

Piloting a Peer Mentoring Program in Social Work Education

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Does peer mentoring increase BSW and MSW-level students' academic preparedness?
- Does peer mentoring increase BSW and MSW-level students' social support and connection to the student body?
- What elements of the peer mentoring program were perceived to be beneficial to students?

PARTICIPANT SAMPLE

- BSW (4), MSW (8), PhD (2) students
- 9 female (64.3%) and 5 male (35.7%) students ranging from 21 to 45 ($M = 28.00$, $SD = 6.56$)
- Majority of participants were white (71.4%) with only 38.6% persons of color

METHODOLOGY

- Availability sampling of program participants
- Peer mentoring program included 3 major components:
 - Information orientation session
 - Four weeks of peer mentoring
 - Two hour-long events
- Students were matched by level of academic experience with additional considerations such as practice interest
- Students completed:
 - Pre-test
 - Weekly reports (4)
 - Post-test
- Evaluation scales were informed by the Five Senses of Success Model (Lizzio, 2006) and the Student Transition Scale, Revised (Chester, Burton, Xenos, & Elgar, 2013).

ANALYSIS

- Reliability Analysis of Scales
- Paired sample t-tests of scales, scale items, and weekly report questions
- Content analysis of responses to open-ended questions

RESULTS

	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	
		Pre-test	Post-test
Academic Preparedness	10	.913	.948
Social Support	9	.899	.909
Benefit of Participating	4	.827	.945
Outcomes of Program	4	.927	.910

	Pre-test	Post-test	t	p
	M (SD)	M (SD)		
<u>Scales</u>				
Academic Preparedness	52.10 (11.79)	59.50 (9.86)	-1.96	.082
Social Support	45.30 (11.78)	50.90 (8.63)	-2.82	.020*
Benefit of Participation	15.80 (3.08)	15.20 (5.35)	.61	.560
Outcomes of Program	23.20 (5.76)	22.40 (6.15)	-.09	.930
<u>Weekly Report Questions</u>				
This meeting was helpful	4.30 (.68)	4.20 (1.23)	.19	.853
This meeting was productive	4.20 (.63)	4.20 (1.23)	.00	1.00
I felt academically supported	3.70 (1.25)	3.80 (1.55)	-.21	.840
I felt emotionally supported	3.70 (1.49)	3.60 (1.51)	.18	.864
I was satisfied with this meeting	4.20 (1.23)	4.0 (1.41)	.41	.693

Note. * $p < .05$. Weekly reports questions compared the first and last week.

Participant's Desires

Mentees:

- Experience
- Knowledge
- Guidance of senior student
- Encouragement

Mentors:

- Share experience and wisdom with others
- Knowledge
- Friendship

Weekly discussions

- Course climate: Current and future
- Practicum experience
- Concentration year options
- Post-education plans
 - Career
 - Licensing
 - Additional degrees
- Shared resources
- Personal backgrounds and interests

Most beneficial aspects of program

- Conversing with graduates
- Establishing friendships and connections
- Giving and receiving advice
- Personal connection
- Forming professional networks and support

"I wish that I would have had a peer mentor before coming into my final year"

"[I hope] to feel less anxious about the next several steps and gather a better understanding about where I'm going and possible steps to get there"

"In my future career, it is my goal to become a mentor and this is a great experience to help me build skills needed to be a positive mentor"

DISCUSSION

- All items on the academic preparedness scale increased and all but one item increased on the social support scale
- Within the limits of the four-week pilot, social support was the only scale to show significantly change
- The difficulty one paired match had relating with one another negatively skewed the overall mean difference between pre- and post-tests.
- Additional training should be provided to mentors to make weekly meetings more productive
- Despite the lack of significance in current findings, most participants reported appreciation for the program

"I appreciated getting to know someone outside of...my concentration...It made me feel like I was connected to the rest of the department"

FUTURE RESEARCH

- 2016-2017 Peer Mentoring Program informed by four-week pilot
- Continued research of academic preparedness and social support within social work education
- Evaluation of programming with revision of scales and structure (i.e. timing, length, training, content of supplemental events)

REFERENCES

- Chester, A., Burton, L. J., Xenos, S., & Elgar, K. (2013). Peer mentoring: Supporting transition for first-year psychology students. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 65, 30-37.
- Lizzio, A. (2006). Designing an orientation and transition strategy for commencing students. *First Year Experience Project*. Brisbane, Australia: Griffith University.

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