Inclusion

College Students' with Intellectual Disability Perspectives on Peer Mentoring Relationships
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College Student's with Intellectual Disability Perspectives on Peer Mentoring Relationships

Inclusive higher education programs offer students with intellectual disability (ID) access to academic and social opportunities that traditionally have been afforded to typical college students. In the U.S., dedicated federal funding for implementation of such programs since 2010 has helped to remedy the long-standing exclusion of people with ID from postsecondary education (Grigal, Hart, & Papay, 2019). By 2021, programs at 2- and 4-year colleges and universities had expanded in number to more than 300 programs across 49 states (Think College, n.d.). Participating students engage in an array of academic, career, and social opportunities that are intentionally integrated into existing campus structures. Successful program completion may lead to credentials such as program-specific certificates or degrees. Preliminary research indicates that college programs that increase the access of students with ID to inclusive social, academic, and career experiences have the potential to enhance students' self-determination, transition to community living, and employment outcomes (Cimera et al., 2018; Grigal et al., 2019; Moore & Schelling, 2018; Petroff et al., 2020; Shogren et al., 2018.)

Peer Mentors in Higher Education

To facilitate campus inclusion of students with ID, programs often engage peers without disabilities as mentors, tutors, or coaches (Paiewonsky et al., 2010). Traditionally, peer mentoring programs in college settings, whether part of comprehensive or informal initiatives, have targeted undergraduates who may require additional supports (Lunsford et al., 2017). Such efforts might focus on how to successfully navigate a challenging activity. For example, a student who wishes to develop knowledge and skills related to academic research processes might be guided through a research internship by a more experienced peer. Peer mentoring programs also may be offered to students such as first-generation college undergraduates to

provide them with broader access to resources and supports while they learn about unfamiliar academic expectations and the social environments of higher education.

Effective mentoring, whether in college or other settings, typically occurs across three dimensions (Pawson, 2004; 2006). First, mentoring partners are matched based on their relative social status or expertise, with one being considered an "insider" to the specific social context and the other being more marginal or an outsider to that social context. Second, mentoring partners position themselves in a complementary fashion within their dyadic relationship. Typically, effective mentors become advocates or supporters of their mentees who adopt an aspirational stance in the relationship. Third, a variety of mechanisms such as direct advocacy, coaching, direction-setting, and affective contacts may be employed to facilitate a mentee's movement toward an "insider" status.

Mentoring by a peer is thought to ease student transitions through creating relationships with others of similar age and interests who can share their own experiences with college life and offer strategies, guidance, and emotional support (Ball & Hennessy, 2020; Lunsford et al., 2017). Similar to other types of mentoring relationships, peer mentoring in college can support a sense of belonging, encourage engagement on campus, promote retention, and improve academic achievement (Ball & Hennessy, 2020; Lunsford et al., 2017). For students with disabilities, effective peer mentors may fulfill multiple student needs including establishing a supportive personal relationship, teaching academic skills and strategies, providing information about university systems, and creating opportunities to expand social activities (Hillier et al., 2019).

Peer Mentors and College Students with ID

Previous studies of planned college-peer relationships specifically for students with ID have explored the impact of including students with ID in college classrooms (e.g., Phillips et al.,

2018) and the experiences of nondisabled students who serve as mentors (e.g., Athamanah et al., 2020; Culnane et al., 2016, Jones et al., 2021; Ryan et al., 2017). Less often, students with ID have been asked about their perspectives on the program or peer supports they receive in inclusive college settings (Bacon & Baglieri, 2021; Rillotta et al., 2020; Wilt & Morningstar, 2020). Engaging more extensively, intentionally, and reflexively with the perspectives of youth with ID would serve two purposes. First, their voices are critical for shifting toward participatory, intersectional research that highlights the diversity of their experiences, and second, their encounters with structures and relationships in college settings help to illuminate larger institutional dynamics (Ferguson & Nusbaum, 2012; Goethels et al., 2015). Especially for programs that seek to break through the traditional ableist boundaries of higher education that previously limited participation of students with ID, centering the experiences of students with ID is essential to moving beyond an "implementation mindset" and adopting an "explorer mindset" (O'Brien, 2019, p. 269).

To extend the emerging literature, this qualitative, interpretive study foregrounded the perspectives of college students with ID who participated in a structured peer mentoring course with peers who did not have ID. Of special interest in this study were the aspects of peer mentoring that the students with ID identified as important to their success. Two overarching research questions guided the study:

(1) How did college students with ID conceptualize their social status on campus and engagement in a structured peer mentoring relationship?

(2) What was the role of an inclusive mentoring course in the mentoring dynamic?

Method

Participants

The students with ID who were the mentees in this study had enrolled in a two-year

certificate program at a U.S. public higher education institution that primarily served an

undergraduate population. Through the certificate program, students took undergraduate courses,

accessed campus activities, and completed work internships. Some resided in dorms or nearby

apartments. With approval from the institutional review board, the study encompassed two

semesters of the course, one year apart, involving two different sets of students.

Twenty-four of twenty-eight students enrolled across the two semesters consented to

participate in the study. Participants included eleven students with ID (including one who

repeated the course) paired with twelve nondisabled undergraduates; six pairs in each semester.

The certificate students were a more diverse group by race and gender than the undergraduates.

Of the eleven certificate students, six identified as male. Two of the twelve undergraduates

identified as male. Among the certificate students, three men identified as black, and two women

identified as Asian. All the undergraduates identified as white. Table 1 shows how the pairs

matched on demographics.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

In the first semester studied, five of six mentees had already completed one year of the

certificate program. In the second semester studied, five of the six mentees were first-year

students. The mentors all had one to three years more experience on campus than the mentees,

except for one mentor in each semester matched with a mentee who had an equivalent level of

campus experience (one year). In the second semester, this included one student with ID who

chose to repeat the course as a second-year student and was matched to a nondisabled student

who was also in her second year.

As the researcher, I was positioned primarily as an observer of the mentoring course and

students' responses to the mentoring experience as described further below. I had familiarity with the certificate program having previously served as a faculty member on the grant that established the program. At the time of this research, I was no longer directly affiliated with the daily operations of the program.

Course Context

The 3-credit mentoring course is offered one semester each year by staff affiliated with the university's certificate program. When the certificate program was first developed, the course was offered as a recruitment and training mechanism for undergraduates interested in later working for pay or as volunteers with certificate students. As the certificate program has become more established on campus, the course is less needed for those purposes and serves more as a supplementary educational experience for undergraduates and certificate students alike. Any interested student may choose to enroll for credit or audit. Students in the certificate program also have a third option of participating in the course as a co-curricular activity. During this study, all participating undergraduates chose to enroll for course credit. Certificate students who chose to join the class did so as a co-curricular activity rather than enroll for credit.

The course included five classroom-based sessions early in the semester, which provided foundational information and opportunities for students to interact with each other prior to identifying mentoring partners. In the class sessions, students learned about social networks, the nature of mentoring relationships, person-centered planning, and goal setting. The instructor facilitated matching of mentoring partners based on mutual interests and similar schedules. Mentoring pairs included a certificate student with ID and a nondisabled undergraduate. Students then met as mentoring pairs for approximately three hours each week for seven weeks to engage in campus and community-based activities related to their goals. Students who complete the

course are not required to continue a relationship established through the course but may choose to do so informally. Some students choose to later work for the certificate program as paid academic or social coaches.

Data Sources

The course instructor provided me with access to participants' assignments. I collected multiple data types across both semesters. Data from class sessions included students' brief written responses in the form of exit tickets (i.e., comments and questions about the class content submitted privately at the end of a session) and comments on worksheets completed in class. Some class activities led to group products (e.g., concept maps) not attributable to individual mentees or mentors. I considered these as background information regarding the course. The instructor also provided the course syllabus and assignment descriptions.

Mentors and mentees each created goal sheets that described what each member of the pair intended to accomplish through shared activities. Mentees and mentors independently submitted weekly written activity reflection logs to document their experiences. The mentees had the option, if desired, to meet with a teaching assistant who would talk to them about their activities and help them to complete their logs. I noted in some instances that mentees used similar wording in their logs, which may have reflected input from the instructor or assistant. In these cases, I examined other sources across the semester from the student to consider alternate views or confirmatory support for the ideas expressed.

Additionally, at the end of each semester, mentees and mentors participated in a 1.5-hour class session in which they rotated through three roundtable discussions about their experiences. Each table focused on a different aspect of their mentoring relationships: actions taken to establish a positive relationship; memorable or meaningful activities; and reflection on goals and

outcomes of the mentoring relationship. The instructor, teaching assistant, and I facilitated the

discussions at each table. We made written field notes to document responses by group (mentors,

mentees) and included brief *in vivo* quotes that captured key points as expressed by students.

Finally, at the end of each semester each mentoring pair created a presentation for the class that

provided an overview of their goals, activities, and reflections. I observed the presentations and

later reviewed the products.

Data Analyses

Qualitative analyses included both deductive and inductive approaches (Miles,

Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020). I utilized the Pawson (2004) conceptual framework of mentoring

practices as an *a priori* coding scheme for purposes of describing the basic structures of the peer

mentoring relationships as perceived by the students with ID. I also developed themes

inductively by attending to how students characterized the dynamics and impacts of peer

mentoring experiences in ways that extended beyond the basic descriptive framework. I selected

quotes from participants' written work and oral comments to convey ideas in their own words.

Deductive Approach

Through deductive coding I examined mentees' perceptions relative to the three major

dimensions of the Pawson framework: membership status, reference group affiliation, and the

interpersonal mechanisms that were used to facilitate change. In the case of this study,

membership status related to how mentees' saw themselves relative to the larger social

environment of the campus (i.e., a continuum of insider, marginal, outsider). For example, a

certificate student's comment that they "would like to feel more comfortable on the [university]

campus to reduce my stress" and stating they wished to establish campus friendships because

they had none both highlight feelings related to a marginal social status. Conversely, a student's

comment that "[the baseball game] was an on-campus event that made me feel more like a [university] student" signals movement toward insider social status.

Reference group affiliation also exists on a continuum. Mentees might position themselves as aspirational, accepting, or antagonistic. Mentors might position themselves as initiators of change (advocates), supporters of mentees' autonomous change, or blockers of change. For example, a certificate student's comment, "I will like to try something new in my life or in my future" represents an aspirational position. A mentor's comment that "I practiced stepping back and letting [my mentee] feel empowered by showing me around" illustrates an autonomous stance.

Mechanisms for change include advocacy, coaching, direction setting, and affective contacts. Advocacy involves mentors using their social position to advance mentees' status; for example, creating opportunities for a mentee to interact with a socially well-connected friend. Coaching means offering encouragement and support for mentees to develop the skills and knowledge they need to advance toward their goals. Direction-setting is when mentors provide advice and how-to knowledge. Affective contacts refer to mentors' efforts to create emotional connections that change the way mentees view themselves.

To facilitate deductive coding, I created matrices (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020), one each for mentors and mentees by each of the two semesters. These were organized by the three major dimensions (membership status, reference group, mentoring mechanisms), their subdimensions (e.g, insider, marginal, outsider for the membership status dimension), and "other notes" as matrices columns. Data source attributes (i.e., participant, data type, date generated) were noted in matrices rows. I proceeded to review each data source in chronological order as completed within a semester, looking for words or phrases that represented examples of

dimensions and subdimensions of the mentoring framework. These data were recorded within the relevant cells of the matrices.

Inductive and Iterative Analyses

Parallel with deductive coding I also engaged in inductive coding by attending to and analyzing instances of broader dynamics of relationships across dimensions. For example, I noted a mentee's reflective comment that "we listen to each other" as possibly extending beyond the *a priori* conceptual framework and incorporated that concept into later rounds of analyses. I wrote analytic memos to capture other interesting concepts and questions that emerged for consideration as data analysis proceeded. At the end of the first semester of data collection and analyses, I had the opportunity to conduct a focus group with the first set of mentees to verify and clarify some preliminary findings. Unfortunately, I was unable to conduct a focus group with the second set of students due to scheduling problems.

Across both semesters, I undertook multiple rounds of analyses navigating back and forth between deductive and inductive coding. Data were examined chronologically (within and across the two semesters), then by mentee, and then by mentoring pair. In each phase, I triangulated across data types (e.g., goal sheets and activity logs) and sources (e.g., mentee and mentor). I also attended to whether the two instances of a pair having equal years of experience accounted for different dynamics. The one student with ID who had participated in both semesters of the course provided a unique opportunity for a within-case comparison. Throughout this process, I worked back and forth between the data sources, analytic matrices and memos to authenticate earlier coding and refine ideas. Ultimately, I distilled patterns and themes identified through deductive and inductive coding that represented important dynamics of the relationships from the perspectives of the students with ID.

Results

Peer mentor relationships, as perceived by the mentees, mirrored basic structures of the mentoring conceptual framework. Yet, their experiences also illustrated more nuanced and fluid dynamics within mentoring relationships, revealed other desired social outcomes, and highlighted the ways in which course structures promoted their agency and reciprocity with peers.

Typically Aspirational

Across both semesters, in response to classroom activities and through their weekly logs, mentees identified as aspirational; a typical stance for a mentee. That is, they expressed eagerness for new experiences in their lives on campus, especially social connections. Given that they chose to participate in the mentoring course, this was not surprising. They described themselves as "completing goals", "reaching for goals" and, through their mentor, "having someone to look up to." One mentee reflected in a weekly log, "It's all about coming out of your comfort zone and trying new things with friends or family." Mentees' goals for their mentoring relationships focused on meeting people on campus, trying new things (e.g., cooking), having fun, and "more experience of college life."

Although primarily aspirational, mentees occasionally indicated that they sometimes felt a lack of self-confidence related to speaking up or trying something new and relied on their mentor for motivation. Instances of mentees' positioning themselves as antagonistic to the relationship were rare. One mentee reported in the roundtable discussion that she initially was not "open-minded," but improved her engagement in the mentoring relationship over time with "practice being friendly." Two mentors commented in their logs about two different instances of mentees ignoring or rejecting their attempts at engagement. However, their mentees gave no

indication in their logs or other sources that they felt antagonistic at any point.

Connected Yet Marginal

Mentees saw themselves as occupying space between marginal and insider status on campus. Perhaps due to their prior campus experiences, mentees in the first group who were in their second year of the program more often expressed that they were "feeling more like a [college] student" or "welcome" because of participation in social events such as hanging out while watching baseball games on campus. However, in the focus group, these same mentees also described themselves as occupying a marginal status relative to establishing broader social connections. Mentees with less experience on campus, primarily those in the second set who were first year students, also positioned themselves as being more marginal relative to their desire to extend their social connections beyond their certificate program cohort. For example, one mentee wished to "increase my social interaction and experiences with fellow students outside of the program." Reflecting language used in the mentoring course classes, some mentees indicated an interest in "opening up my network" and a desire to "increase my social capital and network of supports."

Although, the mentees wished for more social connections outside the program, they were in some campus contexts better connected insiders than their mentors. Most mentors, by design, had more experience on campus than mentees. Yet, in both semesters of the course, mentors and mentees recognized that the mentors were not universally insiders. For example, one mentee reflected in a log that he could learn from his mentor, yet he was able to teach his mentor, too. Following an excursion to a campus recreation center he noted, "she didn't know the [gaming space] so I was able to teach her something she didn't know." Another mentor who accompanied her mentee to a club commented, "I felt a bit awkward. I did not know anyone in

the club and felt a bit like an outsider," whereas her partner had already met some club members. Other mentors reflected on the peer aspect of relating to their mentees, noting for example, "we have a lot more things in common than different," a sentiment echoed by mentees.

Promoting Agency and Reciprocity

A central theme that emerged across both semesters was that certain course concepts (e.g., person-centered, social networks) and course structures (e.g., shared goal setting) supported the mentees to position themselves as active agents in their mentoring relationships and establish reciprocity with nondisabled peers. Mentees viewed their mentors as supporting their autonomy; for example, one noted "[my mentor] let me make decisions." Mentors' comments suggested that this approach was connected to course lessons on being person-centered. One mentor explained "I want to increase my facilitation skills and supports rather than helping him with tasks and activities. This will demonstrate that I am actively using a person-centered approach… ." The few comments from mentees about mentors using direction-setting within their relationships related to occasional assistance with making a schedule or acting on a decision. Mentors acting as direct advocates was the least often noted mentoring mechanism.

Students' goals for the mentoring experience also reflected course structures, stating that they were "working together" to plan and complete activities. Mentees offered comments signaling reciprocity such as, "We listen to each other," "I like bouncing ideas off each other about the project," and "I think we both worked hard to support each other." Mentors had similar comments, for example, "I felt that this activity related to our goals because it was expanding each of our social networks." Another mentor noted, "[He] and I grew a great amount not only as individuals, but also as partners."

From the mentees' perspectives, dynamics of agency and reciprocity were further

promoted through the affective and coaching mechanisms used by the mentors. As one mentee said, "together as a team we will identify a series of activities and experiences that are important to me." One mentee reflected at the end of the semester that his mentor "always asked me what my ideas were." Other mentees noted that their mentors "helped me decide by giving me options to choose from" or "showed how to do things and let me try." Another shared that his mentor, "always told me that he cared what I said and would do his best to support me." Affective mentoring mechanisms were especially evident in mentees' comments such as "It is fun to do social things and learn that you are similar to other people" and "my mentor believes in me."

Discussion

This study extended the college peer mentoring literature for students with intellectual disability (ID) by highlighting their perspectives on the nature and value of these structured relationships, especially within the context of an inclusive course on peer mentoring. Amplifying the voices and perspectives of college students with ID regarding their experiences provides a fuller picture of how higher education structures and programs may be enabling and disabling to groups that have been historically marginalized on campus. Within the context of this study, particular aspects of the peer relationships that supported student agency and created reciprocity were evident, such as shared goal setting. Although students with ID were positioned in the program as more marginal and less experienced on campus, having both members in the relationship establish goals for their time together required that both identify as learners. College peer mentoring relationships that attend to balancing power dynamics and engage students in problem-solving around common academic or social concerns may lead to mutual empowerment for the partners (Ball & Hennessy, 2020; Colvin & Ashman, 2010; Jones & Goble, 2012), an especially important outcome for students with ID in a higher education setting as they assert

their presence on campus. Mentors' adoption of a coaching approach rather than direction-setting or advocacy, created space for mentees to exercise their agency. Mentors' use of affective mechanisms, coupled with the overarching focus on expanding social opportunities through engaging in social activities, appeared to promote students' common identity as college peers.

Status Fluidity

The mentoring conceptual framework was useful for describing key elements of the peer mentoring relationships as perceived by the mentees. However, their experiences also highlighted the importance of paying attention to status fluidity. That is, whether one is considered an insider or more marginal to a campus space – by others or by one's self -- is highly dependent on the specific social context and evolving relationship dynamics. Although students with ID may be enrolled in some postsecondary education programs based on their categorical label of ID, their social identities are neither static nor uniform across campus. Further, the type and degree of mentoring desired by students with ID is likely to vary over time as they gain more experience on campus and establish new goals (Wilt & Morningstar, 2020). Additionally, experienced students with ID should have opportunities to be positioned as mentors, not only as mentees (Fasching-Varner & Bible, 2011).

Expanding Social Connections

Students with ID in this study valued the connections made to nondisabled peers during the mentoring course, but they also wanted strategies for establishing broader social connections across campus. They seemed to recognize that their mentors occupied an important but different type of friendly social relationship. From a social network perspective, mentors in this study could be viewed as bridges to new groups and activities helping students build self-confidence and social knowledge. Both mentors and mentees in other studies of inclusive college programs

(Bacon & Baglieri, 2021; Prohn et al., 2019; Rillotta et al., 2020; Wilt & Morningstar, 2020) have recognized that institutionally arranged supports such as peer mentors can create valued opportunities for making new personal connections and attaining personal social goals. How or whether a semester-long shared mentoring experiences of students with ID can impact their later campus social experiences cannot be answered by this study. However, as suggested by other studies that center their voices and experiences, students with ID consider creating and having a range of social relationships on campus to be of the highest level of importance (Baglieri & Bacon, 2021).

Limitations

Although an extensive amount and different types of data were collected across two semesters from multiple participants, some limitations in the methodology should be noted when discussing the results. First, this study is best understood as a snapshot of a particular type of mentoring experience focusing on participants' perspectives at the time. The study yielded valuable insights about mentoring dynamics between college students with ID and nondisabled undergraduates; yet these relationship dynamics may operate differently in the context of other peer mentoring structures and relationships. Second, although I analyzed all data from both the mentees and mentors, I positioned the mentees' perspectives as primary for analyzing and describing the mentoring relationships. I used mentors' data secondarily as a means of noting how their perspectives corresponded or differed from those of the mentees. Thus, I foregrounded the voices of the mentees by using their quotes more extensively throughout the results section. My analyses did not reveal any major discrepancies in how mentees and mentors viewed their relationships, yet the choice to rely more heavily on the mentees' quotes makes the mentors' voices less prominent. Third, for the focus group and roundtable sessions, I relied on handwritten

field notes completed during those activities rather than audio-recordings. This may have resulted in failing to capture some relevant material.

Fourth, my efforts to conduct second-level member checks, which allow participants to weigh in on a researcher's interpretation of the data, were only partially successful. A focus group specifically for the purpose of discussing preliminary findings was held with the first cohort of mentees. This group helped to affirm, refine, and extend the preliminary findings from the first semester. However, a similar focus group with the second cohort could not be scheduled. Individual member checks with mentees would have added another layer of trustworthiness related to my interpretations but were not possible post-semester. To further check that my interpretations were sufficiently grounded and thus enhance credibility of the results, a peer debriefer who was familiar with the certificate program and its students, provided feedback on a preliminary description of the research process, findings, and key points for discussion.

Implications for Practice

Helping students with ID negotiate the social boundaries that exist on campuses is a worthy goal. Yet, ironically, attempting to facilitate inclusion by creating specialized courses and programs for students with ID may itself erect unintended social boundaries (O'Brien, 2019). Thus, the larger question that peer mentoring programs must answer is whether their approach assists students with ID to develop connections they desire beyond program-facilitated and peer-mentor supported activities – an explicitly stated goal of several students who participated in this study. Potentially, this could be accomplished by a stronger positioning initially of peer mentors as advocates who could promote their mentees' social relationships by directly engaging them with their own network of friends. In this study, mentors rarely positioned themselves as advocates and were not seen as such by their mentees. This may reflect the fact that the course

created dyadic relationships and emphasized person-centered approaches that were widely

adopted by the mentoring partners. Taking an advocacy approach rather than the coaching and

affective approaches favored by the mentors and mentees – and promoted by the course content –

also might have reduced mentees' experience of agency. On the other hand, if mentoring

programs were constructed to reflect a more collectivist approach – working together as

mentoring teams to actively make connections across their networks -- they might open new

opportunities for promoting grassroots institutional change while still supporting individuals'

social goals (Silverman, 2020).

A related alternative approach, although not yet widely implemented or studied, might be

to embed the shared and structured elements that led to mentees' experience of reciprocity within

a more expansive campus peer program that does not focus exclusively on students with ID. Peer

partners could receive some initial training, as they did in the peer mentoring course, to provide a

foundation for participating together in an experiential, leadership, service learning, or similar

program designed to help undergraduates gain confidence, leadership skills, and a sense of

campus belonging (e.g., Manikas et al., 2018). Incorporating learning-focused, mentoring

partners or teams within a larger community of undergraduates would create opportunities for

expanding their social engagement while continuing to provide each other with mutual supports

and the possibility of moving beyond boundaries erected by programmatic binaries of

disabled/nondisabled status (Goethels et al., 2015).

Implications for Research

As more students with ID take advantage of postsecondary education, peer mentoring

relationships offer an important mechanism for promoting their presence and belonging in the

college environment. Students with ID in this study articulated the importance of creating shared

learning experiences intentionally structured to create reciprocity with peers. Situating those experiences within the context of other undergraduate enrichment programs might expand the social impact for students with and without ID by facilitating opportunities for inclusive social network building and collectively reducing the experiences and impacts of ableism on campus. Additional research on peer mentoring is needed to examine this proposition across several dimensions.

Critically, to build a stronger evidence-based foundation for this emerging practice, more research should focus on the underlying theoretical assumptions of peer mentoring programs that involve students with ID, the components and implementation processes of such peer mentoring programs, and the short- and long-term outcomes of peer mentoring relationships. This would also facilitate comparisons of the peer support strategies employed by different college programs for students with ID. Additionally, investigations of alternative approaches that are not specific to students with ID would push the field toward more truly inclusive practice while also engaging critically with the larger literature on the aims, processes, and outcomes of undergraduate peer mentoring.

Finally, future research must intentionally attend to the intersecting social identities and experiences of students with ID as they pursue their social goals in higher education. College students' sense of belonging has been connected to the ways in which their intersecting social identities of gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and disability are recognized, engaged, and enacted across campus settings (Abes & Wallace, 2018; Eisenman et al., 2020; Johnson et al., 2007). Therefore, it is interesting to note that in this study, the potential impact and influence of intersectional social identities related to gender, race, and disability on campus social engagement were not mentioned by mentees or mentors. Mentors were predominantly white,

female, and nondisabled in contrast to the greater diversity evident among the students with ID. The students' silence or lack of awareness about the implications of these differences may suggest an area for further exploration.

Mentoring programs might address these issues by engaging mentoring partners or teams in conversations about the diversity of their experiences of belonging and how those may reflect their intersectional social identities, ableist structures of higher education, and the nature of their relationships with each other on campus. Coupled with strategies that promote reciprocity within relationships, such a focus on the multifaceted construction of belonging could facilitate greater recognition of the value of interdependence for navigating campus environments and systems in ways that build community (Bacon & Baglieri, 2021). This approach would help to better recognize the diversity of students with ID and conceptually align investigations into the experiences of students with ID with the current literature about other historically marginalized students. An essential aspect of this work is to ensure that the perspectives of students with ID are centered through participatory, social justice research.

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Table 1

Demographics of Participant Partners

Cohort	Partners	Level	Gender	Race/Ethnicity
1	C1	2nd	M	B
	U1	Senior	F	W
1	C2	2nd	F	W
	U2	Senior	F	W
1	C3	2nd	M	W
	U3	Sophomore	F	W
1	C4	2nd	M	W
	U4	Senior	F	W
1	C5	2nd	M	B
	U5	Senior	F	W
1	C6	1st	F	A
	U6	Junior	F	W
2	C6	2nd	F	A
	U7	Sophomore	F	W
2	C8	1st	M	B
	U8	Junior	M	W
2	C9	1st	F	W
	U9	Senior	M	W
2	C10	1st	F	A
	U10	Senior	F	W
2	C11	1st	F	W
	U11	Senior	F	W
2	C13	1st	M	W
	U13	Senior	F	W

Note. Cohort = Study Semester 1 or 2; Partners = C - Certificate and U - Undergraduate; Missing identifiers (e.g., C7, C12) represent students enrolled in the course who did not consent to participate in the study; Student Level = Year in Certificate or Undergraduate Program; Gender = M - Male or F - Female; Race/Ethnicity = W - White, B - Black, A - Asian