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College Students With Learning Disabilities and Their Judgments About Issues of Access,
Equity, and Inclusion

By

Rose Cartwright

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Education

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Elliot Turiel, Chair
Professor Karen Draney
Professor Rodolfo Mendoza-Denton

Spring 2024

College Students With Learning Disabilities and Their Judgments About Issues of Access,
Equity, and Inclusion

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By

Rose Cartwright

Abstract

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Rose Cartwright

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Elliot Turiel, Chair

The representation and understanding of students with disabilities and their experiences in higher education—as in many of our social institutions—is gradually evolving, but there is much work to be done. An emergent body of large survey-based research, complemented by smaller ethnographic studies, has shed light on the trajectories, needs, and perspectives of this growing student population. Still, there have been relatively few empirical approaches to examining such students' specific evaluations and interpretations of everyday institutional and social interactions involving disability; even less research is well-grounded in compelling psychological data.

This study explored how undergraduate students with documented, non-visible learning disabilities (LDs) reason about anti-discrimination legislation and interpersonal issues involving equity, inclusion, and access in the university setting. The research utilized theoretical approaches and empirical findings from the fields of social cognitive developmental psychology and disability studies as a conceptual foundation and employed both semi-structured and open-ended clinical interview methods to examine how undergraduates with LDs (a) evaluated the general acceptability of disability anti-discrimination legislation as well as hypothetical instances of disability-related interactions in the university setting; and (b) reasoned about their evaluations. In a second interview segment, participants were also asked semi-structured autobiographical questions about undesired disability-related interactions in the university setting, followed by questions about their evaluations of those experiences and their thoughts about institutional changes that might prevent future such occurrences. Interviews concluded with an open-ended question about participants' general reflections on their experiences as college students with LDs. Interviews were analyzed and interpreted via adapted coding schemes previously developed within the social domain theory empirical tradition.

The study included a total of 33 participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 21.03$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 2.08$; $n = 27$ cisgender women), all of whom were enrolled in undergraduate coursework at a large public university and who self-identified as having a formally documented LD. Results indicated that disability anti-discrimination legislation is consistently affirmed for moral reasons such as equality, equity, and welfare, while judgements and reasoning about nuanced interpersonal experiences (both hypothetical and autobiographical) involve the coordination of myriad priorities, including moral (i.e., justice, welfare, rights), social conventional (i.e., social functioning, authority), personal (i.e., autonomy, choice, personal prerogative), prudential (i.e., one's own safety, comfort, or health), and other (e.g., integration, disability identity) considerations. Ideas about institutional change and reflections on lived experience range from seeking compassion and respect in dyadic interactions to widescale systemic efforts focused on disability and mental health awareness as well as equitable, best practices in instruction and accommodation.

Dedication

For the people around whom this scholarship is centered—especially those who've shared their thoughts and experiences with such generosity, enthusiasm, and vulnerability—in hopes of manifesting the world we yearn for. And for Alma Hope, corazón de mi corazón, whose existence has kindled a light in the darkness of my merely being.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Education is a human right with immense power to transform. On its foundation rest the cornerstones of freedom, democracy, and sustainable human development.

—Kofi A. Annan, Foreword to *The State of the World's Children 1999*

Who decides who we "are?"...How do learners gain access to supports, services, and approaches that best fit their strengths and needs, without acquiescing to crippling categories that stigmatize? How do humans manage to see and be seen clearly in this society, with all their intricacies, especially in our educational systems? (Hulsebosch, 2009, p. 376)

In 1973, the United States established its first federal anti-discrimination legislation that specifically protected the rights of people with disabilities (Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 2023). Those laws were founded upon the intergenerational efforts of individuals with diverse disability identifications who advocated in a variety of spheres—from everyday personal interactions to international social and political movements—as well as upon the hard-won advancements¹ of other historically subordinated communities and their allies who had fought for social equality and inclusion before, during, and following the civil rights movement of the 1960s (McCarthy, 2003; O'Hara, 2009). Since that time, modifications and accommodations such as curb cuts, braille, and disability services programs, as well as a host of other integrative attempts in schools and workplaces, have become expected features of public life and, yet, significant controversy continues to surround these foundational American civil rights legislative mandates vis-à-vis their enactment in public policies, institutional procedures, and social practices (Percy, 2018).

The chasm between such laws, the ideals they rest upon, and our societal realities is evidenced perhaps nowhere better than in the sphere of education, where legislative remedies such as the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and their subsequent amendments have all continued to target seemingly intractable disparities into the next millennium. Despite those efforts and many others, the U.S. Education Department's Office of Civil Rights recently received a record 18,804 complaints around discrimination in K-12 and higher education inside of a year; almost half of the hundreds of investigations still pending in higher education by the end of 2022 pertained to disability-related discrimination (Knott, 2023). Among the millions of American students with disabilities currently experiencing the persistent effects of unresolved institutional barriers and societal ambiguities in educational spaces are those with non-visible disabilities,² such as college students with learning disabilities (LDs), who encounter everyday challenges that are frequently misunderstood or overlooked (McGregor et al., 2016). Qualitative research reveals that these students are impacted through experiences negotiating and receiving accommodations, relationships with faculty members, and the stigmatization of disability status, among other

¹ Access Ferri & Connor (2005), though, for a critique of the legacy of segregation and exclusionary practices in US schools.

² Though there is no consensus surrounding a most appropriate descriptor (Disability:IN, 2022), the terms non-visible, invisible, unseen, hidden, and non-apparent disability are all currently used to describe neurological, physical, and mental impairments that are not readily observable to others. Such terms are generally used in reference to impairments that can include—but are not limited to—conditions and diseases such as: learning disabilities (e.g., dyslexia); chronic illnesses or pain (e.g., multiple sclerosis, diabetes, fibromyalgia); Deafness; and mental health disorders (e.g., bipolar disorder; Dakessian, n.d.; Invisible Disability Project, n.d.).

factors (Lightfoot et al., 2018). Furthermore, large national surveys of students with disabilities—and those with LDs in particular—indicate that they are more likely than their non-disabled peers to enroll in community colleges rather than 4-year universities, take longer to earn a degree, and have an increased likelihood of leaving postsecondary institutions without a degree (McGregor et al., 2016; National Center for Learning Disabilities [NCLD], 2014). These educational disparities have been linked with some of the largest equity gaps in the American workforce today (Stawinoga, 2017).

Compounding these inequities is a paucity of research providing a theoretically grounded, systematic, psychosocial analysis that centers the perspectives, reasoning, and lived experiences of students with LDs. Though the broader theoretical and applied literature on issues of disability in education is extensive, the cognitive developmental and social psychology disciplines have done very little thus far to elucidate, for example, how non-discrimination and the rights of people with disabilities are understood and evaluated by students with disabilities in the context of higher education or how these individuals make judgments about those ideals when situated amongst potentially competing realities of life in educational institutions. While disability is still frequently treated as a minority issue, Shakespeare (2018) reminds us that “there are at least a billion people with disability on the planet, plus all their relatives and friends. So, most lives are touched by disability in some way, and it’s about time we understood it better” (p. 1).

The present study represents one effort towards such understandings. The research is inevitably embedded within the broader historical and societal contexts surrounding the rights of people with disabilities and the evolving meaning and scope of inclusion in education. The study itself is positioned, both conceptually and methodologically, amongst large survey-based quantitative studies that have signaled the continued need for deeper examination of inequalities in experiences and outcomes between students with and without disabilities (e.g., McGregor et al., 2016); smaller scale qualitative work that has illuminated specific areas of concern amongst students with LDs in postsecondary settings (e.g. Denhart, 2008); and social cognitive developmental psychology research that has repeatedly demonstrated patterns in the coordinated ways that individuals reason about complex social issues involving moral, social conventional, personal, and prudential considerations (e.g., Turiel, 2015). The dissertation begins to address the lack of attention to and representation of the perspectives of college students with non-visible LDs in this area of scholarship by exploring how they make judgments and reason about disability anti-discrimination legislation as well as both hypothetical situations and lived interpersonal experiences involving multifaceted issues of equity, inclusion, access, and more in the university setting.

Contextualizing and Conceptualizing Disability in Higher Education: History, Disability Studies, Law, and Student Experiences

The continued project of centering, understanding, and ultimately advocating to improve the experiences of people with disabilities in higher education is indelibly marked by the practices of eugenics and systematic exclusion that were explicitly rationalized and sanctioned by American policymakers and, especially, members of the elite intelligentsia throughout the early 1900s. With the support of Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, and many other noted leaders and thinkers of the time, over 60,000 people—some as young as 10-years-old, and many of whom were people of color living in poverty—were involuntary sterilized in order to “prevent the passing of the ‘germ plasm’ of

disability to the rest of society” (Berkeley Center for Teaching and Learning [Berkeley CTL], 2019; Komodromou, 2019). Related notions about a supposedly fixed ‘inherited intellectual potential’ (amongst other desirable biological and character ‘traits’) were promulgated through the development and widespread use of French psychologist Alfred Binet’s measures, further embedding oppressive academic ideologies and segregationist policies in the national imagination, solidifying the foundation for biases against people with LDs and other types of neurodivergent disabilities that would persist into the present day:

The mainstay of the crusade for a genetically and socially pure America was the IQ test, which not only introduced scientific method into a field where previously only subjective judgment was possible but also purported to demonstrate the superiority of specific groups and upheld the popular bias about unassimilable and inferior [populations]... In the schools unprecedented numbers of students were subjected to IQ tests, examinations, and medical inspections. The resulting statistics lent a specious scientific validity to often dubious judgments regarding individual cases. School-aged children who met the new standards were declared normal; those who failed were labeled as inadequate, delinquent, laggard, feeble-minded...

With a mounting conviction that many disabled persons could never truly attain normalcy, many educators adopted the principles of hereditary determinism. Believing that human development and competence were not malleable but predetermined and inevitable... they also came to believe that education and therapy for exceptional individuals could, at best, only ameliorate or contain the unfortunate conditions that frustrated development. It was not that educational and scientific constituencies embarked on separate paths with different or conflicting goals. Scientists and educators sought to understand, identify, and control mental retardation, the scientific community through sterilization, the educational through segregation. (Winzer, 1993, p. 252)

The teaching of eugenics in American high school, college, and university courses played an essential role in fertilizing grounds for the growth of eugenics as a powerful popular social movement, persisting in the US even after international support for the ideas had waned following the atrocities of the Holocaust (Dolmage, 2017; Winzer, 1993). Dolmage (2017) contends that “...eugenics itself... can be seen as the invention of the North American university, which in turn was also built upon the exploitation of people with disabilities” (p. 14). Although many states have since repealed the specific laws allowing for forced sterilization of people with disabilities, the Supreme Court ruling that permitted such legislation remains and continues to impact the rights of people with disabilities and other marginalized communities in the US (National Women’s Law Center & the Autistic Women and Nonbinary Network, 2022).

The related history of the institutionalization of people with disabilities in asylums and other special ‘schools’ has also been variably documented and critiqued. In *The History of Special Education: From Isolation to Integration* (1993),³ Winzer describes the original emergence of 19th century institutional complex for the deaf, blind, and (later) those broadly labeled “feeble-minded” (p. 83) as a feature of Enlightenment-based philosophies (e.g., “the unequivocal declaration that something must be done for the weak, dependent, and the disabled...” [p. 77]) incorporated into a uniquely American blend of evangelicalism, philanthropy, politics, and industrialization. Early proponents viewed the system within a larger

³ Winzer impressively chronicles a much lengthier and geographically broader history than noted here, tracing the late 19th and early 20th century American eugenics movement further back into the pre-18th century European Dark Ages.

project of social reform through schooling for all, manifested as a public commitment to “special training as a prime means of uplifting disabled individuals, or bringing them to the sacred text of the Bible and of instilling in them patriotic notions of duty to class and country” (p. 78).⁴ The rise of ideas about heredity, hierarchy, and the application of Darwinian theory to the development of society (i.e., Social Darwinism) at the turn of the 20th century would continue to have untold effects on popular support for public education that is inclusive of those with disabilities, particularly people with categories of disorders presently termed intellectual developmental disorder, psychotic disorder, and bipolar disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2022).

The term “learning disability,” first proposed by Samuel Kirk in 1963 (Winzer, 1993, p. 339), was specifically used in reference to children with “disorders in development in language, speech, reading, and associated communication skills needed for social interaction”⁵ (as quoted in Winzer, 1993, p. 358), and was based in more than 150 years’ worth of comparative medical research with brain-injured adults, children with mental retardation, and—lastly—“seemingly normal” children (i.e., those of “average to above-average intelligence”) who nevertheless experienced persistent learning difficulties and “failure to achieve adequately” (Winzer, 1993, pp. 339, 358). That research was the focus of physicians who had sought a neurological, exogenous (i.e., occurring during the developmental period, rather than genetically inherited) etiology of learning disabilities and medicalized them through various classification systems.⁶ Kirk’s generation of psychologists and educators would go on to develop other diagnostic assessments and remedial instruction techniques.

At least some degree of segregated education was the standard for many students with disabilities in America’s public schools from the 1910s until well into the 1970s, particularly for those viewed as behaviorally disruptive and/or unable to perform (Winzer, 1999, pp. 363-4). Though students with “mild” forms of LD were unlikely to endure the same forms of severe ostracization and institutionalization faced by others, a legacy and continuum of separation in educational spaces persists. From the 1970s onward, movement towards varying types of integration for students with all types of disabilities into general education environments increasingly became a priority, and “free appropriate public education” in the “least restrictive environment” eventually became the law of the land (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA], 20 U.S.C. § 1412 *et seq.*, 2004). In the case of students with LDs, Kirk’s new term had the added impact of “imply[ing] an educational rather than a medical orientation,” (Winzer, 1999, p. 359) which in turn had a broader popular appeal to families as an explanation for children’s difficulties in school achievement and, at least by Winzer’s account, a destigmatizing effect. Once the new label became firmly established, a boom in parental advocacy and professional organizations founded around learning disabilities fueled innumerable developments in political and educational spheres. Though understanding of and modalities to support those

⁴ Remarkably, Winzer also notes the sparsity of “trustworthy” historical accounts of the daily experiences of such students and the teachers, principals, physicians, and other officials charged with directing classroom practices and conditions (pp. 80-81).

⁵ Kirk’s definition excluded those with “sensory disorders” like blindness and deafness as well as those with “generalized mental retardation.”

⁶ Among the many terms initially used by neurologists and other medical researchers to describe children who demonstrated contradictory patterns of cognitive ability and school achievement were: minimal brain dysfunction, brain/mentally crippled, cerebral disordered, neurologically impaired, dyslexic, and dysphasic. Principal characteristics of the “minimally brain-damaged child” included “hyperactivity, hyperemotionalism, impulsiveness, distractibility, and perseverance” (Winzer, 1993, p. 358).

with learning difficulties in general education and emergent special education environments had undergone massive transformations in the relatively short span of several generations, the dialogue around equal access to and authentic inclusion in all levels of public education for people with disabilities had just begun in earnest.

Disability Studies and Social Models of Disability

The legislative language and policies used to justify the eugenics movement and associated segregationist educational practices have reverberated through the experiences, trajectories, and contributions of people with disabilities seeking meaningful participation in public schools and institutions of higher learning over the past hundred years (Berkeley CTL, 2019; O'Hara, 2009).⁷ Though public protest around their social subordination had taken place as early as the 1930s (Gabel & Connor, 2009), it was not until the late 1960s and early 70s that the modern disability rights movement (DRM) gained traction⁸ and had tangible manifestations in the forms of federal law and representation in academe. As wheelchair users and people with chronic health-related disabilities (among others) popularly spearheaded the political struggle for equitable access to education, independent living, and other civil rights, the interdisciplinary academic field of disability studies also developed alongside other movements in the social sciences, humanities, and arts for critical perspectives around race, gender, and sexuality. It controverted some of the longstanding academic, political, and popular assumptions around what constitutes disability (Gartner & Lipsky, 1999; Marks, 1999; Shakespeare, 2018) and particularly around how social structures and commonplace social interactions within those structures combine to reproduce inequalities in our public institutions and in life outcomes.

One ongoing dialogue within the disability studies scholarship surrounds a tension amongst various approaches to conceptualizing disability, especially between that of a more traditional 'individual-' or 'medical model' versus a critical 'social model' (Gabel & Connor, 2009; Hendriks, 2002; Marks, 1999).⁹ The former type of perspective places an emphasis on individual deviance from socially acceptable norms, technical taxonomies that stress inherent pathology, and the cure or remediation of impairment (Gabel & Connor, 2009; Hendriks, 2002). In contrast, social models of disability¹⁰ are "recognized globally as a way to understand disability within its historical, material, and social contexts" (Gabel & Connor, 2009, p. 381). Social models draw a distinction between impairments (i.e., "functional limitations") and disability (i.e., "a form of social oppression"), contending that "disability inheres in the interaction between impairment and the surrounding social world" (Emens, 2014, p. 46). This

⁷ One frequently cited instance of such exclusion and advocacy is Ed Harris, a polio survivor who was initially disallowed on-campus university housing in the 1970s due to his usage of an iron lung and wheelchair, but who ultimately went on to matriculate and establish the University of California Berkeley's Disabled Students Program and one of the first centers for independent living in the country (McCarthy, 2003; O'Hara, 2009).

⁸ For historical overviews of the DRM, access Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (2014 [a documentary entitled *We Won't Go Away*, originally produced in 1981 by Patricia Ingram]) and Pelka's (2012) compilation of oral histories.

⁹ Access, e.g., Albrecht et al. (2001); Gartner & Lipsky (1999); Lawson & Beckett (2021); and Watson & Vehmas (2020) for much more elaborated and nuanced discussions around widely varying conceptualizations of disability, including deficit-based modeling, academic discipline perspectives, socio-political contextualization, and as a social rights issue, among others.

¹⁰ Social models of disability do not represent a completely unified, uncontested conceptualization. Access Shakespeare (2014) as well as references in Footnote 9 for further discussion.

type of model, particularly as it has been reflected in the subfield of disability studies in education, is dually concerned with resistance to inequitable practices that result in the disabling consequences of social exclusion and isolation, as well as with the removal of systemic barriers to opportunity and a restructuring of society to fully include people with disabilities (Gabel & Connor, 2009). Some legal and public policy scholars have commented more recently that social models of disability may also be considered complementary or symbiotic with a ‘human rights model’ (Lawson & Beckett, 2021; Series, 2019), which maintains the centrality of inherent human dignity, autonomy, equality, non-discrimination, and full inclusion in society, as well as prescriptions surrounding the responsibility of governments to embed these sentiments in legislation and public policy and to advance social change in a direction that involves, protects, and promotes the rights of people with disabilities. Lawson and Beckett (2021) contend that “[b]oth the human rights model of disability policy and the social model of disability operate as oppositional devices, formed by and at the same time making possible disabled people’s resistance to unjust disabling societies” (p. 371).

Such models of disability (or, at least, “social interpretations of disability” [Gabel & Connor, 2009, p. 381]) are compatible with a relational-developmental-systems paradigm (Lerner & Overton, 2008; Overton, 2015) which also underlies the social domain theory¹¹ psychological approach to moral and social reasoning,¹² namely “a central emphasis...on mutually influential, individual-context relations (represented as individual \leftrightarrow context relations)” (Lerner & Overton, 2008, p. 246). Here, contextualized, reciprocal interactions are centered in processes of meaning-making or construction of social knowledge and the subsequent use of those understandings in individual judgments as well as in relational and systemwide dynamics. Social models or -interpretations of disability also share with domain theory a critical focus on the variable ways that people engage in resistance towards injustice and other sorts of moral violations:

Opposition and resistance to cultural practices stem from reflections, based on moral judgments of welfare, justice, and rights, on existing social conditions. Such opposition and resistance occur in everyday life and even in close relationships....Social opposition to cultural practices indicates that moral development is a process of construction of judgments about what ought to exist rather than acceptance of what exists. (Turiel, 2015, p. 34)

The field of disability studies continues to develop in necessary relation to political and legal action, both shaping and being reshaped by the experiences and advocacy of people with disabilities in private spaces and public institutions. Social and human rights models of disability offer a useful lens through which one can view current legal standards, demographic statistics, and qualitative research pertaining to students with LDs; the perspective also serves as a broad foundation for the current study.

A Brief Summation of U.S. Disability Rights Laws in Education and Current Definitions

Although major civic action and advocacy efforts towards disabled peoples’ rights occurred during the 1960s and even earlier (Meldon, 2019; Shakespeare, 2018), concrete federal legislative action around the educational rights of this diverse group lagged behind protections for other marginalized communities and came to the foreground of American politics around the

¹¹ Herein referred to as domain theory.

¹² Domain theory is elaborated in the subsequent chapter.

last quarter of the 20th century. One influential piece of that early legislation, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, continues to protect individuals who attend higher education institutions that receive federal financial assistance (i.e., most public colleges and universities [Rothstein, 2018]). It, among other key provisions, states:

No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States...shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.... (Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 504 *et seq.*, 2023)

Later, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and, more recently, its reauthorization and amendments (i.e., the ADA Amendments Act [ADAAA] of 2008), clarified and broadened definitions of disability and related “major life activities” to encapsulate a wider range of disabling conditions in response to earlier Supreme Court decisions that had considerably narrowed application of the definition of disability:

The term ‘disability’ means, with respect to an individual—a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual; a record of such an impairment; or being regarded as having such an impairment. ... [M]ajor life activities include, but are not limited to, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working. (ADAAA, 110 U.S.C. § 4 *et seq.*, 2008)

Although a larger body of federal and state legislation has important ramifications for the experiences of students with disabilities in higher education,¹³ these two civil rights laws and their definitions constitute the foundational anti-discrimination and accommodation¹⁴ structure that has been influential in the progress of—and ongoing controversies within—our modern postsecondary institutions. Coupled with the disability studies perspectives described above, they form one impactful element of the evolving landscape of disability in higher education. Nevertheless, advocates have continued to call for an increase in research and policies that centralize the diverse experiences and direct involvement of people with disabilities, as signaled in the popular disabled people’s movement slogan, “Nothing about us without us” (Shakespeare, 2018, p. 159). Some of the research directed in those veins is summarized next.

Trends, Experiences, and Perspectives of College Students with Learning Disabilities

The most recent large national datasets indicate an ongoing rise in the postsecondary institution enrollment of students with disabilities, with as many as 1 in 5 undergraduate students identifying as having some type of documented disability (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2023, Table 311.10; Government Accountability Office [GAO], 2009). Consequently, millions of people with disabilities are presently enrolled in thousands of

¹³ Access, for example, disability category qualification criteria and mandated secondary-postsecondary transition services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 108 U.S.C. § 602 *et seq.* [2004], which applies to students in K-12 settings) as well as other subsections of the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 that delineate the parameters of influential concepts such as “reasonable accommodation” (ADAAA, 110 U.S.C. § 4 *et seq.*, 2008).

¹⁴ Both Section 504 and the ADAAA contain provisions that require public institutions and other entities to make reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures when such accommodations are necessary to afford individuals with disabilities the full and equal enjoyment of those entities’ goods, services, facilities, privileges, and other opportunities.

postsecondary institutions across the country, particularly in public 2- and 4-year colleges and universities (GAO, 2009). Well over half of these students identify as having a non-visible disability,¹⁵ the largest subset of which consists of students with some type of specific LD.¹⁶ Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and dyslexia—two of the most prevalent disabilities often subsumed under a broader LD category in postsecondary settings—represent over 30% of undergraduate students with disabilities (GAO, 2009; Raue & Lewis, 2011, p. 8).

We have also learned that, in spite of increases in their enrollment in postsecondary institutions, gaps between students with LDs and their neurotypical peers persist in GPA and graduation rates (McGregor et al., 2016; National Center for Learning Disabilities [NCLD], 2014). Smaller qualitative interview and survey-based studies have shown that barriers to higher education completion for students with LDs can include being misunderstood by faculty, being reluctant to request accommodations for fear of invoking stigma, and working considerably longer hours than neurotypical peers (Cawthon & Cole, 2010; Denhart, 2008); however, self-reports of academic and social integration perceptions from students with LDs (such as informal faculty contact, forming close peer relationships, and identification with intellectual development related to their academic experience) are all significantly correlated with their intent to persist towards degrees in the face of challenges (DaDeppo, 2009; NCLD, 2014). A variety of other variables, including knowledge of disability, accommodations, and laws; self-advocacy skills; and other executive functions such as goal setting, have also been highlighted in student interviews aimed at uncovering what those with LDs might require in order to succeed academically in postsecondary settings (Skinner, 2004).

These findings, while informative, are largely correlational or else are based on small case studies and lack a very detailed account of just *how* those students reason and make judgments about the common issues of or interactions around access, equity, and inclusion that ultimately coalesce into their experiences of higher education and its related outcomes. As Wessel has noted in the introduction to a 2018 issue of the *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, an evolving body of disability-related literature in education has begun to form a vast network of conceptual considerations and empirical approaches to gaining further insights. This includes, for example, scholarship that focuses at a foundational level on definitional and conceptual issues like those described earlier, but also on: differences and similarities among perceptions of people with different types of disabilities; intersections of disability with other salient, multidimensional social identities, both visible and invisible; complex features of collaborative and inclusive learning environments, as well as the combatting of negative attitudes, beliefs, and stigmatization; and the more general perspectives and everyday educational experiences of students with disabilities (e.g., Cawthon & Cole, 2010; Denhart, 2008; Kerschbaum et al., 2017; Lightfoot et al., 2018; May & Stone, 2010). The expanding landscape of research on disability in higher education and the disciplinary perspectives of contributors has even become so varied as to elicit calls for specific guidelines, particularly around clarity and consistency in sample descriptions (e.g., with explicit attention to and respect for disability identifications and other essential demographics), detailing of study locations using

¹⁵ Learning disabilities (31%), ADHD/ADD (18%), or psychological/psychiatric disability (15%; Raue & Lewis, 2011).

¹⁶ The term 'specific learning disability' as used here means “a disorder in 1 or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which...may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations” (IDEIA, 108 U.S.C. § 602 *et seq.*, 2004).

established classifications, and the appropriate selection and reporting of key study methodologies (whether qualitative, quantitative, mixed, or single-subject designs; Madaus et al., 2020).

Though the extant literature has varied considerably in conceptual underpinnings, study foci, and methodological approaches, several prevalent themes have guided the development of the current study's questions and procedures: the significance of interactions and relationships with peers and faculty; concerns around disability disclosure and stigmatization; and access to information, supports, and accommodations as mediated through disabled students' services programming, personnel, and institutional initiatives. The value of theoretically grounded, systematic psychological approaches to exploring how students with LDs make sense of and navigate everyday interactions around disability cannot be overstated. Though some of the research cited earlier has highlighted important themes and relational contexts through a broad exploration of the experiences and perspectives of college students with LDs, none to date has focused on students' explicit moral and social evaluations around impactful issues such as anti-discrimination, equity, disability disclosure, and access to accommodations or other supports. Thus, the present study also draws on a different body of research regarding judgments about social inclusion and exclusion based on gender and race; a limited number of studies on exclusion and related phenomena based on disabilities; and the findings of other studies about reasoning pertaining to the (un)equal distribution of educational goods and socially (un)just laws. Those studies were largely guided by what has been referred to in the field of social cognitive developmental psychology as social domain theory (Turiel, 1983b).

Chapter 2: Theoretical and Research Background Social Domain Theory, Related Research, and Current Study

Domain theorists posit that individuals reflect on a variety of systems of social thought when making judgments about different situations (Turiel, 1983a, 1983b). In the structuralist and constructivist traditions of developmental psychologists Jean Piaget (1932) and Lev Vygotsky (1978), these systems (or domains) of thought are organized and constructed out of people's interactions with and actions upon objects, events, and persons (Turiel, 1983a, 2008b).¹⁷ Individual-environment interactions occur within fundamentally different types of contexts and relationships, which provide for the simultaneous formation of distinct social-cognitive domains: moral, social conventional, personal, and prudential. Turiel (1983a, 1983b) and other domain theorists describe the personal domain as pertaining to issues of choice, prerogatives, and personal preference. The prudential domain encompasses matters relating specifically to one's own safety and comfort. The social conventional domain comprises matters of group functioning and conventional norms. Moral domain concepts are based on substantive understandings of justice, welfare, and rights (e.g., harm, fairness, etc.). Another major component in this line of theory and research is the assessment of "criterion judgments" (Turiel, 1983b, p. 52). Such assessments have shown that judgments about social conventional acts, because they are "symbolic elements of social organization" (Turiel, 1983a, p. 77), are seen as contingent on rules or authority dictates, and are legitimized by common practices of agreements. In contrast, judgments about moral issues are not viewed as relative to the social context or defined by it, but instead contain prescriptions about how people ought to relate to one another because such judgments are "derived from features inherent to social relationships—including experiences involving harm to persons, violations of rights, and conflicts of competing claims" (Turiel, 1983b, p. 3).

In Turiel's formulation, children, adolescents, and adults often weigh and coordinate different considerations both within domains and across combinations of these domains when interpreting social experience and making decisions (Turiel, 2008a), especially about ambiguous or complex situations. The domain theory investigatory and interpretative framework has been utilized to study individuals' social reasoning across an impressive breadth of phenomena, from the developmental trajectory of diverse children's and adolescents' thinking about gender- and racial exclusion/inclusion (e.g., Killen et al., 2002) to variations in how people in historically subordinated social positions (such as women in traditionally patriarchal, purportedly collectivistic societies) think about acts of subversion and resistance in their daily lives (Turiel, 2002). Whereas global stage assumptions about the developmental trajectory of people's moral and social understandings (e.g., Kohlberg, 1971; Piaget, 1932) or overgeneralizations about the supposed social psychological homogeneity of certain cultural groups (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991) may obscure the complexity of their reasoning and decisions (Nucci & Turiel, 2009; Turiel, 2002), a domain theory conceptual and analytical framework allows for a more comprehensive, nuanced description and interpretation of ubiquitous psychological processes.

¹⁷ These theoretical approaches diverge from other psychological conceptualizations of social development as entailing a transmission or internalization of external societal values (access, e.g., Bandura, 1991).

Studies on Reasoning about Social In/Exclusion, Distributive Justice, and Laws

As mentioned previously, there is a dearth of social cognitive developmental research specifically examining the experiences and social reasoning of postsecondary students with LDs. However, we may begin to extrapolate applicable insights from several empirical corollaries, particularly from research having to do with how primary and secondary school-aged students evaluate numerous features of social interactions in pertinent contexts. The research summarized here demonstrates that children's and adolescents' reasoning and decision-making about important social issues like peer inclusion and exclusion, distribution of educational goods, and socially (un)just laws does not generally represent an underdeveloped sense of morality or social understandings; on the contrary, youth are constantly grappling with other elements of social life, such as personal considerations (e.g., How will selecting a certain classmate as a lab partner change the choices I usually make myself?) and social conventional matters (e.g., Will a peer understand and follow established rules?). Individuals rely on the concepts they have formed with regards to each domain based on prior experience and those experiences are implicated in how they reason about subsequent events or transgressions. In the research described subsequently, priority given to any single domain has been shown to vary by age, context, and a variety of other factors.

Domain Theory Approaches to Race- and Gender-Based Social In/Exclusion

Killen (2007) writes that the subject of race- or gender-based exclusion (also termed intergroup exclusion) is especially fascinating from the viewpoint of moral development because “it reflects...prejudice, discrimination, stereotyping, and bias about groups [in addition to] judgments about fairness, equality, and rights” (p. 32). She goes on to say that the first cluster of considerations (which, according to Killen, fall within the social conventional domain) and the latter cluster (which fall in the moral domain), while diametrically opposed, are both forms of reasoning that empirical evidence suggests exist within the child, oftentimes simultaneously. The consideration of psychological issues pertaining to individual preferences and personal prerogatives (i.e., the personal domain) also factor into reasoning about intergroup exclusion. A general finding of the research here is that young people's reasoning varies by context as well as cognitive developmental capacities in the balancing of various moral, social, and personal priorities.

A line of research undertaken by Killen and her colleagues now spanning over 20 years has utilized a domain theory approach in examining the complexity of children's and adolescents' reasoning about social inclusion and exclusion (e.g., Burkholder et al., 2019; Cooley et al., 2019; Killen et al., 2001; Killen et al., 2002; Killen & Stangor, 2001; Richardson et al., 2014; Theimer et al., 2001). These studies have also been focused on how contextual and individual differences as well as authority influences may provide additional information regarding moral development and reasoning about intergroup processes. In one of their earliest studies on how a sample of children and adolescents ($N = 294$) from varying ethnic backgrounds (approximately 60% African American, Latinx, and Asian American¹⁸) evaluated race- and gender-based exclusion, Killen et al. (2002) used the clinical interview method (Piaget, 1932; Turiel, 1983b) to investigate participants' reasoning surrounding intergroup exclusion in three different contexts: “friendship” (i.e., not socializing with a new neighbor), “peer group” (i.e.,

¹⁸ Racial-ethnic labels used in the original studies are updated here to reflect current standards.

excluding a new person from a music club), and “school” (i.e., a town that excludes certain people from its schools). In that study, researchers found that reasoning in the moral domain (i.e., justifications that referred to fairness, equality, rights, equal opportunity, empathy, integration, reduction of racism, and the wrongfulness of discrimination) is generally more likely than reasoning in social conventional (social coordination, group functioning, group identity, social expectations, traditions, stereotypes, authority, government, and social consensus) or personal domains to be used in intergroup-related exclusion scenarios. It was also found that the use of this type of reasoning is influenced by the context of exclusion, age, and participants’ experience with intergroup contact.

The many variables in Killen et al.’s (2002) study provided numerous notable findings, more than can be discussed here; however, some of their results are appropriate for demonstrating the complexities of the current discussion. For instance, participants applied moral justifications most readily to the school context, whereas they utilized social conventional justifications more often with regards to the peer group context. A variety of important age-based trends were also apparent. Across two of the three contexts (friendship and peer group), the 10th grade participants were more likely to sanction exclusion than were their younger counterparts (4th and 7th graders). Furthermore, with increase in age, participants attributed peer-based exclusion to concerns in the social conventional domain (e.g., group functioning and dynamics) or the personal domain (e.g., individual prerogatives), whereas they reasoned about school-based exclusion in terms of prejudicial authority and unfair traditions (which elicited moral concerns). Interestingly, for the friendship contexts, ethnic differences were found such that African American children were less likely than either European American children or “Other Minority” children (a collapsed variable with Latinx and Asian American participants) to use the moral concept of fairness to reason about exclusion. These participants, instead, most frequently integrated reasoning that espoused a combination of fairness and rights to evaluate exclusion. In other words, African American children more frequently went beyond personal considerations of the individual scenario to discuss the wrongfulness and unfairness of intergroup exclusion in terms of its larger implications for society. Another interesting ethnicity-based difference was that African Americans viewed exclusion more frequently in terms of empathy than did participants in the other racial-ethnic categories in the context of intergroup friendship. With regards to the influence of authority sanctions on intergroup exclusion, 7th grade African American females were more likely than their counterparts from other racial groups to judge the exclusion of a child from school on the basis of race as okay. This trend was also echoed in the tendency of “Other Minority” children to use authority as a justification for exclusion. Overall, however, when concerns about fairness were used to *reject* exclusion, most participants across all contexts and targets of exclusion (i.e., race- or gender-based) utilized that element of moral domain-based rationale.

Research that followed the 2002 study not only replicated aspects of the original findings (e.g., Cooley et al., 2019), but continued to build further evidence for the coordination of domains and nuances in reasoning processes across age groups in additional relational contexts with respect to the issue of peer inclusion/exclusion, such as when children and adolescents consider combinations of race- and wealth status (Burkholder et al., 2019) or competitive versus non-competitive situations and interpersonal characteristics like aggressivity or shyness (Richardson et al., 2014). Notably, these studies have consistently demonstrated differences in judgments and reasoning about exclusion (and related issues like equality and fairness) from people in historically subordinated social groups (e.g., females, people of color; Richardson et

al., 2014, pp. 1283, 1286) when compared to those in positions of greater power. This particular finding makes the overlooked subject of how individuals with disabilities might reason about such issues an all the more compelling area of inquiry.

Domain Theory Approaches to Disability-Based Social In/Exclusion

The evidence for the complexity of moral and social reasoning surrounding intergroup inclusion and exclusion (as well as other forms of social conflict and coordination) continues to grow. And while that line of research has provided some important developmental findings regarding reasoning regarding gender-, race-, and some other types of group membership-based judgments, relatively little research to date (with the exceptions described herein) has applied the same framework to people's reasoning as it pertains to individuals with disabilities, non-visible or otherwise. Bottema (2011), in her study on adolescents' judgments about the failure to include¹⁹ peers with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), notes that

[a]n important difference between gender and race on the one hand and social disability on the other is that gender and racial categories are no longer sanctioned in the U.S. as appropriate grounds for exclusion from most social contexts such as schools or other public institutions. In contrast, individuals with social disabilities like autism are often educated apart from their typical peers, illustrating an institution-level sanctioning of exclusion based on disability status... (p. 45)

She further contends that systemic exclusion from certain educational settings places a limit on intergroup contact and on relational experiences that likely impact future reasoning and personal decisions about inclusion. Though students with social disabilities like ASD may be especially subject to such segregation, Bottema's arguments may also hold in some contexts involving students with LDs, as many of them are likely to have had some experience of being removed or diverted from general education classrooms for specialized instruction during their school careers. The findings from Bottema's work—combined with other experimental and survey-based research on correlates of peer attitudes towards disability (e.g., Griffin et al., 2012) from outside of the domain theory literature—provide some additionally relevant findings.

In their studies on the judgments of children and adolescents without disabilities surrounding the social inclusion and exclusion of peers with ASD features,²⁰ Bottema(-Beutel) and her colleagues have found that, while most individuals judge exclusion on the basis of disability status as generally unacceptable for moral reasons like considerations of welfare and fairness, variations in the context of exclusion sometimes makes a difference in judgments of acceptability as well as in the complexity of reasoning and types of justifications young people offer for their judgments (Bottema, 2011; Bottema-Beutel & Li, 2015; Bottema-Beutel et al., 2017). The interview protocol by Bottema and colleagues (2011; Bottema-Beutel & Li, 2015)

¹⁹ Bottema generally uses the phrase "failure to include" rather than the word "exclude," noting: "...the protagonist in [the interview protocols] excluded the character with autism by not inviting them to an activity. Thus, we refer to this as 'failure to include' rather than 'exclude,' as 'exclude' implies a more active interaction with the character with ASD. We wrote the [protocols] in this way as we believe it to be a more accurate depiction of the mode of exclusion likely to occur in regards to adolescents with ASD" (Bottema-Beutel & Li, 2015, Interview Procedure section, para. 2)

²⁰ Bottema does not explicitly use the term "autism" in every interview protocol; instead, she uses descriptive phrases such as "a disability [that causes] trouble socializing with other students..." or else uses the term "autism" in combination with descriptions of specific characteristics like hand-flapping, verbal/behavioral perseveration, sensory overload, etc.

consisted of four exclusion stories: “classroom” (i.e., excluding a potential science lab group member who has ASD), “social peer group” (i.e., excluding a peer who has ASD from an informal soccer game), “home” (i.e., excluding a same-age neighbor with ASD from playing a video game), and “school” (i.e., a site administrator’s policy of excluding a student with ASD from general education classrooms). They found that exclusion was judged as less acceptable in public contexts (i.e., school and social peer group) than in private ones (i.e., classroom and home), with private contexts eliciting more justifications within the personal domain (e.g., personal preferences), irrespective of acceptability judgment. For those who deemed exclusion to be acceptable under some circumstances, considerations in the social conventional domain (e.g., group functioning) were also prevalent and given greater or equivalent weight to moral reasons. Notably, participants exhibited the most difficulty rendering a straightforward judgment in the school context, with over 40% indicating that a schoolwide policy of excluding a peer with ASD from general education classrooms was *both* unacceptable and acceptable. Again, though participants largely cited reasons of fairness or justice (i.e., a moral obligation of equal access) for the unacceptability of exclusion from general education classrooms, they also cited competing moral concerns regarding fairness to the majority population of general education students, whose learning might be negatively impacted by the presence of a student with ASD (who may not be able to conform to behavioral standards). Such conflicts are suggested in the remarks of an 18-year-old male participant who said,

[i]f someone is disabled to the point where they’re literally distracting other students’ learning, then I don’t think it’s fair to the other students. I don’t think it’s necessarily right to say ‘oh he could never be in class’ because that’s just lazy. You know, you can always find time to include someone and do it the right way like balancing it so the students can be learning when they need to be learning and not being distracted, and so that the special student can also be included at certain times. (2015, Justification Patterns by Context section, para. 9)

Bottema notes that this particular context seems, for many adolescents, to evoke a moral conundrum, “where moral justifications on both sides of the argument are not easily prioritized or subordinated in order to make a judgment” (2015, Justification Patterns by Judgment section, para. 1). The challenge reflects broader, ongoing moral philosophy concerns surrounding the notion of a “just society” (Bottema, 2011, p. 45), in which questions involving resource allocation and societal accommodation of individuals with disabilities have historically arisen and continue to be of vital interest.

Bottema-Beutel and her colleagues (2019) later extended the research to examine how undergraduate students²¹ evaluated the exclusion of peers with ASD and peers with LDs in varying contexts (academic versus social and “no grade” versus “grade” conditions). They, like others before them (e.g., Richardson et al., 2014), confirmed that context, priorities, and individual characteristics are weighed when individuals make decisions about the (un)acceptability of peer exclusion. Their results indicated that exclusion was thought to be most acceptable when there was a grade at stake in a classroom context, and—notably—when the excluded peer had an ASD diagnosis, and less acceptable in “no grade” conditions involving a peer with a LD. When offering justifications for the acceptability of exclusion of either peers with ASD or LD, individuals in their study were most likely to provide social conventional

²¹ Their study sample ($N = 142$) coincidentally included a small subset ($n = 13$) of students with LDs. Those students’ responses were aggregated with the rest of the study sample after the investigators found that LD status was not a significant predictor of any of the dependent variables in their study design.

rationale (e.g., concerns about group dynamics and social expectations); this was especially the case when there was a grade at stake and the hypothetical target of exclusion had an LD. Interestingly, the researchers also noted that moral reasons having to do with various aspects of welfare were sometimes also cited as justifications for exclusion: (a) the potential for negative impact on the autistic peer in social situations and (b) the likelihood of academic and social consequences to the group (regardless of the hypothetical target of exclusion's disability type). Still (and consistent with much previous research), when thinking about the unacceptability of exclusion, individuals almost exclusively cited moral justifications having to do with fairness and harm. Bottema-Beutel and her colleagues have provided some useful preliminary insights into several of the many variables that might be brought to bear in the broader social and institutional experiences of college students with LDs and other sorts of disabilities.

A Note on Being Hurt, Hurting Others, and Narrative Accounts of Interpersonal Conflicts. The Bottema-Beutel et al. and the Killen et al. studies, like the vast majority of research utilizing a domain theory conceptual framework and methodology, employed an interview method that included hypothetical situations specifically constructed by researchers in order to examine judgments and reasoning about variables of interest. Wainryb et al. (2005) maintain that the simultaneous study of reasoning and behavior (or lived experience) is essential to the project of researching moral and social development, contending that "...knowing only [people's] judgments of right and wrong is insufficient for understanding their moral lives" (p. 1). Whereas the issue of (in)consistencies between moral judgments and moral behavior had been addressed elsewhere, Wainryb and her colleagues undertook a study—still steeped in the domain theory tradition—that was intended to more deeply explore how moral (and other) concepts are applied "to real and concrete interpersonal contexts" (p. 1) in order to form a more integrative picture of conflict-laden interactions. The study examined children's and adolescents' self-selected narrative accounts of their own experiences both harming and being harmed by a peer. The research was the first of its kind and made a significant contribution to the ecological validity of the theory. In the same sense that Wainryb and her colleagues' research added deeper cognitive and psychological perspective to etic descriptions of spontaneously arising conflict among children and adolescents, there is an analogous gap in our current understanding of exactly how postsecondary students with LDs attune to and construe everyday interpersonal challenges involving disability; that gap may be similarly addressed with the increasing inclusion of such students' lived experiences in the current research.

Peer Attitudinal Studies on Disability. There is also some research on peers' and authority figures' (e.g., faculty²²) general attitudes towards individuals with disabilities and intergroup social interaction from outside the domain theory framework (Griffin et al., 2012; Siperstein et al., 2007; Tonnsen & Hahn, 2015; Westling et al., 2013) that warrants some mention here because findings not only dovetail with the other work, but also have the potential to be put in a constructive dialogue with the aforementioned qualitative research on the perspectives and experiences of students with LDs (e.g., Denhart, 2008; Lightfoot et al., 2018). Widespread variations in measurement and methodology in this body of work (including age groups, study variables, and [especially] disability specification) limit the applicability of

²² Because they represent a significantly different element of social hierarchy in college settings, studies relating to the perspectives of authority figures such as faculty and staff are beyond the scope of the current review. Readers are directed to Banks (2019), Hansen et al. (2020), Khouri et al. (2022), Murray et al. (2008a), and Murray et al. (2008b).

findings as a whole, but do further signal the import of both individual- and contextual-level considerations.

Tonnson and Hahn (2015) conducted an experimental study by varying characteristics of a hypothetical peer with ASD using social networking blogs and found that disability status was linked to more negative anticipated attitudes in their sample of middle school participants, but also found that more favorable attitudes were expressed by younger participants and females as well as participants with higher social status and more exposure to ASD. In a much larger, national survey of middle school students on their attitudes towards peers with intellectual disabilities (ID²³), Siperstein and colleagues (2007) found that respondents believed peers with ID could participate in non-academic classes (but not in academic ones); viewed inclusion as having both positive and negative effects (e.g., advantage of students learning to be more accepting of differences and disadvantage of potentially creating distractions or discipline issues); and were disinclined towards interacting with peers with ID outside of school settings.

Smaller scale survey-based research with undergraduates (Griffin et al., 2012; Westling et al., 2013) has shown that they generally espouse positive attitudes towards inclusion-based programs in postsecondary institutions, and that (similar to the studies with the middle school aged groups) female respondents and those with higher comfort levels (sometimes associated with prior experiences) with individuals with ID held significantly more positive attitudes towards peers with ID and their inclusion. Taken together, those findings may signal a possible shift between early adolescence and adulthood in perceptions, everyday experience, and/or reasoning around social inclusion and exclusion akin to what Nucci and Turiel (2009) have described in the domain theory literature.²⁴

Lastly of note is a singular survey-based study contrasting the views of college students with and without LDs ($n = 38$ and $n = 100$, respectively) regarding stereotypes about individuals with LDs and conceptions of ability (May & Stone, 2010). Results indicated that the most frequent “metastereotype” (p. 485) shared by both groups of students pertained to notions of generally low ability or lesser intelligence. Though slightly below the conventional cut-offs for statistical significance, their study also evidenced some potential differences between students with and without LDs that are of note. Students with LDs in their sample were more likely to hold the perception that “people in general” view individuals with LDs as less intelligent and as attempting to “work the system” (p.490), though they were less likely than their neurotypical counterparts in the study to view LD as an insurmountable condition.

Domain Theory Studies on Educational Resource Distribution and Socially (Un)just Laws

Though the social inclusion/exclusion studies and attitudinal surveys may all provide some guidance around the utility of exploring varying relational contexts and parameters of

²³ ID is a disability category previously referred to in federal legislation and diagnostic manuals as “mental retardation,” characterized by significantly impaired general intellectual functioning coupled with concurrent deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the early developmental period (i.e., a substantively different disability than LDs or ASD). There is an extensive and growing literature on the particular matter of inclusion and equity for students with ID in K-12, higher education, and the workforce. Refer to Becht et al. (2020) and Whirley et al. (2020) for reviews; also, Corby et al. (2020) for one example of perspectives of postsecondary students with intellectual disabilities from outside the US.

²⁴ I.e., a “u-shaped” pattern where there might appear to be a decline in ‘moral’ judgments. Domain theory-based analyses indicate a period in development where adolescents are beginning to more fully coordinate moral considerations with those in other domains.

different types of judgments, several other domain theory studies on people's reasoning surrounding other associated phenomena may offer some additional insight for the current exploratory research. These studies highlight aspects of reasoning about social inequities that could also arise in the postsecondary educational setting where instances of disability-related conflict are likely to be somewhat more ambiguous and multifaceted than the types of exclusion studied in Killen's and in Bottema-Beutel's work. For instance, in Le's (2014) study on how children evaluate the fairness of differential treatment by teachers (i.e., unequal distribution of educational goods in the forms of assignment modifications, opportunities to practice and demonstrate reading skills, and individual teacher attention), she found evidence that children as young as 6-years-old "[do] not equate fairness with simple equality of treatment" (p. 2), but recognize that special needs may warrant an unequal distribution of educational resources. Children in her study judged increases of educational goods directed towards struggling students—particularly individual teacher attention and opportunities to practice reading skills—as legitimate (in contrast with illegitimacy of unequal distribution based on preferential treatment linked to gender, favored students, or high-achieving students). Further, children generally utilized moral justifications in the sub-domains of need and equality (with other references to welfare and rights) for their judgments.

In one other domain theory-based study that bears some relevance for the current research, Helwig & Jasiobedzka (2001) examined children's reasoning about "socially beneficial" (e.g., compulsory education for children under 16-years-old) versus "unjust" laws (e.g., denial of education to a class of people), conflicts, and legal compliance. Their study demonstrated that children—similarly to the multifaceted ways that participants in Killen's and Bottema-Beutel's research reasoned about exclusion—weigh aspects of perceived justice, socially beneficial purposes, and the potential for infringement on individual freedoms/rights in their deliberations. For instance, an overwhelming majority of children viewed a (hypothetical) socially unjust law that denies education to people with a certain physical characteristic as highly illegitimate, citing moral reasons such as fairness or equality and further indicating that the violation of this law would be acceptable. In contrast, when reasoning about a conflict involving a (hypothetical) socially beneficial law requiring school attendance for all people under the age of 16 and a hypothetical religion that requires parents to be responsible for their own children's education, children clearly weighed the social goal of public education against the right to religious freedom. While they, overall, endorsed the legitimacy of compulsory education and judged the violation of such laws as wrong, they viewed the violation of the law as more acceptable when in conflict with a civil liberty (and more so with increasing age). In their justifications for this type of exception, children "appealed to issues of individual freedom and choice over religious matters, and to parents' prerogative and capacity to exercise responsibility for their children's education" (p. 1390).

Synthesizing a Diverse Body of Research

A broad view of the domain theory work and other research reviewed earlier provides a basis for the notion that college students with LDs—like their neurotypical peers and younger individuals—are likely to weigh a host of important prudential, personal, social conventional, and moral considerations as they navigate the relational realities of the postsecondary institutional landscape in pursuit of their academic, social, and future life goals. Particularly for college students with non-visible disabilities, the tensions amongst potential social stigmatization

and/or misunderstanding following disability disclosure, consideration of rights to privacy of personal information, and the institutional procedural norms or rules established around federally mandated anti-discrimination and accommodation legislation (among a myriad of other issues) illustrate one such set of interrelated concerns that might be brought to bear in a single social interaction or judgment. The complexities of distinct-yet-interrelated phenomena like equity, inclusion, discrimination, and civil rights in the context of higher education make domain theory an ideal analytical framework for the proposed exploratory dissertation study, where the psychological processes underlying experiences with those phenomena are of central interest.

As observed, research in the domain theory tradition on moral judgments surrounding discrimination, social exclusion, equity, and education has primarily centered on categories such as race and gender. Though more recent work on disability has begun to emerge, it has largely concentrated on the perspectives of children and adolescents (i.e., very little on young adults, adults, or older persons). In addition to the work on inclusion and exclusion, information on how people reason about other related phenomena such as the unequal distribution of educational goods and socially unjust laws versus socially beneficial laws is also likely to hold some import for the further study of conflicts around disability in educational settings.

In discussing the implications of their findings on young people's attitudes towards individuals with disabilities and inclusion, researchers frequently call for "facilitating positive, public social experiences of students with [disabilities in order to] promote positive attitudes and social acceptance by peers" (Tonnsen & Hahn, 2015, p. 1). These entreaties further underscore the necessity of the current study, which is aimed at exploring everyday judgments and coordination of social-cognitive domains that students with LDs make and use to coregulate those types of peer relationships and other social encounters. We presently have no information in this body of literature on how young adults with LDs reason about disability status and various specific facets of inclusion in colleges and universities, where the features of inequities or discriminatory treatment may involve moral and social ambiguities left unexplored in existing domain theory studies with children and adolescents on more straightforward forms of (generally peer-based) social exclusion. For instance, how might students' thought processes about an interaction around disability and accommodation disclosure with a person in a position of authority or power (such as a faculty member who has control over grades and professional opportunities) differ from that students' thought processes about an interaction with peers involving group work division and disability self-disclosure? In another example, how are institutional procedural norms weighed against other considerations when those procedures might constitute a hardship or barrier to accessing necessary disability supports and, by extension, a barrier to the full and equal enjoyment of a college education? The body of research reviewed herein has not addressed these types of questions about important social psychological considerations. Perhaps even more significantly, no domain theory-based research to date has explicitly included the perspectives of individuals with LDs (or most other disabilities), let alone those of young adults in the postsecondary institution setting. One of the main priorities of this exploratory research is to begin to address these gaps.

Current Study

The current study was aimed at beginning to understand how undergraduate students with documented, non-visible LDs make judgments and reason²⁵ about issues pertaining to disability

²⁵ Interchangeably termed "evaluations" and "justifications," respectively, herein.

anti-discrimination, equity, inclusion, and access in the university setting. The research questions here have been guided by a review of the literature on experiences and perspectives of undergraduate students with LDs (e.g., Denhart, 2008; Lightfoot et al., 2018; McGregor et al., 2016) and, more specifically, findings highlighting the importance of knowledge around disability rights as well as interactions and relationships with faculty, peers, and campus disability services personnel that encompass the potential for inequitable treatment or stigmatization; the challenges of disability disclosure; and access to targeted supports or accommodations. The current study also included inquiry into self-reported autobiographical instances of bothersome and/or uncomfortable disability-related interactions in the university setting, including participants' judgments and reasoning surrounding such instances; thoughts about institutional changes that might prevent further such occurrences; and general reflections on the experience of being an undergraduate student with a non-visible LD. Though this type of open-ended autobiographical component has not generally been a feature of most domain theory-based research (apart from the aforementioned Wainryb et al. [2005] work on children's narratives of enduring and perpetrating harm), it was an essential element of the current study given the significant underrepresentation of this population in social cognitive developmental research.

Reasoning was systematically examined using a domain theory conceptual and analytical framework (e.g., Turiel, 1983a; Smetana et al., 2014), where moral judgments involving considerations of harm, fairness, and rights are viewed as distinct from considerations of social convention (e.g., societal rules, authority dictates, group norms), personal prerogative (i.e., choice or autonomy), or prudence (i.e., having to do with decisions based on one's own safety or comfort). The domain theory framework also posits that such judgments and the reasoning surrounding them are constructed out of reflections upon everyday reciprocal relationships as well as upon broader contexts of multifaceted societal arrangements, cultural practices, and material conditions often marked by injustice and inequality (Turiel, 2014).

One initial aim of the study (Research Question 1 [RQ1]) was to explore how undergraduates with LDs evaluate the existence of federal legislation around anti-discrimination and accommodations for people with disabilities in postsecondary institutions—that is, judgments about the acceptability or unacceptability of such laws and how those evaluations may or may not change as a result of other contextual criteria regarding the presence or absence of social influence, authority dictates, and generalizability to people in other countries. A second aspect of the first aim was to explore their justifications for their evaluations: What are the moral, social, personal, and/or prudential reasons they provide for their evaluations and how do those vary—if at all—by the aforementioned contextual criteria? At least one previous domain theory-based study (Helwig & Jasiobedzka, 2001) indicated that young children weigh aspects of perceived justice, socially beneficial purposes, and the potential for infringement on individual freedoms/rights in their deliberations surrounding “socially beneficial” versus “unjust” laws and hypothetical social conflicts; the same may be true of college-aged individuals.

A second aim of the study (RQ2) was to elucidate how undergraduates with LDs evaluate hypothetical instances of interpersonal dilemmas that are related to disability and accommodations for disability in the university context. When faced with various competing priorities (described in further detail subsequently), what are the moral, social, personal, and/or prudential reasons or justifications they provide for their evaluations and how do those vary—if at all—by other contextual criteria, including the presence or absence of social influence, authority dictates, and generalizability to people in other countries? There is presently no

domain theory-based research that directly addresses these issues from the perspectives of people with disabilities.²⁶

A final aim (RQ3) of the study was to explore autobiographical instances of bothersome or uncomfortable disability-related interpersonal interactions in the university setting and how undergraduate students with non-visible LDs evaluate and reason about such self-reported experiences (that is, the moral, social conventional, personal, and/or prudential considerations in their reflections upon those experiences). Additional elements of the final aim included inquiry into the recommendations students had for institutional changes that could prevent future such occurrences as well as their general thoughts on their experiences of being undergraduates with non-visible LDs that might have not been represented in the semi-structured (i.e., hypothetical situation) clinical interview protocol.

The paucity of research of this nature in this specific population precluded nuanced hypotheses. However, some general predictions based on findings from the domain theory literature and trends in research on college students with LDs were possible. The study was designed to explore the social cognitive psychological processes that occur when civil rights (i.e., the right to access an education and to non-discrimination in the pursuit of that education) come into conflict with institutional norms or social practices, personal prerogatives, and other moral considerations in the course of commonplace interactions and interpersonal dilemmas. I expected to find that participants would evaluate anti-discrimination and accommodation legislation aimed at ensuring equitable access and opportunities for students with disabilities in the university setting as acceptable and would mainly cite moral justifications (such as fairness and rights) for those evaluations (RQ1). I further expected that, in instances of ambiguous interpersonal interactions involving equity, access, and inclusion (i.e., a conflict with an authority figure involving disclosure of disability accommodations, self-disclosure of disability to a peer work group, and logistical barriers to accessing disability support services [described in further detail subsequently]), participants would have more variable evaluations of acceptability and would justify those evaluations with combinations of moral, social conventional, personal, and prudential rationale (RQ2). For instance, a participant evaluating the acceptability of a hypothetical student with a LD who chooses not to disclose their disability to a peer work group may consider the hypothetical student's personal right to privacy (i.e., a moral concern), but may also coordinate that priority with the group's functioning (i.e., a social conventional consideration).

Consistent with previous domain theory research in its assessment of additional criterion judgments (access Turiel, 1983a; 1983b), I expected that participant evaluations would be justified by moral considerations and would remain stable regardless of varying contextual factors (i.e., social influence, authority dictates, and generalizability to other countries); in contrast, when participants utilize other social domains to justify their evaluations (particularly social conventional), I anticipated that there may be greater variability in criterion judgments (RQ1 and RQ2).

Lastly, I anticipated that the types of autobiographical experiences of uncomfortable or bothersome disability-related interactions reported by participants in the open-ended interview component would at least mirror the relational spheres used in the semi-structured interview hypothetical situations (i.e., they would involve a mixture of experiences with faculty [or other authority figures], peers, and disability services). I believed their evaluations and justifications

²⁶ Though, access Bottema-Beutel et al. (2019) as one example of domain theory research that included some college students with LDs among their neurotypical peers.

surrounding these experiences would involve some of their own reflections about moral, social conventional, personal, and prudential considerations that the participants articulated when considering the hypothetical situations and that they would have varying ideas about institutional changes to prevent such undesired disability-related interactions in the university setting (RQ3). Given the exploratory and intentionally open-ended nature of the concluding autobiographical question regarding general thoughts or observations about their experience as undergraduates with non-visible LDs, no predictions were made.

The overarching goal of all the measures employed in this study was to provide a more nuanced account of how students with LDs might reason about the everyday experiences and interactions surrounding disability in postsecondary settings that have been highlighted in the quantitative and qualitative research described previously; the study also extended the emergent body of domain theory-based research pertaining to disability and social inclusion/exclusion as well as that having to do with how younger individuals reason about the (un)equal distribution of educational goods and socially beneficial versus unjust laws.

Chapter 3: Methods

Site and Participants

The study included a total of 33 participants, ages 19 to 29 ($M = 21.03$, $SD = 2.08$), 27 of whom identified as cisgender women. Participants' reported racial-ethnic backgrounds included Asian, White, Latinx, or multiracial (access Table 1). Participants had an average SES of 5.72 ($SD = 1.89$) on a 10-point scale.²⁷ All participants were enrolled in undergraduate studies (39% for more than 2 years, 33% having completed earlier studies in junior college²⁸) at a large, public university and self-identified as having a formally documented LD (i.e., no third-party verification of disability status was required for study participation).²⁹ Though all participants were enrolled in psychology coursework and were mostly enrolled in that major, other academic majors were also represented in the sample (access Table 1). The majority of participants ($n = 20$) identified as having been diagnosed solely with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), though other reported LDs included dyslexia and processing disorders (access Table 1); numerous participants ($n = 11$) also identified as having comorbid disabilities (at least one of which was a LD [e.g., ADHD and autism, dyslexia and ADHD, etc.]). The average length of time since first being diagnosed with a LD was 4.73 years ($SD = 5.21$). In terms of academic areas of disability impact, participants on average reported being most affected in the areas of time spent studying/preparing for class and in executive functioning skills (e.g., planning, organization, and task completion), though other areas of impact were also noted (access Figure 1). Finally, 73% of participants reported receiving academic accommodations through the university's Disabled Students' Program; 33% reported having had an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) or a 504 Plan in high school and/or prior to attending high school.

Participants were recruited via the Psychology Department's Research Participation Program (RPP), which is an online research study listing-, scheduling- and credit system utilized by the department's faculty, graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, honors students, lab managers, and approved affiliates to conduct approved studies. The RPP platform connects researchers and the university's students aged 18 and older who are enrolled in psychology coursework and who can voluntarily participate in research studies to earn RPP credits (or else complete equivalent assignments) as a small portion of their course grades during the academic year and certain summer sessions. Additionally, the RPP system allows for prescreening of potential participants based on the Institutional Review Board's approved study inclusion criteria (access Appendix A for prescreening survey contents).

²⁷ One participant declined to answer the SES item.

²⁸ One participant had completed an undergraduate degree at another institution and was unrolled in undergraduate coursework at the study site through a post-baccalaureate program.

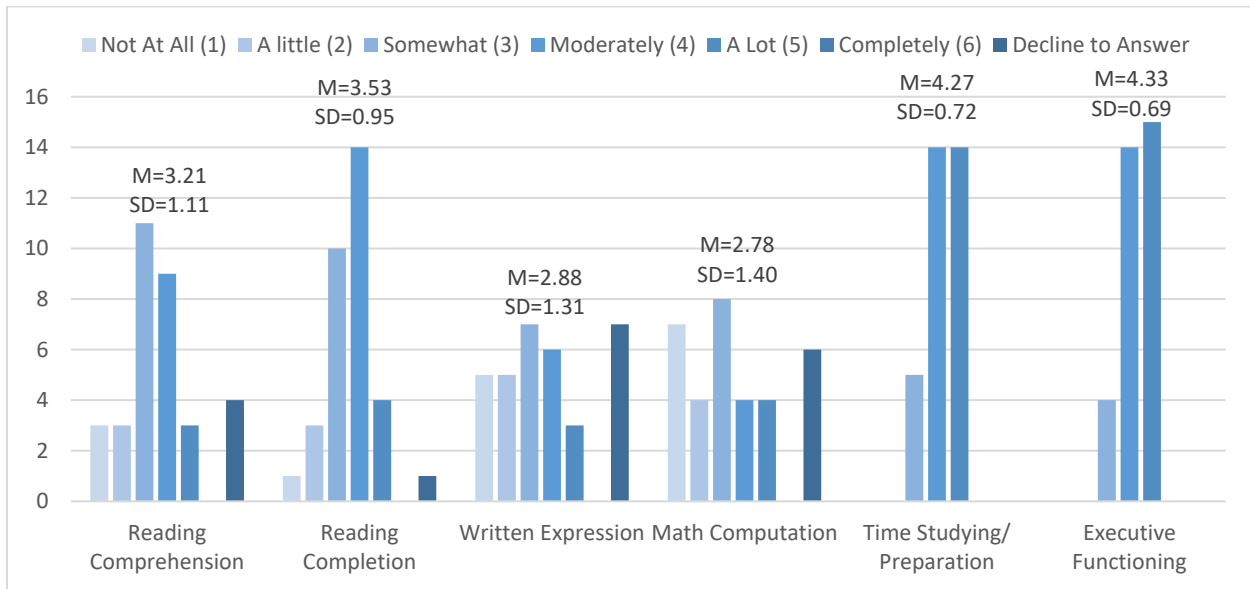
²⁹ Although 'persons with non-visible disabilities' in higher education institutions currently covered under federal civil rights legislation include many other individuals besides those with LDs (e.g., those with psychological or psychiatric disabilities like depression or those with chronic health issues like diabetes), this subset was chosen as the focus of the current study for two reasons: (a) according to governmental statistics, this represents one of the largest and fastest growing populations of individuals with disabilities matriculating into postsecondary institutions in the US, and (b) there have been relatively few psychology-based empirical approaches to systematically investigating this growing student population's evaluations, understandings, and interpretations of everyday institutional- and social interactions around disability.

Table 1*Sociodemographic Characteristics*

	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Female	27	82
Male	5	15
Non-Binary	1	3
Age		
19-20 years	15	45
21-22 years	12	36
23-24 years	4	12
25-29 years	2	6
Race		
Asian	12	36
Latinx	4	12
White	10	30
Multiracial	7	21
Academic Major		
Biological Sciences	4	12
Cognitive and Computer Sciences	3	9
Psychology	21	64
Other	5	15
Learning Disability Type		
ADHD	20	61
Dyslexia	1	3
Processing Disorders	1	3
Comorbid Disabilities	11	33

Figure 1

*Dimensions of Disability Impact*³⁰ (N = 33)



Potential participants who completed prescreening and were found to meet inclusion criteria were emailed with a notification of eligibility, additional study information, and instructions for scheduling an interview. Those who volunteered to participate were then provided a digital copy of the study consent form for their independent review as well as instructions for accessing their scheduled interview session; those who did not initially reply to eligibility notifications were emailed once more in a given semester or summer term with a reminder that they were still eligible to participate before the end-of-term deadline. Additionally, several participants independently located the study listing on the RPP platform and indicated their interest via email. In those instances, eligibility criteria were reiterated and confirmed, and respondents were then provided the same study information, instructions for scheduling an interview, digital consent form, and follow-up instructions for accessing a scheduled interview.

Design and Procedures

Participants were interviewed remotely via individualized, password-protected Zoom video communications platform sessions for approximately 90 minutes. Interviews began with brief instructions for troubleshooting technical issues, notification of and verbal consent for audio recording procedures, completion of digitized consent form via Qualtrics,³¹ outline of interview components, and opportunity for questions. Participants were informed that they could

³⁰ This scale also included the option for a free response regarding other areas of impact. Nine participants completed the item and included the following responses and ratings: staying on task (5); auditory processing (4, 3); attendance/lateness (3, 4); maintaining focus in class and taking notes (5); losing train of thought when talking (4); quality of work (4); emotional stress (5); concentration (4); time management (5); connection and networking with peers, faculty, mentors, clubs in university setting (4).

³¹ A secure data collection platform.

decline to answer any question and/or withdraw their consent to be interviewed at any point without penalty. Responses were recorded and transcribed via the Zoom platform, then cleaned manually and coded for analysis.

The research utilized both semi-structured and open-ended clinical interview methods. In the first portion, participants were presented with four vignettes, one concerning the presence of disability anti-discrimination legislation and three others which were hypothetical situations involving interpersonal interactions of a university student with a non-visible LD. After ensuring that the presentation format was accessible to each participant, a vignette was read aloud. Then, the text of the vignette was left onscreen while participants were asked to evaluate the acceptability of the situation or action described and to provide their justification(s) for why they believed the situation or action to be okay or not okay. Lastly, a series of follow-up evaluation and justification questions were asked regarding contextual criteria variations on each vignette. The series of contextual criteria questions were selected from two protocol series based on whether the participant being interviewed answered the initial (or “general”) evaluation question in the affirmative (i.e., “Okay”) or in the negative (i.e., “Not Okay”).³² The procedure was repeated for each of the four vignettes. In order to ensure ecological relevance, the specific hypothetical situations in the semi-structured interview (described in further detail subsequently; also access Appendix B for full text) were developed in consultation with several experts who have worked extensively with undergraduates with LDs and other disabilities in US college and university settings as well as in conversation with students with various non-visible disabilities, bearing in mind existing broad research findings regarding this student population.

After an optional 5-minute break, participants were asked a series of autobiographical questions surrounding an uncomfortable or bothersome interpersonal interaction of their choosing that involved their disability in the university context. Follow-up questions in the autobiographical segment included the same type of general evaluation and justification questions as in the semi-structured clinical interview.³³ The autobiographical portion concluded with two more open-ended questions regarding institutional change and general experiences (described in further detail subsequently; also access Appendix C for full text).

In the final portion of the study, the audio recording was terminated and participants were asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire (access Appendix D) online via the same Qualtrics platform used for consent. While participants completed the questionnaire, I stayed available for any clarification questions and awarded their credits in the RPP system.³⁴ Lastly, participants were offered the opportunity to provide feedback, ask questions about the research, and were also offered links to campus community resources for students with disabilities.

Semi-Structured Clinical Interview

The first vignette in the semi-structured clinical interview (“Anti-Discrimination Legislation”) was designed to examine how participants evaluated the general acceptability of current federal legislation aimed at eliminating discrimination on the basis of disability and

³² Participants who provided mixed (or “Both”) general evaluations were first asked about their justifications on both sides of their response and then directly queried about whether they fell more strongly on the affirmative or the negative side in order to determine the series of follow-up contextualized criteria items to administer.

³³ Due to the expected diversity of self-reported experiences, it was not feasible to construct contextualized criteria follow-up items for this portion of the interview.

³⁴ In accordance with the study’s IRB approval, one participant who had already completed their RPP credits was awarded a \$15 Amazon eGift card for their participation.

requiring accommodation for disability in university programs, services, and activities. This type of vignette has also been described in the domain theory literature as ‘prototypical’ of the moral domain (i.e., a straightforward moral circumstance; Smetana et al., 2014), wherein the elements presented are not explicitly or implicitly in conflict with other events, goals, or considerations. The subsequent three vignettes were hypothetical situations in which a student with a non-visible LD is faced with various types of social dilemmas relating to their disability. The vignettes were constructed to further explore the parameters of evaluations and reasoning surrounding related issues that entailed additional contextual nuance and ambiguous social conflict. The specific hypothetical situations were selected to reflect the actual types of multi-faceted interactions that students with LDs face in three relational spheres frequently highlighted in research with students with disabilities in postsecondary settings: faculty (or other academic authority figures), peers, and disabled students’ services program personnel. Further, the hypothetical situations were designed to also explore how students with non-visible LDs reason about such dilemmas when evaluating the decisions or behaviors of various stakeholders (i.e., that of a faculty member, that of a student with a non-visible LD, and that of a disability services program specialist) when there are likely numerous competing social domains under consideration. As an exploratory study, it was important that the measures reflected the nature and scope of daily realities that such students experience and, as such, would have a greater potential to guide further research and practical applications.

The hypothetical situations included: a professor who agrees to write a recommendation letter only on the condition that they disclose a student’s disability accommodation (“Authority Figure and Accommodations”³⁵); a student who chooses not to disclose their LD to a peer group despite being delegated a disability-impacted task (“Peer Group Self-Disclosure”), and a disability support services specialist who decides to direct a struggling student who had a history of LD to alternative campus resources and new psychoeducational assessment rather than permitting immediate access to disability-specific academic supports or accommodations due to the student’s lack of current disability documentation (“Disability Support Services”). Each hypothetical situation included a description of the events involved as well as a brief explanation of the hypothetical student’s areas of disability impact. Each of the four vignettes in the semi-structured clinical interview were followed by querying evaluations of the acts involved (i.e., “Do you think it’s okay or not okay that...”) and then justifications for evaluations (i.e., “Why do you think that it’s okay/not okay?”).

Follow-up counterposed contextualized criteria evaluation questions regarding social influence (e.g., “What if another student told [the student in the scenario] that it was okay? Then, would it be okay or not? Why?”), authority dictates (e.g., “What if the chancellor of the university said that it was okay? Then, would it be okay or not okay? Why?”), and generalizability (e.g., “What about if this happened in another country under similar circumstances? Then, would it be okay or not okay? Why?”) were asked after the initial (or “general”) evaluation and justification questions. Two forms of the contextualized criteria follow-up series protocols were in place: one for participants who provided affirmative (i.e., “Okay”) general evaluations and one for participants who provided negative (i.e., “Not Okay”)

³⁵ This particular hypothetical situation was adapted from an article in a widely circulated news source (Appiah, 2018).

general evaluations and then administered accordingly.³⁶ These follow-up item series were structured as counter probes to participants' general evaluations. As mentioned previously, these sets of criterion questions are utilized in domain theory research to further assess the extent to which participants are reasoning about a given situation with respect to a single domain or are coordinating across multiple domains.

Open-Ended Autobiographical Interview

In a second segment of the interview, participants were posed optional open-ended autobiographical questions about a disability-related interaction in the university setting of their choosing. Participants were asked to (a) describe an experience at the university in which they were made to feel uncomfortable or felt bothered by a way they were treated because of their learning disability, then (b) provide their evaluation of the (un)acceptability of the experience, (c) provide their justification for their evaluation, and (d) describe what institutional changes, if any, they believed could be implemented to prevent others from having a similar experience. The autobiographical interview segment concluded with an open-ended question about what else, if anything, participants wanted to share about their experience as an undergraduate with a learning disability that might not have been reflected in the previous components of the interview.

Demographic Background Questionnaire

At the conclusion of the interview, participants were asked to complete a 10-question online demographic questionnaire (Appendix D) that served the primary purpose of thoroughly describing sample characteristics, the lack of which has recently been noted as a common flaw requiring change in disability-related research involving college students (Madaus et al, 2020). Secondly, the demographic items had potential to provide for theoretically grounded comparative analyses if the resulting sample yielded statistically required proportions of participant characteristics.³⁷ Questionnaire items included: age, gender identification(s), racial-ethnic background(s), academic major(s), years completed in college and junior college, socioeconomic status, years since first assessed and diagnosed with a learning disability, disability identification(s), years of experience with Individualized Educational Plan and/or other disability supports prior to college, years of experience with academic accommodations in college, and a dimensions of learning disabilities impact scale (a seven-item Likert-type scale on which participants were asked to rate the extent to which they experienced specific areas of academic functioning and skills as impacted by their disability or disabilities.³⁸

³⁶ Participants who provided mixed (or "Both") general evaluations were first asked about their justifications on both sides of their evaluative response and lastly directly queried about whether they fell more strongly on one side in order to determine the series of follow-up contextualized criteria questions to administer.

³⁷ Given the exploratory nature of the research and challenges recruiting a sufficient number of eligible participants during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not feasible to further limit study inclusion criteria by additional demographic variables that would ensure comparative analytical statistical requirements. Specific areas of interest for comparative analyses included number of years completed in college/junior college, years since initial LD diagnosis, and disability impact.

³⁸ Adapted from an informal LD self-screening tool for college students (Shulman, n.d.).

Coding and Plan of Analysis

Each interview was initially audio-recorded and transcribed through the Zoom videoconferencing software, then manually corrected for full transcription accuracy prior to being coded for evaluations, justifications, and additional qualitative autobiographical content.

Semi-Structured Clinical Interview

Evaluations were coded using a three-value system corresponding to whether the given element or action in a situation was affirmed as acceptable (i.e., “Okay” = 1), negated as unacceptable (i.e., “Not Okay” = 2), or mixed (“Both” [Okay and Not Okay] = 3). A draft coding scheme for justifications that was adapted from previous domain theory-based research (Bottema-Beutel & Li, 2015; Bottema-Beutel et al., 2019; Killen et al., 2002; Turiel, 1983b) and refined through two phases: an initial keyword coding of the raw transcripts using a draft coding scheme and then a second category-collapsing (and elaboration) numerical recoding of the resulting data. The final justification coding scheme is provided in Table 2 and includes the numerical sub-codes that fall within the broader moral, social conventional, personal, and prudential domain (as well as other/uncodable response) categories.

Reliability. An independent coder was trained on the coding system using a subset of five interviews selected for their breadth of response types. After training, a randomly selected subset of 10 semi-structured clinical interview transcript excerpts was double coded to calculate Cohen’s Kappa inter-rater agreement for justifications for each of the four vignettes and overall. Given participants’ use of multiple justifications within a single response, partial agreement between raters was possible (e.g., if the raters agreed on two sub-codes but disagreed on a third). The “Anti-Discrimination Legislation” vignette interrater agreement was $\kappa = 0.47$; “Authority Figure and Accommodations Disclosure” was $\kappa = 0.41$; “Peer Group Disability Self-Disclosure” was $\kappa = 0.63$; and “Access to Disability Services Support” was $\kappa = 0.59$. Average agreement for all justifications was $\kappa = 0.51$. Re-analysis using a less refined coding system of five general domain categories (i.e., moral, social conventional, personal, prudential, and other/uncodable) yielded reliability values in acceptable ranges: “Anti-Discrimination Legislation” of $\kappa = 0.71$; “Authority Figure and Accommodations Disclosure” of $\kappa = 0.69$; “Peer Group Disability Self-Disclosure” of $\kappa = 0.62$; and “Access to Disability Services Support” of $\kappa = 0.78$. Re-calculated average agreement for all justifications was $\kappa = 0.69$. It should be noted that there was a near zero incidence of complete disagreement; weak initial reliability results were mainly due to the proliferation of partial agreement, where both coders agreed on a single sub-code, but the second coder did not assign any additional sub-codes.

Open-Ended Autobiographical Interview

Participants’ responses were examined for categorical relational spheres (i.e., as having to do with authority figures, peers, disabled students’ support services, or other) and reported descriptively. Evaluations and justifications were analyzed according to the same coding scheme utilized for the semi-structured interview (i.e., reference to moral, social conventional, personal, prudential, and/or other concerns); justifications were grouped according to relational sphere and evaluation type (i.e., affirmative, negative, or mixed) and reported descriptively (i.e., in cross-tabulation tables as counts and percentages). Participants’ ideas for institutional changes were

examined for categorical themes (e.g., change to existing university policy) and summarized descriptively. Responses to the final open-ended question regarding any unaddressed additional aspects of their experiences as undergraduate students with LDs were summarized in narrative form.

Table 2*Justification Coding Scheme*

Justification (code)		Description
Moral	<i>Fairness and Equality</i> (11/12)	Appeals to the maintenance of fairness in the treatment of persons, with no elaboration of what constitutes fair treatment <i>OR</i> appeals to the maintenance of fairness via the equal treatment of persons.
	<i>Equity</i> (13)	Appeals to the maintenance of fairness in the treatment of persons, acknowledging that different people may have different needs in order to maintain the same access to resources and opportunities as others.
	<i>Welfare</i> (14)	Reference to harmful consequences to persons or groups, including physical or psychological pain caused by individual actions, circumstances, and/or a shared environment.
	<i>Rights</i> (15)	References to human rights and what everyone universally deserves, including the right to livelihood, privacy of personal information, and the right to education.
Social Conventional	<i>Social Functioning</i> (21)	Appeals to the need to make the group, system, institution, and/or society function well.
	<i>Authority</i> (22)	Appeals to authority, role, and jurisdiction of the government, university, and/or individual in charge. Also, existing laws and rules.
Personal	<i>Personal Choice</i> (31)	Appeals to individual autonomy, preferences, or prerogatives that are the sole decision of the individual.
Prudential	<i>Prudential</i> (41)	Refers to decisions involving the maintenance of one's own current or long-term health, security, and well-being or comfort. Refers only to direct consequences to the actor, which are not imposed or experienced by others (i.e., protagonist's choices surrounding own welfare). Note: This code should not be confused with others' welfare in the moral domain
Other	<i>Integration</i> (51)	Appeals to the consequences of prejudice and/or discrimination for institutions, larger society, and/or for humanity. Also, the benefits to society of inclusion and diversity.
	<i>Uncodable/ Other</i> (99)	This category is used when a participant does not make a clear evaluation, provide an interpretable (or any) justification(s), or otherwise alters (or does not accept) details of the interview protocol as originally stated.
<i>Adapted from Bottema-Beutel et al., 2019; Bottema-Beutel & Li, 2015; Killen et al., 2002; Turiel, 1983b</i>		

Chapter 4: Results

As previously stated, the current study was designed to explore three sets of research questions centered around how undergraduate students with non-visible LDs reason about several issues and interactions involving disability in postsecondary institutions:

(RQ1) *How do undergraduates with non-visible LDs evaluate the existence of federal anti-discrimination and accommodations legislation for people with disabilities in postsecondary institutions and how do those judgments vary—if at all—as a result of other contextual criteria, including the presence or absence of social influence, authority dictates, and generalizability to people in other countries? What moral, social conventional, personal, and/or prudential reasons do they provide for their evaluations and how do those justifications vary by the specified contextual criteria?;*

(RQ2) *How do undergraduates with non-visible LDs evaluate hypothetical instances of interpersonal dilemmas that are related to disability and accommodations for disability in the university context? When faced with various competing priorities, what are the moral, social conventional, personal, and/or prudential reasons or justifications they provide for their evaluations and how do those vary—if at all—by the aforementioned contextual criteria?;* and

(RQ3) *When asked to recall a “bothersome” or “uncomfortable” interpersonal experience involving their disability in the university setting, what sorts of interactions do undergraduates with non-visible LDs report and how do they evaluate and reason about such experiences (that is, the moral, social conventional, personal, and/or prudential considerations in their reflections upon those experiences)? What recommendations do these students have for institutional changes that could prevent future such occurrences, and what general reflections on their experiences of being an undergraduate with a non-visible LD—beyond the scope of the semi-structured interview content—do these students report?*

I first provide descriptive results for general evaluations and corresponding justifications pertaining to the Anti-Discrimination Legislation vignette, followed by evaluations and justifications associated with the three contextual criteria (i.e., social influence, authority dictates, and generalizability). Second, I report descriptive statistics for general evaluations and related justifications as well as contextualized criteria evaluations and justifications for each of the three hypothetical situations (Authority Figure and Accommodations Disclosure, Peer Group Disability Self-Disclosure, and Access to Disability Services Support); the contextualized criteria evaluations and justifications results are further divided by whether participants’ initial (or “general”) evaluations were affirmative (i.e., “Okay”) or negative (i.e., “Not Okay”), given that their initial evaluation determined what form of the follow-up contextual criteria item series was administered.³⁹ Interview excerpts illustrative of the most common types of justifications are also provided where appropriate. Lastly, I present preliminary trends in relational spheres and content in the open-ended, autobiographical reports of participant interactions involving disability (with descriptive results of related evaluations and justifications), themes and examples of suggested preventative institutional changes, and themes that arose amongst participants’ general reflections on their experiences as university students with LDs.

³⁹ Refer to individual table notes for participants providing mixed (i.e., “Both” [Okay and Not Okay]) evaluations.

Semi-Structured Clinical Interview

Vignette 1: Anti-Discrimination Legislation

General Evaluations and Justifications. As expected, 100% of participants affirmed the presence of federal anti-discrimination and accommodations legislation for people with disabilities in postsecondary institutions as “Okay.” All participants cited moral justifications for their endorsement of such legislation (access Table 3.1); approximately 21% of participants also coordinated moral justifications with social conventional ones. The most frequent moral justification cited for affirmation of such legislation involved fairness and equality (approximately 82%); the next most frequent moral justification involved considerations of equity, with 27% of participants citing such rationale. Other somewhat frequent justifications included welfare (moral domain) and authority (social conventional domain), with approximately 18% of participants providing each of these types of justifications.

In their articulation of the two most frequent justifications, one participant (a cisgender man, 2nd year student [M, 2nd year]) remarked:

I think it gives equal opportunity for people with disabilities to succeed to the same degree as somebody who doesn't have a disability.... So, having laws like these in place sort of evens the playing field for people and it's a little bit more equitable.

Another participant (a cisgender woman, 4th year student [F, 4th year]), reflecting concerns of welfare and authority, said:

...having these types of laws in place at least serves as like, some basis of protection or like some baseline of like having the ability for students to reach out if they do need that kind of support....And I think it's also because...it's still very, very stigmatized. And so having these types of laws and things in place at least provides students with the ability to have some form of like support based in legal grounds. Cause I think [accommodation for non-visible disability is] not a very socially accepted thing still...these kinds of things I feel like have to be enacted by law because, if not, I don't think that educational institutions would take them as seriously.

Table 3.1

Anti-Discrimination Legislation General Evaluations and Corresponding Justifications (N=33)

			Justification Domains and Subdomains									
			Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
			<i>Fairness and Equality</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Rights</i>	<i>Social Functioning</i>	<i>Authority</i>			<i>Integration</i>	<i>Uncodable</i>
Evaluation Totals												
Okay	%	100.0	81.8	27.3	18.2	15.2	3.0	18.2	0.0	0.0	6.1	0.0
	<i>n</i>	33	27	9	6	5	1	6	0	0	2	0
Not Okay		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Both		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Note: Justifications total to >100% and *n*>33 due to participants' use of multiple justifications for a given evaluation

Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Justifications. As expected, participants generally continued to affirm the existence of such legislation in the presence of other contextual criteria (access Tables 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4). When further probed about whether the removal of such laws would be “Okay” or “Not Okay” under the circumstances of a voter-based overturning (i.e., social influence) or a government-based repeal (i.e., authority dictates), or if such laws did not exist in another country (i.e., generalizability),⁴⁰ the majority of participants responded in the negative (approximately 91%, 94%, and 91%, respectively). Further, as anticipated, most of those participants continued to cite reasons of fairness and equality (i.e., moral concerns) for their evaluations across all three contextual criteria items (approximately 77%, 81%, and 77%, respectively); participants also frequently referenced welfare (approximately 47%, 39%, and 33%, respectively). In the instance of a hypothetical governmental repeal, some participants also provided reasons having to do with the social conventional element of the role and limits of authority (approximately 16%) as well as the broader benefits to society of inclusion and integration (approximately 16%; a justification treated here as distinct from social domains as traditionally defined owing to its unique combination of elements of welfare, social functioning, and consequence beyond the individual).

⁴⁰ Note that because 100% of participants affirmed the existence of anti-discrimination legislation on the initial general evaluation item, the follow-up contextualized criteria counter probe series querying the acceptability of the removal or absence of such laws was administered to all participants for this one vignette.

Table 3.2

Anti-Discrimination Legislation Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Corresponding Justifications – Social Influence (N=33)

		Justification Domains and Subdomains									
		Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
		<i>Fairness and Equality</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Rights</i>	<i>Social Functioning</i>	<i>Authority</i>			<i>Integration</i>	<i>Uncodable</i>
Evaluation Totals											
Okay	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	<i>n</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not Okay	%	90.9	76.7	3.3	46.7	16.7	3.3	3.3	0.0	0.0	6.7
	<i>n</i>	30	23	1	14	5	1	1	0	0	2
Both	%	9.1	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	66.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
	<i>n</i>	3	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0

*Note: Justifications total to >100% and *n*>33 due to participants' use of multiple justifications for a given evaluation

**Note: This table shows evaluations regarding unacceptability of the *overturning* of anti-discrimination legislation

Table 3.3

Anti-Discrimination Legislation Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Corresponding Justifications – Authority Dictates (N=33)

		Justification Domains and Subdomains									
		Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
		<i>Fairness and Equality</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Rights</i>	<i>Social Functioning</i>	<i>Authority</i>			<i>Integration</i>	<i>Uncodable</i>
Evaluation Totals											
Okay	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	<i>n</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not Okay	%	93.9	80.6	6.5	38.7	12.9	6.5	16.1	0.0	0.0	16.1
	<i>n</i>	31	25	2	12	4	2	5	0	0	5
Both	%	6.1	50.0	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	<i>n</i>	2	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0

*Note: Justifications total to >100% and *n*>33 due to participants' use of multiple justifications for a given evaluation

**Note: This table shows evaluations regarding unacceptability of the *repeal* of anti-discrimination legislation

Table 3.4

Anti-Discrimination Legislation Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Corresponding Justifications – Generalizability (N=33)

			Justification Domains and Subdomains									
			Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
Evaluation Totals			<i>Fairness and Equality</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Rights</i>	<i>Social Functioning</i>	<i>Authority</i>			<i>Integration</i>	<i>Uncodable</i>
Okay	%	3.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	<i>n</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Not Okay		90.9	76.7	13.3	33.3	13.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.3	0.0
		30	23	4	10	4	0	0	0	0	1	0
Both		6.1	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Note: Justifications total to >100% and *n*>33 due to participants' use of multiple justifications for a given evaluation

**Note: This table shows evaluations regarding unacceptability of the *non-existence* of anti-discrimination legislation in other countries

Hypothetical Situations

Though the remaining three vignettes in the semi-structured interview all involved hypothetical interactions surrounding disability in the university setting, they reflected substantively distinct types of relational spheres and issues that render cross-vignette comparisons inadequate for the goal of exploring the nuances of moral and social reasoning. Instead, I report descriptive results for each remaining vignette separately, beginning with general evaluations and justifications, then follow-up contextualized criteria evaluations and justifications for negative and affirmative general evaluations depending upon the most frequent response patterns in each vignette.

Vignette 2: Authority Figure and Accommodations Disclosure

General Evaluations and Justifications. Table 4.1 shows participants' general evaluations of a hypothetical professor's decision to write a recommendation letter only under the condition of disclosing a student's disability-based exam accommodation. Participants' evaluations were majority "Not Okay" (approximately 88%). Participants who provided such negative general evaluations cited a combination of moral, social conventional, and personal domain-related justifications, including fairness and equality (approximately 52%), equity (approximately 38%), authority (approximately 24%), and personal (approximately 24%).

One participant (M, 2nd year), in his coordination of three domains (social conventional, personal, and moral, respectively), reflects on issues of law (i.e., authority), personal choice, and the right to privacy of personal information, thus:

You know, it seems like it would breach like some sort of like, you know, student-teacher confidentiality or...that sort of insinuates that [the student has] a learning disability which also I feel like is a breach of like...medical confidentiality...where you're not supposed to be sharing people's like medical records...I think both [a law and social contract] for sure. There's definitely like a social contract...[I]t would seem like that is something that the teacher would be sort of socially obligated to keep to themselves just out of, you know, respect for the student...[I]t's like your personal struggle and they're like helping you to like facilitate success like with it. And so, like the person with that disability should be the one to share that disability with other people, not the other way....I just think it's sort of like a respect thing for somebody's privacy, and, you know, individual choice to tell whomever they want to about things that are personal to them....You should have the right to determine who knows information about you.

Table 4.1

Authority Figure and Accommodations Disclosure General Evaluations and Corresponding Justifications (N=33)

			Justification Domains and Subdomains									
			Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
			<i>Fairness and Equality</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Rights</i>	<i>Social Functioning</i>	<i>Authority</i>			<i>Integration</i>	<i>Uncodable</i>
Evaluation Totals												
Okay	%	6.1	0.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	50.0
	<i>n</i>	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Not Okay		87.9	51.7	37.9	20.7	13.8	0.0	24.1	24.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
		29	15	11	6	4	0	7	7	0	0	0
Both		6.1	50.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		2	1	0	2	0	2	0	1	0	0	0

*Note: Justifications total to >100% and *n*>33 due to participants' use of multiple justifications for a given evaluation

Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Justifications – Negative. Tables 4.2a-4.2c show the resulting follow-up contextualized criteria evaluations and justifications for participants whose initial general evaluations of the Authority Figure and Accommodations Disclosure vignette were negative (i.e., “Not Okay”; $n = 31$). When further probed about whether a hypothetical professor’s decision to write a recommendation letter only under conditions of disclosing a student’s exam accommodations would be “Okay” or “Not Okay” under the circumstances of other professors’ agreement with the professor (i.e., social influence), the head of the university’s agreement (i.e., authority dictates), or under similar circumstances in another country (i.e., generalizability), the majority of participants continued to evaluate the professor’s decision as “Not Okay” (approximately 94%, 84%, and 90%, respectively). The most frequently cited justification for these negative evaluations across all three contextualized criteria items continued to be moral concerns of fairness and equality (approximately 61%, 54%, and 63% respectively), followed by welfare (approximately 36%, 31% and 37%, respectively). Further, when considering the contextual criteria of social influence, some participants also articulated justifications having to do with the additional moral concern of equity (approximately 32%) and the personal domain (approximately 21%); when considering the contextual criteria of authority dictates, some participants also articulated the social conventional domain consideration of authority (approximately 19%).

In one example of a (F, 2nd year) participant’s coordination of personal choice with moral concerns of (psychological) welfare and potential discrimination (i.e., fairness) while weighing the added contextual criteria of social influence, she reasoned:

...that doesn't change anything for me to be honest. It's more um, like there are a lot of really not great things that are completely normalized in our society, or even at [the university] and the university culture....[J]ust because something's normalized doesn't make it okay....[I]t just feels like personal basic, almost like medical information that it really should be up to the [student] who they want to share that with and when and why. Even if it is standard practice....You know that stuff can be highly personal. It can be really emotionally charged. A lot of people have, like, genuine trauma surrounding it, and like are genuinely treated differently when that information's been revealed....So, I think it should be left to the person how they choose to navigate that situation.

Another participant (F, 2nd year) considering the contextual criteria of authority dictates in her coordination of social conventional (authority and authority’s role/duties) and moral (fairness and equality of opportunity) justifications contended that:

No, the head of the university has a responsibility to adequately see and accommodate for every student and understand. And, like, I think the head of university especially at [the college] is so prestigious and competitive and yada yada yada ya, you have a duty to make sure every single student within your student body has an equal chance of leaving your university and like being represented—they feel like as if they were treated correctly and equally to everyone else—and I feel like that's an inequality in general, and by allowing that, you're perpetuating inequality within the university and that's not okay. And I don't think it's okay for professors to do it either.... But the head of the university has the greatest responsibility. And like you also are in charge of the appearance of the university and the name of the university, and I don't think you want your university to

look and be seen that way and it would definitely deter people with learning disabilities from coming to the university if you set out such precedent.

When probed about the generalizability of their initial general evaluation to an analogous situation in another country, a different participant (F, 3rd year) maintained moral justifications of fairness and equality along with concerns of welfare:

I still don't think it would be okay for the same reasons that I described before....[I]'s a potential block, a potential obstacle for people with disabilities um when they have that information disclosed as there is stigma surrounding disabilities....So it would be adding on to the challenges of having disabilities um and it would increase the, like, gap of, like, disadvantages between people with disabilities and people without disabilities. There would be like a huge gap between like access to opportunities and access to help and services and access to a lot of things....I think it could lead to drastic um changes for people with disabilities' future.

Table 4.2a

Authority Figure and Accommodations Disclosure Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Justifications for Negative General Evaluations – Social Influence (n=31)

			Justification Domains and Subdomains									
			Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
			<i>Fairness and Equality</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Rights</i>	<i>Social Functioning</i>	<i>Authority</i>			<i>Integration</i>	<i>Uncodable</i>
Evaluation Totals												
Okay	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	<i>n</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not Okay		93.5	60.7	32.1	35.7	14.3	3.6	7.1	21.4	0.0	0.0	3.6
		29	17	9	10	4	1	2	6	0	0	1
Both		6.5	100.0	0.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		2	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

*Note: Justifications total to >100% and *n*>31 due to participants' use of multiple justifications for a given evaluation

**Note: Participants who provided a “Both” general evaluation (*n*=2) for this vignette are included here because, when queried further, their evaluation leaned towards negative (i.e., “Not Okay”)

Table 4.2b

Authority Figure and Accommodations Disclosure Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Justifications for Negative General Evaluations – Authority Dictates (n=31)

			Justification Domains and Subdomains									
			Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
			<i>Fairness and Equality</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Rights</i>	<i>Social Functioning</i>	<i>Authority</i>			<i>Integration</i>	<i>Uncodable</i>
Evaluation Totals												
Okay	%	3.2	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	<i>n</i>	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Not Okay		83.9	53.8	15.4	30.8	7.7	0.0	19.2	3.8	3.8	7.7	0.0
		26	14	4	8	2	0	5	1	1	2	0
Both		12.9	75.0	0.0	25.0	0.0	50.0	75.0	25.0	25.0	0.0	0.0
		4	3	0	1	0	2	3	1	1	0	0

*Note: Justifications total to >100% and *n*>31 due to participants' use of multiple justifications for a given evaluation

**Note: Participants who provided a “Both” general evaluation (*n*=2) for this vignette are included here because, when queried further, their evaluation leaned towards negative (i.e., “Not Okay”)

Table 4.2c

Authority Figure and Accommodations Disclosure Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Justifications for Negative General Evaluations – Generalizability (n=31)

			Justification Domains and Subdomains									
			Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
			<i>Fairness and Equality</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Rights</i>	<i>Social Functioning</i>	<i>Authority</i>			<i>Integration</i>	<i>Uncodable</i>
Evaluation Totals												
Okay	%	6.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	<i>n</i>	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Not Okay		90.3	63.0	11.1	37.0	7.4	0.0	3.7	11.1	0.0	3.7	3.7
		28	17	3	10	2	0	1	3	0	1	1
Both		3.2	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Note: Justifications total to >100% and *n*>31 due to participants' use of multiple justifications for a given evaluation

**Note: Participants who provided a “Both” general evaluation (*n*=2) for this vignette are included here because, when queried further, their evaluation leaned towards negative (i.e., “Not Okay”)

Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Justifications – Affirmative. Only two participants gave affirmative initial general evaluations of the Authority Figure and Accommodations Disclosure vignette. Tables 4.3a-4.3c show the resulting follow-up contextualized criteria evaluations and justifications for those participants. Potentially of some note here is that at least one (and, in one instance, both) of the participants' evaluations changed from affirmative to negative when they considered additional contextual criteria. Their justifications included both social conventional (social functioning or authority) and some moral (fairness and equality) elements. This type of evaluation and justification pattern has been shown in other domain theory research when participants' reasoning involves the social conventional domain, as was at least partially the case in this small sample.

Table 4.3a

Authority Figure and Accommodations Disclosure Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Justifications for Affirmative General Evaluations – Social Influence (n=2)

			Justification Domains and Subdomains									
			Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
			<i>Fairness and Equality</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Rights</i>	<i>Social Functioning</i>	<i>Authority</i>			<i>Integration</i>	<i>Uncodable</i>
Evaluation Totals												
Okay	%	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
	<i>n</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	
Not Okay		50.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
		1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	
Both		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	

*Note: Justifications total to >100% and *n*>2 due to participants' use of multiple justifications for a given evaluation

Table 4.3b

Authority Figure and Accommodations Disclosure Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Justifications for Affirmative General Evaluations – Authority Dictates (n=2)

			Justification Domains and Subdomains									
			Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
			<i>Fairness and Equality</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Rights</i>	<i>Social Functioning</i>	<i>Authority</i>			<i>Integration</i>	<i>Uncodable</i>
Evaluation Totals												
Okay	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	<i>n</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not Okay		100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Both		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 4.3c

Authority Figure and Accommodations Disclosure Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Justifications for Affirmative General Evaluations – Generalizability (n=2)

			Justification Domains and Subdomains									
			Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
			<i>Fairness and Equality</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Rights</i>	<i>Social Functioning</i>	<i>Authority</i>			<i>Integration</i>	<i>Uncodable</i>
Evaluation Totals												
Okay	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	<i>n</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not Okay		50.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Both		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Uncodable		50.0										100.0
		1										1

Vignette 3: Peer Group Disability Self-Disclosure

General Evaluations and Justifications. Table 5.1 shows participants' general evaluations of a hypothetical student's decision to not disclose their learning disability to their peers during task delegation on a group project when the student's assigned task is impacted by their disability. Participants' evaluations were varied, with approximately 67% affirmative (i.e., "Okay"), 18% negative (i.e., "Not Okay), and 15% mixed (i.e., "Both Okay and Not Okay").

Also shown in Table 5.1, participants who provided affirmative general evaluations cited mostly personal and prudential justifications (approximately 64% and 46%, respectively), though some moral domain justifications as well (particularly those relating to welfare [approximately 23%]). In an example of personal domain-based reasoning, one participant (a non-binary, postbaccalaureate student [NB, 6th year]) considered the student's autonomy:

I think that's [the student's] personal decision....I don't think there's any like saying whether or not it's okay for someone to disclose their disability. I think that's completely someone's decision....[I]t's something that pertains to [the student] and so they should be able to have that autonomy. I think a lot of the times something that I struggle with policy and people with disabilities is that their autonomy is stripped from them....[P]eople could try and say, like, "Oh, it's encouraging to tell them that they should" and like it is, but it's also encouraging to give them autonomy and understanding that they shouldn't.

Another participant (F, 1st year) cited prudential considerations in her affirmative evaluation thus:

I think it's okay, because if she wasn't comfortable telling them that, it's her comfortability. And even though it might create a harder time for her to work on that assignment, if she felt like she would be safer and more comfortable not telling them, or even just if it's out of anxiety or worry, it's okay for her to choose that for herself.

In contrast, participants who provided negative general evaluations primarily cited the moral consideration of welfare (approximately 83%). One participant (F, 1st year) centered the group's (academic) welfare in her reasoning as she also considered other ways that the hypothetical student might contribute to the group:

I would say it's not okay because, in a group setting, if [the student] can't fulfill [their] task, regardless of any disability [they] may have, if you can't do your task well and in a timely manner and to the standard that needs to be, that is not only going to affect you[,]. . .that is going to significantly impact the group...and I feel like we could easily just be like "Oh, can you do some of the research? Can you maybe write out or take notes?" Like, [the student] doesn't have to do the online presentation. So, instead of trying to carry that burden and instead of, even to the best of [the student's] ability, [they] may not still be able to do the task to the standard that needs to be done....[I]f it's in an academic setting, the grades could be impacted by it....That means, even though you spent however many hours on it, if it's not to the standard that needs to be, someone else is gonna have to pick up on any given slack....[T]hat is going to impact the group um in a negative way.

Table 5.1

Peer Group Disability Self-Disclosure General Evaluations and Corresponding Justifications (N=33)

			Justification Domains and Subdomains									
			Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
Evaluation Totals			<i>Fairness and Equality</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Rights</i>	<i>Social Functioning</i>	<i>Authority</i>			<i>Integration</i>	<i>Uncodable</i>
Okay	%	66.7	4.5	0.0	22.7	13.6	0.0	0.0	63.6	45.5	0.0	0.0
	<i>n</i>	22	1	0	5	3	0	0	14	10	0	0
Not Okay		18.2	0.0	0.0	83.3	0.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.7
		6	0	0	5	0	3	0	0	0	0	1
Both		15.2	0.0	0.0	80.0	0.0	40.0	0.0	40.0	40.0	0.0	0.0
		5	0	0	4	0	2	0	2	2	0	0

*Note: Justifications total to >100% and *n*>33 due to participants' use of multiple justifications for a given evaluation

Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Justifications – Affirmative. Tables 5.2a-5.2c show the resulting follow-up contextualized criteria evaluations and justifications for participants whose initial general evaluation of the Peer Group Disability Self-Disclosure vignette were affirmative (i.e., “Okay”; $n = 22$). When further probed about whether the hypothetical student’s decision not to disclose their disability to peers during the group project would be “Okay” or “Not Okay” under the circumstances of a friend’s disagreement with the decision (i.e., social influence), a professor’s disagreement (i.e., authority dictates), or under similar circumstances in another country (i.e., generalizability), the majority of participants continued to evaluate the student’s decision as “Okay” (100%, approximately 86%, and 100%, respectively). The most frequently cited justification for the maintenance of these affirmative evaluations continued to involve the personal domain across all three contextual criteria items (approximately 73%, 84%, and 73%, respectively); numerous participants also continued to provide prudential justifications (approximately 55%, 47%, and 46%, respectively). In responses to the generalizability criterion item, some participants also cited reasons having to do with the moral consideration of welfare (approximately 27%).

One such participant (F, 3rd year), coordinating personal, prudential, and moral (welfare) justifications of choice, risk, and the potential for stigmatization said:

I think that the social stigmas exist in more than one country. So, even if it's not in the US, I think that [the student] telling [her] peers about her disability...would still run the risk...of facing [the group's] judgment and facing their opinions on it. Um and so if she doesn't want to take that risk, I think that's still up to her.

Table 5.2a

Peer Group Disability Self-Disclosure Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Justifications for Affirmative General Evaluations – Social Influence (n=22)

			Justification Domains and Subdomains									
			Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
			<i>Fairness and Equality</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Rights</i>	<i>Social Functioning</i>	<i>Authority</i>			<i>Integration</i>	<i>Uncodable</i>
Evaluation Totals												
Okay	%	100.0	4.5	0.0	9.1	9.1	0.0	0.0	72.7	54.5	0.0	0.0
	<i>n</i>	22	1	0	2	2	0	0	16	12	0	0
Not Okay		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Both		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Note: Justifications total to >100% and *n*>22 due to participants' use of multiple justifications for a given evaluation

Table 5.2b

Peer Group Disability Self-Disclosure Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Justifications for Affirmative General Evaluations – Authority Dictates (n=22)

Evaluation Totals		Justification Domains and Subdomains									
		Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
		<i>Fairness and Equality</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Rights</i>	<i>Social Functioning</i>	<i>Authority</i>			<i>Integration</i>	<i>Uncodable</i>
Okay	% 86.4 n 19	5.3 1	0.0 0	15.8 3	0.0 0	5.3 1	0.0 0	84.2 16	47.4 9	0.0 0	0.0 0
Not Okay	9.1 2	0.0 0	0.0 0	50.0 1	0.0 0	50.0 1	0.0 0	0.0 0	50.0 1	0.0 0	0.0 0
Both	4.5 1	0.0 0	0.0 0	100.0 1	0.0 0	100.0 1	0.0 0	100.0 1	0.0 0	0.0 0	0.0 0

*Note: Justifications total to >100% and n>22 due to participants' use of multiple justifications for a given evaluation

Table 5.2c

Peer Group Disability Self-Disclosure Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Justifications for Affirmative General Evaluations – Generalizability (n=22)

			Justification Domains and Subdomains									
			Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
			<i>Fairness and Equality</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Rights</i>	<i>Social Functioning</i>	<i>Authority</i>			<i>Integration</i>	<i>Uncodable</i>
Evaluation Totals												
Okay	%	100.0	4.5	0.0	27.3	9.1	0.0	0.0	72.7	45.5	0.0	0.0
	<i>n</i>	22	1	0	6	2	0	0	16	10	0	0
Not Okay		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Both		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Note: Justifications total to >100% and *n*>22 due to participants' use of multiple justifications for a given evaluation

Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Justifications – Negative. Tables 5.3a-5.3c show the resulting follow-up contextualized criteria evaluations and justifications for the 11 participants whose initial general evaluation of the Peer Group Disability Self-Disclosure vignette was either negative (i.e., “Not Okay”; $n = 6$) or mixed (i.e., “Both Okay and Not Okay”; $n = 5$). When further probed about whether the hypothetical student’s decision not to disclose their disability to peers working on a group project would be “Okay” or “Not Okay” under the circumstances of a friend’s agreement with the student’s decision (i.e., social influence), a professor’s agreement (i.e., authority dictates), or under similar circumstances in another country (i.e., generalizability), most of those participants continued to evaluate the student’s decision as “Not Okay” (approximately 82%, 73%, and 64%, respectively). Again, they most frequently cited the moral justification of (the group’s academic) welfare in the maintenance of these negative evaluations across all three contextual criteria items (approximately 78%, 75%, and 71%, respectively). In responses to the social influence item, some participants also cited reasons having to do with the social conventional consideration of social functioning (approximately 44%).

Table 5.3a

Peer Group Disability Self-Disclosure Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Justifications for Negative General Evaluations – Social Influence (n=11)

			Justification Domains and Subdomains									
			Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
			<i>Fairness and Equality</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Rights</i>	<i>Social Functioning</i>	<i>Authority</i>			<i>Integration</i>	<i>Uncodable</i>
Evaluation Totals												
Okay	%	18.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	
	<i>n</i>	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	
Not Okay		81.8	0.0	0.0	77.8	0.0	44.4	11.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	
		9	0	0	7	0	4	1	0	0	0	
Both		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	

*Note: Justifications total to >100% and *n*>11 due to participants' use of multiple justifications for a given evaluation

**Note: Participants who provided a “Both” general evaluation (*n*=5) for this vignette are included here because, when queried further, their evaluation leaned towards negative (i.e., “Not Okay”)

Table 5.3b

Peer Group Disability Self-Disclosure Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Justifications for Negative General Evaluations – Authority Dictates (n=11)

			Justification Domains and Subdomains									
			Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
			<i>Fairness and Equality</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Rights</i>	<i>Social Functioning</i>	<i>Authority</i>			<i>Integration</i>	<i>Uncodable</i>
Evaluation Totals												
Okay	%	18.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	50.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	<i>n</i>	2	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0
Not Okay		72.7	25.0	0.0	75.0	0.0	12.5	0.0	12.5	25.0	0.0	0.0
		8	2	0	6	0	1	0	1	2	0	0
Both		9.1	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Note: Justifications total to >100% and *n*>11 due to participants' use of multiple justifications for a given evaluation

**Note: Participants who provided a “Both” general evaluation (*n*=5) for this vignette are included here because, when queried further, their evaluation leaned towards negative (i.e., “Not Okay”)

Table 5.3c

Peer Group Disability Self-Disclosure Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Justifications for Negative General Evaluations – Generalizability (n=11)

		Justification Domains and Subdomains									
		Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
		<i>Fairness and Equality</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Rights</i>	<i>Social Functioning</i>	<i>Authority</i>			<i>Integration</i>	<i>Uncodable</i>
Evaluation Totals											
Okay	% 27.3 n 3	33.3 1	0.0 0	33.3 1	0.0 0	0.0 0	0.0 0	33.3 1	33.3 1	0.0 0	0.0 0
Not Okay	63.6 7	0.0 0	0.0 0	71.4 5	14.3 1	14.3 1	0.0 0	0.0 0	0.0 0	14.3 1	0.0 0
Both	9.1 1	100.0 1	0.0 0	100.0 1	0.0 0	0.0 0	0.0 0	0.0 0	0.0 0	0.0 0	0.0 0

*Note: Justifications total to >100% and n>11 due to participants' use of multiple justifications for a given evaluation

**Note: Participants who provided a “Both” general evaluation (n=5) for this vignette are included here because, when queried further, their evaluation leaned towards negative (i.e., “Not Okay”)

Vignette 4: Access to Disability Services Support

General Evaluations and Justifications. Table 6.1 shows participants' general evaluations of a hypothetical disability services specialist's decision to not immediately make a case for accommodations for a student with a previous history of non-visible LD who is attempting to access services the week prior to final examinations. Participants' evaluations were varied, with approximately 55% negative (i.e., "Not Okay"), 39% affirmative (i.e., "Okay"), and 6% mixed (i.e., "Both" [Okay and Not Okay]).

Also shown in Table 6.1, participants who provided negative general evaluations cited mostly moral justifications, including welfare (approximately 78%) as well as fairness and equality (approximately 22%); some of these participants also articulated social conventional domain-based justifications of social functioning and authority (approximately 22% each).

In one example of coordinated moral and social conventional justifications, one participant (F, 4th year) considered elements of the specialist's authority, procedures related to social functioning, academic welfare, and basic fairness:

...because part of the specialist role is that they're allowed to use...professional judgment to see whether [the student] can be accommodated at the time without having to send [the student] to do extra....Because usually that's how it works a lot of times. It's students like [this one] who should be able to be accommodated right then and there because of prior history. So I don't think it's okay for [the student] not to be accommodated, and having to wait til next semester given that [they] will most likely will do poorly in final exams....It's unfair to [the student. They've] been through this before, and it's not fair that [they're] going through it again without support.

In contrast, the majority of participants who provided affirmative general evaluations cited only the social conventional domain justification of social functioning (approximately 92%). For example, one such participant (F, 3rd year) stated:

I'm understanding like [disability services] do need time to like actually do an assessment of each student....Cause the other questions were more like moral-based, I think. But for this one, I'm thinking like it's less morals and more of...here's like a protocol that the people have to like follow for accommodating disability and stuff like that. So that's why I think it's like okay.

Table 6.1

Access to Disability Services Support General Evaluations and Corresponding Justifications (N=33)

			Justification Domains and Subdomains									
			Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
Evaluation Totals			<i>Fairness and Equality</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Rights</i>	<i>Social Functioning</i>	<i>Authority</i>			<i>Integration</i>	<i>Uncodable</i>
Okay	%	39.4	7.7	0.0	7.7	0.0	92.3	7.7	7.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
	<i>n</i>	13	1	0	1	0	12	1	1	0	0	0
Not Okay		54.5	22.2	5.6	77.8	0.0	22.2	22.2	5.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
		18	4	1	14	0	4	4	1	0	0	0
Both		6.1	100.0	0.0	50.0	0.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		2	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0

*Note: Justifications total to >100% and *n*>33 due to participants' use of multiple justifications for a given evaluation

Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Justifications – Negative. Tables 6.2a-6.2c show the resulting follow-up contextualized criteria evaluations and justifications for the 20 participants whose initial general evaluation of the Access to Disability Support Services vignette were either negative (i.e., “Not Okay”; $n = 18$) or mixed (i.e., “Both” [Okay and Not Okay]; $n = 2$). When further probed about whether the hypothetical disability specialist’s decision to not immediately make a case for a student’s access to disability accommodations a week prior to final examinations would be “Okay” or “Not Okay” under the circumstances of a professor’s agreement with the specialist’s decision (i.e., social influence), a disability services director’s agreement (i.e., authority dictates), or under similar circumstances in another country (i.e., generalizability), those participants mostly continued to provide negative evaluations across all three contextual criteria items (90%, 85%, and 95%, respectively). They continued to primarily cite moral reasons related to welfare for those evaluations (approximately 78%, 71%, and 63%, respectively), but also several other moral and social conventional reasons. In response to the social influence criterion item, the other most frequent justifications included authority, fairness and equality, and social functioning (approximately 44%, 33%, and 22%, respectively); in response to the authority dictates criterion item, other frequent justifications included fairness and equality, authority, and equity (approximately 41%, 41%, and 24%, respectively); similarly, the other most frequent justifications for the generalizability criterion item included fairness and equality, equity, and authority (approximately 47%, 26%, and 26%, respectively).

In one example of some of the most common justifications for negative evaluations of the social influence criterion item, a participant (F, 1st year) prioritized the moral issues of (academic and livelihood-related) welfare and fairness in addition to the (less common) consideration of rights, over the scope of a specialist’s or professor’s authority in their roles:

...again, kind of going back to the other vignette...the professors aren't dealing with the learning disability, the professor isn't, you know, banking on a grade for getting into grad school or getting a good job or something like that. And, so yeah, so I don't think it's their place to say whether or not the specialist did something right or wrong....[T]hey aren't the student that's struggling with...a learning disability. They aren't in that student's shoes and neither is the specialist. And by saying that [the student] can't get [access to disability accommodations], they're preventing them from being able to be successful in school...something that they have a right to be successful at. Like they have a right to education. They have a right to accessible education and the specialists and the professors are preventing that accessibility to the education. And they're coming from a place of privilege in power where they don't have to deal with the same issues. So I don't think that they should be able to call those shots.

Table 6.2a

Access to Disability Services Support Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Justifications for Negative General Evaluations – Social Influence (n=20)

			Justification Domains and Subdomains									
			Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
Evaluation Totals			<i>Fairness and Equality</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Rights</i>	<i>Social Functioning</i>	<i>Authority</i>			<i>Integration</i>	<i>Uncodable</i>
Okay	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	<i>n</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not Okay		90.0	33.3	11.1	77.8	5.6	22.2	44.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		18	6	2	14	1	4	8	0	0	0	0
Both		10.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		2	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

*Note: Justifications total to >100% and *n*>20 due to participants' use of multiple justifications for a given evaluation

**Note: Participants who provided a “Both” general evaluation (*n*=2) for this vignette are included here because, when queried further, their evaluation leaned towards negative (i.e., “Not Okay”)

Table 6.2b

Access to Disability Services Support Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Justifications for Negative General Evaluations – Authority Dictates (n=20)

			Justification Domains and Subdomains									
			Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
			<i>Fairness and Equality</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Rights</i>	<i>Social Functioning</i>	<i>Authority</i>			<i>Integration</i>	<i>Uncodable</i>
Evaluation Totals												
Okay	%	5.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	<i>n</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Not Okay		85.0	41.2	23.5	70.6	5.9	11.8	41.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		17	7	4	12	1	2	7	0	0	0	0
Both		10.0	50.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		2	1	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

*Note: Justifications total to >100% and *n*>20 due to participants' use of multiple justifications for a given evaluation

**Note: Participants who provided a “Both” general evaluation (*n*=2) for this vignette are included here because, when queried further, their evaluation leaned towards negative (i.e., “Not Okay”)

Table 6.2c

Access to Disability Services Support Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Justifications for Negative General Evaluations – Generalizability (n=20)

			Justification Domains and Subdomains									
			Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
			<i>Fairness and Equality</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Rights</i>	<i>Social Functioning</i>	<i>Authority</i>			<i>Integration</i>	<i>Uncodable</i>
Evaluation Totals												
Okay	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	<i>n</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not Okay		95.0	47.4	26.3	63.2	10.5	15.8	26.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		19	9	5	12	2	3	5	0	0	0	0
Both		5.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Note: Justifications total to >100% and *n*>20 due to participants' use of multiple justifications for a given evaluation

**Note: Participants who provided a “Both” general evaluation (*n*=2) for this vignette are included here because, when queried further, their evaluation leaned towards negative (i.e., “Not Okay”)

Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Justifications – Affirmative. Tables 6.3a-6.3c show the resulting follow-up contextualized criteria evaluations and justifications for the participants whose initial general evaluation of the Access to Disability Support Services vignette were affirmative (i.e., “Okay”; $n = 13$). When further probed about whether the hypothetical disability specialist’s decision to not immediately make a case for a student’s access to disability accommodations a week prior to final examinations would be “Okay” or “Not Okay” under the circumstances of a professor’s disagreement with the specialist’s decision (i.e., social influence), a disability services director’s disagreement (i.e., authority dictates), or under similar circumstances in another country (i.e., generalizability), those participants’ evaluations changed to varying degrees. Particularly in response to the authority dictates criterion item, evaluations shifted to approximately 85% negative. In response to the social influence and generalizability criteria items, the majority of those participants maintained an affirmative evaluation (approximately 54% and 77%, respectively).

Most justifications, whether for affirmative or for negative evaluations, were in the social conventional domain, involving considerations of authority (affirmative – social influence: approximately 57%; negative – authority dictates: approximately 73%) and social functioning (affirmative – social influence: approximately 57%, generalizability: 70%). In one example of a participant (F, 3rd year) whose evaluation changed from affirmative to negative when probed with the authority dictates item, she articulated concerns about a hierarchy in authority, expertise, and established procedures that ensure the functioning of disability services in varying circumstances thus:

...the specialist is under this director, so if the director thinks that um accommodations can be made within this week, then the specialist must be missing out on something in the process....[M]aybe the specialist is missing out on some sort of like expedited procedure or something....[I]t could just be that the specialist is not trained well enough, that they don't know that maybe there's a way to get it done faster or use their judgment to just directly get [the student] the accommodations without needing, like, an evaluation or a diagnosis or something.

Table 6.3a

Access to Disability Services Support Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Justifications for Affirmative General Evaluations – Social Influence (n=13)

			Justification Domains and Subdomains									
			Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
			<i>Fairness and Equality</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Rights</i>	<i>Social Functioning</i>	<i>Authority</i>			<i>Integration</i>	<i>Uncodable</i>
Evaluation Totals												
Okay	%	53.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	57.1	57.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	<i>n</i>	7	0	0	0	0	4	4	0	0	0	0
Not Okay		38.5	0.0	0.0	40.0	0.0	60.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		5	0	0	2	0	3	1	0	0	0	0
Both		7.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

*Note: Justifications total to >100% and *n*>13 due to participants' use of multiple justifications for a given evaluation

Table 6.3b

Access to Disability Services Support Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Justifications for Affirmative General Evaluations – Authority Dictates (n=13)

			Justification Domains and Subdomains									
			Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
Evaluation Totals			<i>Fairness and Equality</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Rights</i>	<i>Social Functioning</i>	<i>Authority</i>			<i>Integration</i>	<i>Uncodable</i>
Okay	%	7.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	<i>n</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Not Okay		84.6	0.0	0.0	18.2	0.0	36.4	72.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		11	0	0	2	0	4	8	0	0	0	0
Both		7.7	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

*Note: Justifications total to >100% and *n*>13 due to participants' use of multiple justifications for a given evaluation

Table 6.3c

Access to Disability Services Support Contextualized Criteria Evaluations and Justifications for Affirmative General Evaluations – Generalizability (n=13)

		Justification Domains and Subdomains									
		Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
		<i>Fairness and Equality</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Rights</i>	<i>Social Functioning</i>	<i>Authority</i>			<i>Integration</i>	<i>Uncodable</i>
Evaluation Totals											
Okay	% 76.9 n 10	0.0 0	0.0 0	0.0 0	0.0 0	70.0 7	30.0 3	0.0 0	0.0 0	0.0 0	0.0 0
Not Okay	7.7 1	0.0 0	0.0 0	0.0 0	0.0 0	100.0 1	0.0 0	0.0 0	0.0 0	0.0 0	0.0 0
Both	15.4 2	0.0 0	0.0 0	50.0 1	0.0 0	0.0 0	100.0 2	0.0 0	0.0 0	0.0 0	0.0 0

*Note: Justifications total to >100% and n>13 due to participants' use of multiple justifications for a given evaluation

Open-Ended Autobiographical Interview

In the second segment of the interview, participants were asked several open-ended autobiographical questions, beginning with recounting a time during college that they were made to feel uncomfortable or felt bothered by the way they were treated because of their learning disability. Most participants (approximately 79%, $n = 26$) recalled a specific interaction for which it was possible to decipher some general contextual themes and to further query evaluations, justifications, and their ideas for institutional changes that might prevent recurrence in the university setting. The remaining participants either (a) described an experience that took place outside of the college setting ($n = 1$); (b) described an experience that did not involve an external interaction ($n = 1$); or (c) could not recall any such experience ($n = 5$). The latter participants remarked on their generally positive experiences surrounding disability and accommodations in college: respectful treatment, good luck, and features of their disability that made it less likely to encounter disability-related interactions or conflict (e.g., mild and/or non-apparent disability symptoms, types of accommodations utilized, etc.).

Relational and Contextual Themes

Of the 26 participants who recalled uncomfortable or bothersome disability-related experiences in the college setting, 50% reported an interaction with a peer or peer group; approximately 38% described an encounter with a faculty member or other academic authority figure (such as a graduate student instructor); and approximately 12% detailed an experience with disabled students' services programs. Additionally, seven of those participants (approximately 27%) also described an experience that intersected more than one of these relational spheres and/or involved a novel relational element not completely accounted for by the original three categories.⁴¹ A unique relational theme arose around aspects of "Self," wherein participants' reflections on their interactions also involved an internal navigation of their disability identity and/or their areas of disability impact, in combination with features of other relational spheres (e.g., challenges with spontaneous verbal expression in small discussion groups of peers and thoughts about differences between their own lived experiences as neurodivergent students versus those of neurotypical students).

Examples of additional context in peer-related experiences included being teased for disability-impacted mistakes in reading and verbal expression, encountering skepticism about the necessity and fairness of disability accommodations, and being excluded from study groups because of disability-related habits or inattentiveness. Examples of faculty-related experiences included not being granted approved accommodations, ableist or inflexible instructional practices, and antagonistic responses to requests for additional academic support. Examples of disabled students' services program experiences included delays in accessing intake appointments and overwhelming bureaucratic procedures for obtaining required documentation to access accommodations and supports.

Evaluations and Justifications. The relational and contextual diversity of the autobiographical responses (as well as the study's sample size) render the aggregation of participant evaluations and justifications (access Tables 7.1-7.3), again, preliminary and

⁴¹ However, upon further querying, it was possible to assign such mixed experience responses to a single relational sphere category in analysis of evaluations and justifications.

exploratory in nature. Further study is needed to more fully represent and characterize such experiences.

In the instances of participants who described experiences having to do with a peer or peer group ($n = 13$), approximately 54% provided negative evaluations. Justifications for negative evaluations mostly included references to welfare (and particularly psychological welfare [approximately 71%]); in contrast, the most frequent types of justifications for affirmative evaluations were not well-captured by existing justification categories (83% “other/uncodable”⁴²) but did include some consideration of social functioning (approximately 33%). In one example of a negative evaluation with welfare-based justification, one participant (M, 1st year) who had described being questioned and met with skepticism about their disability manifestation and variable need for extended testing time accommodations, commented:

I think disregarding somebody's um, or diminishing what someone deals with—their learning disability—is not okay....because that's something that they inherently struggle with. And they are not in that person's shoes to judge them. They don't know what that person experiences with it. And they don't know how it's affected them throughout their lives...It makes you feel like you're lesser in a way or just less able to succeed, or just less able to do well. Um like, just inherently, like not as a result of um a learning disability....Like it makes you feel just like less capable, like less able to do it. Like it's just like someone telling me that. Um they're like saying that's just me. You know, you're you yourself are not good. You yourself are not good enough, like that's what it feels like.

Another participant (F, 4th year) who had provided an affirmative evaluation highlighted unintentionality (i.e., other/uncodable justification) along with consideration of social functioning as she recalled the experience of being teased by her lab group for the remainder of the semester after having made a phonological reading error at the beginning of the term, said:

I wanna say [it was] okay, just because, like there is absolutely no ill intent behind it, like they're all very nice people. And it was genuinely like they had no idea that it made me uncomfortable....I feel like to say that it's not okay kind of implies that [the lab group] should like walk on eggshells 100% of the time. Yeah, I guess it's tough to say that it's not okay. Just because like, it was very, very unintentional.

Of the participants who described experiences of interactions with faculty members or other academic authority figures ($n = 10$), 80% provided negative evaluations. Justifications for those evaluations mostly included moral considerations like fairness and equality (75%) and welfare (75%), though some participants also reflected on social conventional elements of authority (25%) and social functioning (25%). For instance, one participant (F, 3rd year)—in recalling a series of frustrated, antagonistic email replies to her requests to a professor for help understanding course material—considered both the role and responsibility of authority figures in the academic setting, along with elements of equity, academic welfare, and fairness:

⁴² “Other/Uncodable” justification responses in this instance often involved references to “unintentionality”/“no ill intent” or a peer “not knowing what they’re talking about,” but also included elements of the participants not taking the interaction personally and using it as an opportunity to facilitate understanding about learning disabilities.

I don't think it was okay for that to happen...[b]ecause I think that part of the responsibility of being a professor is ensuring that the students understand the material, and that the students who need extra help with that receive that help and don't fall behind and...I suffer from two disabilities that really affect my ability to focus and comprehend information. And um, and I felt like, I did need extra help as a result, and I was being met with um agitation and unhelpful behavior on behalf of the professor. And I felt like I was falling behind and my grades were suffering. Because I also feel like I did my part um to be responsible for my academic success, and I, I reached out, and I was proactive. And they did not do their part as a professor to help me and ensure that I'm on the same page um as everyone in the class....

In the three instances of participants who detailed experiences involving a disabled students' services program, two gave negative evaluations. The small subsample size makes deciphering any emergent trends highly speculative, but justifications for those evaluations included welfare, social functioning, authority, and other/uncodable; the single participant who gave a negative evaluation provided a social functioning justification. One participant (F, 4th year) who described an experience of struggling to access disabled students' services resources in a timely manner due to being required to obtain a costly additional assessment, spoke to aspects of psychological welfare and procedure (i.e., social functioning):

It was not okay as it increased my anxiety and depression. It made me so stressed out to the point that I actually wanted to withdraw from the semester, and when I simply could have been accommodated, having [preexisting] documentation. So I just don't think it was okay, cause I easily could have withdrew, and I wouldn't have been here now as a senior. Of course, now I'm accommodated so it's a lot different. But yeah, I just don't think it was okay. It's also very traumatic. No one deserves to go through that.

Table 7.1

Peer-Related Autobiographical Experiences Evaluations and Justifications (n = 13)

			Justification Domains and Subdomains									
			Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
Evaluation Totals			<i>Fairness and Equality</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Rights</i>	<i>Social Functioning</i>	<i>Authority</i>			<i>Integration</i>	<i>Other / Uncodable</i>
Okay	%	46.2	16.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	33.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.7	83.3
	<i>n</i>	6	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	5
Not Okay		53.8	14.3	0.0	71.4	14.3	14.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.3
		7	1	0	5	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
Both		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Note: Justifications total to >100% and *n*>13 due to participants' use of multiple justifications for a given evaluation

Table 7.2

Faculty-Related Autobiographical Experiences Evaluations and Justifications (n = 10)

Evaluation Totals			Justification Domains and Subdomains									
			Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
			Fairness and Equality	Equity	Welfare	Rights	Social Functioning	Authority			Integration	Other / Uncodable
Okay	%	10.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
	<i>n</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Not Okay		80.0	75.0	12.5	75.0	0.0	25.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		8	6	1	6	0	2	2	0	0	0	0
Both		10.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Note: Justifications total to >100% and *n*>10 due to participants' use of multiple justifications for a given evaluation

Table 7.3

Disabled Students' Services-Related Autobiographical Experiences Evaluations and Justifications (n = 3)

			Justification Domains and Subdomains									
			Moral				Social Conventional		Personal	Prudential	Other	
			<i>Fairness and Equality</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Rights</i>	<i>Social Functioning</i>	<i>Authority</i>			<i>Integration</i>	<i>Other / Uncodable</i>
Evaluation Totals												
Okay	%	33.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	<i>n</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Not Okay		66.7	0.0	0.0	50.0	0.0	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	50.0
		2	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
Both		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Note: Justifications total to >100% and *n*>3 due to participants' use of multiple justifications for a given evaluation

Ideas for Institutional Change

The diversity of participants' autobiographical reports rendered their ideas about institutional changes to prevent future occurrences of experiences like theirs ($n = 26$) equally diverse. Still, some identifiable themes arose. Those included: targeted preparation for faculty and other instructors on best practices for teaching students with disabilities and supporting accommodations (approximately 35%); university-wide disability and mental health awareness and education initiatives akin to other required modules on sexual harassment or cybersecurity (approximately 19%); increasing disabled students services' accessibility and comprehensiveness, especially with a reduction in the logistical and financial burden of proof on students (approximately 15%); larger scale public initiatives and societal shifts in disability anti-discrimination and de-stigmatization (approximately 15%); firmer policies around the provision of approved accommodations and streamlined communications between disabled students' services and faculty (approximately 8%). Additional responses included: the racial-ethnic diversification of disabled students' program specialists; improving visibility of available resources for students with disabilities; application of principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL; Evmenova et al., 2024); and the normalization of disability in learning spaces with broader support for compassion towards all students experiencing stress in academia.

Additional Open-Ended Experiential Reflections

The final item in the autobiographical interview portion of the study provided an opportunity for participants to articulate any additional thoughts or reflections regarding their experiences as university students with non-visible LDs, particularly those involving aspects that might not have been well-represented in the semi-structured clinical interview protocols (i.e., the hypothetical vignettes). Approximately 91% ($n = 30$) of participants provided a response to this final item. Participants' reflections involved both negative and positive features of experience.

Emergent themes surrounding challenges included: difficulties adjusting to academic and social differences between high school and college settings (sometimes prompting the need to withdraw and enroll in junior college coursework); the many ways in which students' needs might go unaddressed, particularly when other identities (e.g., student athlete status, racial-ethnic minority status) or lack of targeted accommodations might generate additional challenges; the burden of expense, psychological trauma, and time involved in obtaining required documentation and intakes for disability support eligibility while struggling academically, emotionally, and socially; repetitive stress and fear involved in navigating disability disclosure with every course instructor; widescale lack of understanding and accounting for the effects of learning disabilities (e.g., time expected to complete reading assignments); programmatic vagaries and unyielding deadlines that make full access to campus resources and opportunities less likely for students with disabilities; the desire to see more immediate avenues for navigating academic supports; the effects of popular media's advancing misinformation about learning disabilities; and overt disability-related exclusion from certain opportunities (e.g., research studies).

Emergent themes pertaining to positive experiences included: privilege associated with early disability diagnosis and opportunities to develop compensatory academic skills in supportive learning environments; the utility of being proactive and specific about accommodation needs; benefits of disabilities being well-understood and accounted for by some faculty and in certain university departments; the support provided by disabled students' services

programs when the intake process operates efficiently and effectively; the importance of accommodations for accessibility and academic success; and the social and academic benefits of creating community and increasing awareness around disability, mental health, and related resources.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The present study was designed as a preliminary exploration of the kinds of judgments and reasoning postsecondary students with non-visible learning disabilities (LDs) utilize when thinking about everyday disability-related social encounters in the university setting. Following previous social cognitive developmental research, it employed a semi-structured clinical interview method in which participants were first asked to generally evaluate the presence of federal anti-discrimination legislation that protects access and accommodations for students with disabilities in postsecondary institutions; participants were then asked to provide their rationale (i.e., justifications) for stated evaluations. The study also included the assessment of what have been referred to in the social domain theory literature as criterion judgments (e.g., Turiel, 2002), in which a circumstance or action is further evaluated with regards to the presence of absence of general agreement (i.e., “social influence”), an authority directive, or acceptance in another country (i.e., “generalizability”). Participants were next asked to evaluate and provide their reasoning (i.e., justifications) for several hypothetical vignettes having to do with (a) a professor’s decision to write a recommendation letter only under the condition of disclosing a student’s testing accommodations; (b) a student’s decision to not disclose their learning disability to peers during a group project; and (c) a disability services program specialist’s decision to not make an immediate case for a student’s eligibility for academic accommodations a week prior to final examinations. Vignettes also included several other commonplace contextual features, as well as a description of the hypothetical students’ areas of learning disability impact. Initial evaluation and justification questions for these vignettes were followed by the three aforementioned criterion judgment assessments. In a second segment of the interview, participants were asked to recount an autobiographical experience in the college setting during which they were made to feel uncomfortable or bothered by the way they were treated because of their learning disability. Following their narrative accounts, participants were asked to evaluate the (un)acceptability of their experience and provide rationale for their evaluations. The autobiographical segment of the interview concluded with two open-ended questions regarding participants’ ideas for preventing future instances of their reported encounters and any additional general reflections about their experiences as postsecondary students with LDs that might not have been well-represented in the previous interview questions.

The most striking—though perhaps unsurprising—aspect of this study’s results is the ubiquity of moral thought, particularly that involving elements of fairness and equality. Whether reflecting upon the necessity of disability anti-discrimination legislative protections in higher education, or upon more nuanced interpersonal decisions involving conflicts around disability in the university setting, participants steeped their reasoning in prescriptions of what modern educational institutions have historically purported (and ought) to be: societal strongholds of equal access and opportunity. Part of this ubiquity also has to do with the fact that moral considerations can and do exist on both sides of social conflicts in educational spaces (e.g., welfare-based elements of disclosing or not disclosing one’s disability to peers).

The study also demonstrated several important aspects of moral and social reasoning that echo general findings from previous domain theory research (e.g., Bottema-Beutel et al., 2019; Le, 2014; Turiel, 2002). Those findings have to do with the stability of judgments based primarily in moral reasoning, the transiency of judgments based primarily in social conventional reasoning, and the balancing and coordination of social domains of thought—including personal and prudential considerations—in reasoning about multifaceted hypothetical interpersonal

interactions involving competing social priorities. Additionally, participants' responses in the autobiographical segment of this study further demonstrated the pertinence of experiences involving faculty, peer, and disabled students' services programs to research efforts aimed at better representing and understanding the complexities of learning disabled postsecondary students' internal and external lives. Moreover, many of participants' reflections on those lived experiences were recognizably suffused with multiple domains of social thought—particularly moral and social conventional rationale—but also involved considerations insufficiently addressed in existing social cognitive developmental research, such as aspects of disability identity self-navigation as well as the intentionality⁴³ or ignorance of neurotypical people in undesired interactions. Finally, participants in the present study had substantive, achievable ideas for improving the ways that postsecondary institutions can support a more equitable and accessible learning environment. This exploratory study both complements and deepens previous work from both within and beyond the social domain theory literature on how postsecondary students perceive, understand, and navigate various issues and interactions involving disability and education (e.g., Bottema-Beutel et al., 2019; Lightfoot et al., 2018; McGregor et al., 2016). Overall, the study provided substantial evidence that such students traverse a complex moral and psychosocial landscape as they pursue the benefits of higher education.

The Stability of Judgements Based in Moral Reasoning

As predicted, participants in this study affirmed the existence of federal disability anti-discrimination legislation in their general evaluations. They did so without exception and unanimously cited moral considerations in their justifications, even while sometimes referencing additional social conventional aspects of authority (e.g., the US constitution and congress) and social functioning. Consistent with previous domain theory studies that have included prototypical events (i.e., a straightforward moral circumstance; Smetana et al., 2014)—wherein the elements presented are not explicitly or implicitly in conflict with other events, goals, or considerations—participants' judgments and rationale largely remained consistent even when further considering opposing viewpoints from social equals and authority figures, as well as norms or practices in other countries (i.e., criterion judgments). That is: regardless of a hypothetical overturning by voters, repeal by government officials, or absence of such laws in another country, participants in this sample maintained that such legislation is necessary and ought to be in place, primarily for moral reasons of fairness, equality, and welfare. This kind of a stability of judgments and rationale is consistent with much previous domain theory research that has included (among other analyses) general assessments of prototypical events in educational settings involving, for example, differential treatment in instructional practices (Le, 2014) and deception of authority figures (e.g., Creane, 2022).

The stability of judgments based in moral rationale sometimes also extends beyond the prototypical and into more complex and naturally occurring interpersonal situations.⁴⁴ In the present study, this was evidenced in the majority of participants' negative evaluations of a

⁴³ Though, access Creane (2022) for one systematic investigation of intention (along with many other variables) in children's and adolescents' reasoning about teachers' directives and students' acts of deception.

⁴⁴ While reasoning in the moral domain is often stable and prescriptive, it should be noted that there are exceptions—times with moral considerations are subordinated to other important priorities—such as personal choice, social conventional considerations like group functioning, or learning goals (e.g., Helwig & Jasiobedzka, 2001; Killen, 2007; Richardson et al., 2013; Le, 2014).

hypothetical professor's decision to write a recommendation letter for a student only under the condition of disclosing the student's disability-based testing accommodations. Participants rejected this decision largely for moral reasons of fairness, equality, and equity, continuing (as predicted) to do so for similar reasons even in the face of the hypothetical assent of other professors or the head of the university, or common practice in another country. This pattern of stability was also apparent even in the less prevalent evaluations, as in the instances of participants who rejected a hypothetical student's decision to not disclose their disability to peers in a work group when the student had been delegated a task that would be impacted by their learning disability. Though a minority of participants provided such evaluations, they were mostly consistent in their application of reasoning involving group (academic) welfare, both with regards to their general evaluations and criterion-based ones. Finally, a consistent thread of moral reasoning was evident in many of participants' negative responses to the most complex of the three hypothetical vignettes developed for the current study. In that vignette, a student with a previous history of learning disability has been progressively falling behind over the course of their first semester in college, so attempts to access testing accommodations through the campus disabled students' services program the week prior to final examinations. Their assigned disability specialist can use professional discretion in making a provisional case for accommodations eligibility, but does not, instead suggesting that the student obtain updated disability documentation for the following semester and access other academic supports in the meanwhile. While this vignette resulted in a more even split of affirmative and negative evaluations than the other hypothetical vignettes, a narrow majority of participants negatively evaluated the specialist's decision, continuously steeping their rationale in elements of academic and psychological welfare as well as fairness and equality, despite any of the counterposed contextual criteria.

On the (Semi-Ambiguous) Roots of Judgments Based in Personal and Prudential Reasoning

One area that is occasionally of some philosophical ambiguity in existing domain theory research has to do with the basis and parameters of domains of personal jurisdiction and prudence,⁴⁵ which can sometimes have broader consequences relating to morality and society (Turiel, 2002). The social domain of personal jurisdiction (i.e., choice or autonomy) has often been investigated in developmental research examining, for example, conflicts between adolescents and parents or teachers around issues that do not inherently involve elements of harm or fairness, such as one's choice of friends and extracurricular activities (access, e.g., Nucci & Turiel, 2009, for a summary); but it has also been studied in the context of everyday opposition and resistance of adults occupying positions of lesser power in social hierarchies (access Turiel, 2002, for numerous examples). Likewise, the prudential, which encompasses decisions or actions involving one's safety, comfort, and health, is treated as a system of social thought and knowledge distinct from the moral domain in that it mainly involves consequences to the self rather than to others. Personal (and prudential) issues "are distinct from—but related to—the scope and nature of morality...because rights are grounded in notions of self and personal agency....[Personal concepts] are not judged to be matters of right or wrong; rather, they are seen as up to the individual and therefore not matters of moral concern or conventional regulation" (Smetana et al., 2014, p. 25)

⁴⁵ Sometimes treated by domain theorists as different elements of a "psychological domain" (e.g., Smetana et al., 2014, p. 25), but analyzed separately in the present study.

In the present study, there were times, however, when reasoning involving personal choice and autonomy (which was also sometimes referenced in addition to prudential considerations of one's own comfortability and psychological or emotional safety), rather blended into features of the moral domain. During these interviews, and specifically with regard to the vignette portraying a student's decision not to disclose their disability to peers, it was often difficult to distinguish rationale that involved choice, autonomy, prerogative, and comfort, from that involving the right to privacy of personal information, freedom of self-determination, and psychological or emotional welfare. When participants affirmed the decision of keeping one's disability to oneself amongst peers for reasons of autonomy, personal choice, or comfortability, they also maintained that position and rationale in the face of other contextual criteria, including the disagreement of a peer or professor and common practice in another country. This type of stability has not always been demonstrated in other research surrounding issues in the personal domain, but, in the present case, may be owing to the intersecting moral issues (e.g., the violation of equality via discrimination, the potential for harm via consequences of stigmatization, etc.), particular features of non-visible disability identity, and the historical context of disability in higher education institutions. It is an intriguing and important issue in need of further study.

The Transience of Judgements Based in Social Conventional Reasoning

Another finding from studies based in domain theory is that the scope and primacy of social conventional considerations like authority and social functioning are limited. That is: there is an extent to which rules, norms, dictates, and traditions are viewed as arbitrary and malleable, and can also become less salient than other social priorities in different contexts. There is a preponderance of social cognitive developmental research demonstrating that children (as young 3- and 4-years-old), adolescents, and adults all verbally distinguish between moral concepts and social conventional ones, and that these systems of thought (along with the personal) coexist and differentiate over time through interpersonal experiences (Smetana et al., 2014; Turiel, 2002). Those distinctions are relevant both to our theoretical conceptions of human development and to practical matters of moral and social decision making (Turiel, 2010, p. 561).

In the present study, the patterns of evaluations and related reasoning observed particularly in the instance of participants' acceptance of a hypothetical disability services specialist's decision to not immediately make an accommodations eligibility case for a struggling student a week prior to final examinations (i.e., the Access to Disability Services Support vignette) demonstrate some malleability. Approximately one-third of the participants initially accepted the specialist's decision and almost all of them made references to aspects of social functioning, such as the logistics and time involved in disability accommodations coordination, as well as established institutional procedures. However, when a considering additional criteria of a hypothetical authority figure's (i.e., a disability services director's) disagreement with the specialist, nearly all those participants changed their evaluations and cited reasons of authority (such as expertise and understanding of regulations and procedures). This shift also occurred to some extent with the added criteria of social influence (i.e., a professor's disagreement with the specialist's decision), eliciting a mix of reasons, mostly including additional considerations around social functioning (such as coordination between faculty and disability services), but also elements of (academic) welfare. In the present context, this preliminary finding marks a need and potential inroad for more responsive procedural and policy development in higher education, indeed echoed in participants' open-ended autobiographical responses regarding their own

uncomfortable or bothersome disability-related interactions, preventative institutional changes, and general reflections on their experiences as postsecondary students with non-visible LDs (discussed in further detail subsequently).

Coordination of Social Domains in Everyday Conflict

It is, however, insufficient—and perhaps vulnerable to misinterpretation—to discuss the stability of moral reasoning or the transience of social conventional domain-based evaluations as solitary or singular phenomena. Another prominent result related to these issues has to do with the proliferation of domain coordination, or the weighing and prioritizing of numerous important social concepts, goals, and concerns. Domain coordination has been explicitly examined in at least one study of how children can think about issues of inclusion and exclusion with regards to disability (specifically peers with autism spectrum disorder; Bottema-Beutel et al., 2017), but is a pervasive aspect of most other social cognitive domain theory research with different populations and foci (Nucci & Turiel, 2009).

The present study provided strong evidence for the heterogeneity of thinking involved in the navigation of everyday interactions pertaining to disability within higher education institutions. This diversity was apparent in the multi-faceted ways that individual participants responded both within a given vignette as well as across vignettes, and in the differing perspectives across participants. Those responses demonstrated that students with non-visible LDs do not just affirm or reject commonplace decisions involving disability and accommodations for disability out of hand, but that they weigh a multitude of competing priorities. Even in the instance of the (prototypically moral) Antidiscrimination Legislation vignette, participants made reference to significant aspects of social convention: the essential functions that governing bodies and the laws they enact can serve in protecting socially subordinated or stigmatized communities, and the responsibility they have to do so. In response to that vignette, participants also frequently coordinated across different concepts within the moral domain: fairness and equality, equity, welfare, and rights.

As predicted, most participants in this study also coordinated across and within domains as they evaluated more complex hypothetical interactions as well as their own lived interpersonal experiences involving disability in the university setting. For instance, when rejecting a hypothetical professor's decision to only write a recommendation letter under the condition of disclosing a student's exam accommodations, participants often reasoned about more than one aspect of (a) the social conventional role and jurisdiction of authority figures as well as laws protecting private health information, along with (b) personal choice around disability disclosure, and/or (c) multiple moral considerations (particularly those having to do with fairness and equality or equity). Similarly, in their responses to the Access to Disability Services Support vignette, participants frequently reflected on elements of social functioning and authority in the forms of established protocols, logistics, and documentation requirements, but concluded that the hypothetical student's welfare (academic, psychological, and future livelihood), along with other social conventional considerations of an existing history of learning disability and the specialist's authority to use professional judgment, took precedence in rejecting the disability specialist's decision to not make an immediate case for the struggling student's accommodations eligibility.

Their coordination of domain concepts was not only limited to participants' evaluations of decisions made by hypothetical authority figures; it was also apparent in their responses to the hypothetical instance of a student who decides not to disclose their learning disability to a peer

group after being delegated a task that would be affected by the student's disability. Some participants coordinated concepts within and across domains, both in the acceptance and rejection of the student's decision. Those who made references to personal choice in their justifications for affirming the hypothetical student's decision also made (moral) references to potential stigmatization and discrimination; those who rejected the decision spoke to moral and social conventional issues of group welfare and social functioning. This particular vignette further demonstrated how moral considerations (e.g., group welfare and individual welfare) can be a further source of conflict involving social concept coordination.

A Note on Mixed Judgements and Coordinated Reasoning

An occasionally underemphasized subsample in domain theory studies is participants who respond with "mixed" evaluations—that is, those who view a stipulated interaction or circumstance as "both okay and not okay." Though, as in other studies, mixed evaluations were relatively uncommon, they did occur in the current study. Those responses were not highlighted in the results (though they were reported in corresponding tables), partially because the small sample size makes the aggregation of very small subsample data highly speculative, but also because the semi-structured clinical interview methodology (particularly the assessment of criterion judgments) and related interview time constraints can be somewhat limiting in fully tracing the extent and complexity of such initial or general evaluations.

Apart from the Anti-Discrimination Legislation general evaluation item (which participants unanimously affirmed), mixed evaluations were given to some extent for each of the four vignettes as well as for one participant's evaluation of the autobiographical experience item. In general, justifications for mixed evaluations included some degree of coordination across domains, typically involving the same types of considerations and concepts cited by participants who provided strictly affirmative or negative evaluations. Notably, the Peer Group Self-Disclosure general evaluation item yielded the most mixed evaluations (15% of the total sample, $n = 5$; access Table 5.1). In that instance, most of those participants made some type of reference to welfare (e.g., potential harm to the group's and/or the individual's grades or other academic consequences), but most of them further coordinated considerations of social functioning, personal choice, and/or prudence. The single participant who solely cited concerns of welfare coordinated the potential stigmatization the student might endure for disclosing a learning disability along with consideration of the group's grades. A second item on which mixed evaluations occurred with relatively greater frequency ($n = 4$) was the authority dictates criterion probe for participants who had originally provided negative general evaluations of the Authority Figure and Accommodations Disclosure vignette ($n = 31$; access Table 4.2b). In that instance, most participants who responded with mixed evaluations coordinated moral concerns of fairness and equality or welfare (either that of the hypothetical student whose accommodations were being disclosed in a recommendation letter or the professor who may suffer consequences to their job for not following specified procedure) along with the authority of a hypothetical head of a university.

These examples further illustrate the heterogeneity of thinking involved in these multifaceted issues. Specifically regarding the present subject matter of everyday interpersonal tensions and ambiguities related to disability in higher education, mixed evaluations likely signal contexts and concepts in need of more nuanced and detailed examination. The broader subject of mixed judgments of complex psychosocial phenomena will continue to be an important area of

study for domain theorists and others invested in a psychological data-driven account of moral and social decision making.

Reflections on Autobiographical Experiences and Institutional Change

While not a traditional component of much domain theory research (apart from Wainryb et al., 2005, whose design provided precedent), the autobiographical segment of the current exploratory study was motivated by several important purposes. First, given the lack of prior domain theory research centered around people with LDs, it was constructed as an informal ecological validity check, indicating how relevant the types of hypothetical vignettes developed for the semi-structured clinical interview were to the lived experiences of participants, with the further potential of informing design of larger scale research. Second, in keeping with the directive of the disabled people's movement slogan, "Nothing about us without us," the open-ended autobiographical item regarding participants' ideas for preventive institutional changes was included in hopes that the study would spotlight some substantive inroads and recommendations for postsecondary institution personnel or policymakers that are clearly, directly tied to the experiences, perspectives, and needs of students with LDs. Lastly, in considering the potential impact that an interview primarily focused on interpersonal and institutional tensions related to their identities might have on participants, it was important to offer space for them to reflect not only on sources of conflict around disability, but also more wholistically on their own broader experiences in the university and on how they might envision relational, institutional, and social change around disability discrimination, unencumbered by the constraints of the semi-structured interview format. The protocol as a whole extends and deepens case study ethnographic approaches to understanding the experiences of postsecondary students with LDs (e.g. Denhart, 2008) through the use of theoretically grounded and methodologically systematic psychological data. In addition to the decision to center the study exclusively around the perspectives of students with non-visible LDs (as opposed to, for example, structuring it as a comparative study including neurotypical peers), these design choices represented an effort to counteract some of the harm caused by the history of systematic erasure, exclusion, segregation, and disregarding of students with disabilities in US educational institutions.

Nearly all the participants in the present study (approximately 91%, $n = 30$) responded to at least one item from this set of questions, and several participants further commented on their enthusiasm to be witnessed in aspects of their experiences that, for various reasons, are often not apparent to others and are kept in silence. Of note was participants' use of concepts that ostensibly fell outside the scope of social cognitive domains—particularly references to and reflections on the internal navigation of their disability identity and/or their areas of disability impact—as they worked to describe, evaluate, and make sense of difficult interpersonal encounters. As anticipated, there was substantial overlap between the types of autobiographical experiences reported by participants and the hypothetical vignettes developed for the semi-structured clinical interview segment, particularly in terms of relational spheres. Most of the participants who recalled a time they were made to feel uncomfortable or felt bothered by a way they were treated because of their learning disability recounted either an experience with peers ($n = 13$) or an encounter with an authority figure (most commonly a faculty member; $n = 10$). Several participants also recalled an experience involving disabled students' services and/or combinations of relational spheres. The content of those experiences varied from somewhat harmless teasing by peers around disability-impacted academic errors, to moderately ambiguous

exclusion from study groups (presumably due to apparent study habits or inattentiveness), to overt hostility towards participants' requests for additional coursework support or the violation of approved disability accommodations by faculty, or else logistical and financial barriers to accessing disability supports altogether. As anticipated, participants demonstrated heterogeneous and multi-faceted thinking in their evaluations of and reasoning about their experiences which included moral, social conventional, and other concepts. Though the diversity of contexts and issues articulated in their lived experiences makes the preliminary interpretation of aggregated data highly speculative, it may be of some note that participants' evaluations of peer-related autobiographical experiences appeared somewhat more variable than those regarding encounters with faculty (or other authority figures). Whereas approximately half the participants who recalled a peer-related experience provided a negative evaluation, nearly all the participants who recalled a faculty-related one provided negative evaluations. However, in both instances, a majority of participants cited moral reasons for their negative evaluations, including concerns of welfare and fairness and equality. These patterns, while only preliminary, suggest differences in the ways students may navigate the complexities of power dynamics and hierarchy in learning environments. Those considerations require further study in the work of fully representing and accounting for the multitude of cognitive processes and influential contextual factors that impact the experiences of students with non-visible LDs in higher education.

Participants' ideas about potential institutional changes that might prevent future undesired experiences included both relational and systemic elements. Almost one-third of participants who responded to this item referred to targeted preparation for faculty and other instructors on best practices for teaching students with disabilities and supporting accommodations. Approximately one-fifth of responses included the addition of compulsory university-wide educational training modules (akin to existing cybersecurity or sexual harassment units) aimed at bolstering awareness and skills related to disability and mental health. Numerous participants commented on counteracting perceived societal and popular media-based stigmatization of disability through the development of affinity spaces and other community-building efforts that normalize disability in learning environments and promote compassion for all students experiencing stress in their academic journeys.

Limitations, Considerations, and Future Directions

The present study has several limitations, the relatively small sample size and limited sample composition being chief among them. The original proposed research was designed to include at least 40 participants, drawn from a departmental Research Participation Program at a large public university based in an urban setting. The study was approved just as nationwide and global shelter-in-place orders proliferated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite multiple waves of participant recruitment during the regular academic year and over the course of summer session, it was clear that the necessary shift to distance learning and changes in course requirements were likely affecting response rates. Adjustments were made to the proposed analyses given a smaller sample size, which (coincidentally) mostly comprised White or Asian cisgender women who were majoring in psychology and identified as having been diagnosed with ADHD (and, sometimes, a comorbid disability like dyslexia or autism spectrum disorder). Given the resulting sample size and composition, it was not advisable to further restrict eligibility criteria or to conduct the types of correlational and inferential statistical analyses that would allow for other types of conclusions about nuanced relationships among evaluations,

justifications, and demographic variables. Accordingly, readers are cautioned against generalizing the present exploratory results to larger populations, particularly regarding the myriad experiences of diverse disability identifications (and/or other salient intersectional identities) that exist among postsecondary students.

Another important consideration is that this study was conducted, analyzed, and reported by a single researcher. The clinical interview methodology involves an imperfect science of probing responses in the moment, sometimes leaving potentially informative threads of reasoning and other novel concepts or contexts under- or unexplored. There is a possibility that this occurred in some consistent fashion that would perceivably or imperceivably impact results. This was evidently the case in the instances of mixed general evaluation responses, to which it was ultimately only feasible to probe one side of participants' rationale for further contextual criteria judgments. It may have also been true in the instances of participants who invoked concepts of personal prerogative and autonomy around disability disclosure. It was difficult—if not altogether impossible—to immediately and reliably formulate non-leading probes that would consistently help differentiate between instances where participants believed that disclosure was an issue of personal choice or an issue of the right to personal choice. A second aspect of the research having been conducted, coded, and analyzed by a single researcher appeared in the initial reliability coding results, which showed that the justification subcodes (particularly within domains [e.g., between equality and equity]) could not be consistently distinguished; however, less refined re-analysis (via collapsing into four social cognitive domains and one other/uncodable category) yielded acceptable reliability values.

A future research agenda that centers issues of disability equity, access, and inclusion in higher education is as limitless as students with disabilities and postsecondary institutional systems are diverse. As highlighted here, domain theory and other social cognitive developmental approaches that are further informed by a disability studies lens have the potential to continue contributing to a deeper, more nuanced understanding of moral and social decision making around such issues. Future work using those conceptual approaches could be aimed at further examining the distinction between autonomy or personal choice and issues of rights in the disclosure of disability under differing circumstances as well as with additional considerations of the scope and impacts of various power dynamics and hierarchies. Additionally, the subject of mixed evaluations and their relationship to coordinated justification patterns could be a fruitful area for further investigation. The natural extension of the current study would be larger scale work that incorporates content from participants' autobiographical experiences and is systematically inclusive of a broader range of increasingly prevalent non-visible disability identifications and comorbidities (such as students with psychological disabilities like anxiety or trauma-related disorders), along with inferential analyses of how areas of disability impact and amount of experience in higher education might be related to evaluation and justification patterns. Of course, many other conceptual and mixed methodological approaches have a potential to deepen understanding, expand intersectional representations, and instigate much-needed changes.

The Issue of Equity: Meaningful Access and Inclusion in Higher Education

Although access to higher education has become a reality for many more students with disabilities following the hard-won advancements of the disability rights movement as well as subsequent federal legislation and the emergent body of applied research and related institutional

policies, some still wonder about remaining growing pangs in the 21st century: challenges posed by sustained controversy and ambiguity after the culmination of the movement, continued pathologization by a national narrative that frames students with disabilities (who are more often people of color, LGBTQIA+, indigenous, and/or foreign) as unworthy or fraudulent, and the diverse (sometimes conflicting) visions of how the current generation might meaningfully manifest the right to inclusive education (Berkeley CTL, 2019; Jones & Mitchell, 2019). The more recent proliferation of pay-for-services higher education programs specifically marketed towards students with learning disabilities (access Dolmage [2017] for the example of Landmark College) is just one of numerous indicators demonstrating the problematic ambiguity of equity and inclusion for neurodivergent students in postsecondary educational spaces. One participant (F, 2nd year), remarkably introspective and sobering in reflections on her higher education experiences, considered the scale and malleability of societal, institutional, and individual obstacles in her hopes and deliberations about the future:

I'm wondering how much you would have to change the education system and ...specifically higher education, to make it truly equitable. Because accommodations are great – I'm grateful that I have them; I probably wouldn't be able to be here if I didn't have some of them. But, like, I just have a sense that my neurotypical, able-bodied peers are able to get a lot more out of this experience than I ever will. And I say that because, like, my brain is...generating 42% more information at rest....That's just a lot of energy. When I'm in a classroom, my nervous system is processing so much background sensory information that the higher parts of my brain that should be thinking and learning and understanding information...I'm not getting it as much. I sit in lecture and I take notes, but I'm not learning anything; I have to do all my learning on my own time out of class, when I'm in my room, my sensory sanctuary. I cannot work – it's difficult. I think I'm taking a full unit load. I can't take more than that...[F]or me to have, like, an in-person internship in a lab like I want, on top of taking a full courseload, like, that's a lot...and I'm considering going to graduate school, but I don't think that, to be honest...like, undergrad, like I can get through it. But something like a PhD program where you're working day in day out, you're researching, you're going to school, you're maybe teaching, or you have another job to support you. Like, that's something that I want and I know I could be good at. I know I have the kind of detail-oriented interest in niche stuff, and the passion and the openness to experience that would make me a good candidate for that. But I don't know if I'm able and I don't know how you can accommodate stuff like that....And it's still, like, again: I'm grateful, like my housing accommodations are a miracle for me. But even socially I'd like to be more social and outgoing. I'd like to go to my professors' office hours more to form more of a connection and cause I just like to learn. But I'm somebody that's interested, motivated, passionate, cares a lot...and I'm good at it. I get good grades, like I'm a 4.0. I'm excelling in my neurobio classes. But I have no bandwidth for anything outside of the bare minimum. And I'm somebody that is...I guess I'm high-functioning. Like, I have full language and whatever. For somebody that has more support needs (especially with language, especially the social stuff)...you'd have to really change the system to make it fully equitable. And that makes me sad, because...not just for myself, but like I know so many smart, interesting people that have different perspectives on things and a real drive. But because they just happen to be physically, mentally, neurologically different than how we're supposed to be, how

capitalism wants us to be, we don't get to reach our full potential and I just think that that's really sad. Like yeah, so that's, that's how I feel. But at the same time, like, I'm grateful that we have the ADA and the disability stuff. But a lot of the times I think it would just take a much more radical change to ensure that there was true, true equity.

Her frustrated efforts to reconcile a developing concept and vision of equity with her experiences, observations of structures and requirements in higher education institutions, and her knowledge of her own needs and strengths is emblematic of the multifaceted psychosocial and logistical navigation continually required of college students with learning disabilities. These complexities were apparent in the ways participants responded to the present study's hypothetical interpersonal vignettes as well as in their reflections on their own experiences, which included both a rejection of ongoing moral violations as well as an understanding and appreciation of cultivating capabilities, resources, and relationships to navigate modern realities and resist such violations. The current exploration of their judgments and reasoning is just one very preliminary piece of a much larger, collaborative effort required to redress longstanding inequities faced by students with disabilities of all types while also uncovering practicable inroads for the gradual construction of radically reimaged inclusive educational systems.

The humanist imperative to strive for opportunity, equality, and the fulfillment of individual potential remains a lodestar for policy and practice in higher education.⁴⁶ In that effort, students with disabilities of all kinds and their allies continue the work of simultaneous navigation, opposition, and innovation. Though the problems of inequity, inaccessibility, and exclusion of and for students with disabilities in postsecondary institutions are persistent ones, there is good reason to believe that they are not entirely intractable. In addition to the rise in enrollment of postsecondary students with learning disabilities in higher education, the gradual movement towards postsecondary programs for students with intellectual disability (access, e.g., Becht et al., 2020) as well as the matriculation of nonspeaking autistic students in one of the most prominent and competitive US public universities (access, e.g., Srinivasan, 2018) are two major educational and societal developments that would have been thought impossible just two generations ago.

The question of how students with non-visible learning disabilities conceptualize experiences around issues of access, equity, and inclusion involves innumerable relational complexities and their varying functions. Federal legislation protecting the civil rights of students with disabilities, institution-specific policies that are intended to enact that legislation, the perspectives of individual faculty members and peers, personal preferences and learning history: these all interact to form the highly complex, heterogeneous experiences we see reflected in much of the qualitative research and theoretical academic work that involves disability to date. Research that elucidates the psychological processes that fuel so many of the interactions within these relational spheres is essential for both theoretical and practical reasons. Marks (1999) writes that,

[u]ltimately, the study of disability offers a useful topic for deconstructing... 'core sociological dichotomies,' for example between structure and agency, continuity and change, fact and value, normal and pathological, culture and nature, public and private, needs and wants, relativism and absolutism. (p. 13)

⁴⁶ Access Nussbaum (2006) for a comprehensive philosophical treatment (not exclusive to the sphere of education), which she terms a capabilities approach.

The current study is a preliminary step for those of us who wish to better understand and improve the teaching and learning experiences of instructors, support staff, and students in colleges and universities. Furthermore, it constitutes a too-rare centering in the empirical literature of postsecondary students with learning disabilities, their experiences, and their ideas – an aspiring catalyst for more a robust, comprehensive lineage of related work from which future generations of diverse students and our society can hope to benefit.

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**Appendix A.
Prescreening Survey**

Q1

Do you have a documented, non-visible learning disability or -disabilities?

*Note: Here, a learning disability means "a disorder in 1 or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which...may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations" ([IDEA, 2019](#)) and can include - but is not limited to - dyslexia, ADHD, auditory- or visual processing disorders, etc.

Yes

No

I'm not sure (please explain): _____

Decline to answer

Q2

How many years ago were you formally assessed and diagnosed with a learning disability or -disabilities?:

I was assessed and diagnosed with a learning disability or disabilities this many years ago:

I'm not sure (please explain): _____

Decline to answer

Q3

What type(s) of learning disability (or -disabilities) do you identify as having?:

My learning disability/disabilities is/are called: _____

I'm not sure (please explain): _____

Decline to answer

Appendix B.
Semi-Structured Clinical Interview Protocol
(male, female, and nonbinary forms)

Vignette 1: Anti-Discrimination Legislation

In the United States, there are laws and policies that prohibit “discrimination on the basis of disability in university programs, services, and activities.” Those laws and policies require that universities provide students with accommodations meeting the student’s disability. These accommodations and related support services are “not intended to remediate disabilities, but are made to provide students equal access by reducing the negative impact of their disabilities.” Since this legislation has been enacted, universities and colleges across the country have seen an increase in the number of enrolled students with disabilities who are seeking accommodations.

Q1. Evaluation/Judgment: Do you think it’s okay or not okay that the US has such laws?

Q2. Justification: Why do you think it’s okay/not okay?

For a Judgment of Not Okay

Q3N. Social Influence: What if a majority of voters had signed a petition in support of such legislation? Then would such laws be okay or not okay?

Q4N. Justification: Why?

Q5N. Authority: What if the US government had publicly stated that such legislation should be in effect? Then would such laws be okay or not okay?

Q6N. Justification: Why?

Q7N. Generalizability: What about in another country, would it be okay or not okay if such laws existed?

Q8N. Justification: Why?

For a Judgment of Okay

Q3Y. Social Influence: What if a majority of voters signed a petition to overturn these laws and the laws were removed? Would that removal be okay or not okay?

Q4Y. Justification: Why?

Q5Y. Authority: What if the government had publicly stated that such legislation should not be in effect and repealed the laws? Would that repeal be okay or not okay?

Q6Y. Justification: Why?

Q7Y. Generalizability: What about in another country, would it be okay or not okay if no such laws existed?

Q8Y. Justification: Why?

Vignette 2: Authority Figure and Accommodations Disclosure

(Paul/Katie/Casey) is a student with a learning disability who is applying for a research position on campus and needs a faculty member to write (him/her/them) a letter of recommendation to put in the university file for the position and future job applications. (Paul/Katie/Casey) has been a good student – (he/she/they) attend(s) course lectures and discussion sections and work(s) extra hours to complete all of (his/her/their) assignments – but (his/her/their) learning disability affects how quickly (he/she/they) read(s) and work(s) on written tasks. Because of (Paul’s/Katie’s/Casey’s) learning disability, (he/she/they) (has/have) academic accommodations for a reduced course load and extended time on exams. (Paul/Katie/Casey) decides to ask a professor (he/she/they) think(s) could write a good recommendation for (him/her/them) because the professor’s course was related to the research position (Paul/Katie/Casey) is applying for and (he/she/they) earned a good grade in the professor’s course. The professor tells (Paul/Katie/Casey) that (he/she/they) would agree to write the recommendation only under the condition that (he/she/they) include(s) a statement that (Paul’s/Katie’s/Casey’s) performance on exams in (his/her/their) course was with extra time.

Q1. Evaluation/Judgment: Do you think it’s okay or not okay that the professor agreed to write the recommendation letter only under these conditions?

Q2. Justification: Why do you think it’s okay/not okay?

For a Judgment of Not Okay

Q3N. Social Influence: What if most professors at the university thought it was okay for the professor to write the recommendation letter only under these conditions? Then would it be okay or not okay for the professor to write the letter only under these conditions?

Q4N. Justification: Why?

Q5N. Authority: What if the head of the university decided that it was okay that the professor write the recommendation letter only under these conditions? Then would it be okay or not okay?

Q6N. Justification: Why?

Q7N. Generalizability: What about at another university in another country, would it be okay or not okay if it was accepted that professors can write recommendation letters under these conditions?

Q8N: Justification: Why?

For a Judgment of Okay

Q3Y. Social Influence: What if most professors at the university thought that it was not okay that the professor write the recommendation letter only under these conditions? Then would it be okay or not okay for the professor to write the letter only under these conditions?

Q4Y. Justification: Why?

Q5Y. Authority: What if the head of the university decided it was not okay that the professor write the recommendation letter only under these conditions? Then would it be okay or not okay?

Q6Y. Justification: Why?

Q7Y. Generalizability: What about at another university in another country, would it be okay or not okay if it was not accepted that professors write recommendation letters under these conditions?

Q8Y. Justification: Why?

Vignette 3: Peer Group Disability Self-Disclosure

(Tim/Julie/Riley) is a student with a learning disability who is working on a group project with several other students. (Tim/Julie/Riley) is a good student – (he/she/they) take(s) extensive notes during lectures, work(s) extra hours to complete (his/her/their) assignments, and makes an effort to participate in class discussions. (Tim’s/Julie’s/Riley’s) learning disability affects some types of tasks on computers, but (his/her/their) group does not know about (his/her/their) disability and assigns the group’s online presentation to (Tim/Julie/Riley). (Tim/Julie/Riley) tries to ask for a different type of task, but the group still assigns it to (him/her/them). (Tim/Julie/Riley) considers explaining to the group that (he/she/they) (has/have) a learning disability, but decides not to because (he/she/they) (is/are) worried about how people in the group will react.

Q1. Evaluation/Judgment: Do you think it’s okay or not okay that (Tim/Julie/Riley) decided not to tell (his/her/their) group about (his/her/their) learning disability?

Q2. Justification: Why do you think it’s okay/not okay?

For a Judgment of Not Okay

Q3N. Social Influence: What if (his/her/their) friends told (Tim/Julie/Riley) that (he/she/they) should not tell (his/her/their) group about (his/her/their) learning disability? Then would it be okay or not okay that (Tim/Julie/Riley) did not tell the group about (his/her/their) learning disability?

Q4N. Justification: Why?

Q5N. Authority: What if a professor told (Tim/Julie/Riley) that (he/she/they) should not tell (his/her/their) group about (his/her/their) learning disability? Then would it be okay or not okay?

Q6N. Justification: Why?

Q7N. Generalizability: What about in another country, would it be okay or not okay if another student decided not to tell (his/her/their) group about (his/her/their) learning disability under similar circumstances?

Q8N. Justification: Why?

For a Judgment of Okay

Q3Y. Social Influence: What if (his/her/their) friends told (Tim/Julie/Riley) that (he/she) should tell (his/her) group about (his/her/their) learning disability? Then would it be okay or not okay that (Tim/Julie/Riley) did not tell the group about (his/her/their) learning disability?

Q4Y. Justification: Why?

Q5Y. Authority: What if a professor told (Tim/Julie/Riley) that (he/she/they) should tell (his/her/their) group about (his/her/their) learning disability? Then would it be okay or not okay?

Q6Y. Justification: Why?

Q7Y. Generalizability: What about in another country, would it be okay or not okay if another student decided not to tell (his/her/their) group about (his/her/their) learning disability under similar circumstances?

Q8Y. Justification: Why?

Vignette 4: Access to Disability Services Support

(Greg/Linda/Jessie) is a first-year student nearing the end of (his/her/their) first semester at college. (Greg/Linda/Jessie) was diagnosed with a learning disability in elementary school and received Special Education services through middle school. (Greg/Linda/Jessie) learned ways to compensate for (his/her/their) disability with the support of (his/her/their) teachers, so was taken out of Special Education and continued to earn good grades in high school. When (Greg/Linda/Jessie) first began college, (he/she/they) decided not to contact the university's Disabled Students' Program because (he/she/they) had done well in school and thought that, maybe, (he/she/they) no longer had a learning disability. This semester, despite studying hard and attending office hours, (Greg/Linda/Jessie) is doing poorly in classes with exams because (he/she/they) run(s) out of time before completing the exams. (Greg/Linda/Jessie) decides to reach out to a disability specialist at the university a week before final exams to see if (he/she/they) might be eligible for accommodations. After speaking with (Greg/Linda/Jessie) about (his/her/their) learning disability history and current semester, the specialist says that students ideally have recent documentation of (his/her/their) disability to be eligible. However, specialists are allowed to use their professional judgment in deciding whether to make a case for accommodations temporarily based on student history and current access barriers even when the documentation is not as recent as preferred. Because there's not enough time for the specialist to make a case for accommodations without further documentation before final exams, the specialist suggests that (Greg/Linda/Jessie) use the campus tutoring program to prepare, talk to

(his/her/their) professors about extra credit, and have a disability assessment done over the winter break to see if (he/she/they) might be eligible for accommodations next semester.

Q1. Evaluation/Judgment: Do you think it's okay or not okay that the disability specialist did not make a case for (Greg's/Linda's/Jessie's) eligibility?

Q2. Justification: Why do you think it's okay/not okay?

For a Judgment of Not Okay

Q3N. Social Influence: What if (his/her/their) professors told (Greg/Linda/Jessie) that it was okay that the disability specialist did not make a case for (Greg's/Linda's/Jessie's) eligibility? Then would it be okay or not okay that the disability specialist did not make a case for (Greg's/Linda's/Jessie's) eligibility?

Q4N. Justification: Why?

Q5N. Authority: What if the director of the Disabled Students' Program told (Greg/Linda/Jessie) that it was okay that the disability specialist did not make a case for (Greg's/Linda's/Jessie's) eligibility? Then would it be okay or not okay?

Q6N. Justification: Why?

Q7N. Generalizability: What about at another university in another country, would it be okay or not okay if another disability specialist did not make a case for a student's eligibility under similar circumstances?

Q8N: Justification: Why?

For a Judgment of Okay

Q3Y. Social Influence: What if her professors told (Greg/Linda/Jessie) that it was not okay that the disability specialist did not make a case for (Greg's/Linda's/Jessie's) eligibility? Then would it be okay or not okay that the disability specialist did not make a case for (Greg's/Linda's/Jessie's) eligibility?

Q4Y. Justification: Why?

Q5Y. Authority: What if the director of the Disabled Students' Program told (Greg/Linda/Jessie) that it was not okay that the disability specialist did not make a case for (Greg's/Linda's/Jessie's) eligibility? Then would it be okay or not okay?

Q6Y. Justification: Why?

Q7Y. Generalizability: What about at another university in another country, would it be okay or not okay if another disability specialist did not make a case for a student's eligibility under similar circumstances?

Q8Y: Justification: Why?

Appendix C.
Open-Ended Autobiographical Interview Protocol

As you respond to questions in this next portion, please be sure to refrain from naming specific people or places, okay?

- 1) Tell me about a time in college that you were made to feel uncomfortable or felt bothered by a way you were treated because of your learning disability. Pick a time you remember really well, and tell me everything you remember about that time.⁴⁷

- 2) Do you think it was okay or not okay for that to happen?

- 3) Why do you think it was [okay/not okay]?

- 4) What changes, if any, do you think could be made at the college so that no one else would have to have an experience like the one you had?

- 5) Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your experience as an undergraduate with an LD that we haven't touched upon today?

⁴⁷ General prompts might include short phrases like, "uh huh," or "and...?" as well as verbatim repetitions of what the participant has just said (e.g., "So, the professor told you that you should..."). When a participant appears to have concluded his/her narrative, the interviewer will ask, "Is there anything else you remember about that time?"

Appendix D. Demographic Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to participate in our research today. As the final component of today's session, we'd like to ask that you complete the following 10 demographic questions via Qualtrics. You may decline to answer any item(s) below by typing or selecting "Decline to answer." Your responses will be made anonymous. The researcher will remain available to respond to any questions or comments you may have as you complete the questionnaire, but will not audio record any of this information.

General Questions

- 1) Age: _____
- 2) Gender identification and pronouns: _____
- 3) Racial/ethnic background: _____
- 4) Academic major(s): _____
- 5) Number of years completed in 4-year college(s): _____
 - a. Please indicate any additional years completed in junior college(s) if applicable: _____
- 6) Socioeconomic status

Think of this ladder as representing where people stand in the United States.

At the **top** of the ladder are the people who are the best off – those who have the most money, the most education, and the most respected jobs. At the **bottom** are the people who are the worst off – who have the least money, least education, and the least respected jobs or no job. The higher up you are on this ladder, the closer you are to the people at the very top; the lower you are, the closer you are to the people at the very bottom.

Where would you place the family you grew-up in on this ladder?

Please click the rung on the ladder where you think the family you grew-up in stands – at this time in your life – relative to other people in the United States:



Decline to answer

Disability-related Questions

7) How many years ago were you first formally assessed and diagnosed with a learning disability?:

a. What type of learning disability (or disabilities) do you identify as having?:

8) Did you have an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) and/or receive other disability-specific supports and services in high school and/or prior to high school?:

Yes **No** **I'm not sure (please explain):** _____ **Decline to answer**

a. If so, how long did you have an IEP?: _____

9) Do you currently receive academic accommodations through the Disabled Students' Program (DSP)?:

Yes **No** **I'm not sure (please explain):** _____ **Decline to answer**

10) Dimensions of learning disabilities: Please indicate the extent to which you experience the following as impacted by your disability or disabilities:

1 = Not at all **2** = A little **3** = Somewhat **4** = Moderately **5** = A lot **6** = Completely

a. Reading comprehension: 1 2 3 4 5 6 Decline to answer

b. Completion of assigned reading: 1 2 3 4 5 6 Decline to answer

c. Written expression: 1 2 3 4 5 6 Decline to answer

d. Math computation and problem solving: 1 2 3 4 5 6 Decline to answer

e. Amount of time spent studying and preparing for classes: 1 2 3 4 5 6 Decline to answer

f. Planning, organization, and task completion: 1 2 3 4 5 6 Decline to answer

g. If other significant area(s) of academic impact, please note type and extent of impact:

_____ 1 2 3 4 5 6 Decline to answer

h. If other significant area(s) of academic impact, please note type and extent of impact:

_____ 1 2 3 4 5 6 Decline to answer

i. If other significant area(s) of academic impact, please note type and extent of impact:

_____ 1 2 3 4 5 6 Decline to answer