Building Academic Tenacity in Students for Improved Wellbeing, Deeper Learning and Increased Success

PSYC 217- TA Training for Student Wellbeing

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Ben is a Lecturer and Indigenous Initiatives Coordinator in the Dept. of Psychology, teaching a variety of courses encompassing research methods, social psychology, and cultural psychology. He is a self-described "teaching, hockey, language, culture, food, and gaming enthusiast". Student wellbeing, both inside and outside the classroom, is a central focus of Ben's teaching practice and scholarly research. Along with his colleagues, Ben is continuously exploring innovative, evidence-based ways to support undergraduate student learning wellbeing.
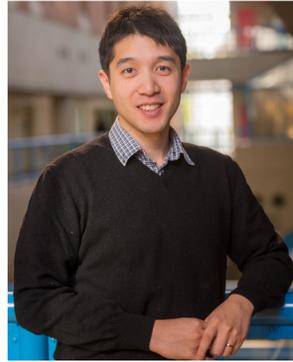
In the literature

- Graduate student teaching assistants (TAs) play an essential role in undergraduate teaching in higher education in both Canada and the US.

- There is a growing body of literature that has explored the relationship between sense of self efficacy as a teacher and student achievement (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000; Meadows, Olsen, Dimitrov, Dawson, 2015).

- Training programs for TA's positively impact their teaching practice, increasing their use of effective and student-centered teaching practices (Boman, 2013; Chadha, 2015; LeGros & Faez, 2012).
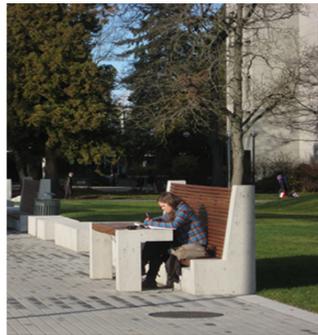
Our research question

This study explored the effectiveness of a series of TA Training workshops to foster and facilitate TA's abilities to create a safe classroom environment that supports student learning and well-being.

This study was guided by the following research question: **Does TA training in effective study skills, wellbeing, and pedagogy support TAs' perception of their ability to support student learning and self-regulation? Through this training, is students' development of academic tenacity facilitated?**

Project design
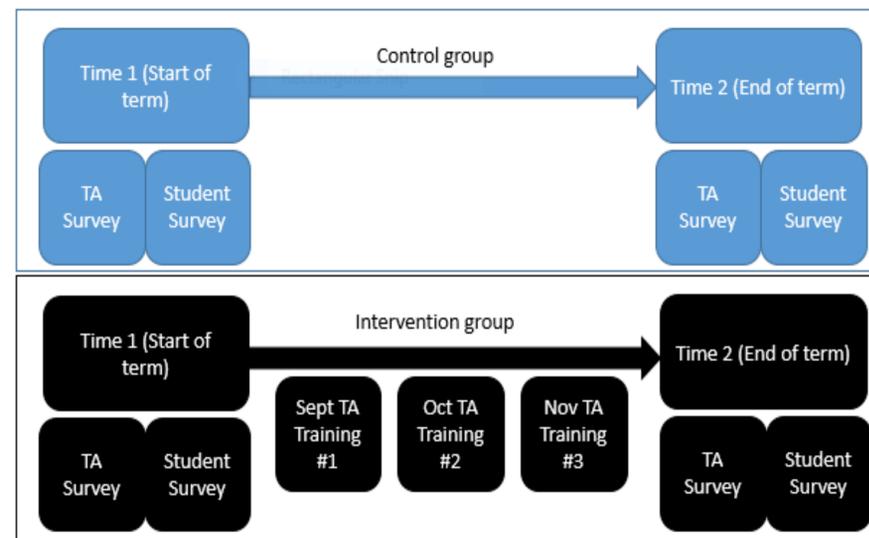
Educational strategy

The topics of the training sessions included:
- Fostering Growth Mindsets in Students
- Having Supportive Conversations with Students
- Effective Learning Strategies & Study Skills

Evaluation

Two sets of surveys were administered, one for undergraduate students and the other for TA's. Surveys included items from:

- Undergraduate Experience Survey (UBC, 2018)
- Achievement Goal Questionnaire (Elliot & Murayama, 2008)
- Implicit Theories of Intelligence/Self-Theory (De Castella, & Byrne, 2015).
- Additionally, interviews were conducted in July of 2018 with TA participants regarding their experience.

Preliminary findings

This study provided important insight around the sense of social belonging and self-efficacy that undergraduate students reported experiencing in connection with their interactions and relationship with their TA's.

Having a TA in different experimental groups did not have a significant impact on any of the measures of interest to this study. However, TA help was positively and strongly correlated with managing academic success ($r = .46$, $p < .05$) and also with students' willingness to seek assistance for the course ($r = .51$, $p < .05$).

Next steps

- Strengthen learning opportunities for TAs: Develop resources for departments to use in TA training
- Develop resources to help TAs integrate self-care and wellness into their overall teaching practice.

References

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