

Experiences of Peer Educators Teaching Relationship Education to College Students



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Presentation Preview

- Rationale for peer-education approach to relationship education
- Overview of programming
- Methods used to understand peer-educators experiences
- Results of phenomenological study
- Implications of this work
- Q&A

Service-Learning

- A type of experiential learning in which students provide a service to the community as the basis for learning.
 - Service = community education programming for peers.
- Students can identify possible careers and develop relevant skills.
 - Ex: public speaking, teamwork, leadership, cultural competence, teaching

Peer Education

- Commonly used in health promoting and prevention programs on college campuses.
 - Ex: Sexual health; tobacco/alcohol
- Meta-analyses of peer education prevention programs show effectiveness for participants and even educators themselves.
- Why are peer educators effective?
 - Relatability, trust, credibility, shared language, personalization, accessibility

Young Adult Development and Learning

- Adult learning involves taking more initiative with learning and applying information to **solve real-world problems**.
- Adults are focused on exploring personal and occupational domains of **identity**.
- Emphasis on **intimate relationships** is developmentally appropriate for educators and participants.

What do Peer Educators Experience?

POSITIVE EFFECTS

Enhanced Learning

Increased Confidence

Leadership Development

Improved Communication Skills

Empathy and Understanding

CHALLENGES AND POTENTIAL NEGATIVE EFFECTS

Pressure and Responsibility

Balancing Roles

Conflict Handling

Time Management

Why Prioritize Young Adult Audiences in HMRE?

Unhealthy relationships → poor academic achievement, greater alcohol use, and more mental and physical health problems

- Relationship aggression peaks during young adulthood.

Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education (HMRE)

- Teaches key knowledge and skills to prevent abuse and improve mate selection, conflict management, and relationship maintenance.
- Synergy with other university initiatives to prevent dating violence and sexual assault.
 - HMRE can prevent negative outcomes **AND promote positive relationship skills.**





Relationship Education and Leadership (REAL) Program

- Upper class UW students enrolled in a 1-2 credit service-learning course.
- **Peer educators were responsible for:**
 - Marketing & recruitment.
 - Making appropriate adaptations to the lessons.
 - Practicing lessons with their co-facilitator.
 - Teaching lessons to peers ages 18-25 on campus.
 - Assisting as participant observers.

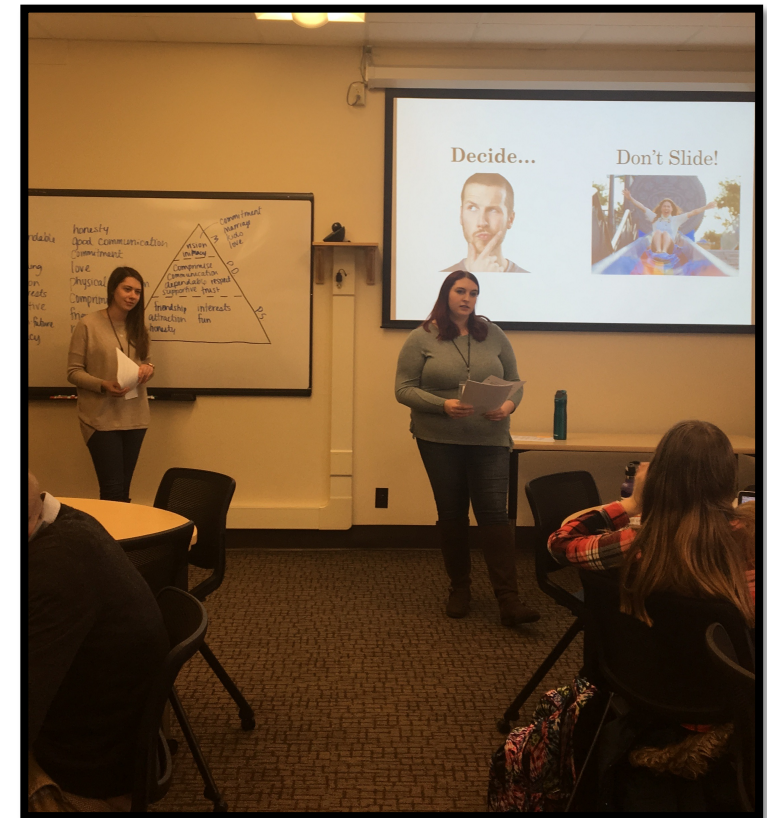




Relationship Education and Leadership (REAL) Program

Training Protocol

- Peer educators were trained to teach selected **Love Notes** lessons.
- One day orientation to **Love Notes**
- Weekly 90 minute meetings focused on training, processing implementation, and professional implications.
- Randomly assigned **teach-back** method.
 - Mock teaching with peer feedback, instructor examples, challenging scenarios.





Relationship Education and Leadership (REAL) Program

HMRE programming was delivered to participants (*Mage* = 20) during 2-hour sessions across four weeks.

- A team of four students led the session.
- Session topics aligned with core ***Love Notes*** content.
- Average class size was 12 participants.

Additional one-time events for student athletes and panhellenic houses.



Study Research Questions

1

What practical and personal gains do peer educators experience delivering HMRE within a service-learning course?

2

What interpersonal challenges and lessons learned do peer educators experience delivering HMRE within a service-learning course?

Participants

- Undergraduates (N = 15; *Mage* = 21) enrolled in a service-learning course to serve as Peer Educators
- 87% European American/White; 13% Latina/Hispanic
- 1 male; 14 female
- Diverse Majors: Human Development and Family Sciences (6), Psychology (5), Social Work (1), Communications (1), Zoology (1), and Elementary Education (1)
- No prior service-learning experience

Procedure

- The project director/instructor provided peer educators with a description of the research project.
- Signed informed consent before submitting their final service-learning reflection paper.
- Peer educators were assured that their participation was voluntary.

Data Collection

- Third (and final) reflection papers written in response to three open-ended prompts:

- 1) What happened?
- 2) What have you learned?
- 3) Now what will you do?

- Instructions stated, *“reflections will be evaluated based on whether students address the prompts thoroughly not based on whether responses are positive or negative.”*



Analysis

Interpretive phenomenological approach:

- An iterative, collaborative process
- Initiated analysis with a planning meeting, acknowledged our biases, proceeded with Heidegger's method:
 - Open coding
 - Recorded and discussed analytic memos
 - Focused coding
 - Thematic analysis of significant statements


Analysis

- Findings were organized to co-construct gains and challenges as patterns emerged illustrating “what” kinds of gains were experienced and “what” kinds of challenges were faced, in their experiences, as reflected in their own words
- Conducted member checks to verify and further develop findings

Findings:

RQ1: Personal Impact & Practical Gains

① **Development of applicable professional skills**



"As a childbirth educator, I will need to be able to **effectively present material** to a group of adults. I will need to **build rapport** with them and **use active listening** when they are sharing their experiences. These are all things that I have learned in this service-learning course." *-D.M., age 21*

Findings:

RQ1: Personal Impact & Practical Gains

② Clearer understanding of family science career options



"I think I may still go into counseling at first, and maybe one day I'll start working with non-profits and other groups to continue to educate. **I am a little firmer on my path than I was when I started.**"

-R. M., age 21

Findings:

RQ1: Personal Impact & Practical Gains

③ Application of HMRE beyond service-learning



“This experience also taught me a great deal of information about how to have healthy friendships and intimate relationships. **I personally am trying really hard to stop using invalidations** such as ‘don’t be upset’ or ‘it’s not a big deal.’” *-R.C., age 22*

Findings:

RQ1: Personal Impact & Practical Gains

④ Awareness of the value of HMRE



“I also felt that **the curriculum really did some magic...**It was amazing watching the participants link course concepts back to each other and bringing the program full circle.” *-B.A., age 21*

Findings:

RQ1: Personal Impact & Practical Gains

⑤ Civic engagement



“I am really glad that we **made such a big impact** on some of these people and maybe even saved them physical or emotional pain.” —*C.V., age 21.*

Findings:

RQ1: Personal Impact & Practical Gains

⑥ Pushed to grow



“It was difficult at times, but well worth it. I do believe that the most learning comes from getting out of one’s comfort zone, and I did exactly that and grew quite a bit.” *–M.K., age 21*

Findings:

RQ2: Interpersonal Challenges and Lessons Learned

⑦ **Cooperative conflict management**



“Learning how to work in a team in this capacity taught me a lot about other people, and about **what it takes to work with others in a professional setting.**” *-R.K., age 20*

Findings:

RQ2: Interpersonal Challenges and Lessons Learned

⑧ Group Cohesion



“I knew that everyone wanted me to succeed and was there to be supportive.” *W.M, age 20*

Findings:

RQ2: Interpersonal Challenges and Lessons Learned

⑨ Reciprocal audience engagement



“When participants can relate to the educator and feel comfortable around them, they are more likely to share their own stories and attend more classes.” *-D.M., age 21*

Implications



Being a peer educator created an in-depth personal and professional learning opportunity.

- Personal impact and application of concepts.
- Skills required to overcome interpersonal challenges and successfully reach a collective goal.
- Encouraged critical thinking of one's experiences as emerging professionals.

Implications

Peer educators gained a deeper understanding of:

- Career options within their discipline, such as Family Life Education.
- Their own professional interests and plans.
- Effective strategies for working on teams as engaged citizens.
- Components of healthy romantic relationships.



Conclusions

Using a peer education HMRE program delivery model:

- Prepares emerging professionals to be competent family science practitioners.
- Advances implementation science by promoting a potentially effective method for HMRE implementation for emerging adults.
- Promotes awareness of HMRE and the utility of primary prevention.



Wrap-Up

**What was
most interesting or
important to you?**

What questions can we answer?

For more information, please read our paper published in Family Relations!

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