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, Michael Hooker Research Center, Room 03
Spring, 2016

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Office Hours: Flexible, By Appointment

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 27 through February 22, we will review foundational and research literature on social support. From February 29 to the end of the semester, we will review applications of social support, largely through peer support programs.

The underlying theme of the course is that the two sections are related, that understanding social support can enhance our ability to develop effective peer support interventions and that implementing and evaluating peer support interventions can expand our fundamental understanding of this very important but poorly understood influence, social support.
Student Project and Term Paper – Tentative Plan – To Be Finalized 1/25

During our first class on January 11, we will discuss a number of current topics in peer support for which students might develop a document, report, program plan, 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”
- Peer support for veterans in conjunction with a “Veterans Working Group” from veterans on campus – see description at end of this syllabus.

We will continue this discussion in our 2nd class, on January 25. 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 schedule presentations of progress of these projects in each class in order to compare notes and provide some guidance to development of the projects. In our last class (April 25), 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 by electronic copy to edfisher@unc.edu by Wednesday, May 4, 5 pm, 12-point, Times New Roman, 0.75 in. top and bottom margins, 1.0 in. side margins, maximum = 10 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 by electronic copy to edfisher@unc.edu by 5 pm Wednesday, March 9. 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Term Paper</td>
<td>33%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-Term Assignment</td>
<td>22%</td>
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<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>Project (Document or Product for the field)</td>
<td>20%</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>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/11</td>
<td>What is social support? Where does it fit within an ecological view of health and health behavior?</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/18</td>
<td>MLK Day – No Class</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/25</td>
<td>Fundamentals</td>
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<td>Conceptual Background: Interaction, Context, and Behaviorism</td>
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For Reference – Not Assigned:

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<th>Reference</th>
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2/1 Social Networks & Environmental Determinants of Social Support:


| 2/8 | What is universal? What is specific?  
Guest Instructor: Sarah Kowitt, M.P.H.  
|---|---|
| 2/15 | Attachment  
Assignment: Bring a Valentines Day card or copy of one!  
Lecture 1: Caring for Children, pp. 6-19.  
May add or replace with reading on how attachment plays out in adulthood. |
Section 2 – Social and Peer Support Interventions (February 29 – April 18)
In this section of the course, we turn toward practical applications of social support in prevention, health, and health care.

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

Evaluation:
Peers for Progress: Consensus Evaluation For Research on Self Management and Peer Support in Diabetes: Evaluation Measures, Indicators, Tools/Instruments, and Reference Information. (http://peersforprogress.org/take-action/evaluate-peer-support) Read and come to class prepared to describe what you think is most interesting about an evaluation of a peer support program of your choice. You may choose from those listed below or identify a paper on your own. If the latter, please send an abstract of that paper to edfisher@unc.edu by 5 pm Saturday, 2/27.

Diabetes:


Mental Health:


Asthma, Maternal & Child Health, HIV/AIDS:


international adaptation of peer support for diabetes management. *Family Practice, 27* Suppl 1, i6-16.


**Workshop on Developing a Peer Support Program**


3/14 Spring Break

3/21 Lessons Learned, Failure Factors, Success Factors, and Key Contributions of Peer Support to Improved Health Care


Fisher et al., Systematic Review of the Effects of Peer Support Interventions for Complex Health Behaviors (in preparation) *Section on Unsuccessful Studies*.

3/28 Primary Care, the Patient-Centered Medical Home, and Peer Support

Guest Presenter (9:05-10:20): Timothy Daaleman, D.O., M.P.H., Professor and Vice Chair of the Department of Family Medicine at UNC School of Medicine

Readings:


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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tr>
<td>4/11</td>
<td>Network Approaches</td>
<td>Guest Presenter (9-10:15): Valarie Clark Worthy, Sisters’ Network</td>
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<td>Visit the Sisters Network website (<a href="http://www.sistersnetworkinc.org">http://www.sistersnetworkinc.org</a>) and website of Sisters Network Triangle (<a href="http://www.sisterstriangle.org/">http://www.sisterstriangle.org/</a>) –</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/18</td>
<td>Open for topics identified by seminar members</td>
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<td>4/25</td>
<td>Retrospect and Student Presentations</td>
<td><strong>Class Presentations, 4/25:</strong> Groups will circulate ahead of time* and bring copies of their product for all class members to class on April 25. 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.</td>
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<td>* Send current draft of product to <a href="mailto:edfisher@unc.edu">edfisher@unc.edu</a> by end of day, Thursday, 4/21. This of course does <strong>not preclude</strong> further work over the following several days.</td>
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