Social and Peer Support in Health: An Ecological and Global Perspective

Edwin Fisher, Ph.D.
Health Behavior 756-001
University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill
Mondays, 9:05-11:55 AM, Room 324, Rosenau Hall
Spring, 2015

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Overview

This course has four broad purposes.

1. Review key features of social support, a very powerful but not well understood aspect of human behavior and experience.
2. Review applications of social support to health promotion.
3. Consider these issues from a global and cross-cultural perspective.
4. Through the group project and term paper, provide the student the opportunity to contribute to an application of peer support and examine how (a) fundamental features of and research on social support inform that application, as well as how (b) the process of application heightens understanding of fundamental features of and research on social support.

The course is divided into two sections. From January 12 through February 23, we will review foundational and research literature on social support. From March 16 to the end of the semester, we will review applications of social support.

The underlying theme of the course is that the two sections are related, understanding social support and can enhance our ability to develop effective peer support interventions.
Student Project and Term Paper – Tentative Plan – To Be Finalized 1/12 and 1/26

During our first class on January 12, we will discuss a number of current topics in peer support for which students might develop a document, report, or other “product.” These include, just as a short list of possibilities:

- Addressing mental health/behavioral health through peer support
- **Peer support and the elderly**
- Peer support for rural populations
- The roles of instrumental and emotional support in peer support
- Comparison of peer support across different kinds of health problems, e.g., diabetes management vs HIV/AIDS
- Peer support in specific country or cultural settings
- “Reverse innovation” or “Twinning”; transferring lessons from developing to developed countries
- Exploring the tension between lay persons and health professionals, including, e.g., paradigm shift in modern medicine and health care, evolution vs revolution, roots in social activism, empowerment of minority groups
- New ways of measuring impact of peer support programs, e.g., positive psychology, happiness index
- Modes of delivery: Peer support delivered by trained individuals vs mutual support networks; peer support based in clinical vs community settings
- eHealth as Peer Support: to what extent can we create supportive interventions through eHealth technolog?
- Characterizing the general benefits of peer support in the communities in which it is implemented, not just its health benefits among “target audiences”

We will continue this discussion in our 2nd class, on January 26. At the conclusion of this, students will break up into groups of 2-5 people and choose a specific topic on which they would like to develop some document or “product” that may be useful to the field. The document or “product” can be anything from a manual or report for the field to a research proposal or review of existing research. At the end of the semester, these may be selected for promotion through Peers for Progress such as through its website or newsletters, etc.

We will discuss these student projects every week or so in class to compare notes and provide some guidance in students’ development of the projects. In our last class (April 20), students will present their product or document.

**Term Paper** – Reflecting on the product or document which your group developed during the semester, describe how (a) fundamental features of and research on social support inform your work, as well as how (b) the process of application heightens understanding of fundamental features of and research on social support.

Due Friday, May 1, 5 pm by hard and electronic copy, 12-point, Times New Roman, 0.75 in. top and bottom margins, 1.0 in. side margins, maximum = 15 pp not including cover and references.

**Mid-Term Assignment** – As preparation for the Term Paper, describe one example of each of how (a) fundamental features of and research on social support inform the work you are doing for your project, as well as how (b) the process of application heightens understanding of fundamental features of and research on social support.

Due Friday, March 6, 5 pm by electronic copy to edfisher@unc.edu and to jlhr@email.unc.edu, 12-point, Times New Roman, 0.75 in. top and bottom margins, 1.0 in. side margins, Maximum = 5 pp not including cover and references.

**Grading Scheme**  Assignment of final grades will be guided by the following:

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Term Paper</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-Term Assignment</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<td>Project (Document or Product for the field)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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Section 1 – Foundations and Research on Social Support (January 12 - Feb 23)
In this first section of the course, we will review classic and current literature on social support, what it is, how it enters into health, and how it works.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/12</td>
<td>What is social support? Where does it fit within an ecological view of health and health behavior?</td>
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<td>1/19</td>
<td>MLK Day – No Class</td>
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<td>1/26</td>
<td>Fundamentals</td>
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<td>Optional:</td>
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<td>For Reference – Not Assigned:</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>Social Networks &amp; Environmental Determinants of Social Support:</td>
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Social and Peer Support in Health

Sciences, 64(2), 234-246.

2/9 Attachment – Suggestions for how attachment plays out in adulthood are welcome

Lecture 1: Caring for Children, pp. 6-19.


Assignment: Bring a Valentine’s Day card or copy of one!
Optional:

2/16 Psychosocial studies of social support and social influence – Suggestions for additional examples are welcome

Psychosocial Studies of Social Support


2/23 What is universal? What is specific? Cross-cultural perspectives on social support – Additional suggestions welcome

Regarding social support and peer support in different cultures:

Review:


Section 2 – Social and Peer Support Interventions (March 2 – April 20)

In this section of the course, we turn toward practical applications of social support in prevention, health, and health care.

3/2 Examples of Successful Peer Support Interventions – Diabetes, Mental Health, Asthma, Maternal & Child Health, HIV/AIDS


Read and come to class prepared to describe what you think is most interesting about your choice of two of the following regarding diabetes, mental health, and asthma, maternal and child health, and HIV/AIDS:

**Diabetes:**


**Mental Health:**


**Asthma, Maternal & Child Health, HIV/AIDS:**


**Evaluation:**

3/16 Practical Challenges in Developing and Managing Peer Support Interventions

**Workshop on Developing a Peer Support Program**

3/23 Successes and Failures: Reaching the Hardly Reached, and Learning from Failure: Lessons Learned, Failure Factors, and Success Factors
Fisher, E. & Boothroyd, R. Response to Smith et al. and Smith et al., Rejoinder
Fisher et al., Systematic Review of the Effects of Peer Support Interventions for Complex Health Behaviors (in preparation) *Section on Unsuccessful Studies.*

3/30 Network Approaches
Guest Speaker: Valarie Clark Worthy, Sisters’ Network, to be confirmed
Visit the Sisters Network website (http://www.sistersnetworkinc.org) and website of Sisters Network Triangle (http://www.sisterstriangle.org/) – To be confirmed
Readings:
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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>4/20</td>
<td>Retrospect and Student Presentations</td>
<td><strong>Class Presentations, 4/20:</strong> Groups will circulate ahead of time* and bring copies of their product for all class members to class on April 20. We will take 15-20 min for each which will include the student’s presentation of the product (about 5 min) and then the class’ general discussion of it. * Send current draft of product to <a href="mailto:edfisher@unc.edu">edfisher@unc.edu</a> and <a href="mailto:jlbr@email.unc.edu">jlbr@email.unc.edu</a> by end of day, Thursday, 4/16. This of course does <strong>not preclude</strong> further work over the following several days. <strong>Reading:</strong> Fisher, E. B., Coufal, M. M., Parada, H., Robinette, J. B., Tang, P., Urlaub, D., Castillo, C., Guzman-Corrales, L.M., Hino, S., Hunter, J., Katz, A., Symes, Y.R., Worley, H.P., &amp; Xui, C. (2014). Peer Support in Health Care and Prevention: Cultural, Organizational and Dissemination Issues. In J. Fielding, R. C. Brownson &amp; L. Green (Eds.), <em>Annual review of public health</em> (Vol. 35). Palo Alto: Annual Reviews.</td>
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