant Director of Housing Systems and Logistics, the Director of Housing Assignments and Administrative Services, and two Housing Assignments Coordinator. These professional positions offer support to students during business hours, focusing on improving a student's residential experience for their specialization within the department. There are also live-on positions that are a part of the team of residence life staff. These include four Residential Learning Coordinators that oversee a specific area of campus, 12 Resident Directors that oversee a single building or set of buildings, 12 Assistant Resident Directors that work closely with the Resident Director to oversee their building or set of buildings, and 136 Resident Assistants that are split up amongst the 15 on-campus housing options.

Part of the responsibility of the live-on positions is providing crisis response and support to students all day and all night. They participate in a rotating on call rotation to provide that support. In order to adequately support all of the residents living on campus, these employees need to understand how to work with different types of people. Most residence staff do not receive the appropriate training to be able to properly support students with disabilities.

There are 114 students registered with the Academic Success Center through the Disability Resource Center. These students are registered with physical, psychiatric,

learning, and developmental disabilities of varying severities. That number does not include the multitude of students that choose not to register their disability for various reasons. All of the students with disabilities, whether they are registered or not, have unique needs and may need additional support from residence life staff to navigate things like living independently, living with a roommate, or understanding the various policies and procedures that are in place for on campus residents.

Students with disabilities might have additional difficulty communicating with their roommates which can make personal living arrangements uncomfortable or hostile. A negative experience with a roommate has the opportunity to impact a student's academics, involvement on campus, and can cause them to have a negative overall college experience (Hanasono & Nadler, 2012). These students may also have difficulty advocating for personal needs and as such may not feel supported or may feel unable to succeed at the institution.

Population and Sample Selection

The target population for this study was students with disabilities that lived on-campus at various colleges or universities from the 2016-2017 academic year. Specifically, the target population is the students that share their residence hall or apartment space with another person. The available population for this study is all students with disabilities that are living in on-campus housing with a roommate at Rowan University for the 2016-2017 academic year. There are 114 students with disabilities that were registered with the Academic Success Center that also lived on campus. Of those students 111 of them also lived with a roommate.

A full population sample was utilized to select all eligible residents to participate in the study. All Rowan University students in this population were part of the study. The study omits Rowan College of Gloucester County students that resided on the Rowan University campus due to the differences in their academic experience. The students received an e-mail from the Director of the Academic Success Center with information about the study and a link to complete an online survey. For students that may have had difficulty completing the survey online due to their disability, there were further instructions with how to request a scribe, receive and complete a paper copy of the survey, and whom to contact if they needed another support to be able to participate in the study. Students were notified that participation in the study was voluntary and that they could elect to not complete the survey.

Instrumentation

The instrument used to assess the impact living with a roommate had on a student with disabilities' residential experience was adapted from two different studies and the items were modified to address the research questions of the study. The final instrument was 20 items and was a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions (Appendix G). This instrument was distributed to students with disabilities that lived on campus and with a roommate.

The first instrument utilized was Katlyn Hale's *Roommate Satisfaction Survey* (Appendix D). Permission was received from Hale to use and modify her instrument (Appendix C). The instrument consisted of 17 items that varied with collecting qualitative and quantitative data. The *Roommate Satisfaction Survey* focused on challenges a student may have faced while living with a roommate and what resources a

student used to overcome those challenges (Hale, 2011). The quantitative items in this study had a scale of 1-5 with 1 being the low end of the scale and 5 being the high end of the scale. The qualitative data often provided students with options relating to their experience with a roommate and gave them the option of providing further information.

The second study that was referenced was Amy Kampsen's *Semistructured Student Interviews* guide (Appendix F). Permission was received from Kampsen to utilize her interview questions (Appendix E). This interview guide focused on the impact a student's disability has on their experience with their university and what supports they found helpful or what supports they feel needed to be improved or created (Kampsen, 2009). The questions were open-ended to promote a student's original response. These interview questions were modified to become quantitative questions regarding the support a student feels from staff members as well as their comfort level disclosing their disability to another party whether they be a roommate or a staff member.

The revised instrument focused on two main topics. The instrument asked for information about living with a roommate and the students comfort level. The instrument also asked for specifics about how supported a student felt with the residence life staff in charge of assisting them through the process of living with a roommate. When incorporating questions about living with a roommate, the instrument included items about when they first met, what a student with disabilities' original impression was of their roommate, whether their roommate had changed over the course of the academic year, and what challenges or conflicts occurred between the students and their roommate. The items about residence life staff included what a student's initial impressions of the staff were, what steps residence life staff took to resolve roommate conflicts, and how

supported they felt by that staff. A general question about their comfort with advocating for personal needs was included as the final item on the instrument.

The items that were not incorporated into the adapted instrument were questions that involved parental involvement, accommodations a student received through the Academic Success Center, and the transition and adaptation to college that was unrelated to their experience of living with a roommate.

To determine the validity and reliability of the instrument, it was distributed to five subjects. The subjects did not report any errors, difficulty understanding the items, or items that may be sensitive to someone participating in the study. A Cronbach Alpha score was generated for the Likert scale items. This test resulted in a Cronbach Alpha score of .318 for item 14 and a score of .646 for item 19 indicating that the instrument lacked internal consistency; scores of .70 or above indicate a stable and internally consistent instrument.

Data Collection

Before data were collected, an electronic Institutional Research Board application was submitted and approved (Appendix A). The only demographic information that was collected in the study were a student's class year, gender, and where they currently lived on campus. The subjects were assigned numbers to ensure personal confidentiality and to correspond with the data they provided.

The survey was administered in January and February of 2017. The survey was distributed via e-mail and included information about the research that was being conducted and specifics about the instrument. No questions on the survey were required to be answered to ensure a subject's ability to leave the survey at any time or skip any

questions they do not want to answer. The director of the Academic Success Center reached out to the students selected to participate to maximize confidentiality with the subjects.

Data Analysis

Students answered each item on the survey and once all of the responses were collected, the answers were recorded for each item for the ease of comparison. The mean, standard deviation, frequency, and correlation was taken for different open-ended data and the qualitative data were analyzed to note trends in responses. Trends in open-ended responses were grouped together to determine the frequency of different experiences. These data were utilized to answer the research questions and determine how living with a roommate impacts a student's residential experience. Data were separated to measure the difference between that impact for upperclassman and first-year students. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 24 was utilized to analyze all data presented in this study.

Chapter IV

Findings

Profile of the Sample

The subjects of the study were Rowan University students with an on-campus housing assignment and a disability registered with the Academic Success Center for the Fall 2016–Spring 2017 academic year. Surveys were distributed to the entire population of 111 students and 81 responses were received for a return rate of approximately 73%. The survey was distributed electronically via Qualtrics with the option of a student taking a paper version in the Academic Success Center if they were unable to complete the electronic version. A total of 53 of the responding population participated in the study via the online system, while 28 of the responding population completed a paper copy of the instrument. Items one through four on the study instrument asked demographic questions related to class-year, gender, current residence hall, and number of roommates.

Table 4.1 details the class year of the subjects in the study. A total of 26% of the subjects were first-year students, 21% were sophomore students, 27% were junior students, 16% were senior students, and 10% of the subjects identified with a different class year. Table 4.1 also shows the distribution of the gender of students of that participated in the study. A total of 40% of the subjects were female, 53% were male, and 7% selected that they have a different gender identity.

All students that participated in the study had an on-campus housing assignment for the 2016-2017 academic year. The students living in on-campus housing assignments lived in both first-year residence halls and upper-class apartment complexes. While students in need of housing accommodations for a physical disability are housed in

specific complexes that are ADA accessible, students without physical disabilities can be assigned to any on-campus housing option. Table 4.1 shows the distribution of where students lived on campus. A total of 11% of subjects lived in the Whitney Center, 19% in Townhouses, 15% in Rowan Boulevard, 4% in Edgewood Park Apartments, 6% in Triad Apartments, and 11% in Holly Pointe Commons for a total of 66% of subjects living in upper-class or air-conditioned communities. A total of 5% of subjects lived in the Magnolia and Willow area, 10% in Mimosa, 8% in the Mullica, Oak, Laurel, and Evergreen area, and 11% in Chestnut for a total of 34% of subjects living in first-year communities. As indicated in Table 4.1, 26% of subjects were first-year students and 74% of subjects were upper-class students. This discrepancy is explained by upper-class students that have an accommodation that can only be satisfied by a specific residence hall.

The final demographics question asked was related to the number of roommates a student had. The results in Table 4.1 show that 38% of subjects had one roommate, 17% had two roommates, 30% had three roommates, 3% had four roommates, and 12% had five roommates. Most first-year halls have bedrooms that house two or three students, while most apartment complexes have units that house four or more students. The number of roommates a student has impacts the likelihood that they could have a roommate conflict and is more likely to influence their residential experience.

All of the demographics questions were meant to gain insight into the population of students that participated in the study. Gaining this information gives insight into conflicts that may be unique to first-year students versus upper-class students and

provides numerical insight into what students make up the population of students with disabilities that live on campus.

Table 4.1

Demographics (N=81)

Category	Sub-category	f	%
Class	Other	8	9.9
	Senior	13	16
	Junior	22	27.2
	Sophomore	17	21
	First-Year	21	25.9
Gender	Other	6	7.4
	Male	43	53.1
	Female	32	39.5
Residence Hall	The Whitney Center	9	11.1
	Townhouses	15	18.5
	Magnolia/ Willow	4	4.9
	Rowan Boulevard	12	14.8
	Mimosa	8	10
	Mullica/ Oak/ Laurel/ Evergreen	7	8.6
	Edgewood Park Apartments	3	3.7
	Chestnut	9	11.1
	Triad Apartments	5	6.2
	Holly Pointe Commons	9	11.1
Number of Roommates	1	31	38
	2	14	17
	3	24	30
	4	2	3
	5	10	12

Analysis of the Data

Research question 1. What impact does living with a roommate have on a student with disabilities' residential experience?

Items 13 and 14 from the study instrument were analyzed to provide insight into how a student with disabilities' residential experience is impacted by an experience with a roommate. Item 13 was formatted like a multiple-choice question and asked about when a subject disclosed their disability to their roommate. Item 14 collected Likert scale data on a subject's comfort with a roommate, preparation to live with a roommate, and whether they had experienced different treatment because of a disclosed disability.

There are many factors that impact a student with disabilities' residential experience. These include a student's comfort with disclosing their disability, whether they feel their roommate treats them differently because of their disability, if they have had a conflict with their roommate because of their disability, if they are comfortable communicating with their roommate, if they felt prepared living with a roommate, if their roommate is understanding of their disability, and if they feel their roommate has had an impact on their disability. Table 4.2 includes the frequencies and percentages for when a subject told their roommate about their disability. A total of 25.9% of subjects never disclosed their disability, 25.9% disclosed it prior to moving in, 21% disclosed it at the beginning of the semester, and 27.2% disclosed it after getting to know their roommate. This indicates that 74.1% of students felt comfortable or obligated to disclose their disability to their roommate.

Table 4.2

Disclosure of Disability to Roommates (N=81)

Disclosed	<i>f</i>	%
After getting to know them	22	27.2
Beginning of the semester	17	21
Before moving in	21	25.9
Did not disclose	21	25.9
Missing=0		

Table 4.3 provides the information for a series of Likert scale items including the means, standard deviation, frequencies, and percentages for data collected. Items are arranged from most to least positive using mean scores. Responses indicate that students agreed most with the statement, “I have had conflicts with my roommate because of my disability,” with 57.9% of respondents indicating some level of agreement. The statement subjects disagreed most with was, “I feel comfortable communicating with my roommate,” with 65.5% of respondents indicating that they either somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement.

Table 4.3

Roommate Experience (N=81)

(5=Strongly Agree, 4=Somewhat Agree, 3=Neutral, 2=Somewhat Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree)

	Strongly Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Neutral		Somewhat Agree		Strongly Agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
I have had conflicts with my roommate because of my disability ($n=76$, $M=3.68$, $SD=1.134$) Missing=5	2	2.6	11	13.6	19	25	21	27.6	23	30.3
My roommate has had a negative impact on my college experience ($n=79$, $M=3.38$, $SD=1.254$) Missing=2	10	12.7	8	10.1	17	21.5	30	38	14	17.7
I feel my roommate treats me differently because of my disability ($n=75$, $M=2.95$, $SD=1.184$) Missing=6	8	10.7	23	30.7	16	21.3	21	28	7	9.3
I was reluctant to disclose the nature of my disability to my roommate ($n=80$, $M=2.81$, $SD=1.360$) Missing=1	17	21.3	22	27.5	9	11.3	23	28.8	9	11.3
I felt prepared to live with a roommate ($N=81$, $M=2.78$, $SD=1.049$)	12	14.8	16	19.8	34	42	16	19.8	3	3.7
My roommate is understanding of my disability ($n=73$, $M=2.67$, $SD=1.323$) Missing=8	16	21.9	22	30.1	14	19.2	12	16.4	9	12.3

Table 4.3 (Continued)

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>		<i>Somewhat Disagree</i>		<i>Neutral</i>		<i>Somewhat Agree</i>		<i>Strongly Agree</i>	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
I feel comfortable communicating with my roommate ($N=81$, $M=2.31$, $SD=1.169$)	22	27.2	31	38.3	14	17.3	9	11.1	5	6.2

Research question 2. Is there a significant relationship between living with a roommate on a student’s residential experience and their class status (e.g. freshman to senior)?

Item 14 and the demographic question about class year were utilized to help answer this research question. Item 14 was a Likert scale item that prompted the subjects to indicate their agreement to a series of statements. As this was a full population study, the Pearson Correlation was used in SPSS. There were no significant relationships between class year and at the .01 or .05 levels.

Research question 3. What challenges did students with disabilities face while living with a roommate?

Items 5 through 12 and 20 were used to analyze data to draw conclusions about this research question. Item 5 was a multiple-choice question that asked students how they first met the roommate they were assigned to. While students were given the option of selecting all that apply, no student selected more than one option for how they first met their roommate. Item 6 was a multiple-choice question that asked students to rank their first impression of their roommate and item 7 was a yes or no question that asked students if they had a different roommate than they were originally assigned to. Item 8

was an open-ended question that asked students when and how they changed roommates and item 9 was a multiple-choice question that asked why they changed roommates. Item 10 was a multiple-choice question that asked students what conflicts they experienced with roommates. This was structured so students could select all that applied to them. Items 11 and 12 were open-ended questions about what steps a resident took to resolve a conflict and whether those steps were successful. While they were given the option to explain why those steps were or were not successful, no subject provided an answer other than yes or no. Finally, item 20 was an open-ended question that asked a student about self-advocacy skills.

Table 4.4 displays data related to a student's initial experience with their roommate and whether their current roommate is their original roommate. Frequencies were utilized to identify commonalities in a students' experience with their roommate. The first item on the table asked subjects how they met their roommate. Students had several listed options and were able to select "Other" if their option was not on the table. The answers provided for students that selected "Other" were that they knew their assigned roommates from high school, that they lived with their roommate the previous year, or they met them in a college class. With 27.2% of respondents choosing it, the most subjects selected that they met their roommate for the first time during move in as opposed to any other means of meeting them. This indicates that most experiences with a roommate occurred during move-in, when students are not only acclimating to a new roommate, but a new place of residence. This prevents them from having time to get to know their roommate prior to move in and having a chance to discuss their living situation prior to living together. A total of 33.3% of students first interacted with their

roommates through social media or e-mail. As these interactions occurred electronically, there is the potential for miscommunication or for opinions to be formed based off of assumptions behind the meaning of exchanged messages. This can cause roommates to think negatively of each other before they even have the chance to meet and could have an impact on the potential for a roommate conflict.

The second item in Table 4.4 asked about a subject's first impression of their roommate. A total of 33.4% of subjects expressed that their first impression of their roommate was either bad or terrible. This is almost the same proportion of students that first talked to their roommates through electronic means, which may be an indicator of how first-impressions are impacted by the means a student uses to meet their roommate. A total of 50.6% of subjects had a positive first impression of their roommate. It is important to consider what factors could change a student's first impression of their roommate. Different experiences could change a negative experience to a long-term positive one or vice versa.

Table 4.4

First Experience with Roommates (N=81)

Item	Selection	f	%
How did you first meet the roommate you were assigned to?	Added them on social media	13	16
	Called them	2	2.5
	E-mailed them	15	18.5
	Met them in person prior to move in	14	17.3
	Met them through the department	6	7.4
	Met them in person during move-in	22	27.2
	Knew them from high school	4	4.9
	Lived with them previous year	3	3.7
	Met them in class	2	2.5
	What was your first impression?	Great	20
Okay		21	25.9
Undecided		13	16
Bad		16	19.8
Terrible		11	13.6

As a student's experience with their roommate develops, this can cause conflict for students who do not have positive experiences with their roommates. Table 4.5 identifies different conflicts that students may experience with their roommates and what steps they took to resolve those conflicts. When reflecting on personal conflicts with a roommate, subjects were provided with a list of 13 potential causes of conflict and the option of "none" to indicate they did not have a conflict while living with roommates. A total of 73.1% of respondents indicated that communication was a component of their roommate conflicts, 46.3% expressed cleanliness was an issue, 40.3% had issues with their roommate's guests, and 23.8% had issues with sleeping different hours than their roommates. Seven subjects solely selected that they experienced no conflict with their

roommates, leaving 60 subjects that actively expressed they had a conflict with their roommate. Subjects in the study had the opportunity to select as many conflicts that were relevant to their roommate situation. Between the 60 respondents there were 170 conflict selections. This indicates that most residents experience multiple issues while living roommates.

Table 4.5

Conflicts

Item	Selection	<i>f</i>	%
What issues or conflicts have you had with your roommate (<i>n</i> =67)			
	Sleeping different hours	16	23.8
	Studying different hours	9	13.4
	Sharing food	9	13.4
	Using your stuff	7	10.4
	Guests	27	40.3
	Cleanliness	31	46.3
	Communication	49	73.1
	Alcohol use	2	3
	Laundry	1	1.5
	Noise	12	17.9
	Religion	1	1.5
	Pet Peeves	6	9
	None	7	10.4
What steps did you take to resolve those issues? (<i>n</i> =51)			
	Contacted staff	10	19.6
	Spoke with roommate	19	37.3
	Avoided roommate	22	43.1
Were these steps successful? (<i>n</i> =45)			
	Yes	18	40
	No	27	60

A key component of conflict is how a resident responds to that conflict. The question, “Thinking of the conflicts you noted above, what steps did you take to resolve those issues?” was presented as an open-ended question on the study instrument. All of the responses were related to getting staff involved, talking to their roommate themselves, or actively avoiding the situation entirely. Of the 51 responses, a total of 19.6% consulted with a staff member, 37.3% spoke with their roommate themselves, and 43.1% avoided their roommate. When asked if the steps they took were successful, 60% of subjects indicated that the steps they took were not successful. The large number of students that immediately consulted with staff or avoided their roommate and the lack of success subjects had with their roommate, indicates that there might be an advocacy issue with these students that is preventing them from communicating with their roommates themselves.

If a student lacks self-advocacy skills, they may have difficulty communicating with their roommate or appropriately expressing their needs to staff which can impact whether a roommate conflict is mediated. Table 4.6 details how students assessed their own self-advocacy skills. A total of 19.8% of subjects expressed their confidence in their advocacy abilities while 80.2% expressed some kind of difficulty with advocacy. Many students explained that they can advocate for others more effectively than they can advocate for themselves or that when they attempt to advocate for themselves, they do not have success with getting what they are advocating for. It is important to recognize the impact advocacy has on a student’s experience with their roommate.

Table 4.6

Advocacy (N=81)

Advocacy	<i>f</i>	%
Yes	16	19.8
No	29	35.8
Sometimes	5	6.2
I can advocate for others, but not for me	18	22.2
I have tried, but have not had success	13	16
Missing=0		

A student's inability to advocate for themselves may cause students to be granted a room change and may expedite the room change process. Table 4.7 analyzes all of the items on the study instrument related to changing roommates including how, when, and why a change of roommates occurred. A total of 51.9% of subjects indicated they had changed roommates at some point since the start of the year. At an institution that is experiencing a housing crisis, thereby resulting in significant room change waitlists, this is a startling proportion of students that participated in the study. This indicates that students with disabilities often are granted room changes, potentially in place of roommate mediations. Of the 28 respondents to how a change of roommates occurred, 71.4% indicated that their change of roommate was the result of them leaving the space, further confirming that they are being granted room changes more frequently. When asked when a roommate change occurred, 51.3% of respondents indicated that they changed roommates either at the end of the semester, or over break before the start of a new semester. The change of the semester is one of the most common times for room changes to be approved as there are an influx of vacancies in on-campus housing due to

students graduating, transferring, or electing not to return in the spring semester. The high proportion that changed roommates at that time indicates that room changes for students with disabilities may be prioritized at that time due to ongoing conflicts.

Table 4.7

Changing Roommates

Item	Selection	<i>f</i>	%
Is your current roommate your original roommate? (<i>N</i> =81)	Yes	42	51.9
	No	39	48.1
How did you change roommates? (<i>n</i> =28)	Swapped into a friend's room	7	25
	Room change	13	46.4
	They moved out	8	28.6
When did you change roommates? (<i>n</i> =37)	Beginning of year	6	16.2
	During the semester	12	32.4
	At the end of the semester	4	10.8
	Over winter break	15	40.6
Why did you change roommates? (<i>n</i> =34)	Disagreement	8	23.5
	Disliked each other	6	17.7
	Moved in with a friend	5	14.7
	Did not connect with each other	5	14.7
	Difference in values	10	29.4

Finally, subjects were asked why they changed roommates. Subjects were given the opportunity to indicate that there was a different reason they changed roommates than the options provided to them. Of the 34 respondents, 29.4% selected “other” and all explanations provided were centered around a difference in values. A total of 23.5% of

respondents indicated that a disagreement lead to a change of roommates, 17.7% indicated they shared a mutual dislike with assigned roommates, 14.7% indicated that a lack of connection lead to a change of roommates, and 14.7% expressed that they elected to move into a room with a friend. A majority of the reasons behind a subject moving are directly related to the conflicts experienced with roommates.

Research question 4. Does the level of support students receive from staff impact how prepared they are to communicate and negotiate with roommates?

Items 15 through 19 were analyzed about how supported a student felt by staff. Item 15 was a multiple-choice question that asked subjects for their first impression of staff and frequencies and percentages were utilized to analyze collected data. Items 16 and 17 were open-ended questions that asked about what steps residence life staff took to resolve issues with roommates and whether those steps were successful. From the responses received, commonalities were identified and frequencies were utilized to draw conclusions from data. Item 18 was an multiple-choice question intending to learn about a student's comfort disclosing their disability to staff. Item 19 was a series of Likert scale statements that allowed subjects to rate their agreement to a series of statements about experience with residence life staff members.

Table 4.8 provides insight into a student with disabilities first impression of a first experience with residence life staff. A majority of the subjects at 65.4% had an "okay" or "undecided" first impression of residence life staff. The criteria for both of those options was centered around being unsure whether residence life staff was going to be able to appropriately support a student. Only 18.5% of subjects had a "bad" or "terrible" experience with staff. This is a positive indicator that students were not willing to make

judgements about someone that was in a position to act as a role model, support, and resource to them.

Table 4.8

First Impression of Staff (N=81)

First Impression	<i>f</i>	%
Great	13	16
Okay	33	40.7
Undecided	20	24.7
Bad	10	12.3
Terrible	5	6.2

Table 4.9 analyzes the steps residence life staff took to resolve a roommate conflict and whether those steps were successful. While in Table 4.6, only 10 or 19.6% of subjects indicated that they went to staff as their first step in a roommate conflict, there were 47 responses to steps that staff took to resolve an issue, indicating that most students eventually get staff involved if personal attempts at resolving a conflict are not successful. A total of 46.8% of respondents indicated that they felt staff did nothing to help resolve an issue with a roommate. Feeling like staff are not taking appropriate steps to resolve an issue has a substantial impact on a student's experience with staff. Only 8.5% of students indicated that staff had a roommate mediation or revisited the roommate contract with them. This is surprising as both of those are generally supposed to precede any type of room change or referral, except in extenuating circumstances. That they were not first steps staff took supports the previous finding that these students are being prioritized for room changes and also suggests that they may not be receptive to

mediation attempts. A student not being receptive to resolution attempts by staff may also be the reason that students feel staff is not doing anything to help them. This may be represented in the 62.5% of respondents that felt the steps staff took were not successful.

Table 4.9

Residence Life Staff Steps

Item	Selection	<i>f</i>	%
What steps did residence life staff take to resolve those issues? (<i>n</i> =47)	Completed a room change for resident	4	8.5
	Completed a room change for roommate	4	8.5
	Mediation	3	6.4
	Revised roommate contract	1	2.1
	Referred to another staff member	13	27.7
	Nothing	22	46.8
	Were these steps successful? (<i>n</i> =40)	Yes	15
No		25	62.5

A student's experience with staff is also dependent on whether they felt comfortable disclosing personal disability to staff members. Table 4.10 displays the responses subjects provided related to when they disclosed personal disabilities to residence life staff. A majority of respondents at 59.3% indicated that they never disclosed a disability to staff member. This may indicate a lack of comfort with staff or that the student felt their disability was not relevant to their living arrangements. Students may also have wanted to avoid having their disability play a role in a staff member's interactions with them. A total of 30.9% of subjects disclosed their disability at the start

of the semester, 6.2% after getting to know residence life staff, and 3.7% before moving in. This indicates that how well a student knows residence life staff has little impact on whether they disclose their disability.

Table 4.10

Disclosure of Disability to Staff (N=81)

Disclosed	<i>f</i>	%
After getting to know them	5	6.2
Beginning of semester	25	30.9
Before moving in	3	3.7
Did not disclose	48	59.3

Table 4.11 provides the information for a series of Likert scale items including the means, standard deviation, frequencies, and percentages for data collected. Items are arranged from most to least positive using mean scores. Responses indicate that students agreed most with the statement, “Overall, my experience with residence life staff was good,” with 60.1% of respondents indicating some level of agreement. The statement subjects disagreed most with was “I feel like staff treated me differently because of my disability,” with 58.7% of respondents indicating that they either somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement.

Table 4.11

Staff Experience (N=81)

(5=Strongly Agree, 4=Somewhat Agree, 3=Neutral, 2=Somewhat Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree)

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>		<i>Somewhat Disagree</i>		<i>Neutral</i>		<i>Somewhat Agree</i>		<i>Strongly Agree</i>	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Overall, my experience with residence life staff was good ($n=80$, $M=3.58$, $SD=1.145$) Missing=1	6	7.4	7	8.8	19	23.8	31	38.8	17	21.3
I feel comfortable going to residence life staff about a conflict ($n=72$, $M=3.24$, $SD=1.081$) Missing=10	3	4.2	18	25	18	25	25	34.7	8	11.1
My concerns were addressed in a timely manner when I reported them ($n=58$, $M=2.95$, $SD=1.206$) Missing=24	8	13.8	14	24.1	14	24.1	17	29.3	5	8.6
I feel like my needs are heard and understood by residence life staff ($n=64$, $M=2.73$, $SD=1.275$) Missing=18	15	23.4	15	23.4	8	12.5	24	37.5	2	3.1
I feel supported by residence life staff ($n=77$, $M=2.62$, $SD=1.148$) Missing=5	12	15.6	29	37.7	17	22.1	14	18.2	5	6.5

Table 4.11 (Continued)

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>		<i>Somewhat Disagree</i>		<i>Neutral</i>		<i>Somewhat Agree</i>		<i>Strongly Agree</i>	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
I feel satisfied with the solutions offered to me by residence life staff ($n=56$, $M=2.52$, $SD=1.335$) Missing=26	17	30.4	13	23.2	11	19.6	10	17.9	5	8.9
I would feel/ felt comfortable disclosing my disability to staff ($n=78$, $M=2.45$, $SD=1.101$) Missing=3	17	21	26	32.1	21	25.9	11	14.1	3	3.8
I feel like residence life staff are prepared to assist me with my needs ($n=76$, $M=2.42$, $SD=1.074$) Missing=5	15	19.7	31	40.8	15	19.7	13	17.1	2	2.6
I feel like staff treated me differently because of my disability ($n=54$, $M=2.26$, $SD=1.291$) Missing=28	19	35.2	19	23.5	2	3.7	11	20.4	3	5.6

Chapter V

Summary, Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary of the Study

This study evaluated students with disabilities that live on campus and attempted to find trends in roommate conflicts that have occurred, staff roles in those conflicts, and areas of growth. It focused on assessing a student with disability's experience with their roommate and with staff to identify areas that students feel unsupported in. This study also examined the nature of a student's roommate conflict and how their disability impacted that conflict. Finally, this study assessed a student's comfort with living with a roommate, with disclosing their disability, and with advocating for their needs.

The subjects of the study were all students that live on campus and have a disability registered with the Academic Success Center. A total population study was conducted with 111 surveys distributed both electronically and through a paper copy. The instrument used for this study was adapted from two instruments and incorporated a variety of qualitative and quantitative data. There were 20 items on the instrument including demographic questions. Some questions were multiple choice, scaled, and open-ended. Eighty-one responses were received through both methods of data collection.

Data were analyzed using frequencies, means, standard deviations, and correlations where appropriate. Some of the research questions focused on relationships between variables, resulting in the need for varying statistics to appropriately draw conclusions for the research questions. Data were analyzed in those ways using SPSS.

Open-ended data were grouped together according to trends in responses. Once like responses were grouped, frequencies were utilized to determine commonalities between that item on the study instrument.

Discussion of Findings

The literature review revealed that there is little to no current research on students with disabilities that live with a roommate. Thus, the data collected during this study were some of the first collected on the topic. The data collected and the learning theories used in the theoretical framework were analyzed to support the findings of the research study. The data focused on collecting information about roommate conflicts a student has experienced, what they did personally to resolve those situations, what staff did to resolve those situations, and general information on living with a roommate. The data indicated that students with disabilities feel like their roommates treated them slightly differently because of their disability and that there is a relationship between the quality of their roommate experience and the quality of their experience at Rowan University.

All research questions were supported by the necessity of personal wellness being prioritized to allow an individual to feel comfortable and safe in a living environment. If a student is experiencing a conflict with a roommate, it may impact their emotional and social wellness as demonstrated by the experiences students indicated they had with roommates and at colleges and institutions. Maintaining relative contentment in the six dimensions of wellness is essential for an individual to thrive in any environment (Hettler, 1976).

Research question 1. What impact does living with a roommate have on a student with disabilities' residential experience?

The key findings of the impact that living with a roommate has on a student with disabilities' residential experience were related to disclosure of a disability and the negative experiences a student with disabilities had with a roommate. Most students with disabilities chose to disclose a disability to a roommate resulting in more students that had the potential to feel like the needs associated with their disability influenced experiences with a roommate. Students with disabilities also noted that they tend to have a negative experience with roommates, which directly impacts their residential experience. Students did not feel prepared or ready to live with a roommate and felt that roommates treated them differently as a result of a disability.

Living with a roommate is a significant transition for most students, especially for students that may have had their own bedroom prior to moving on campus. Based off of Chickering's findings regarding students experiencing transition, students are experiencing a lot of overwhelming changes and regardless of how anticipated those transitions are, students may struggle with coping with those changes (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006).

Furthermore, students could be developing any number of identities as they attend college and attempt to learn more about who they are. As Chickering identified, development of identity requires students to learn, grow, and experience challenging situations to gain a stronger understanding of who they are and what is important to them. As a student is moving towards interdependence, they are experiencing all of the challenges that accompany personal independence (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Research question 2. Is there a significant relationship between living with a roommate on a student's residential experience and their class status (e.g. freshman to senior)?

The data collected did not find that there were any significant relationships between what year in school students are and their experiences with a roommate. It is possible that despite where students are in the transition period of living independently, their experiences with developing their identities still have a substantial impact on their overall experience. Specifically, looking at the fourth vector of identity development, the importance of mature, interpersonal relationships are incredibly important. If students do not have interpersonal support, they will be unable to fully develop their identity, whether that be acceptance of their disability or some other personal identity that is important to them (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Research question 3. What challenges did students with disabilities face while living with a roommate?

A key finding of the study in the area of challenges students with disabilities face was the lack of advocacy skills students possess. Less than 20% of subjects expressed that they felt they could advocate for themselves. A majority of the subjects in the study indicated that when they had a roommate conflict they either avoided their roommate or got staff involved. Specifically, a student's inability to advocate for themselves has the potential to impact their identity development. Several vectors relate to interpersonal competence, interpersonal development, and developing purpose (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Advocacy impacts a student's development in those areas as if they cannot

advocate for themselves, they are not going to develop interpersonally in a productive way and may have a skewed vision about their purpose.

Research question 4. Does the level of support a student receives from staff impact how prepared they are to communicate and negotiate with a roommate?

Another important finding of the study was how staff interact with students with disabilities. Many students expressed that while they felt comfortable going to residence life staff with a conflict and they generally had positive experiences with staff, they did not feel like staff knew how to support them. They also generally felt that staff was unprepared to meet their needs. This indicated that residence life staff may not have the appropriate resources to adequately work with and support this population of students. Staff are also meant to assist students transitioning to new experiences. If a student does not have support while they are transitioning, they will have a significantly more difficult experience (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006).

Conclusions

Students with disabilities living on campus have an additional set of struggles as they have to learn how to navigate living with a roommate and sharing a space with another person. This study investigated the unique challenges these students may face as a result of their disability while living with a roommate. The findings emphasize the importance of supporting students as they live with a roommate and preparing them to have the skills to do so. While many conflicts stem from a lack of communication, there are generally underlying concerns that students have and are unable to verbalize their thoughts and feelings on it.

The results of the study confirmed that students with disabilities are more inclined to roommate conflicts and that there is a gap in the knowledge base for staff members working with these students. There was also compelling evidence that many students struggle with self-advocacy which had a noticeable contribution on the magnitude the conflict impacted their residential experience. While many students did report having positive experiences with roommates and staff, the students that did not share those opinions are in need of support and assistance to have a positive residential experience.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that living with a roommate has a substantial impact on a student's experience. While a student is transitioning to the experience of living with a roommate, many students indicated that they felt unprepared for that transition, which may have impacted their comfort with a roommate, which may have impacted how a roommate perceived them. Preparation is an essential part of living with a roommate as it lends itself to a student being able to communicate, negotiate, and advocate for personal needs. This also has impacts on how a student perceives their experience, because if they feel like they are struggling emotionally or socially, they may have additional difficulties with coping with their transition and with themselves. Students clearly feel some type of obligation to disclose a disability to a roommate which may be the result of a disability that impacts a student's living arrangements. This may cause students to disclose a disability before they are truly prepared to disclose that disability.

A student's class year had little to do with their experience with a roommate. This helps better prepare staff to work with students if they do not need to distinguish between different experiences of students in different class years. Staff will be more prepared to

meet the needs of students with disabilities if there is a consistent means of addressing and resolving a roommate conflict.

Students with disabilities experience a variety of conflicts and challenges while living with a roommate. Primary causes behind conflicts were caused by communication, guests, and difference in sleep hours. Based on this, it is evident that disagreements in lifestyle preferences are the primary cause of roommate conflicts, especially when a roommate indicates they have difficulty communicating their needs. A lack of communication lends itself to the large proportion of subjects that indicated they were having difficulty advocating for themselves. Communication and advocacy skills are integral to living with a roommate and negotiating shared spaces, and based on the findings it can be concluded that many students with disabilities struggle in those

Based on the findings, it can also be concluded that students felt supported by staff even if they felt staff were unprepared to work with them. Several students had negative experiences with staff with specific competencies such as support and preparedness, but still were willing to consult with residence life staff if a conflict arose and they had overall positive experiences with staff support and assistance. While students had overall positive experiences with staff, it is clear that the areas subjects identified as weaknesses impacted their ability to communicate and negotiate with a roommate.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, there are several suggestions that can improve future work with students with disabilities living with roommates. The most important change needs to be centered around staff training for students with

disabilities. The study indicated that residents did not feel as supported by staff, because they felt that most staff members did not know how to adequately work with them. By increasing training for those staff members, they will be able to support their students much more efficiently.

Another recommendation is an increase in programming for students with disabilities that live with a roommate. Such programming opportunities include focusing on communication skills, negotiating shared living spaces, a coaching program to create an additional support system for these students, and workshops on developing independent living skills. Implementing programs like these can ensure that students have the appropriate support systems and are in a place to be more prepared to live with a roommate. It will also give them the tools to more appropriately address roommate conflicts and communicate what their needs are if a conflict arises.

Recommendations for Further Research

The research that was conducted in this study is essential to being able to meet the needs of students with disabilities living on campus. As a result of this study, a revised instrument was created (Appendix H) to more allow more accurate data to be collected. The first change that was made was to make all language gender inclusive. There is a large demand for inclusive language and calling students “freshman” or upperclassman” excludes a population of students that does not identify as male. The appropriate gender inclusive terminology is “first-year” and “upper-class” students, which is the language used in the analysis of this study. The second change that was made was to remove all open-ended data and replace it with multiple choice options. Prior to conducting this study, there was not enough research to provide options for some of the questions. Many

students elected not to complete any open-ended questions, so providing answers for them will allow for more accurate data. The options provided in those previously open-ended questions were based on responses gathered during the study. The third and final change was to include a question asking students whether they have experienced a roommate conflict. The study that was completed did not ask that question, thus it relied on responses to other questions to infer whether a subject has had a roommate conflict.

Changes that were not made, but are recommended if this instrument is used in a future study would be to specifically write out the names of the residence halls to allow students to select one. Many students misspelled, abbreviated, or used the informal name of a residence hall or apartment complex, resulting in demographics data that had to be manually identified.

Research on working with students with disabilities is essential and will better prepare various areas of Student Affairs to work with this population of students. A follow up study can also be conducted to compare the experiences of students with disabilities to students without disabilities. This would provide relevant information on how much a disability impacts a student's experience.

Outside of using a more holistic research instrument to collect more accurate data, further research needs to be conducted on students with disabilities that live on campus. There is so little research currently on that topic, that it is vital for that knowledge base to be expanded. A student's residential experience is a significant part of their overall collegiate experience, and these students are particularly susceptible to negative experiences. Expanding on the research within this particularly area would give residence

life professionals insight into what they can do to better prepare undergraduate student staff and support students living with roommates.

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Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Approval

DHHS Federal Wide Assurance

Identifier: FWA00007111

IRB Chair Person: Harriet Hartman

IRB Director: Sreekant Murthy

Effective Date: 1/6/2017

eIRB Notice of Approval

STUDY PROFILE

Study ID: [Pro2016001426](#)

Title: The challenges of living with a roommate: THE impact on a student with disabilities' residential experience

Principal Investigator:	Burton Sisco	Study Coordinator:			
Co-Investigator(s):	Ashley Payne	Other Study Staff:	There are no items to display		
Sponsor:	Department Funded	Approval Cycle:	Twelve Months		
Risk Determination:	Minimal Risk	Device Determination:	Not Applicable		
Review Type:	Expedited	Expedited Category:	7	Exempt Category:	There are no items to display
Subjects:	75	Specimens:	0	Records:	

Appendix B

Academic Success Center Support



November 7, 2016

To Whom It May Concern,

May this letter confirm my support for Ashley Payne to be granted IRB approval to survey students with disabilities registered with the Academic Success Center.

I believe Ashley is doing important research that can only enhance understanding the needs of students with disabilities transitioning into the college environment.

Please contact me if I can provide any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Woodruff".

John Woodruff
Director, Academic Success Center
& Disability Resources
Savitz Hall 3rd Floor
Rowan University
201 Mullica Hill Road
Glassboro, NJ 08028

Appendix C

Katlyn Hale Permission

Payne, Ashley Marie

From: Katlyn Hale <hale1599@pacificu.edu>
Sent: Friday, November 4, 2016 1:15 PM
To: Payne, Ashley Marie
Subject: Re: Request for Survey

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Yes that is fine, please let me know if you need anything from me.
-Katlyn

Katlyn Hale, Psy.D. | Clinical Psychologist | West Hawaii School District

Confidentiality Notice: This message is intended for the sole use of the individual and entity to whom it is addressed, and may contain information that is privileged, confidential, and exempt from disclosure under applicable law. If you are not the addressee, nor authorized to receive for the addressee, you are hereby notified that you may not use, copy, disclose, or distribute to anyone the message or any information contained in the message. If you have received this message in error, please immediately advise the sender by reply email.

On Fri, Nov 4, 2016 at 7:12 AM, Payne, Ashley Marie <paynea82@rowan.edu> wrote:

Hello,

My name is Ashley Payne and I am currently pursuing my Masters in Higher Education Administration. I am conducting research for my Thesis at Rowan University. My research is on students with disabilities living with a roommate. While I was searching for different studies, I found your study "Should I Stay or Should I Go?" I wanted to request permission for me to adapt your survey for the study I am conducting. I found that your survey incorporated all of the areas about living with a roommate that I was hoping to incorporate in my study. I would also like to include a full copy of your survey in an appendix of my paper.

Please let me know if you find that permissible.

Sincerely,

Ashley Payne

Resident Director, Rowan University

Rowan Boulevard Apartments

[856-256-7471](tel:856-256-7471)

paynea82@rowan.edu



Appendix D

Instrument: Katlyn Hale's Roommate Satisfaction Survey

1. Study Title

Should I Stay or Should I Go: Roommate Satisfaction

2. Study Personnel

Katlyn Hale

Principle Graduate Student Investigator

Pacific University

Professional Psychology

Hale1599@pacificu.edu

503-938-0049

Tamara Tasker, Psy.D.

Faculty Advisor

Pacific University

Professional Psychology

tasker@pacificu.edu

503-352-2411

3. Study Invitation, Purpose, Location, and Dates

You are invited to participate in a research study on student retention and the relationship with roommate satisfaction. The project has been approved by the Pacific University IRB and will be completed by June 30, 2011. The study will take place via election survey. The results of this study will be used to inform roommate selection processes and conflict resolution processes.

4. Participant Characteristics and Exclusionary Criteria

All first-year students over the age of 18 that reside in University housing are welcome. Any first-year student under the age of 18 or that does not live in university housing will not be eligible to participate.

5. Study Materials and Procedures

After reading the consent form, if you agree to participate the survey will begin. At any point during the survey, you will be able to stop with no negative consequences or repercussions. If you agree to participate, you will complete a survey containing 37 questions that should take between 10-20 minutes to complete.

6. Risks, Risk Reduction Steps and Clinical Alternatives

a. Unknown Risks:

It is possible that participation in this study will expose you (or an embryo or fetus, if you are or become pregnant) to currently unforeseeable risks.

b. Anticipated Risks and Strategies to Minimize/Avoid:

The risks involved with this study are minimal and do not exceed those expected from routine daily living.

c. Advantageous Clinical Alternatives:

This study does not involve experimental clinical trial(s).

7. Adverse Event Handling and Reporting Plan

Any report of an adverse event or reaction would be met with consultation both of the department and the IRB committee

8. Direct Benefits and/or Payment to Participants

a. Benefit(s):

This study is non-beneficial.

b. Payment(s) or Reward(s):

Participants will have the option of entering to win one of two \$25 gift cards to Barnes & Noble.

9. Promise of Privacy

Names will not be needed on the survey and your survey responses cannot be linked with your email address. Thus, all data are confidential. Survey responses are collected by survey monkey and sent to me in aggregate form. All data collected will be kept on a password-protected computer and in a locked file.

10. Medical Care and Compensation In the Event of Accidental Injury

During your participation in this project, it is important to understand that you are not a Pacific University clinic patient or client, nor will you be receiving complete medical care as a result of your participation in this study. If you are injured during your participation in this study and it is not due to negligence by Pacific University, the researchers, or any organization associated with the research, you should not expect to receive compensation or medical care from Pacific University, the researchers, or any organization associated with the study.

11. Voluntary Nature of the Study

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Pacific University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without prejudice or negative consequences. If you choose to withdraw after beginning the study, you will not be eligible to enter to win a \$25 gift card.

12. Contacts and Questions

The researcher(s) will be happy to answer any questions you may have at any time during the course of the study. If you are not satisfied with the answers you receive, please call Pacific University's Institutional Review Board, at (503) 352-1478 to discuss your questions or concerns further. If you become injured in some way and feel it is related to your participation in this study, please contact the investigators and/or the IRB office. All concerns and questions will be kept in confidence.

13. Statement of Consent

I have read and understood the above information and all my questions have been answered. I am a first-year student 18 years of age or over, currently live in University housing, and agree to participate in the study.

By checking the YES box, you are agreeing to participate in the study.

If you do not wish to participate in the study, please check the NO box.

- Yes
- No

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

What ethnicity do you identify with?

*** Where do you currently live?**

- Burlingham
- Clark
- Gilbert
- McCormick
- Walter

How many roommates do you have?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

*** What is your current status?**

- First-Year (Freshman)
- Second-Year (Sophomore)
- Third-Year (Junior)
- Fourth-Year (Senior)

*** How did you first meet your original roommate? (i.e. the roommate you were assigned to at the beginning of the school year)**

Check as many as apply

- Added them on a social media network (e.g. Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, ect.)
- Called them
- Emailed them
- Met them in person (prior to move in)
- Met them in person (first time during move in)
- Other (please specify)

*** When you first met your original roommate what was your initial impression?**

- 5 Great - I immediately knew we were going to get along well and have no problems.
- 4
- 3 Undecided - We may or may not get along. I will have to wait till we move in to see.
- 2
- 1 Poor - I instantly knew we were going to have problems. I tried to change roommates immediately.

*** Is your current roommate your original roommate?**

(The roommate you were assigned to at the beginning of the school year)

Yes

No

*** When or how did you change roommates?**

During the 2nd two-weeks of the semester

Requested roommate change through Housing

Other (please specify)

*** Why did you change roommates?**

(check as many as apply)

Disagreement

Disliked each other

Moved in with a friend

Did not connect with each other

Other (please specify)

*** What problems/conflicts did you and your roommate have? Think of anything that was a problem that either you and your roommate solved together, required a RA, required mediation, or required the assistance of a RD or Residence housing.**

Mark as many as apply.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sleep cycle/time | <input type="checkbox"/> Communication Style |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Study Hours/Quiet Time | <input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol use/abuse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food & Food Sharing | <input type="checkbox"/> Laundry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sharing/Using Your stuff | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious Background/Beliefs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Privacy & Overnight Guests | <input type="checkbox"/> Pet Peeves |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cleanliness | <input type="checkbox"/> None |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) | |

Thinking about the problems you marked above, what processes did you use to resolve the problems and how satisfied were you with the process used?

(Mark as many as apply)

	Did you use?	How satisfied were you with the assistance you recieved?
Solved by ourselves	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Solved by ourselves using the "Talking Points" pamphlet provided at the beginning of the school year	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Required RA assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Required Mediation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Required RD assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Required assistance from Residence Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you were Somewhat or Completely Unsatisfied, what would have made the process better?

If you were Somewhat or Completely Unsatisfied, what would have made the process better?

*** What information do you think would be useful in selecting roommates?**

Check as many as apply. If "other" please elaborate what you think is important to know when selecting a roommate.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sleep habits (e.g. snoring, sleep walking, ect.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Bed time preference |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal interests (e.g. music, movies, ect.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Waking time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication style (e.g. collaborative, confrontational, ect) | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Study location preference (e.g. Room, library) | <input type="checkbox"/> Smoking preference |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conflict management style (e.g. non-confrontational, solution-oriented, control) | <input type="checkbox"/> How the dorm room will be used (e.g. study space, social space, ect.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual Orientation | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) | |

*** Are you planning on returning for the Spring semester?**

If No, please give a brief explanation of why you are not returning.

- Yes
- No

If you would like to be entered to win one of two \$25 gift cards please enter your contact information here.

This information will not be used to identify you as it will be collected separate from your survey data.

Name:
Email Address:
Phone Number:

Type your name in the box below and then print this page if you need a research participation receipt.


The person named below has participated in Katlyn Hale's Masters Thesis research "Should I stay or should I go: Roommate Satisfaction" (Fall 2010)

Name:

Thank you for participating in the study. If you have any questions please contact the Primary Investigator at hale1599@pacificu.edu

Appendix E

Amy Kampsen Permission

 Tue 10/18/2016 8:21 PM
Amy Kampsen <kamps008@umn.edu>
Re: Request for Interview Questions
To: Payne, Ashley Marie
[Bing Maps](#) + Get more at

Hello, Ashley.
Yes, you are welcome to use the interview questions from my study and am glad you find them useful.
I wish you the best with your thesis!

Amy

On Tue, Oct 18, 2016 at 5:37 PM, Payne, Ashley Marie <paynea82@rowan.edu> wrote:

Hello,

My name is Ashley Payne and I am currently pursuing my Masters in Higher Education Administration. I am conducting research for my Thesis at Rowan University. My research is on students with disabilities living with a roommate. While I was searching for different studies, I found your study "Personal, social, and institutional factors influencing college transition and adaption experiences for students with psychiatric disabilities." I wanted to request permission for me to adapt your interview questions for the study I am conducting. I found that your questions were extremely holistic and addressed multiple areas I am hoping to address in my own study. I would also like to include a full copy of your interview questions in an appendix of my paper.

Please let me know if you find that permissible. Thank you so much and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Ashley Payne

Resident Director, Rowan University


Rowan Boulevard Apartments

[856-256-7471](tel:856-256-7471)

paynea82@rowan.edu



--
Amy Kampsen, PhD
Director, Student Services
College of Education and Human Development
University of Minnesota
40A Education Sciences, 56 East River Road
Minneapolis, MN 55455
kamps008@umn.edu
Ph: 612-624-4899
Appt: 612-625-0772
Find us on Facebook! www.facebook.com/CEHDundergrad

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Appendix F

Instrument: Semi-Structured Student Interviews

SEMISTRUCTURED STUDENT INTERVIEWS

Transitioning and adapting to college:

1. Describe the process you took in making the decision to go to college.
 - a. Who were the people or events that influenced your decision?
2. Describe how you experienced the differences from high school to college when you first started college.
 - a. Academics?
 - b. Friendships?
 - c. Support systems?
3. Describe your relationships with friends and family and how they may have changed since coming to college.
4. What was your first year of college like?
 - a. What experiences stand out in your mind?
 - b. What about the academic experiences stand out for you?
 - c. What, if anything, would you do differently during your first year?
5. Describe your overall college experience.
 - a. What activities are you involved in both on and off campus?
 - b. Describe the friendships you have made.
 - c. How has the college environment influenced your experience at college?
6. How have family and/or friends contributed to your experience in college?
 - a. With whom do you spend your time?

7. Who or what is the biggest support for you while in college?

Disclosure of Disability:

1. Describe the nature of your disability.
 - a. Describe how you experience symptoms.
 - b. Describe treatment, if any, for your disability.
2. Who was the first person on campus to whom you disclosed your disability and why?
3. Tell me about the process of disclosing your disability to staff, friends and faculty at the university
 - a. What factors do you consider when deciding whether or not to disclose your disability?
4. What has been your experience after disclosing your disability to staff, friends, or faculty at the university?
 - a. Give examples of positive experiences.
 - b. Give examples of negative experiences.
5. What would either encourage you or prevent you from disclosing your disability?

Support Services:

1. What support services do you use on or off campus?
 - a. How did you find out about the services?
2. What has been your experience with support services on campus?
 - a. What has been most helpful?
 - b. What do you need more of in terms of support services?

3. What accommodations do you receive, if any, in relation to your disability?
 - a. What was the process of obtaining the accommodations?
 - b. Are there accommodations that you feel you need but were not offered?
4. Describe your experiences with the universities policies and procedures.
 - a. In what ways did you feel supported?
 - b. What would you like to see changed?

End: Is there anything else you would like to add that we did not discuss? Do you have any concerns about this process that you would like to discuss? Ending Comment: Thank you for your time in responding to the interview questions. If you would like to review the transcribed copy of this interview to be sure I have captured your responses accurately, I will be happy to provide you with one. If you have further information you would like to provide, please feel free to contact me. Again, your name and any other identifying information will not be included in the written document. If you have any concerns about this process, please discuss this with me at any time.

Appendix G

Instrument Used in Study

Living with a Roommate Questionnaire

1. What is your class year?
 - First-year
 - Sophomore
 - Junior
 - Senior
 - Other
2. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Other
3. Where do you currently live on campus?
4. How many roommates do you have?
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
5. How did you first meet the roommate you were assigned to at the beginning of the year? Check all that apply:
 - Added them on social media
 - Called them
 - E-mailed them
 - Met them in person prior to move in
 - Met them through the department
 - Met them in person during move-in
 - Other (please specify):

6. When you first met the roommate you were originally assigned to, what was your first impression?
- 5: Great – I immediately knew we were going to get along and have no problems
 - 4: Okay – I knew we weren't going to be friends, but we would be able to live together without any problems.
 - 3: Undecided – we may or may not get along.
 - 2: Bad – I knew we were going to have some conflicts, but nothing that meant we couldn't live together.
 - 1: Terrible – I instantly knew we were going to have severe conflicts. I put in a room change request to get a new assignment.
7. Is your current roommate your original roommate?
- Yes
 - No
8. If no, when or how did you change roommates?
9. In no, why did you change roommates?
- Disagreement
 - Disliked each other
 - Moved in with a friend
 - Did not connect with each other
 - Other (please specify):
10. What issues or conflicts have you and your roommate had?
- Sleeping different hours
 - Studying different hours
 - Sharing food
 - Using your stuff
 - Overnight guests
 - Untrustworthy guests
 - Cleanliness
 - Communication

- Alcohol use
- Laundry
- Noise
- Religion
- Pet Peeves
- None

11. Thinking of the conflicts you noted above, what steps did you take to resolve those issues?

12. Were these steps successful? Why or why not?

13. When did you disclose your disability to your roommate?

- The beginning of the semester
- After getting to know them
- Before I moved in
- I did not disclose it

14. Please rank your agreement with the following statements:

5 = strongly agree, 4=slightly agree, 3=neutral, 2=slightly disagree, 1=strongly disagree, 0=N/A

I was reluctant to disclose the nature of my disability to my roommate. 0 1 2 3 4 5

I feel my roommate treats me differently because of my disability. 0 1 2 3 4 5

I have had conflicts with my roommate because of my disability. 0 1 2 3 4 5

I feel comfortable communicating with my roommate. 0 1 2 3 4 5

I felt prepared to live with a roommate. 0 1 2 3 4 5

My roommate is understanding of my disability. 0 1 2 3 4 5

My roommate has had a negative impact on my college experience. 0 1 2 3 4 5

15. When you first met the residence life staff in your building, what was your first impression?

- 5: Great – I immediately knew they were going to understand my needs and support me.
- 4: Okay – I knew they understood a little about how to work with me.
- 3: Undecided – I wasn't sure if they were going to be able to support and help me.

- 2: Bad – I knew they were not going to be able to understand me, but they were going to try.
- 1: Terrible – I knew they did not understand my needs and were unable/unwilling to help me.

16. Thinking of the conflicts you may have had with your roommate(s), what steps did residence life staff take to resolve those issues?

17. Were these steps successful? Why or why not?

18. When did you disclose your disability to residence life staff?

- The beginning of the semester
- After getting to know them
- Before I moved in
- I did not disclose it

19. Please rank your agreement with the following statements:

5 = strongly agree, 4=slightly agree, 3=neutral, 2=slightly disagree, 1=strongly disagree, 0=N/A

I feel supported by residence life staff.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I feel like residence life staff are prepared to assist me with my needs.	0	1	2	3	4	5
My concerns were addressed in a timely manner when I reported them.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I feel satisfied with the solutions offered to me by residence life staff.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I feel like my needs are heard and understood by residence life staff.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I would feel/ felt comfortable disclosing my disability to staff.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I feel like staff treated me differently because of my disability.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I feel comfortable going to residence life staff about a conflict.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Overall, my experience with residence life staff was good.	0	1	2	3	4	5

20. Do you feel like you can advocate for yourself? Why or why not?

Appendix H

Revised Instrument for Future Research

Living with a Roommate Questionnaire

Demographics

1. What is your class year?
 - First-year
 - Sophomore
 - Junior
 - Senior
 - Other
2. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Other
3. Where do you currently live on campus?
4. How many roommates do you have?
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5

Living with a Roommate Questions

5. Have you ever experienced a roommate conflict?
- Yes
 - No
6. How did you first meet the roommate you were assigned to at the beginning of the year? Check all that apply:
- Added them on social media
 - Called them
 - E-mailed them
 - Met them in person prior to move in
 - Met them through the Academic Success Center
 - Met them through the housing department
 - Met them in person during move-in
 - Knew them from high school
7. When you first met the roommate you were originally assigned to, what was your first impression?
- 5: Great – I immediately knew we were going to get along and have no problems
 - 4: Okay – I knew we weren't going to be friends, but we would be able to live together without any problems.
 - 3: Undecided – we may or may not get along.
 - 2: Bad – I knew we were going to have some conflicts, but nothing that meant we couldn't live together.
 - 1: Terrible – I instantly knew we were going to have severe conflicts. I put in a room change request to get a new assignment.
8. Is your current roommate your original roommate?
- Yes
 - No
9. If no, how did you change roommates?
- I moved out

- They moved out
10. In no, why did you change roommates?
- Disagreement
 - Disliked each other
 - Moved in with a friend
 - Did not connect with each other
 - Difference in values
11. What issues or conflicts have you and your roommate had?
- Sleeping different hours
 - Studying different hours
 - Sharing food
 - Using your stuff
 - Guests
 - Cleanliness
 - Communication
 - Alcohol use
 - Laundry
 - Noise
 - Religion
 - Pet Peeves
 - None
12. What steps did you take to resolve those issues?
- Contacted staff
 - Spoke with roommate
 - Avoided roommate
13. Were these steps successful?
- Yes
 - No
14. When did you disclose your disability to your roommate?
- The beginning of the semester

- After getting to know them
- Before I moved in
- I did not disclose it

15. Please rank your agreement with the following statements:

5 = strongly agree, 4=slightly agree, 3=neutral, 2=slightly disagree, 1=strongly disagree, 0=N/A

I was reluctant to disclose the nature of my disability to my roommate.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I feel my roommate treats me differently because of my disability.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I have had conflicts with my roommate because of my disability.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I feel comfortable communicating with my roommate.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I felt prepared to live with a roommate.	0	1	2	3	4	5
My roommate is understanding of my disability.	0	1	2	3	4	5
My roommate has had a negative impact on my college experience.	0	1	2	3	4	5

16. When you first met the residence life staff in your building, what was your first impression?

- 5: Great – I immediately knew they were going to understand my needs and support me.
- 4: Okay – I knew they understood a little about how to work with me.
- 3: Undecided – I wasn't sure if they were going to be able to support and help me.
- 2: Bad – I knew they were not going to be able to understand me, but they were going to try.
- 1: Terrible – I knew they did not understand my needs and were unable/unwilling to help me.

17. Thinking of the conflicts you may have had with your roommate(s), what steps did residence life staff take to resolve those issues?

- Complete a room change for you
- Complete a room change for your roommate
- Mediation
- Completion of a new roommate contract
- Referred to higher level staff
- Nothing

- I did not feel comfortable reporting it

18. Were these steps successful?

- Yes
- No

19. When did you disclose your disability to residence life staff?

- The beginning of the semester
- After getting to know them
- Before I moved in
- I did not disclose it

20. Please rank your agreement with the following statements:

5 = strongly agree, 4=slightly agree, 3=neutral, 2=slightly disagree, 1=strongly disagree, 0=N/A

I feel supported by residence life staff.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I feel like residence life staff are prepared to assist me with my needs.	0	1	2	3	4	5
My concerns were addressed in a timely manner when I reported them.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I feel satisfied with the solutions offered to me by residence life staff.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I feel like my needs are heard and understood by residence life staff.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I would feel/ felt comfortable disclosing my disability to staff.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I feel like staff treated me differently because of my disability.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I feel comfortable going to residence life staff about a conflict.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Overall, my experience with residence life staff was good.	0	1	2	3	4	5

21. Do you feel like you can advocate for yourself?

- Yes
- Yes, but it's not successful
- No
- Sometimes
- I can advocate for others, but not for myself