

From Problem to Promise:  
An Examination of the Effects of Peer Group Coaching on the Wellbeing of  
Undergraduate Students

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## **Abstract**

College student mental health has historically been framed as a “crisis” in need of a solution. Currently, college counseling centers report an inability to meet the demands of students. This study invites a shift in thinking about college student mental health to a focus on student wellbeing. This focus is not meant to replace attention to severe mental health needs of students, but is instead intended to augment the work being done by student affairs staff. Given college students’ increasing mental health needs, higher education professionals are obligated to explore additional means of supporting students. The practice of peer coaching has been demonstrated as beneficial to participants in spheres outside of higher education. This mixed methods study sought to examine the experiences of 30 undergraduate students enrolled in a semester-long peer group coaching program. Students who participated in peer group coaching (n = 30) showed significant increases in multiple dimensions of wellbeing as measured by the Ryff (1989) Scales of Psychological Wellbeing and the Social Provisions Scale (Cutrona & Russell, 1987), while a comparison group (n = 34) increased in only one dimension. Analysis of qualitative interview data provided description of the experience of peer group coaching in students’ own words, and a third analysis involving both the quantitative and qualitative data provided support for and illumination of the quantitative changes. Overall, the results of this study support the creation of peer coaching groups as one means of addressing the needs of today’s undergraduate students.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

In 2004, Kadison and DiGeronimo asserted that institutions of higher education faced a *campus mental health crisis*, with students requiring greater numbers of and increased options for mental health services. Today, more than a decade later, college student mental health needs continue to warrant the attention of college administrators and staff (Henriques, 2014; Spano, 2011; Taub & Thompson, 2011). The persistence of mental health as a critical issue for college students invites scholarship on the subject, as well as a critical examination of the manner in which the issue is addressed within higher education.

Beyond mere attention, student mental health needs also consume considerable energy, as well as monetary resources, of higher education staff and administrators. The question of responsibility for student mental health continues to be debated in the field (Spano, 2011; Varlotta & Oliaro, 2011). College mental health professionals spend the majority of their time assisting students with the more common concerns of feeling overwhelmed, sad, stressed, lonely, and/or anxious rather than more severe psychological problems (Gallagher, 2012; Reynolds, 2013). While many students struggle with these more moderate mental health issues, the prevalence of severe mental health needs in college students is also on the rise (American College Health Association, 2014; Kitzrow, 2003; Watkins, Hunt, & Eisenberg, 2011). A number of instances, such as the Virginia Tech massacre and the shooting of United States Representative Gabrielle Giffords, have invited criticism of higher education's handling of students with severe mental health issues (Davies, 2008; Sulzberger & Gabriel, 2011). Many college counseling departments

report being understaffed given student demands (Watkins et al., 2011). Owen, Tao, and Rodolfa (2006) argue, “student mental health is not the sole responsibility of those with titles such as counselor, psychologist, or advisor” (p. 19). Accordingly, higher education institutions might consider a moving toward a philosophy that student mental health is the responsibility of everyone involved in students’ lives, not just counseling center staff (Kitzrow, 2003). Given the significant range of student struggles, from feelings of loneliness and being overwhelmed to having thoughts of suicide and homicide, higher education institutions must develop a corresponding and appropriate range of services for students.

A current shift in thinking within higher education (Howard, 2014; Marklein, 2014), as well as scholarly literature, focuses on the concept of *wellbeing* for students as well as faculty and staff. Grounded in the conceptual thinking of positive psychology, the concept of wellbeing is defined in a variety of ways at different institutions of higher education. A few examples of these definitions include: “optimal living” (Gustavus Adolphus College, 2015), “a state of balance in mind, body and spirit” (University of Minnesota, 2014), and a general sense of “thriving” while in college (University of Colorado, 2013).

For the purposes of this particular research, the term wellbeing refers to “optimal psychological functioning and experience” (Ryan & Deci, 2001, p. 142). This attention to individual wellbeing within higher education can be considered one possible means of addressing some of the moderate mental health needs of students. Literature on college student wellbeing also contributes to scholarly conversations relating to what students

gain from a college experience aside from the typical outcomes of employability and income (Rivard, 2014).

One application of positive psychology takes the form of coaching. The type of coaching referred to here is distinct from athletic coaching, and is explained in detail in Chapter Two. For the purposes of this research, coaching is defined as, “the art of creating an environment, through conversation and a way of being, that facilitates the process by which a person can move toward desired goals in a fulfilling manner” (Gallway, 2000, p. 177). The practice of coaching has been well documented as beneficial in corporate environments (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001) and in the healthcare sphere (Palmer, Tubbs, & Whybrow, 2003). Coaching has been shown to decrease stress within the workplace (Grant, Green, & Rynsaardt, 2010) and to increase the likelihood of goal attainment (Grant, 2008; Grant, 2012; Grant, Green, & Rynsaardt, 2010). Coaching has also been shown to increase courage and motivation in adults experiencing professional transitions (Curtis & Kelly, 2013), and to reduce anxiety in individuals receiving professional training (Grant, 2008). The empirically documented benefits of coaching outside of higher education lend support to the possibility of coaching as a promising intervention for undergraduate students.

### **Problem Statement**

The most prevalent mental health issues reported by college students, such as loneliness and feelings of being overwhelmed, fall on the more moderate side of the mental health spectrum and could possibly be addressed via expanded services and programs in order to alleviate some pressure on higher education staff and administrators.

A shift in practical and scholarly thinking toward college student wellbeing is timely, given the increase in attention to wellbeing within higher education.

An examination of peer coaching programs for students is particularly appropriate for the current generation of college students. As Lowery (2004) argues, today's college students need programs that help them learn to manage the pressure they feel as a result of the high expectations they place on themselves. Newton (2000) recommends that institutions explore programs that help students develop skills in such areas as financial issues, time management, stress management, and relationships. The development of a peer coaching program with developmental outcomes related to a multi-dimensional model of wellbeing may benefit students in these aforementioned areas.

Given the increased amount and range of student mental health concerns on college campuses and the effectiveness of coaching demonstrated above, research on the effectiveness of peer group coaching for college students is warranted. A sequential, explanatory, mixed method study that combines both quantitative and qualitative methods provides a much-needed voice to this dialogue. Quantitative data can be used to demonstrate the effects of a peer group coaching on students' wellbeing as measured by a validated instrument. A qualitative method, such as semi-structured interviews, provides explanatory data in the students' own words, which is a rich and valuable indicator of a program's success in higher education.

### **Purpose of the Study**

In this study, a focus on student wellbeing is proposed as one possible means of reframing the issue of college student mental health, and the implementation of a peer



group coaching program is introduced as an intervention with potential for improving student wellbeing. The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of participation in a peer group coaching program with a focus on student wellbeing. This study combines quantitative and qualitative data to provide understanding of this phenomenon in order to contribute to multiple areas of scholarship, including within coaching and higher education literature.

### **Significance of the Study**

A study that examines the effects of peer group coaching on undergraduate student wellbeing is timely and promising for several reasons. First, the issue of college student mental health has historically and continually placed strain on students, as well as staff and faculty. Institutions of higher education should explore means of demonstrating a commitment to serving students' needs in a manner that does not place additional pressure on counseling center staff.

Second, the practice of coaching has been demonstrated as beneficial in other spheres, as well as higher education in other countries (Grant, 2001), but has not been empirically examined in American higher education. The benefits of coaching discussed in Chapter Two demonstrate that coaching programs have potential and promise as a means for supporting students by leveraging the inherent role of peer support in college and alleviating pressure on counseling and other student affairs staff.

Finally, the use of mixed methods in this study provides both quantitative and qualitative data to empirically examine the effects of a peer group coaching intervention on the wellbeing of students. Both types of data can be considered useful in evaluating

the effectiveness of a program, and the data gained here will contribute to scholarship in the areas of coaching as well as higher education.

### **Research Questions**

This research attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What effect, if any, does participation in a peer coaching group program have on the wellbeing of students as measured by quantitative measures of wellbeing?
2. How do students describe their experience in the peer group coaching program, and how, if at all, do they consider the program to be beneficial to their own wellbeing?

The first question is addressed in the first, quantitative phase of this study, and seeks to understand the effects of participation in a peer coaching program on student wellbeing via the use of validated quantitative measures of wellbeing.

The second question is addressed in the second, qualitative phase of this study. This question is addressed in the students' own words via data gained through individual interviews and allows for their perception of the experience to be included in this study.

A third emergent research question also informs the scope of this research. This question relates to the simultaneous consideration of both the quantitative and qualitative data collected in this study. Specifically, this question invites examination of the qualitative data to provide explanation for areas of significant quantitative change in the wellbeing of study participants, and is addressed in a second, independent qualitative analysis of the data collected in individual interviews.

## **Methodology Overview**

An explanatory sequential mixed methods design is used in this study, which involves collecting quantitative data first and then explaining the quantitative results with in-depth qualitative data. In the first, quantitative phase of the study, participants completed surveys that included two measures of wellbeing prior to and after completion of an eight-week peer group coaching intervention. These quantitative data were then analyzed to determine statistically significant change in wellbeing as measured by the two instruments. The results of this analysis were compared to those of a comparison group who did not participate in the intervention. The second, qualitative phase was conducted as a follow-up to help explain the quantitative results. This explanatory qualitative phase involved semi-structured individual interviews with study participants. The qualitative data was first analyzed for themes across interviews, and then was independently analyzed using the quantitative results as a guideline for coding.

## **Organization**

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter One has introduced the general problem and issues under investigation and the approach proposed for this study. Chapter Two reviews the literature that lays the empirical and theoretical foundation for this study, including expanded discussion on the concepts of coaching and wellbeing. Chapter Three details the methodological approach used in this study, providing discussion of overall design, samples, instruments, the research site, and analytical techniques. Chapter Four presents the results of the analyses discussed in Chapter Three.

Chapter Five discusses these analyses, provides implications of this research for higher education and student affairs practitioners, and suggests future research possibilities.

## Chapter Two: Review of Relevant Literature

To fully understand the real life issues and scholarly discussions surrounding student mental health, a number of perspectives must be considered. Accordingly, this literature review seeks to examine the historical and current scholarship around student mental health and potential means for addressing moderate mental health issues.

This chapter begins with an examination of student mental health from an historical deficit perspective, which focuses on the pathology of college student mental health and the resulting strain on college administrators. Then, a shift in thinking about students from what is *wrong* with them to what is *right* with their lives (Shushok & Hulme, 2006), founded in positive psychology, is proposed as an alternative means of viewing student mental health today. Finally, a specific application of positive psychology in the form of peer group coaching is presented as one possible intervention that shows promise for improving the lives of students.

An examination of scholarly work on college student mental health includes a number of perspectives, each of which takes a distinct approach to discussing the issue. However, each of these viewpoints plays a vital role in gaining a comprehensive view of college student life today. The first section of this literature review examines the issue of student mental health from a *deficit standpoint*, conceptualizing the issue as a “crisis” in need of a solution. This section is divided into two parts: the first explores the realities of college student mental health and the increased pressure on college mental health professionals to meet students’ expanding needs; the second considers contributing factors to the current state of college student mental health. The second perspective

considered here, the *wellbeing standpoint*, calls for a shift in thinking from student mental health as a problem to a more positive focus on student wellbeing. The final perspective, the *active engagement standpoint*, builds upon the previous sections and examines literature around the practice of coaching as programmatic element of an institutional focus on wellbeing. As a result of the literature included here, the creation of peer coaching groups is proposed as an intervention that may provide college students with support for moderate mental health needs while alleviating some of the pressure on college mental health professionals.

### **College Student Mental Health: A Deficit/Pathology Standpoint**

A review of scholarship on college student mental health reveals a frequent characterization of the issue as a significant problem on many (if not all) campuses. This view is based on statistical data provided by students themselves as well as from college administrators and staff. Today, students enter college with more prevalent and more complex mental health needs than ever before, and counseling center staff, as well as others on campus, are expected to respond to and address these needs (Spano, 2011). Literature in this section conceptualizes student mental health as a problem in need of fixing and focuses on the strain that student mental health places not only on the students themselves, but also on counseling center staff as well as other student affairs staff. Authors included here emphasize the pathology of student mental health, characterizing the issue as problematic and somewhat daunting. The following section first contains statistical data pertaining to student mental health needs and the strain on college

administrators, then turns to an examination of possible contributing factors to the current state of college student mental health.

**College student mental health by the numbers.** According to the results of a 2014 study of college students by the American College Health Association, the most frequently occurring mental health needs for students are less severe than depression, self-harm, or suicidal ideation. Over half of college students reported feeling overwhelmed, very sad, lonely, and anxious. In fact, 86.4 percent of college student respondents reported feeling overwhelmed by all they had to do (up from 86.1 percent in 2012), 62 percent felt very sad (up from 61 percent in 2012), 59.2 percent felt very lonely (up from 57.3 percent in 2012), and 54 percent felt overwhelming anxiety (up from 50.7 percent in 2012) (American College Health Association, 2012; 2014). On the more severe end of the spectrum of mental health needs, 46.4 percent felt that things were hopeless, 32.6 percent felt so depressed that it was difficult to function, and 8.1 percent reported they had seriously considered suicide (American College Health Association, 2012). Notably, these numbers have continued to increase over the past five years (American College Health Association, 2014). As the above statistics show, student needs vary in scope from requiring intense psychological or psychiatric intervention to perhaps just needing to find some intentional connection with peers.

Many college students seek help on campus for their varying mental health needs. As college student mental health needs change, higher education staff and administrators face corresponding pressures as they attempt to respond to the shifting needs of students. Watkins et al. (2011) conducted qualitative interviews with ten campus mental health

administrators at different institutions to examine the changes in demand and the role of student mental health services; their semi-structured interviews resulted in a number of emergent themes. Participants reported increased demand for services overall as well as changing needs related to the specific characteristics of the current generation of “millennial” students (Howe & Strauss, 2007). According to participants, today’s college students have a higher level of anxiety, perfectionism, and competitive drive than in the past, which has led to increased demand for mental health services (Watkins et al., 2011). Participants also noted a need for a shift toward offering more outreach services to students. One participant stated, “We’re becoming too much of a little island of mental health and not serving some of the other ways we could serve this campus” (Watkins et al., 2011, p. 11). Counseling center staff reported feeling overwhelmed with the number of students needing help and articulated a need for increased staff as well as physical space to accommodate increased student demand (Watkins et al., 2011). According to Grasgreen (2014), on average, counseling center directors report having one staff member for every 1,772 students on campus during the academic year, an increase in students per staff from one for every 1,673 in 2013. Given the realities identified by counseling center professionals, higher education institutions have an obligation to explore additional means of supporting students’ mental health needs.

Counseling centers are not the only places students turn to for help. In a recent study of student affairs practitioners outside of counseling centers, Reynolds (2013) sought to increase understanding of the most frequent and challenging concerns facing today’s college students. As Watkins et al. (2011) demonstrated, many students utilize



counseling services on campus, but as Reynold's (2013) study demonstrates, many student affairs practitioners outside of counseling centers provide support to students who do not feel comfortable utilizing counseling services or do not feel their struggles warrant counseling. Using the Delphi method (Murray & Hammons, 1995), Reynolds (2013) surveyed 159 entry- and mid-level student affairs practitioners at unspecified institutions about their perceptions of student concerns. Participants reported that they most frequently encountered student concerns of stress management, time management, anxiety, and transitioning to college (Reynolds, 2013). These results align with the American College Health Association statistics discussed above, in that students most often seek help for relatively moderate mental health struggles. Given the frequency with which student affairs practitioners without training as counselors or therapists encounter students struggling with stress and anxiety, the exploration of additional means of support for students to address these more moderate needs is warranted and timely.

The literature discussed in this section argues for the critical nature of student mental health needs on campus based on relevant statistics as well as qualitative data from college administrators who work closely with students. Scholars included here focus on the challenges presented by student mental health. Mental health is viewed as a significant problem for both students and staff; however, the presentation of possible solutions to this problem is not of primary concern to these authors. The set of scholars in the second part of this section attempts to put forth possible contributing factors to the current state of college student mental health and present suggested responses related to these factors.

**Contributing factors to student mental health.** As discussed above, the reality of changing student mental health needs provides support for the exploration of innovative programs for students. An additional vital perspective on this discussion is research that attempts to examine potential correlates of student mental health and other contributing factors to the current state of college student mental health.

While the research discussed above is relatively recent, the issue of college student mental health is not new to scholars of higher education. Nearly a decade ago, Kadison and DiGeronimo (2004) used quantitative data from the 2002 American College Health Association, as well as qualitative data from their time working in student health, and offered their perspective on the causes of the “campus mental health crisis” and possible responses in their book, *The College of the Overwhelmed*. Kadison and DiGeronimo (2004) discussed the effects of pressure and competition relating to academics, extracurricular activities, and parental influence on college student mental health. The authors asserted that college students face pressure from themselves and others to perform to a high standard, and this pressure leads to feelings of inadequacy and of being overwhelmed. Additionally, given the price of college, financial stresses influence students’ mental health (Kadison & DiGeronimo, 2004). Finally, Kadison and DiGeronimo cited the “social fears” as a result of the 9/11 attacks as an additional contributing factor to the changing state of college student mental health. The authors’ explicit framing of college student mental health as a “crisis” in need of a solution is a clear indication of a deficit approach to the issue.

More recent research has also attempted to provide some explanation for the changes in student mental health needs. Some scholars attribute these changes to the shared characteristics commonly assigned to today's college students. Howe and Strauss' 2007 book *Millennials Go to College* outlined perspective on the development of today's college students and provided suggestions for higher education faculty, staff and administrators working to support these students. According to Howe and Strauss (2007), the "millennial" generation of students currently enrolled in college consistently present seven core traits: special, sheltered, confident, team-oriented, conventional, pressured, and achieving. In other words, the college students of today are pressured, high achieving, and rule-followers. This combination of traits leads to frequent periods of "burnout" and an inability to strike balance between work and leisure time (Howe & Strauss, 2007). As the literature around college student mental health discussed in the first part of this section suggests, the majority of the current generation of college students report some sort of mental struggle. Howe and Strauss (2007) attribute this prevalence of mental health needs to students' collective identity as millennials. The authors assert that intentional and purposeful extra-curricular activities may assist students in finding a more healthy balance (Howe & Strauss, 2007).

Other scholars have approached college student mental health in a more specific manner, investigating the relationship between mental health and particular elements of student life. Hefner and Eisenberg (2009) sought to examine the relationship between social support and mental health among college students, and to evaluate which types and sources of social support are most strongly associated with mental health. Data were

collected via a web-based survey of 1,378 students at a large Midwestern public university. Social support was measured through questions about frequency of contact with friends and family members, as well as perceptions of feeling supported by others. Mental health was measured using scales of depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, non-suicidal self-injury, and eating disorders. The pathological/negative nature of these instruments illustrates the authors' focus on college student mental health as a problem. The results of this study demonstrated a relationship between social support and student mental health. Using a bivariate analysis, the researchers found that social support was negatively associated with measures of mental health, and this relationship was strongest for depression (31 percent among those with low social support vs. 5 percent among those with high social support). Respondents with low social support also had a significantly higher probability of anxiety (12 percent) than those with medium or high social support (Hefner & Eisenberg, 2009). Additionally, higher perceived social support was found to be strongly associated with lower likelihood of depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, and eating disorders (Hefner & Eisenberg, 2009). The authors assert, "The strong associations between functional support and mental health suggest that measures of social support quality could serve as important indicators of wellbeing and risk in student populations" (Hefner & Eisenberg, 2009, p. 497). In their discussion of implications for practice, the authors suggest interventions that strengthen supportiveness within peer networks (Hefner & Eisenberg, 2009). The results of this study support the creation of programs that bring students together and provide a structure for social support as a means for addressing college students' mental health needs.

Similar to scholars discussed in the first part of this section, scholars included here examine the issue of college student mental health as a problem in need of a solution and focus on the pathology of student mental health. However, scholars in this part also offer possible solutions based on their findings. While a number of explanations and possible solutions are presented, each is rather singular in focus and unlikely to bring about measureable change in the lives of students. The information gained from such scholarship should be used collectively to inform the development of effective programs to meet student mental health needs.

### **A Shift in Thinking: Toward a Positive View of Student Development**

The literature discussed above views college student mental health from a deficit standpoint, with a focus on pathology as well as the challenges placed on college support staff and administrators as a result of student mental health. All of the scholars discussed above contribute valuable knowledge to an examination of the current state of college student mental health. However, an alternative framework for discussing student mental health is also emerging, rooted in positive psychology and placing emphasis on the wellbeing of college students. A shift of this sort is not intended to imply a dismissal of the realities of mental illness among college students; rather, it acknowledges the varied realities of college student mental health and invites a complementary strategy (Keys, 2007) of focusing on the positive life experiences students have in college.

The literature in the following section outlines a shift in thinking within psychology from the pathology of mental health to the positive elements in individuals' lives. The foundations of positive psychology are discussed, as well as the theoretical

foundations of the concept of wellbeing. Then, a number of applications of positive psychology within higher education are discussed.

**Positive psychology.** In some ways a response to the historical focus on pathology and illness within psychology, positive psychology invites an emphasis on the *good*—“what makes life worth living” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 13). Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) argue, “This almost exclusive attention to pathology neglects the fulfilled individual and the thriving community. The aim of positive psychology is to begin to catalyze a change in the focus of psychology from preoccupation only with repairing the worst things in life to also building positive qualities” (p. 5). The field of positive psychology encourages exploration of concepts such as happiness (Buss, 2000), optimism (Peterson, 2000), creativity (Simonton, 2000), and giftedness (Winner, 2000). Research findings rooted in positive psychology are intended to supplement, but not replace, work on mental illness and disorder (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005).

***Positive psychology in higher education.*** A number of scholars have examined the application of positive psychology within higher education. Mather (2010) proposed positive psychology as a “framework of possibility” for the work of student affairs professionals. Identifying the “tradition of practice that emphasizes opportunity and possibility” (p. 158) within student affairs, Mather (2010) drew connections between the development and learning foundation of student affairs and positive psychology. Drawing from research on the physiology of wellbeing and the possibility of modifying wellbeing through focusing on positivity (Begley, 2007), Mather encouraged student affairs

practitioners to accentuate positive experiences with students. Mather (2010) posited that a student affairs practice informed by the underpinnings of positive psychology would strive to nurture positive emotions among students, assist students in healthy goal commitment, and generate wellbeing among students through the practices of gratitude and service.

In 2005, Kuh, Kinzie, Schuch, and Whitt published the results of their Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) study. The researchers were concerned with student engagement as measured by the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Specifically, they wanted to determine what characteristics institutions with particularly engaged students and relatively high graduation rates had in common. In other words, they asked, “What accounts for these achievements? And what can other colleges and universities learn from them to enhance their own effectiveness?” (Kuh et al., 2005, p. 3). While the authors do not explicitly use the language of positive psychology, their research focus exemplifies a standpoint rooted in positive psychology, in that the researchers sought to uncover what contributes to student success, as opposed to a focus on explaining student attrition. Using a regression analysis on NSSE data, Kuh and associates (2005) identified 20 schools that met their criteria for higher-than-predicted student engagement and graduation. The researchers conducted multiple-day visits to each of the campuses for observation, document review, and interviews with students, staff, and faculty. The researchers found six shared features common to these institutions: aligned espoused and enacted missions, a steadfast focus on student learning, environments created to foster educational enrichment among students, easily identifiable

pathways to student success, an ethos of “positive restlessness,” and campus-wide shared responsibility for student success (Kuh et al., 2005). A culture of positive restlessness, for these researchers, entails “an acculturated wariness that what and how we are doing can well be improved, if we *stay focused* on the quality of our work and its impact on students” (Kuh et al., 2005, p. 146, emphasis in original). The results of this study not only provide an example of a positive psychology standpoint in higher education scholarship, but may also serve to inform the allocation of funding and creation of programs to best serve students.

***Wellbeing.*** The shift in focus from pathology to positivity has attracted attention to the concept of wellbeing. Generally speaking, and for the purposes of this literature review, wellbeing refers to “optimal psychological functioning and experience” (Ryan & Deci, 2001, p. 142). This concept is not only relevant to commonplace interpersonal inquiries (e.g., asking someone, “How are you?”), but is also the focus of significant scientific scrutiny. Scholarly attention to the concept of wellbeing has determined it to be controversial and complex (Ryan & Deci, 2001). These scholarly dialogues among researchers have crystallized a number of themes within the field of wellbeing, namely the formation of two relatively distinct yet overlapping perspectives on wellbeing. The first takes a *hedonic* view of wellbeing, and reflects the view that wellbeing consists solely of pleasure or happiness (Kahneman, Diener, & Schwartz, 1999). The second, or *eudaimonic* view, contends that wellbeing lies instead in the actualization of human potentials (Waterman, 1993). Both views have deep historical roots, and both retain numerous empirical advocates today.



*The hedonic approach.* The equating of hedonic pleasure to wellbeing dates back to ancient Greece. In the fourth century B.C., the Greek philosopher Aristippus taught that the goal of life should be to experience the maximum amount of pleasure, and that one's happiness is the sum of one's hedonic moments (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Hedonic psychology has been defined as the study of "what makes experiences and life pleasant and unpleasant" (Kahneman et al., 1999, p. ix). Most current hedonic research uses assessment of subjective wellbeing (SWB) (Diener & Lucas, 1999). SWB generally consists of three components: satisfaction with life, the presence of a positive mood, and the absence of a negative mood. The latter two components are often summarized together as happiness (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

In an example of research focused on the hedonic view of wellbeing, Seligman, Steen, Park, and Peterson (2005) sought to examine whether or not particular positive interventions could alter happiness in the short- and long-term. A sample of 411 visitors to a website associated with Seligman's (2002) book *Authentic Happiness* were randomly assigned to complete an exercise, either one of five "happiness" exercises or a control exercise of journaling about early memories. The happiness exercises included a "gratitude visit" (delivering a letter of gratitude to someone), writing down three things that went well each day, writing about a time when they were "at their best" and reflecting on the strengths exhibited in the story, a challenge to use "signature strengths" (as identified in an inventory offered on the website), and finally, an invitation to use their "signature strengths" in a new way each day of the week (Seligman et al., 2005, p. 416). Participants completed the Steen Happiness Index (SHI) and the Center for

Epidemiological Studies—Depression Scale (CES-D) prior to completing the exercise, immediately after doing the exercise for one week (immediate posttest), one week after the posttest, three months after the posttest, and six months after the posttest. ANOVAs were used to compare participants' scores across these time points. Participants in all conditions (including placebo) were happier and less depressed at the immediate posttest. At all following testing periods, however, placebo participants were no different than they had been at the baseline. The other interventions varied in effect on happiness and depression. Participants in the “three good things” and the “using signature strengths in a new way” groups were significantly happier and less depressed than their baseline levels at the three-month and six-month follow-ups (Seligman et al., 2005). Participants who reported continuing the exercises on their own after the first week saw the most-pronounced effects on happiness and depression. The results of this study suggest that happiness and depression can be altered through intentional mental focus on positive elements in one's life.

*The eudaimonic approach.* Founded in the original thinking of Aristotle—who considered hedonic happiness to be a vulgar ideal which made humans slaves to their desires—this view calls upon individuals to recognize and live in accordance with their *daimon*, or true self (Waterman, 1993). Theories within this approach maintain that not all desired outcomes lead to wellbeing when achieved. In other words, some outcomes that may produce pleasure may not, in fact, promote overall wellness (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Waterman (1993) argued that individuals experience eudaimonia when they are holistically engaged and their life activities are congruent with deeply held values. The

eudaimonic approach to wellbeing attends to feelings of fulfillment and purpose, rather than a singular focus on happiness or pleasure.

Seligman's views have evolved from the hedonic (Seligman, 2002; Seligman et al., 2005) to the eudaimonic (Seligman, 2011). In his 2011 book, *Flourish*, Seligman asserted wellbeing as the primary topic of positive psychology, rather than happiness, as he had originally argued. Embracing the eudaimonic approach, Seligman (2011) argued that wellbeing is more than happiness alone and in fact includes positive emotion, engagement, meaning, accomplishment, and positive relationships. Each of these elements contributes to one's wellbeing, and some aspects of each are most effectively measured subjectively by self-report, while some lend themselves to objective measurement (Seligman, 2011).

Ryff's (1989) model of psychological wellbeing (PWB) warrants consideration in a discussion of eudaimonic wellbeing. The foundational thinking behind PWB adopts the eudaimonic view and assumes that functionality is comprised of much more than one's level of happiness. The theoretical grounding of PWB includes Erikson's (1959) psychosocial stage model, Maslow's (1968) conception of self-actualization, and Jung's (1993) formulation of individuation. In developing the Ryff Scales of Psychological Wellbeing instrument, Ryff intended to measure six theoretically-grounded, core dimensions of psychological wellbeing: mastery of one's environment, autonomous decision making, maintaining positive relations with others, thinking positively about oneself, having a sense of purpose in life, and seeking opportunities for personal growth (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Instrument development included the creation of

definitions for the poles of each dimension. For example, a high scorer on the dimension of self-acceptance "possesses a positive attitude toward the self; acknowledges and accepts multiple aspects of self including good and bad qualities; [and] feels positive about past life," while a low scorer on this same scale "feels dissatisfied with self; is disappointed with what has occurred with past life; is troubled about certain personal qualities; [and] wishes to be different than what he or she is" (Ryff, 1989, p. 1072).

Guided by the established definitions, Ryff (1989) created 80 items for each scale, with 40 associated with each high and low pole. Items had to be self-descriptive and fit within the theoretical definition and to be applicable to both sexes of varying age. Items were eliminated if they were determined to be redundant, ambiguous, lacked fit with their dimension definition, distinctiveness from other dimensions, or the ability to produce variable responses; or did not incorporate all facets of the scale's definition (Ryff, 1989). Thirty-two items for each scale (16 for each pole of the scale's definition) were retained following the aforementioned elimination process. Ryff (1989) then conducted a provisional test of the instrument on 321 men and women. Respondents rated themselves on each item using a six-point scale ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. From the data of the 321 respondents, item-to-scale correlations were obtained, resulting in another round of item elimination. At the final stage, each scale was comprised of 20 items, with approximately 10 corresponding to each pole (Seifert, 2005). The instrument is limited in that it requires participants to self-report. However, in measures of subjective and psychological wellbeing, self-report may be a more accurate method of measurement than ratings by an observer (Baldwin, 2000).

As this literature has shown, the concept of wellbeing has been conceptualized in a variety of ways. Ultimately, perhaps “wellbeing is...best conceived as a multidimensional phenomenon that includes aspects of both the hedonic and eudaimonic conceptions” (Ryan & Deci, 2001, p. 148), and there may be costs to an overstated distinction between the two (Kashdan, Biswas-Diener, & King, 2008). Literature in the following section examines past and present research around college student wellbeing as a means for thinking about college student mental health from a more positive framework, rather than focusing on the “problem” of college student mental health.

***Wellbeing in higher education.*** As early as 1949, The American Council on Education, in its *Student Personnel Point of View*, called upon student affairs practitioners to embrace a broadened concept of education to “include attention to the students’ well rounded development—physically, emotionally, and spiritually, as well as intellectually” (Williamson et al., 1949, p. 109). Additionally, the monograph went further to list “physical and mental health services whose orientation is not only the treatment of illness but also...an educational program of preventative medicine” (Williamson et al., 1949, p. 28). This concept of the “whole student” has been interpreted in numerous ways since that time. While the foundation of student development theory (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010) serves higher education staff and administrators well, institutions must also stay abreast of current conversations around student development and services.

More recently, in 2013, the theme of the national conference of student affairs practitioners for the organization College Student Educators International summoned

participants to explore ways of “Inspiring Communities of Wellbeing,” with sessions focusing on the advancement of student learning and wellness, the cultivation of critical discourse, the integration of intersectional approaches to understanding identity, and the transformation of higher education (College Student Educators International, 2013). Additionally, the recent launch of the National Consortium for Building Healthy Academic Communities by The Ohio State University brought together over 300 participants from over 90 institutions to discuss “a comprehensive and innovative approach to health and wellness” among college students and staff (National Consortium for Building Healthy Academic Communities, 2013).

Varlotta and Oliaro (2011) proposed institution-wide “wellness models” as opposed to the traditional model focusing on the pathology of student mental health. The authors advocated for a “collaborative and proactive approach” (Varlotta & Oliaro, 2011, p. 330) to student wellness that involves all student affairs staff, not just counseling center staff. In their model, counseling and health centers can provide training focused on early detection of low-level mental health challenges as well as positive reinforcement of healthy choices. This training can be offered to other departments on campus, such as housing and residential life, judicial affairs, recreation sports, disability offices, and new faculty orientation. The implementation of such a model not only shifts the campus focus from pathology to wellness, but also creates a sense of shared responsibility for student wellness across a particular campus.

A number of higher education institutions utilize the framework of a “wellness wheel” as conceived by Hettler (1984) to guide student programming and services

(Clarion University, 2013; Texas A&M University, 2013; Vanderbilt University, 2013). Some institutions embrace the term *wellbeing* as opposed to *wellness* in their models. The concept of wellbeing has been argued to be more inclusive than wellness, which is often equated to physical health (Kreitzer, 2014). For example, The Center for Spirituality and Healing at the University of Minnesota (UMN) offers a comprehensive website to its community members, inviting them to “[Take] Charge of Your Health and Wellbeing” (University of Minnesota, 2014). UMN puts forth a model of wellbeing that incorporates health, relationships, security, purpose, community, and environment (University of Minnesota, 2014). Another institution in Minnesota, Gustavus Adolphus College, employs a nine-dimension model of wellbeing within its community, including intellectual wellbeing, relational wellbeing, emotional wellbeing, spiritual wellbeing, physical wellbeing, financial wellbeing, career wellbeing, vocational wellbeing, and environmental wellbeing (Gustavus Adolphus College, 2015).

Despite the current increase in higher education institutions declaring attention to wellbeing, little empirical research explicitly demonstrates the benefits of such a focus (Archer, 1987). Additionally, materials available from these institutions lack theoretical support for their models, which leads to the question of the models’ appropriateness and comprehensiveness. Empirical research on the impact of an institutional focus on student wellbeing is needed.

Clearly, there a move is afoot in higher education toward thinking about student wellbeing in a holistic manner and to embrace the challenge outlined in the original *Student Personnel Point of View* (Williamson, et al., 1949). Wellbeing among college

students should be discussed within the framework of what is known about student development generally. Given the increased amount and range of student mental health concerns on college campuses, attention to student wellbeing is a sensible focus for institutions of higher education.

*Psychological wellbeing of college students.* Given the need for empirical research to examine the impact of an institutional focus on wellbeing, a reasonable measure for wellbeing among college students should be established. A significant amount of research uses measures of psychological wellbeing with college students. The following scholars discuss psychological wellbeing from a variety of perspectives.

Historically, student psychological wellbeing has been conceptualized in different ways. In his foundational work on the influence of institutional environment on the college student experience, Astin (1993) measured student psychological wellbeing using two items appearing on the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey: “felt depressed” and “felt overwhelmed by all I had to do.” Using data collected from 24,847 first year students, Astin (1993) reported that students’ sense of psychological wellbeing declines during college. Astin (1993) offers academic and social stresses as possible explanations for this decline. While these results are interesting and confirm the argument for an examination of intentional support for students, Astin’s means of measurement is lacking. This two-question measurement may have been a reasonable start toward assessing college student wellbeing, but it is strikingly insufficient in its assessment, in that it contains only two items, both of which focus on the negative experiences of students rather than employing a more positive framework. A



more accurate assessment of students' psychological wellbeing requires a more holistic understanding of the college student experience.

While little research examines Ryff's (1989) concept of PWB among college students (Seifert, 2005), the six dimensions of PWB apply to general life changes and closely align with existing college student development theory and established developmental outcomes for students in higher education (Bowman, 2010). For example, the concept of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Kegan, 1994) also includes cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal components. Students who are self-authored have internally formed goals, tend to think independently, have healthy personal relationships, and value others' opinions. Each of these behaviors and perceptions map well onto the PWB dimensions of autonomy, self-acceptance, positive relations with others, and purpose in life (Bowman, 2010). Essentially, "the development of PWB is conducive to living a healthy and happy life at any age" (Bowman, 2010, p. 181), including the time students spend in college.

Bowman (2010) used data from the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education to examine the relationship between student background characteristics and Ryff's (1989) PWB when students enter college. Additionally, the study sought to examine the association between pre-college characteristics, college experiences, and PWB during the first year of college. The Wabash dataset contains responses from 3,081 students from 19 colleges and universities of various types from around the United States (Bowman, 2010). This study focuses on the experiences of underrepresented student populations, such as first-generation students and students of color. Bowman (2010)

found that students from high-income families have greater overall PWB than students from middle-income families when entering college. First-generation students exhibited decreases in overall PWB during the first year of college (Bowman, 2010). Positive interactions with diverse students were associated with gains in most dimensions of PWB (Bowman, 2010). Students who attended large research universities experienced greater gains in self-acceptance, purpose in life, and positive relations with others than students who attend smaller liberal arts colleges (Bowman, 2010). This difference between research and liberal arts institutions may be a function of the considerable social options at larger institutions, which afford students greater opportunity to foster friendships, reflect on their own development, and ascertain their vocational interests (Bowman, 2010). The results of this study align with literature about the experiences of first-generation students and students from lower economic backgrounds (Terenzini, et al., 1994; Zwerling & London, 1992). This alignment between Bowman's (2010) findings and other student development research demonstrates the applicability of PWB as a measure of college student wellbeing.

This literature included in this section has posited an institutional focus on student wellbeing to shift attention away from the pathology of student mental health and instead toward the positive elements of students' lives. Scholars included this section would argue that instead of focusing on mental health as a problem in need of fixing, institutions (and their students) would benefit from the creation of a campus community that intentionally works to foster wellbeing among its members. An institutional commitment to wellbeing may be applied in number of different forms, including campus-wide use of

a program like *StrengthsQuest* (Shushok & Hulme, 2006), the application of appreciative inquiry into academic advising (Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008), or the implementation of a peer coaching program focused on wellbeing for students (Sommers, 2013) to name a few examples. The next section of literature builds upon this concept by examining the benefits of coaching as a potential means of fostering wellbeing in students.

### **Active Engagement Standpoint: Coaching as a Promising Practice**

As the literature above has shown, college student mental health can be viewed as a problem that places strain on both students as well as college support staff.

Alternatively, the framework of positive psychology invites a focus on student wellbeing as a promising shift toward reframing student development. An espoused focus on wellbeing by an institution is not sufficient to bring about change for students, however. Campus programs and services must be tied to and actively engage the outcome of promoting wellbeing among students. This section examines the practice of coaching as one possible programmatic element of an institutional focus on wellbeing. A number of studies lend support for the creation of coaching programs for college students in the interest of promoting wellbeing.

**Coaching defined.** Coaching has been defined as “the art of creating an environment, through conversation and a way of being, that facilitates the process by which a person can move toward desired goals in a fulfilling manner” (Gallwey, 2000, p. 177). Positive psychology provides a useful theoretical and empirical background for coaching (Seligman 2007; Kaffman, 2006), which can take on many forms and various functions. Additionally, coaching can be classified as an application of positive

psychology, in that “coaching seeks to optimize personal functioning across multiple domains of life” (Spence & Grant, 2007, p. 187). Within a coaching relationship, individuals are encouraged to build upon their strengths and virtues.

Some of the communication tools used in coaching can also be used in therapy. However, coaching is distinct from therapy in that in coaching, one focuses on goals and solutions, whereas in therapy, the focus may be more problem-centered and solutions may arise from discussion of problems (Ellis, 2006). Additionally, the practice of coaching is not intended to address severe mental health problems (Buckley, 2010), as therapy may be in some cases.

A coach does not offer advice, but rather helps an individual to brainstorm ideas and strategies to reach goals (Swarbrick, Murphy, Zechner, Spagnolo, & Gill, 2011). Fundamentally, coaching entails the belief that answers lie within an individual and that advice-giving distracts from the process of uncovering these answers. Solution-focused coaching emphasizes people’s resilience and personal resources and attempts to empower individuals to use these in the pursuit of purposeful positive change (Grant, 2001; Grant et al., 2012). At its core, this approach assumes that individuals possess the resources to resolve their problems, and that coaching time is best spent identifying a desired solution and pathways to achieve that state (Jackson & McKergow, 2002).

The foundational elements of coaching theory are guided by principles of adult learning (Grant, 2001), as well as Kolb’s (1984) theory of experiential learning (Cox, Bachkirova, & Clutterbuck, 2010), which also inform developmental objectives for students within higher education (Evans et al., 2009). These principles recognize that,

Learners are autonomous, have a foundation of life experiences and knowledge from which they are able to generalize, have a readiness to learn and engage in reflective practice, and the notion that adult learners wish to be treated with respect (Grant, 2001, p. 20).

Again, higher education professionals often invoke similar assumptions about students as they journey through their college experience, which makes the exploration of coaching with college students a reasonably logical endeavor.

The term “coaching” has gained popularity in many spheres, including corporate and healthcare as well as higher education. However, an examination of what is included in true coaching reveals an occasionally imprecise and ill-defined concept that takes many forms (Wolever, et al., 2013). Currently, movement has occurred to provide empirical evidence of the effectiveness of coaching as well as to share best practices as established through empirical studies. The establishment of *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice* by the Association for Coaching in 2008 and the Harvard Institute of Coaching in 2009 (Institute of Coaching at McLean Hospital, 2013) are just two significant steps toward the process of providing a centralized structure to coaching scholarship.

**Coaching models.** To clarify what qualifies as coaching, this literature review includes a discussion of various elements of coaching models. A thorough discussion of coaching includes not only elements of the *process* of coaching, but also the *spirit* of a true and effective coaching relationship.

***The coaching process.*** Models that focus on the *process* of coaching emphasize that effective coaching involves the use of a number of communication tools, such as motivational interviewing (MI) and nonviolent communication (NVC), and appreciative inquiry (AI) (Moore & Tschannen-Moran, 2010). Moore and Tschannen-Moran (2010) provide extensive guidelines for the practice of coaching in their *Coaching Psychology Manual*. Their Wellcoaches® model places primary emphasis on the process of coaching, namely, various communication tools used by coaches, such as motivational interviewing, nonviolent communication, and appreciative inquiry.

***Motivational interviewing.*** The foundational guiding principles of motivational interviewing (MI) inform an effective coaching practice (Moore, Tschannen-Moran, Silvero, & Rhode, 2010). Essentially, “the goal of MI is to encourage change talk and discourage resistance talk” (Moore et al., 2010, p. 64). Originally developed by Miller and Rollnick (2002) within the context of psychological counseling related to behavioral change, MI utilizes four general principles: expressing empathy, developing discrepancy, rolling with resistance, and supporting self-efficacy. The first principle highlights the importance of *empathy* as the respectful understanding of another person’s experience, including his or her feelings, needs, and desires (Moore, et al., 2010). Empathy is distinct from sympathy, in that sympathy involves identifying with the experience of another on an emotional level, whereas empathy involves understanding and respecting another’s experience. The second principle, *develop discrepancy*, encourages the recognition of discrepancy between one’s present behavior and one’s broader goals and values (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). The third principle invites the practice of *rolling with resistance*,

meaning that resistance to change should not be opposed but instead embraced and reframed to create new momentum (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). The final principle highlights the importance of *supporting self-efficacy*, which refers to an individual's belief in her/his ability to perform and succeed with a particular task. When self-efficacy is supported, responsibility for change comes from within and not from an outside source (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). Additionally, MI encourages resistance of the “righting reflex” (Rollnick, Miller, & Butler, 2008), in order to avoid the desire to “fix” a challenging situation for another individual, and instead emphasizes the ability of individuals to find their own solutions.

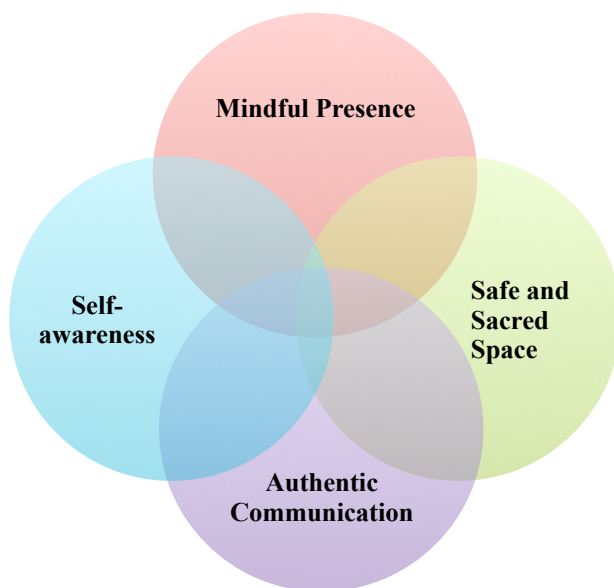
*Nonviolent communication.* The practice of nonviolent communication (NVC) facilitates the development of empathy within a coaching relationship (Moore, et al., 2010). Marshall Rosenberg is credited with coining the term “nonviolent communication” (Rosenberg, 2003, p. 2). NVC focuses on four components of communication: observations, feelings, needs, and requests. The first component distinguishes between observations and evaluations. Within a coaching relationship, one should limit descriptions to what can be *observed* with the five senses (Moore et al., 2010). Additionally, NVC encourages the identification and expression of *feelings* as opposed to thoughts. The third component invites the identification and expression of needs that may be at the root of feelings (Rosenberg, 2003). Finally, NVC values the expression of *requests* founded in empathy and respect as opposed to demands (Rosenberg, 2003).

*Appreciative inquiry.* Developed in the late 1980s by David Cooperrider, appreciative inquiry (AI) is a framework for motivating change in individuals and organizations that focuses on exploring and amplifying strengths (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). The “5-D” cycle of AI can be used within a coaching relationship (Tschannen-Moran, 2010). Individuals may work together to *define* what falls within the scope of the relationship, and what the focus of a particular conversation may be. Then, individuals are encouraged to *discover* promising examples of the outcomes they desire. Once these discoveries are identified, they are utilized to develop a *dream*, which is grounded in an individual’s history as well as expansive toward one’s potential. In the *design* phase of AI, individuals are invited to envision how the dream might manifest in terms of habits, resources, relationships, structures, finances, and stakeholders. Finally, the dream designed by individuals within the AI process becomes a reality within the *destiny* phase (Tschannen-Moran, 2010).

***The spirit of coaching.*** While the elements of coaching included in the Wellcoaches® model clarify what the process of coaching entails, it is not sufficient for individuals to simply use the communication tools of MI, NVC, and AI within a coaching relationship. The individuals involved in coaching must work to create a space that provides what all individuals involved in a coaching relationship need. Two particular models add a vital piece to the practice of coaching: the *spirit* of coaching. The University of Minnesota’s integrative health coaching program utilizes a model that emphasizes the type of space created within an effective coaching dynamic (Lawson, 2013). This model, called “The Four Pillars of Health Coaching” (see Figure 1), posits



four distinct but interconnected pillars as a foundation to guide coaching interactions. The first, *mindful presence*, encourages the practice of “focused, nonjudgmental awareness in the present moment” (Lawson, 2013, p. 7). The second pillar, *authentic communication*, entails the practice of deep listening, curious inquiry, perceptive reflections, and comfort with silence. The third pillar, *self-awareness*, applies to the coach and requires an awareness of one’s own emotional responses within a coaching interaction. This pillar challenges coaches to “walk their talk” in regard to their own personal wellbeing (Lawson, 2013). Pillar four, *safe and sacred space*, emphasizes the need for trust on the part of the person being coached. What feels safe for an individual may change over time, and a coach must have a fluid awareness of safety (Lawson, 2013). The intersection of these pillars results in the “heart” of the coaching dynamic.



*Figure 1.* The Four Pillars of Health Coaching.

The Mayo Clinic School of Health Sciences utilizes an additional model that attends to the process and spirit of coaching in their wellness coach training: the “5 E” model of coaching (see Figure 2) (Mayo School of Health Sciences, 2013). This comprehensive model underscores the role of the coach in supporting others. The first E, *engage*, focuses on the building of trusting relationships between individuals and groups. The coaching process then moves to *explore*, in which a coach may assist another individual in identifying their values and desires. The coach and the individual then work together in the *envision* stage to facilitate a vision for wellness. The coach then invites the individual to *experiment* by employing communication strategies to enhance self-efficacy and to transform values and desires into action. Finally, the coaching relationship *evolves* and the coach supports lasting change in the individual. The Four Pillars model and the “5 E” model provide a useful structure within which to utilize communication tools such as MI, NVC and AI.

As the literature in this section has suggested, effective coaching entails the intentional use of specific communication tools as well as the deliberate creation of a safe, trusting environment for individuals. The intersection of these elements can lead to dynamic coaching relationships that can bring about numerous benefits for all individuals involved.

**Coaching in practice.** The practice of coaching has been well documented as beneficial in corporate environments (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; Gyllensten & Palmer, 2005; McGovern et al., 2001) and in the healthcare sphere (Palmer, Tubbs, & Whybrow, 2003). Coaching has been shown to decrease stress within the workplace



*Figure 2.* The Mayo Clinic 5 E Model of Coaching.

(Grant, Green, & Rynsaardt, 2010) and to increase the likelihood of individual goal attainment (Grant, 2008; Grant, 2012; Grant, Green, & Rynsaardt, 2010). Coaching has also been shown to increase courage and motivation in adults experiencing a professional transition (Curtis & Kelly, 2013) and to reduce anxiety (Grant, 2008). The practice of being coached inherently encourages self-reflection and higher levels of insight (Grant, 2003).

Grant's (2001) doctoral dissertation criticized the absence of a theoretical framework for coaching and proposed a solution-focused/cognitive behavioral framework

(Grant, 2001). In this study, Grant examined the effects of cognitive and behavioral coaching programs for Australian undergraduate students on measures of academic achievement, test anxiety, and self-concept. The intervention entailed a one-day, seven-hour seminar and five two-hour follow-up workshops. Participants in the intervention received training on goal setting and models of change during the seminar, and then participated in group coaching sessions during the follow-up workshops. Grant (2001) compared 12 participants who received the coaching intervention with 12 controls. Compared to controls, participants' GPAs increased significantly ( $F(1,22) = 15.07, p < .01; d = 1.65$ ). Participation in the coaching program significantly decreased test anxiety ( $F(1,22) = 15.07, p < .01; d = 1.65$ ). Following the intervention, participants had higher self-concepts than controls in the domains of scholastic competence ( $F(1,22) = 7.08, p < .01; d = 1.16$ ), global self-worth ( $F(1,22) = 5.062, p < .05; d = 0.96$ ) and intellectual ability ( $F(1,22) = 3.28, p = .08; d = 0.77$ ). Given these results, Grant (2001) argued for a view of coaching as a "collaborative, solution-focused, result-oriented systematic process during which coaches facilitate coachees' self-directed learning, personal growth, and goal attainment" (p. i). The benefits of coaching demonstrated by this study support the creation of coaching programs for students as a means of promoting wellbeing.

***Peer coaching.*** While the unidirectional coaching model where the coach has some authority over the person being coached has been demonstrated as effective (Diedrich, 1996; Kiel, Rimmer, Williams, & Doyle, 1996), a different model has also shown success: that of peers coaching one another (Showers & Joyce, 1996). The practice of peer coaching has been embraced in the executive sphere as well as the education sphere

(Grant, Green, & Rynstaardt, 2010; Showers & Joyce, 1996). In contrast to an executive coaching model where the coach has authority over the coachee, peer coaching involves coaching of individuals on an equal level (Ladyshevsky & Varey, 2005). Peer coaching partnerships must be based on trust and respect (Ladyshevsky, Baker, & Jones, 2001; Zeus & Skiffington, 2000). Because of the absence of a power dynamic in peer coaching, participants may be more open with each other than they would be with a supervisor or other authority figure (Ladyshevsky & Varey, 2005). “[Peer coaching] has unique dynamics that neutralize status imbalances and provide reciprocal metacognitive learning opportunities” (Ladyshevsky & Varey, 2005, p. 172). Given Astin’s (1993) claim that “the students’ peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years” (p. 398), peer coaching may be a logical model for student support programs.

Green, Oades, and Grant (2005) examined the effects of peer coaching on measures of goal-striving, wellbeing, hope, and mental health. Ryff’s (1989) PWB scale was used as one of the measures of wellbeing in this study. Participants were recruited for a 10-week life coaching program. Fifty-six participants (mean age = 42.6) were then randomly assigned to either a coaching intervention group or a waitlist control group. Coaching participants took part in a one-day workshop in which they were trained on the elements of coaching as outlined in the *Coach Yourself* (Green, Oades, & Grant, 2002) group program. Following the training, the intervention group met in pairs each week for 1-hour co-coaching sessions, during which each participant spent 15-20 minutes as coach and 15-20 minutes as coachee. Participants completed pre- and post-intervention assessments.

Of the PWB scales, the intervention group had significant increases on the subscales of personal growth,  $F(1, 48) = 14.03, p = .000$ ; environmental mastery,  $F(1, 48) = 10.84, p = .002$ ; positive relations with others,  $F(1, 48) = 5.96, p = .018$ ; purpose in life,  $F(1, 48) = 14.84, p = .000$ ; and self-acceptance,  $F(1, 48) = 14.54, p = .000$ , while the control group showed no such changes (Green, Oades, & Grant, 2005). The results of this study demonstrate the numerous benefits of a peer coaching program on PWB. While participants in this particular study were not college-age students, the intervention format and resulting benefits provide support for the exploration of similar programs with college students.

An additional study by Grant (2008) further demonstrated the effects of peer coaching on goal attainment, cognitive hardiness, and anxiety, all of which relate to the mental health needs of college students discussed above. Grant (2008) evaluated the effects of coaching on 29 adults pursuing postgraduate degrees in coaching. Participants were both coaches and coachees within the study, meaning each participant coached another participant as well as received coaching from yet another participant. Participants received a three-day intensive training on professional coaching practices prior to the start of the program, as well as two one-day intensive workshops during the program. The coaching program in this study consisted of five one-to-one coaching sessions over a 10- to 12-week period. Three of the sessions were face-to-face and two were conducted via telephone. Sessions lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. Participation in the program was associated with significant increases in goal attainment,  $t(1, 28) = -7.80, p < 0.001$  as measured by Goal Attainment Scaling (Spence, 2007), as well as increases in cognitive

hardiness as measured by the Cognitive Hardiness Scale (Nowack, 1990),  $t(1, 28) = -2.99, p < 0.01$ , and insight,  $t(1, 28) = -2.55, p < 0.05$ . Participation was also associated with significant decreases in anxiety as measured by the Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21: Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995),  $t(1, 28) = 2.14, p < 0.05$  (Grant, 2008). While this study was also not conducted using college aged students as participants, the results nevertheless have value to this discussion. Given the challenges facing college students discussed above such as feelings of anxiety and being overwhelmed, as well as the goal-oriented nature of the current generation of students, the results of this study support the exploration of coaching programs for college students.

Armstrong et al. (2013) examined the development of peer group coaching interventions within the healthcare sphere. “When individuals make commitments toward their goals in front of the group, they feel a greater sense of responsibility to follow through. They also feel less alone and are often open to learning from other clients’ experiences” (p. 75). Hearing about another person’s experiences may validate an individual’s experience, or may generate new ideas related to goal accomplishment. The authors argue for nonjudgmental communication and a focus on positivity as critical elements of group coaching (Armstrong, et al., 2013).

**Coaching in higher education.** The practice of coaching is making its way into postsecondary education (Campbell & Gardener, 2005), most often in the form of academic coaching (Hayes, 2012; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010). However, very little empirical research on general coaching programs within U. S. higher education exists. In one study, Schwartz, Prevat, and Proctor (2005) examined the creation of a coaching

intervention for college students with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Support for students with this disorder, which typically manifests in adults as impulsivity, inattention disorganization, and a lack of self-regulation, warrants attention as 4.5 percent of college students report being diagnosed with ADHD within the last 12 months (American College Health Association, 2012). The actual rate of prevalence may be higher given the frequent comorbidity of ADHD with other neurological disorders (Barkley, 1998; Murphy & Gordon, 1998). Participants in this study received eight weeks of coaching services which focused on long-term goals, weekly objectives, and appropriate rewards and consequences, with the ultimate goal of encouraging participants to take responsibility for change in their lives (Schwartz et al., 2005). Doctoral and EdS-level practicum students in Counseling and School Psychology provided coaching to the participants. The authors presented their results in an illustrative, singular case-study format, and posited that students with ADHD may benefit from coaching services in the form of increased academic goal attainment (Schwartz et al., 2005). While this study provides an example of coaching in practice in higher education, it does not offer any quantitative measures of coaching benefits for college students.

My previous work on the effectiveness of peer coaching has contributed to coaching and higher education scholarship. Quantitative and qualitative data from previous phases of this research project have been presented in poster and scholarly research paper format at a number of conferences (Sommers, 2013; Sommers & Lawson, 2013). One phase of the study examined the PWB of coaching participants and a control group before and after a peer group coaching program. Results showed that students in



the coaching intervention showed statistically significant increases in the areas of autonomy, personal growth, purpose in life, and self-acceptance, while individuals in the control group showed no significant increases. Previous phases of this research have utilized focus groups as a qualitative method, and have yielded themes relating to students' positive experiences with the intervention, including: time to focus on self, sense of community/not being alone, trust and support system, goal accountability, and mindful presence (Sommers, 2013).

While this preliminary work shows evidence of some effect of participation in coaching on college students' wellbeing, a number of limitations should be noted. First, the control group used in the quantitative phase was not matched to the coaching group on any characteristics. Second, the two groups were not comparable at baseline. Additionally, previous iterations of this research have used only one quantitative measure. Finally, while past phases have involved collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, they have not employed intentional mixed methods, in which one method informs the other in some manner (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010). The study proposed in Chapter Three addresses these limitations.

**Peer coaching and peer counseling.** Programs that facilitate peer support on college campuses can and have taken various forms. Work by Zunker and Brown (1966) and Botvin, Baker, Filazzola, and Botvin (1990) support the idea that college students can be as effective as professionals in assisting their peers with “everyday problems, academic advising, and peer education issues” (Hatcher, 1995, p. 8). This research provides evidence for peer support programs as having particular promise for students.

The practice of peer counseling on college campuses takes a similar approach to the coaching processes outlined by D'Andrea and Salovey (1983) as follows:

The role of the counselor in peer counseling is not to solve people's problems for them but rather to assist them in finding their own solutions...by using active listening and counseling skills...the peer counselor helps the counselee clarify his or her thoughts and feelings and explore various options and solutions" (p. 3).

Peer counseling training and programs espouse similar approaches to counseling, such as nonjudgmental, empathy, and refraining from giving advice (Hatcher, 1995). This definition of peer counseling is quite similar to the Rogerian or "person-centered" structure of coaching discussed earlier in this chapter. In some ways, the differences between peer coaching and peer counseling may be relatively slight. However, the term *counseling* can be saddled with some negative stigma for college students (Eisenberg, Downs, Golberstein, & Zivin, 2009), while the term *coaching* may not elicit negative feelings.

**Limits of coaching.** The practice of coaching has limits and should not be viewed as a singular solution to the continuing college student mental health crisis. Coaching is not a suitable treatment plan for students who struggle with severe mental illness (Buckley, 2010). Grant (2005) states, "the assumption is that clients are from a population without significant levels of psychopathology or emotional distress" (p. 2). As enumerated above, coaching is not therapy and should not be expected to demonstrate effectiveness in treating clinical-level mental health problems (Cavanagh & Grant, 2004). Instead, coaching programs should be explored as a means for providing support to

students and mitigating some of the lesser challenges, such as loneliness, feelings of being overwhelmed, and pressure to achieve. Coaching programs should only be offered to students who are not in need of more intense psychological counseling. Given the high numbers of students who seek campus counseling services discussed earlier (American College Health Association, 2014), it is reasonable to assume that some students seeking coaching may in fact have an established relationship with a mental health professional. Staff creating coaching programs may consider requiring students who have a relationship with a mental health professional to acquire permission from that professional to participate in a coaching program.

The literature in this section supports the creation of peer coaching programs as one means of promoting student wellbeing and as a potential support for students with moderate mental health needs. This section provides foundational thinking around the practice of coaching as well as research that demonstrates the benefits of participation in coaching programs. Scholars in this section consider coaching as a means for improving participants' lives and would argue that coaching should be embraced as one application of an institutional focus on wellbeing in response to the current state of college student mental health needs. The next chapter offers a detailed description of the purposeful methods selected for this particular study.

## **Chapter Three: Methods**

### **Introduction**

For this study, a mixed methods research design was employed to gain a deeper understanding of the effects of a peer group coaching program on the wellbeing of undergraduate students at a small, private liberal arts college located in the Upper Midwest. This chapter describes the research methodology, methods, and materials for this study. It also provides an in-depth examination of the research site and a rationale for its selection, as well as a discussion of the peer group coaching intervention evaluated within this study.

### **Research Perspective**

A pragmatic framework guides this research study. Research undertaken from a pragmatic approach considers the research question to be of paramount importance and allows for the determination of methods to best address the question at hand (Morgan, 2007). As Morgan (2007) argues, “it is not the abstract pursuit of knowledge through ‘inquiry’ that is central to a pragmatic approach, but rather the attempt to gain knowledge in the pursuit of desired ends” (p. 69). This research began in 2012 as a program evaluation to determine the effectiveness of wellbeing-focused peer group coaching for undergraduate students. Accordingly, this particular study is guided by the overarching question of whether peer group coaching has positive effects on the wellbeing of undergraduate students.

In particular, I ascribe to the principles of pragmatism outlined by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), which include a rejection of dichotomous thinking and embrace a

view of knowledge as both constructed and resulting from empirical discovery. My inclusion of quantitative and qualitative methods in this study align with my identification as a pragmatic, applied researcher, in that I believe multiple methodological approaches are necessary to address this overarching question.

### **Setting and Environment**

This study was conducted at a small, liberal arts college in the Upper Midwest with a student population of approximately 2,400 students (53 percent female, 47 percent male). This particular site was chosen because of its recent institutional commitment to fostering wellbeing among its students, faculty and staff, as well as my existing relationship with the institution and based on my previous work on evaluation of the peer group coaching program.

The commitment to wellbeing at the study institution was initially conceived by the associate dean of students, along with the college president. In 2011, a task force consisting of staff and faculty at the institution was convened and charged with creating a model for wellbeing to be utilized at the institution, along with learning outcomes and suggestions for program implementation. The task force prepared a report for the institution, which outlined a number of suggestions for the college to consider in moving forward with a commitment to the wellbeing of its community. In particular, the work of the task force led to the development of a nine-dimensional model of wellbeing that the institution now employs in various ways within its community, including intellectual wellbeing, relational wellbeing, emotional wellbeing, spiritual wellbeing, physical

wellbeing, financial wellbeing, career wellbeing, vocational wellbeing, and environmental wellbeing (See Figure 3).



Figure 3. Wellbeing model at study institution.

As a result of this institutional commitment to wellbeing, college staff involved in the wellbeing initiative began a collaboration with two faculty members who taught courses in a health coaching certificate at a nearby large research university. This collaboration resulted in the creation of the “Be U” peer group coaching program. The “Be U” coaching program has been in place since the fall of 2012, with coaching groups created for students, faculty and staff. I was invited to assist in evaluation of this program in the spring of 2012. Table 1 chronicles the previous phases of the implementation of the coaching program for students. The program includes the roles of *coaching facilitators* (those who receive intense, multi-day training as coaches) and *coaching participants*

(those who receive abbreviated training on the basics of coaching and are then placed into coaching groups led by the coaching facilitators). In the fall of 2012 and the fall of 2013, the same students served as both coaching facilitators and coaching participants, coaching each other in small groups throughout the semester. In the spring of 2013, the spring of 2014, and the fall of 2014 (the period during which this study was conducted), different students served as coaching facilitators and coaching participants.

Table 1

*Phases of Coaching Program*

Term	Student participants
Fall 2012	16 coaching facilitators/coaching participants (all served both roles)
Spring 2013	16 coaching facilitators, 27 coaching participants (all sophomores)
Fall 2013	Nine coaching facilitators/coaching participants (all served both roles)
Spring 2014	46 coaching facilitators, 140 coaching participants (varied year in school)
Fall 2014	25 coaching facilitators, 31 coaching participants (varied year in school)

In September 2013, the wellbeing initiative at the study institution received a gift of \$250,000 in funding from an alumni donor with particular interest in the peer coaching program and its potential benefits related to student wellbeing. This funding was used to support the creation of a Center for Wellbeing in the spring of 2013, a physical space on campus associated with the wellbeing initiative. The funding also supported the creation of a full-time director level staff position to oversee the initiative, with whom I worked collaboratively in the design of this study and recruitment of study participants.

## **Reflexivity**

I, the researcher, was the sole collector of data in this study. My positionality and subjectivity should be known to the reader to provide context for this particular study. My interest in this particular research topic has evolved over the course of several years. As indicated above, I was invited to lead the assessment of the peer group coaching program at the study institution in 2012. I have conducted three rounds of qualitative and quantitative data collection with program participants to this point, and have presented these findings to a number of constituencies. As discussed in Chapter Two, previous phases of this research have produced useful findings. This particular phase is the result of my immersion in mixed methodology—the *thinking tool* of research (Giddings & Grant, 2009)—and methods—the *doing tools* of research (Giddings & Grant, 2009)—as well as coaching practices and scholarship, and has yielded rich, useful data.

## **Research Design**

This mixed methods study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010) examines the experiences of undergraduate students participating in a wellbeing focused peer coaching program at a small liberal arts college in the Upper Midwest. The rationale for mixing quantitative and qualitative methods in this study is that neither method sufficiently captures the complexity of the phenomenon (Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006): namely, students' experiences in a peer group coaching program. The quantitative and qualitative methods used in this study are intended to be complimentary, in that the strengths of each method will be used to illuminate the results of the other (Morgan, 1998). Greene, Caracelli, & Graham (1989) identified a key goal of studies seeking



complementarity as the measurement of “overlapping but also different facets of a phenomenon, yielding an enriched, elaborated understanding of that phenomenon” (p. 258). Additionally, use of two methods for the purpose of complementarity can provide “elaboration, enhancement, illustration, clarification of the results from one method with the results from the other method” (Greene et al., 1989, p. 259). In this case, the results from semi-structured interviews will provide elaboration and clarification of the overall quantitative/empirical evaluation results.

This explanatory sequential mixed methods study has a (QUAN + QUAL) + (QUAL → quan) (Morse, 1991) design, in that quantitative and qualitative data were first collected and analyzed separately, and then the qualitative data was used to provide possible explanation and clarification of the quantitative data in a second, independent thematic analysis (see Figure 4 for a more detailed representation of the design).

Student volunteers participated in four, three-hour training sessions related to the facilitation of coaching groups in September 2014. Students who completed this training are referred to as *coaching facilitators* for the purposes of this study. Two experienced coaching professionals employed outside of higher education facilitated the training.

The first evening of training began with a discussion of coaching definitions and models. The students then learned about the practice of MI, and engaged in role-plays wherein they employed MI with each other. The trainer used a similar approach to the concept of empathy, presenting the students with a short video on empathy, and then inviting them to practice expressing empathy in dyads. The evening ended with a brief

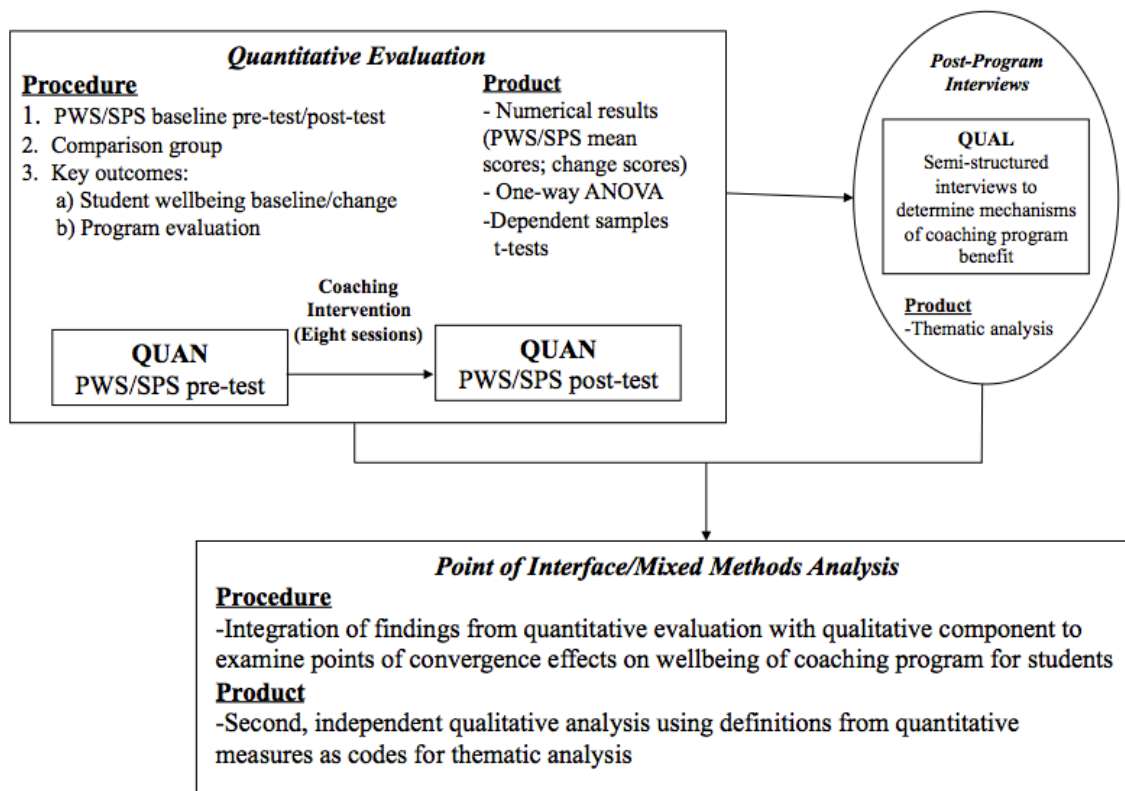


Figure 4. Visual model of mixed methods explanatory sequential design.

exercise on practicing mindfulness in the form of a grounding activity. The second evening of training began with more mindful presence, and involved a presentation on the Mayo Clinic Wellness Coaching Model. Students then learned about soliciting change talk through MI, and practiced coaching each other with feedback from the trainer.

The third evening began with the students implementing techniques for mindful presence with each other. The training then focused on vision writing and sharing; students wrote an affirmative vision of their ideal future and shared their visions with each other. Students then practiced coaching in groups with feedback from the trainer. The final evening of training involved a presentation on stress management and how to

identify stress in others, and entailed in depth discussion of a proposed coaching session agenda (see Table 2), as well as extended practice time in coaching groups (see Appendix A for the complete training agenda).

Following the conclusion of the training, coaching facilitators then led eight weekly, hour-long coaching group sessions for other students who volunteered to participate during the fall 2014 semester. These student volunteers are referred to as *coaching participants* for the purposes of this study.

Table 2  
*Sample Weekly Coaching Session Agenda*

Agenda Item	Time (minutes)
Opening/Grounding exercise	5
Review rules of engagement/confidentiality	3-4
Check-in	6-7
Coaching Person #1	15
Coaching Person #2	15
Closing Circle	6
Closing Ritual	2-3

All coaching facilitators and coaching participants rotated roles within the sessions, at times serving as a coach for their peers, and at times requesting coaching from their peers.

I attended all four training sessions and met in person with the coaching facilitators and participants in September 2014. During this meeting, I informed them about the purposes of my study as well as answered questions they had about the study. I

emphasized that students were not required to participate in any phase of the study, and that their choice to participate had no bearing on their status with the peer group coaching program or the study institution.

I first conducted the quantitative phase of my study to assess students' change in wellbeing before and after their participation in the group coaching program as measured by the Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-being (Ryff, 1989) and the Social Provisions Scale (SPS) (Cutrona & Russell, 1987). Email was used to invite students to participate in the study, and contained a link to an electronic version of the survey. Appendix B contains the text included in this email, and Appendix C contains the consent form that began the electronic survey. The pre-test was administered following the training and prior to the start of coaching sessions in September 2014, and the post-test was administered following the final peer coaching group sessions in December 2014.

Following my quantitative data collection, I invited all coaching facilitators and coaching participants who completed both the pre- and post-test surveys to participate in in-depth interviews for the second, qualitative phase of my study. These semi-structured interviews were intended to provide qualitative data to further explain the effects of the coaching intervention on student wellbeing. Because this purposive criterion sampling required that quantitative responses be linked to individuals, I included information about the second phase of my study in the consent form included in the pre-test survey as well as in my in-person discussion of the study with participants in September 2014.

## **Subjects, Participants, and Sample**

Staff in the Center for Wellbeing at the study institution conducted recruitment of facilitators and participants for the peer group coaching program. Students were recruited in early September 2014 from the entire population of undergraduates at the institution by the following means:

1. Word-of-mouth from previous participants
2. Posters/flyers in prominent locations on campus
3. Emails to all students from the Center for Wellbeing on campus.

This recruitment led to a final count of 25 coaching facilitators and 31 coaching participants. All program participants were informed about the research study and invited to participate during their September 2014 training via an in-person conversation with the researcher. Students in the coaching program were not required to participate in the study. All 25 coaching facilitators and 31 coaching participants consented to participate in the study during this in-person meeting and were sent the link to the pre-test and post-test surveys via email. Students had one week to complete the pre-test survey and were sent two reminders throughout the course of that week. Students had two weeks to complete the post-test survey following the last meeting of their coaching group and were sent four reminders throughout the course of those two weeks.

*Coaching facilitators.* A total of 18 students in the coaching facilitators group completed the pre-test; 14 completed the post-test; 12 students in this group completed both the pre- and the post-test administrations of the survey, for an overall response rate of 48 percent. Of this group, four identified as male and eight identified as female. Nine

of the coaching facilitators identified as Caucasian/White, one identified as African American/Black, one identified as Asian American, and one identified as both Caucasian/White and African American/Black. Six of these students were seniors, five were juniors, and one was a sophomore.

***Coaching participants.*** A total of 23 students in the coaching participants group completed the pre-test; 18 completed the post-test; all of these 18 completed the pre- and post-test surveys, for an overall response rate of 58 percent. In this group of students, six identified as male and 12 identified as female. Seventeen of the coaching participants identified as Caucasian/White, and one identified as Latino/a. Two of the students were first-years, nine were sophomores, three were juniors, and four were seniors.

***Comparison group.*** A comparison group was recruited with the assistance of staff in the Center for Servant Leadership at the study institution. This particular office was contacted in order to recruit a comparison group that demonstrated a similar commitment to extracurricular activities. A comparison group of students participating in a “leadership series” was selected. These students volunteered to attend four, monthly, two-hour trainings related to various areas of leadership throughout the course of the fall 2014 semester. Sixty-four prospective comparison group students were invited to participate in a study about college student wellbeing during an in-person conversation with the researcher at their September 2014 meeting. All 64 students consented to participate in the study and were sent the link to the pre-test and post-test surveys via email. Students had one week to complete the pre-test survey and were sent two reminders throughout the course of that week. Students had two weeks to complete the post-test survey following

the last training in the leadership series and were sent four reminders throughout the course of those two weeks.

Fifty-two students in the comparison group completed the pre-test survey; 39 completed the post-test survey; 34 students in this group completed both the pre- and post-test surveys, for an overall response rate of 53 percent. Of this group of students, 23 identified as female and 11 identified as male. Twenty-six of the comparison group students identified as Caucasian/White, two identified as Latino/a, two identified as both Caucasian/White and African American/Black, one identified as American Indian, one identified as Italian American, one identified as Asian American, and one provided the term “human” in the “other” option.” Ten of these students were first-year students, 12 were sophomores, eight were juniors, and four were seniors.

Table 3 below describes the demographic characteristics of the 120 students who completed the set of pre-test assessments. Since not all students who took the pre-test completed the instruments at post-test, additional analyses were conducted to determine whether or not any attrition of subjects could be attributed to differences in pre-test scores. In addition, demographic characteristics of the two coaching groups were compared using a chi-squared goodness-of-fit analysis. This analysis resulted in a chi-square value of 0.006 on the characteristic of gender ( $p = .997$ ), suggesting no relationship between group membership and gender. On the demographic characteristic of race/ethnicity, this analysis resulted in a chi-square value of 2.87 ( $p = 2.38$ ), suggesting no relationship between group membership and race/ethnicity. Relating to the characteristic of year in school, this analysis resulted in a chi-square value of 16.32 ( $p =$

.012) suggesting the existence of a relationship between group membership and year in school. This particular result is not surprising, given that the role of coaching facilitator was not available to first-year students. Therefore, that group has a greater distribution of members within sophomore, junior, and senior years.

### **Research Instruments**

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used in this study. This section discusses the psychometric characteristics of the validated quantitative instruments used in this study as well as the qualitative semi-structured interview process. Two quantitative survey instruments (discussed in depth below) were used as a means for assessing student wellbeing from a holistic perspective to include multiple dimensions in alignment with the wellbeing model in use at the study institution. The use of these two instruments concurrently yields a relatively holistic measure of student wellbeing that addresses most of the dimensions of wellbeing identified within the model, discussed earlier in this chapter.

***Demographic information survey.*** The pre-test survey began with questions to collect information about demographic characteristics of participants, relating to gender, race/ethnicity, and year in school. These questions did not appear in the post-test survey.

***Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-being (PWB).*** As discussed in Chapter Two, this instrument is an 84-item instrument intended to measure six theoretically-grounded core dimensions of psychological wellbeing: mastery of one's environment, autonomous decision making, maintaining positive relations with others, thinking positively about



Table 3

*Demographic Frequencies and Chi-Square Values for All Groups (N = 64)*

Characteristic	Group						<i>df</i>	$\chi^2$	<i>p</i>
	Coaching Facilitators (N = 12)		Coaching Participants (N = 18)		Comparison (N = 34)				
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%			
Gender							2	0.006	.997
Male	4	33	6	33	11	32			
Female	8	67	12	67	23	68			
Race/ethnicity							2	2.87	.238
White	9	75	17	94	26	76			
Non-white	3	25	1	6	8	24			
Year in school							6	16.32	.012
First-year	0	0	2	11	10	29			
Sophomore	1	8	9	50	12	35			
Junior	5	42	3	17	8	24			
Senior	6	50	4	22	4	12			

oneself, having a sense of purpose in life, and seeking opportunities for personal growth (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). The six-point response scale on this instrument ranges from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*.

*Psychometric characteristics.* Ryff and Keyes (1995) computed item to scale correlations for all items on all scales. Internal consistency reliability for each subscale was estimated in a sample of 321 men and women ranging in age with Cronbach's alpha, resulting in estimates ranging from good (autonomy,  $\alpha = 0.86$ ) to very good (self-acceptance,  $\alpha = 0.93$ ; positive relations with others,  $\alpha = 0.91$ ). Specific alphas for other

dimensions were not offered (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Concurrent and convergent validity was estimated using the Pearson product-moment correlations of the six subscales with eight previously validated measures of similar constructs (e.g., Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale, Bradburn's Affect Balance Scale, and Zung's Depression Scale). Results showed that three of the subscales (self-acceptance, environmental mastery, and purpose in life) were highly correlated with the prior indexes, while three of the subscales (positive relations with others, autonomy and personal growth) were not strongly associated with prior indexes (Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

The PWB conceives wellbeing as a multidimensional construct, and the scales, noted in Table 4, map reasonably well onto the nine-dimensional model of wellbeing currently in use at the research site.

***Social Provisions Scale.*** Qualitative data collected via focus groups in previous phases of this study lend support for the idea that participants feel that the peer coaching groups provide a helpful means of social support. The Social Provisions Scale (Cutrona & Russell, 1987) was used in this study to broaden and improve on the methodology used in previous iterations of this research. This 24-question instrument has six subscales, which the authors call *social provisions*: 1) *guidance* (advice or information), 2) *reassurance of worth* (recognition of one's competence, skills, and value by others), 3) *social integration* (sense of belonging to a group that shares similar concerns, interests, and recreational activities), 4) *attachment* (emotional closeness from which one derives a

Table 4

*Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-being and Wellbeing Model at Study Institution*

Study Institution Dimension	Ryff Dimension	Sample Item
Intellectual Wellbeing	Personal growth, environmental mastery	I am not interested in activities that will expand my horizons. <sup>a</sup>
Emotional Wellbeing	Autonomy, personal growth, positive relations with others, environmental mastery, self-acceptance	I tend to worry about what other people think of me. <sup>a</sup>
Relational Wellbeing	Positive relations with others, autonomy, self-acceptance	I enjoy personal and mutual conversations with family members or friends.
Physical Wellbeing	Not explicitly addressed	N/A
Spiritual Wellbeing	Not explicitly addressed	N/A
Environmental Wellbeing	Not explicitly addresses	N/A
Career Wellbeing	Purpose in life, autonomy	I feel good when I think of what I've done in the past and what I hope to do in the future.
Vocational Wellbeing	Purpose in life	I have a sense of direction and purpose in life.
Financial Wellbeing	Personal growth, environmental mastery	I generally do a good job of taking care of my personal finances and affairs.

*Note:* <sup>a</sup> = item based on reverse scoring

sense of security), 5) *opportunity for nurturance* (the sense that others rely on the individual for their wellbeing), and 6) *reliable alliance* (assurance that others can be

counted on for “tangible assistance” (Cutrona & Russell, 1987, p. 41). The four-point response scale on this instrument ranges from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*.

The subscales of this model fit quite well with data from participants in previous iterations of the peer group coaching program at the research site, and allow for reflection on their support of others as well as their perception of their own social support. The items on the instrument also align well with qualitative themes from previous iterations of the research, and do not use specific words such as “family,” “friends,” or “special person.” The relatively broad language of this instrument may allow for the students in this study to broadly include the coaching group in their reflection on perceived social support when completing the survey.

*Psychometric characteristics.* Cutrona and Russell (1987) conducted multiple regression analyses to determine whether or not satisfaction with relationships with friends, romantic/dating partners, and family could be used to predict scores on each of the six social provisions. Attachment was significantly related to how satisfied individuals were with romantic relationships (beta = .244,  $p < .001$ ), and social integration was significantly related to how satisfied they were with their friendships (beta = .317,  $p < .001$ ). The dimension of reliable alliance was related to perceived quality of both family relationships (beta = .244,  $p < .001$ ) and friend relationships (beta = .253,  $p < .001$ ). Opportunity for nurturance was related to satisfaction with romantic relationships (beta = .381,  $p < .001$ ) and satisfaction with family relationships (beta = .139,  $p < .01$ ).

Data from a sample of 1183 undergraduate students in introductory psychology classes, 303 public school teachers, and 306 nurses from a military hospital were used to conduct analyses to evaluate the reliability of the instrument (Cutrona & Russell, 1987). The reliabilities for each subscale were adequate, with coefficient alphas ranging from .653 to .760. The coefficient alpha for the total Social Provisions Score was excellent (.915).

*Internal consistency reliability in the current sample.* To evaluate the reliability of the instruments for the sample in this particular study, analyses were conducted on the total sample of 96 students who completed the pre-test, which included 23 coaching participants, 19 coaching facilitators, and 54 students in the comparison group. Table 5 reports the results of these analyses. As Table 5 shows, the reliabilities of individual subscales of both the Ryff and the SPS are adequate for use in this case, with coefficient alphas ranging from .523 to .855. Additionally, these coefficient alphas are comparable with those reported by the instrument authors and calculated with data from much larger sample populations.

*Semi-structured interviews.* While the quantitative data gained in the first phase of this study were expected to provide insights into the effects of peer coaching on student wellbeing, they do not provide information about the *experiences* of the students within the coaching program, nor their own evaluation of why or how the coaching program influenced their wellbeing. A qualitative approach such as interviews “affords an in-depth analysis of complex human...experiences in a manner that cannot be fully captured with

measurement scales” (Castro, Kellison, Boyd & Kopak, 2010, p. 343). In-depth interviews were conducted with a sample of coaching facilitators and coaching

Table 5

*Reliabilities for the Ryff Scales of Psychological Wellbeing  
and Social Provisions Scale*

Instrument Scale	$\alpha$
<b>Ryff Scales of Psychological Wellbeing</b>	
Autonomy	.715
Environmental mastery	.787
Personal growth	.731
Positive relations with others	.843
Purpose in life	.780
Self-acceptance	.855
<b>Social Provisions Scale</b>	
Guidance	.701
Reassurance of worth	.700
Social integration	.648
Attachment	.523
Nurturance	.743
Reliable alliance	.687

participants in order to gain explanatory data to enrich understanding of the effects of peer group coaching on students’ wellbeing. According to Patton (2005), “the purpose of interviewing...is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit” (p. 341).

Given the relatively small sample sizes for both groups of coaching facilitators and coaching participants, I invited all students in these two groups who completed the pre- and post-test surveys (12 coaching facilitators and 18 coaching participants) to participate in semi-structured interviews. Four coaching facilitators and nine coaching participants agreed to be interviewed for this study. Interviews were conducted in person at the study institution during January 2015. More detail about the interviews appears in the next section.

### **Data Collection**

*Quantitative.* The survey instruments (PWB and SPS) were sent to students via email using Qualtrics. This particular vehicle was chosen because it is supported by the University of Minnesota, is secure, widely-used, user-friendly for the researcher, and has a good interface experience for those who take the survey. The survey also included information about consent to participate in the study prior to the collection of demographic information and the research instruments (see Appendix C). Responses remained confidential and survey results were kept in electronic format. The link to the pre-test survey was sent via email to coaching facilitators during the final evening of training in September 2014, and they were asked to complete the survey within a week and prior to their first coaching group meeting. Coaching facilitators received two reminders via email over the course of that week. Coaching participants were sent the link to the survey a week prior to their first coaching group meetings and received two reminders via email during the course of that week. The link to the post-test survey was sent via email to coaching facilitators and coaching participants following the completion

of the coaching program in December 2014. Students had two weeks to complete the survey and were sent four reminders throughout the course of those two weeks. All 64 students in the comparison group were sent the link to the pre-test and post-test surveys via email during their first meeting in September 2014. These students had one week to complete the pre-test survey and were sent two reminders throughout the course of that week. Students in the comparison group had two weeks to complete the post-test survey following the last training in the leadership series and were sent four reminders throughout the course of those two weeks. The surveys for all three groups closed on December 23, 2014.

I attempted to maximize retention of coaching facilitators and coaching participants in the post-test by offering an incentive to those who completed both the pre- and post-test surveys. Students who completed both surveys had their names entered into a drawing for one \$100 Visa gift card. Students in the comparison group were not offered any incentive for completing the surveys. Twelve coaching facilitators, 18 coaching participants and 34 students in the comparison group completed both the pre- and post-test surveys.

*Qualitative.* The pre- and post- test surveys that students received also contained one open-ended qualitative question preceding the quantitative instruments: “How would you describe your current level of personal wellbeing?” Students were asked to provide a brief response to this question. All students who completed the pre- and post-test surveys provided a response to this question at both administrations.



Additionally, in order to obtain more in-depth qualitative data about the experience of students in the peer group coaching program, coaching facilitators and coaching participants who completed both the pre- and post-test surveys were contacted via email in January 2015 and invited to participate in semi-structured interviews. Thirteen students (four coaching facilitators and nine coaching participants) agreed to be interviewed.

Interviews followed a basic question format, with allowance for follow-up questions as needed. Questions were formulated in order to gain enhanced understanding of how participation in the peer coaching groups influenced students' sense of wellbeing. Interviews began with a reminder of the purpose of the study and an opportunity for interviewees to ask clarifying questions. Interviewees were asked to reflect on skills they gained through participation in the peer coaching groups, and on anything they may have learned about themselves through participation. Interviewees were also invited to offer their definition of personal wellbeing. Examples of interview questions include: "How, if at all, did participation in the wellbeing peer coaching groups contribute to your sense of personal wellbeing?" and "How will the knowledge and skills you've gained during your participation in the coaching groups influence future choices, if at all?" Appendix D contains a copy of the interview script. Each interview was scheduled for 45 minutes in duration. Interviews ranged in duration, and lasted between 11 and 23 minutes.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed. To ensure accuracy of transcripts, member checking was conducted (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2000). Interview participants were emailed transcripts of their individual interviews and invited

to send any changes or edits within one week. Two students sent minor edits that did not affect the content of their interview. One student sent a supplemental document with expanded answers to two of the questions. Each student who participated in an interview received a \$10 gift card for the on-campus bookstore at the study institution.

### **Institutional Review Board Approval**

Approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at both the University of Minnesota and the study institution was received prior to the commencement of data collection in September 2014. Each institution received a copy of the approval letter from the other institution's IRB. Appendix E contains copies of both approval letters.

### **Data Analysis**

*Quantitative.* The analysis of the quantitative data proceeded in the order listed below. First, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine whether or not significant differences existed between pre- and post-scores of the comparison and intervention groups. Second, given that a number of students participated in only the pre-test administration of the survey, an initial analysis was conducted to ascertain whether or not those who had completed both the pre- and post-tests differed from those who completed only the pre-test. To address this issue, independent sample t-tests were conducted for each of the 12 scales on the two instruments.

Third, dependent samples t-tests were conducted to determine if statistically significant differences existed between pre- and post-test scores on each of the 12 scales on the two instruments for each of the three groups: coaching facilitators, coaching participants, and the comparison group.

Given that the final sample sizes for this study included 12 coaching facilitators, 18 coaching participants, and 34 students in the comparison group, the question arose about the appropriateness of using parametric statistics on samples of such relatively small size. The statistical analyses used in this study were determined to best be able to provide answers to the first research question relating to the effects of a peer group coaching intervention on the wellbeing of students. In order to increase the size of the intervention coaching group sample, a separate analysis compared the combined groups ( $n = 30$ ) with those in the comparison group ( $n = 34$ ). This strategy was deemed appropriate given that past iterations of the coaching intervention did not distinguish between coaching facilitators and coaching participants (in that students served in both roles throughout their time in the program). Additionally, this analysis allowed for an examination of the effects of a peer group coaching intervention in both forms on the wellbeing of students as measured by the two instruments used in this study.

Fourth, although no research questions were posed concerning differences in scores on the two instruments as a function of gender, race/ethnicity and year in school, additional post hoc statistical analyses were conducted. For gender and race/ethnicity, independent samples t-tests were conducted on each of the 12 scales for the two instruments. For year in school differences, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. For these analyses, students across all three groups were combined given the relatively small sample size of each group.

*Qualitative.* Responses to the open-ended qualitative question on the pre- and post-test surveys were analyzed to determine whether or not individuals report changes in their personal wellbeing following the coaching intervention.

Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. According to Johnson and Christensen (2008), a sample size of 6-12 participants for a qualitative method such as interviews yields acceptable levels of theoretical saturation. My sample of 13 individual semi-structured interviews therefore produced useful and valuable data. Data analysis of all open-ended data involved coding themes from a qualitative data analysis approach (Gibbs, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994). In qualitative data analysis and presentation, "the task of the researcher is to find patterns within those words and to present those patterns for others to inspect while at the same time staying as close to the construction of the world as the participants originally experienced it" (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 18). A two-step coding process was used. First, I developed codes and themes based on my previous "pilot" study of this intervention (discussed in Chapter Two), which involved the use of focus groups as a means of collecting qualitative data about the experiences of the participants.

I then used the constant comparative method for the second phase of coding. This method involved breaking down the data into discrete "units" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and coding them to categories. The units used in this case included quotes that I determined to be representative of the students' perception of their experience with the peer group coaching program. The categories used in this step of analysis took two forms: those derived from the participants' language, and those that I identified as

significant to the focus of the project. The goal of the first group “is to reconstruct the categories used by subjects to conceptualize their own experiences” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 334). The goal of the second group is to assist a researcher in developing theoretical insights into the social processes at work in the phenomenon of inquiry. As a result, “the process of constant comparison stimulates thought that leads to both descriptive and explanatory categories” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 341). Over the course of the analytical process, categories underwent content and definition changes as units were compared and categorized, and as I developed and refined my understandings of the properties of categories and the relationships between categories. I ensured that all thirteen of the interviews were represented in my final qualitative analysis.

I employed member-checking to increase the validity of my quantitative analysis (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2000). Interview participants were emailed transcripts of their individual interviews as well as documentation of the qualitative themes and invited to send any changes or edits within one week. Two students sent minor edits that did not affect the content of their interviews. One student sent a supplemental document with expanded answers to two of the questions.

***Mixing/Integration.*** Following the quantitative analysis, I conducted a second, independent qualitative analysis to find areas of convergence between areas of significant positive change on the quantitative measures (for coaching facilitators and coaching participants) and themes from the semi-structured interviews. This analysis involved utilization of the original authors’ (Cutrona & Russell, 1987; Ryff, 1989) definitions of each dimension on which the students showed significant increases as categories to guide

the coding of units, and yielded insightful results that provided some possible explanation for the quantitative changes.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter outlined the purposeful, mixed methods design of this study. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to address the multiple research questions in this study. The next chapter presents the findings from each of these methods.

## **Chapter Four: Findings**

This study sought to address two research questions: 1) What effect, if any, does participation in a peer coaching group program have on the wellbeing of students as measured by quantitative measures of wellbeing, and 2) How do students describe their experience in the peer group coaching program, and how, if at all, do they consider the program to be beneficial to their own wellbeing? A third emergent research question also related to the simultaneous consideration of both the quantitative and qualitative data collected also informs the scope of this research. Specifically, this question invites examination of the qualitative data to provide explanation for areas of significant quantitative change in the wellbeing of study participants. As the previous chapter detailed, the methods for this study were intentionally chosen in an attempt to best address these questions.

The first section of this chapter presents analysis of the quantitative data collected in this study in response to the first research question. The second section of this chapter presents an analysis of the qualitative data collected in this study in response to the second research question. The third section of this chapter presents a mixed analysis of both the quantitative findings and the qualitative data in response to the third emergent research question.

### **Quantitative Analysis**

Participants in this study took pre- and post-test surveys that contained both the Ryff Scales of Psychological Wellbeing (PWB) and the Social Provisions Scale (SPS). Analysis of this quantitative data yields a response to the first research question: What

effect, if any, does participation in a peer coaching group program have on the wellbeing of students as measured by quantitative measures of wellbeing?

**Effects of group membership.** A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine the effects of group membership (facilitator, participant, or comparison) on pre-test scores. As the results in Table 6 indicate, this analysis revealed that group membership did not have a statistically significant effect on pre-test scores for any of the six dimensions of PWB. For only one of the SPS dimensions, opportunity for nurturance, group membership was shown to have a statistically significant effect on pre-test scores ( $p = .043$ ), with a mean score of 13.25 for coaching facilitators, 11.72 for coaching participants, and 13.05 for the comparison group. Despite this one area of significance, the overall results of this analysis lend support to the hypothesis that there were no significant effects of group membership on pre-test scores, and that the comparison group was well-matched to the intervention groups, at least in terms of initial scores on the two measures of wellbeing.

**Comparison of pre-test only and both pre-and post-test.** Given that a number of students participated in only the pre-test administration of the survey, an initial analysis was conducted to ascertain whether or not those who had completed both the pre- and post-tests differed from those who completed only the pre-test. To address this issue, independent sample t-tests were conducted for each of the 12 scales on the two instruments. Table 7 contains the results of this analysis. No significant differences on any of the 12 dimensions existed between mean scores of those who completed only the pre-test and those who completed both the pre-and post-test administrations of the



Table 6

*The Effects of Group Membership (Facilitator, Participant, or Comparison Group) on Pre-test Scores*

Instrument scale	SS	MS	F (2, 61)	p	$\eta^2$
<b>Ryff Scales of Psychological Wellbeing</b>					
Autonomy					
Between	23.1	11.55	0.25	0.783	.01
Error	2869.1	47.03			
Environmental mastery					
Between	45.7	22.86	0.46	0.636	.01
Error	3056.7	50.11			
Personal growth					
Between	29	14.50	0.52	0.597	.02
Error	1703	27.91			
Positive relations with others					
Between	58	28.81	0.53	0.593	.02
Error	3330	54.59			
Purpose in life					
Between	128.9	64.44	1.71	0.189	.05
Error	2293.5	37.60			
Self-acceptance					
Between	37	18.64	0.28	0.757	.01
Error	4066	66.65			
<b>Social Provisions Scale</b>					
Guidance					
Between	1.5	0.751	0.24	0.791	.01
Error	194.1	3.182			
Reassurance of worth					
Between	1.72	0.860	0.25	0.776	.01
Error	206.28	3.382			
Social integration					
Between	1.5	0.7484	0.31	0.733	.01
Error	146.2	2.3976			
Attachment					
Between	1.6	0.799	0.19	0.831	.01
Error	261.6	4.289			
Opportunity for nurturance					
Between	25.19	12.597	3.32	0.043	.10
Error	231.74	3.799			
Reliable alliance					
Between	0.98	0.4918	0.25	0.777	.01
Error	118.13	1.9365			

Table 7

*Comparison of Pre-test Scores Between Pre-test Only and Pre- and Post-test.*

Instrument scale	Group				<i>t</i> (87)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Pre-Test only ( <i>n</i> = 25)		Pre- and Post- Test ( <i>n</i> = 64)				
	M	SD	M	SD			
<b>Ryff Scales of Psychological Wellbeing</b>							
Autonomy	35.80	5.44	36.11	6.78	-0.20	.839	0.05
Environmental mastery	38.32	7.12	37.84	7.02	0.29	.775	0.07
Personal growth	44.40	5.78	44.69	5.24	-0.23	.822	0.05
Positive relations with others	42.48	7.47	41.94	7.33	0.31	.756	0.07
Purpose in life	42.08	6.76	42.80	6.20	-0.48	.633	0.11
Self-acceptance	40.64	7.05	40.28	8.07	0.19	.846	0.05
<b>Social Provisions Scale</b>							
Guidance	14.28	1.70	14.42	1.76	-0.35	.731	0.08
Reassurance of worth	13.16	2.06	13.25	1.82	-0.20	.840	0.05
Social integration	14.08	1.58	14.31	1.53	-0.64	.525	0.15
Attachment	13.16	1.82	13.39	2.04	-0.49	.623	0.12
Opportunity for nurturance	12.52	1.83	12.72	2.02	-0.43	.670	0.10
Reliable alliance	14.76	1.79	14.83	1.38	-0.19	.848	0.05

survey. These results suggest that any attrition of subjects between the pre- and post-test administrations was not related to differences in pre-test scores.

**Effect of coaching intervention on student wellbeing.** In order to address the first research question, dependent samples t-tests were conducted with each of the three groups, as well as for the combined group of coaching facilitators and participants, to determine whether or not students showed significant changes in wellbeing as measured by the PWB and the SPS between the pre- and post-test administrations of the survey.

**Coaching facilitators.** For this group, dependent samples t-tests determined that post-test scores were statistically significantly higher on the PWB dimensions of environmental mastery ( $p < .001$ ) with an increase in mean score from 37.67 (SD = 6.95) to 41.17 (SD = 5.51), positive relations with others ( $p = .009$ ) with an increase in mean score from 41.92 (SD = 8.27) to 45.25 (SD = 5.41), purpose in life ( $p = .009$ ) with an increase in mean score from 40.17 (SD = 7.44) to 43.17 (SD = 5.80), and self-acceptance ( $p = .023$ ) with an increase in mean score from 38.75 (SD = 7.82) to 42.50 (SD = 6.40). This group did not experience any statistically significant change in any of the six dimensions of the SPS. However, for all but one of the PWB dimensions, post-test scores were higher than pre-test scores, albeit not significantly for dimensions other than those listed above. On the dimension of personal growth, post-test scores were lower than pre-test scores, though not significantly. Similarly, for all but one of the SPS dimensions, post-test scores were higher than pre-test scores. On the dimension of Social Integration, post-test scores were lower than pre-test scores, though not significantly. Table 8 contains the full results of this analysis.

**Coaching participants.** Table 9 presents the results for dependent samples t-tests, which determined that post-test scores were statistically significantly higher on the PWB dimensions of positive relations with others ( $p = .031$ ) and self-acceptance ( $p = .017$ ) for coaching participants. The mean score for this group on the dimension of positive relations with others increased from 43.39 (SD = 5.99) to 45.72 (SD = 4.85), and the mean score for the dimension of self-acceptance increased from 40.94 (SD = 7.56) to 44.56 (SD = 5.69). Post-test scores were also statistically significantly higher for this

Table 8

*Comparison of Pre- and Post-test Scores for Coaching Facilitators (n = 12)*

Instrument scale	Pre-Test		Post-Test		<i>t</i> (11)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Ryff Scales of Psychological Wellbeing							
Autonomy	36.25	7.05	37.33	6.30	-0.91	.382	0.16
Environmental mastery	37.67	6.95	41.17	5.51	-4.64	<.001	0.56
Personal growth	43.75	4.49	43.67	5.82	0.05	.958	0.02
Positive relations with others	41.92	8.27	45.25	5.41	-3.16	.009	0.48
Purpose in life	40.17	7.44	43.17	5.80	-3.17	.009	0.45
Self-acceptance	38.75	7.82	42.50	6.40	-2.51	.023	0.52
Social Provisions Scale							
Guidance	14.33	1.56	14.41	1.73	-0.19	.851	0.05
Reassurance of worth	13.25	1.96	13.92	1.88	-1.04	.323	0.35
Social integration	14.25	1.76	14.17	1.47	0.14	.886	0.05
Attachment	13.33	2.23	14.00	2.22	-1.43	.180	0.30
Opportunity for nurturance	13.25	1.91	13.42	1.83	-0.69	.503	0.09
Reliable alliance	14.58	1.50	14.66	1.72	-0.18	.857	0.05

group on the SPS dimensions of reassurance of worth, ( $p = .022$ ) with an increase in mean score from 13.50 ( $SD = 1.25$ ) to 14.39 ( $SD = 1.42$ ), attachment ( $p = .017$ ) with an increase in mean score from 13.17 ( $SD = 1.95$ ) to 14.28 ( $SD = 1.41$ ), and opportunity for nurturance ( $p = .017$ ) with an increase in mean score from 11.72 ( $SD = 2.24$ ) to 12.67 ( $SD = 1.85$ ). For all 12 of the PWB and SPS dimensions, post-test scores were higher than pre-test scores, albeit not significantly for dimensions other than the five listed above.

***Coaching facilitators and participants combined.*** Both of the coaching intervention groups were combined to determine the effects of peer group coaching in

Table 9

*Comparison of Pre- and Post-test Scores for Coaching Participants (n = 18)*

Instrument scale	Pre-Test		Post-Test		<i>t</i> (17)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Ryff Scales of Psychological Wellbeing							
Autonomy	35.17	6.41	36.72	6.72	-1.76	.096	0.24
Environmental mastery	39.17	6.79	39.83	5.48	-0.78	.445	0.11
Personal growth	45.67	5.40	46.67	5.67	-1.46	.163	0.18
Positive relations with others	43.39	6.39	45.72	4.85	-2.36	.031	0.41
Purpose in life	44.39	5.99	44.67	5.47	-0.29	.775	0.05
Self-acceptance	40.94	7.56	44.56	5.69	-2.64	.017	0.54
Social Provisions Scale							
Guidance	14.67	1.85	15.06	1.55	-0.84	.415	0.23
Reassurance of worth	13.50	1.25	14.39	1.42	-2.53	.022	0.67
Social integration	14.56	1.20	14.67	1.37	-0.44	.668	0.09
Attachment	13.17	1.95	14.28	1.41	-2.65	.017	0.65
Opportunity for nurturance	11.72	2.24	12.67	1.85	-2.65	.017	0.46
Reliable alliance	14.94	1.16	15.17	1.25	-0.54	.594	0.19

either format on the wellbeing of students. Dependent samples t-tests determined that for this combined group, post-test scores were statistically significantly higher on the PWB dimensions of environmental mastery ( $p = .008$ ) with an increase in mean score from 38.57 (SD = 6.78) to 40.37 (SD = 5.44), positive relations with others ( $p < .001$ ) with an increase in mean score from 42.80 (SD = 7.10) to 45.53 (SD = 4.99), and self-acceptance ( $p < .001$ ) with an increase in mean score from 40.07 (SD = 7.61) to 43.73 (SD = 5.97). Post-test scores were also statistically significantly higher for this group on the SPS dimensions of reassurance of worth, ( $p = .021$ ) with an increase in mean score from 13.40

(SD = 1.54) to 14.20 (SD = 1.61), attachment ( $p = .005$ ) with an increase in mean score from 13.23 (SD = 2.03) to 14.17 (SD = 1.74), and opportunity for nurturance ( $p = .014$ ) with an increase in mean score from 12.33 (SD = 2.22) to 12.97 (SD = 1.85). For this combined group, post-test scores were higher than pre-test scores for all 12 of the PWB and SPS dimensions, albeit not significantly for dimensions other than the six listed above. Table 10 presents the full results of this analysis.

Table 10

*Comparison of Pre- and Post-test Scores for Coaching Facilitators and Participants (n = 30)*

Instrument scale	Pre-Test		Post-Test		$t(29)$	$p$	Cohen's $d$
	$M$	$SD$	$M$	$SD$			
Ryff Scales of Psychological Wellbeing							
Autonomy	35.60	6.57	36.97	6.45	-1.95	.061	0.21
Environmental mastery	38.57	6.78	40.37	5.44	-2.82	.008	0.29
Personal growth	44.90	5.07	45.47	5.82	-0.77	.449	0.10
Positive relations with others	42.80	7.10	45.53	4.99	-3.78	<.001	0.44
Purpose in life	42.70	6.82	44.07	5.56	-1.90	.068	0.22
Self-acceptance	40.07	7.61	43.73	5.97	-3.67	<.001	0.54
Social Provisions Scale							
Guidance	14.53	1.72	14.80	1.63	-0.82	.419	0.16
Reassurance of worth	13.40	1.54	14.20	1.61	-2.45	.021	0.51
Social integration	14.43	1.43	14.46	1.41	-0.12	.902	0.02
Attachment	13.23	2.03	14.17	1.74	-3.01	.005	0.50
Opportunity for nurturance	12.33	2.22	12.97	1.85	-2.62	.014	0.31
Reliable alliance	14.80	1.30	14.97	1.45	-0.56	.583	0.12

**Comparison group.** For this group, dependent samples t-tests, the results of which are presented in Table 11, determined that post-test scores were statistically significantly

higher on the PWB dimension of autonomy ( $p = .013$ ). This group experienced no significant change in any of the other 12 PWB and SPS dimensions. For five of the six PWB dimensions, post-test scores were higher than pre-test scores, albeit not significantly. Pre- and post-test scores remained equivalent on the PWB dimension of purpose in life. For three of the six SPS dimensions (guidance, reassurance of worth, and attachment), post-test scores were higher than pre-test scores, albeit not significantly; for the SPS dimensions of social integration, opportunity for nurturance and reliable alliance, post-test scores were lower than pre-test scores, albeit not significantly.

Table 11

*Comparison of Pre- and Post-test Scores for Comparison Group (n = 34)*

Instrument scale	Pre-Test		Post-Test		$t(33)$	$p$	Cohen's $d$
	$M$	$SD$	$M$	$SD$			
Ryff Scales of Psychological Wellbeing							
Autonomy	36.56	7.02	38.38	6.75	-2.62	.013	0.26
Environmental mastery	37.21	7.26	37.38	7.15	-0.22	.827	0.02
Personal growth	44.50	5.46	44.62	6.42	-0.15	.883	0.02
Positive relations with others	41.18	7.55	42.24	6.83	-1.20	.239	0.15
Purpose in life	42.88	5.70	42.88	6.39	0.00	1.00	0.00
Self-acceptance	40.47	8.57	41.18	8.40	-0.78	.440	0.08
Social Provisions Scale							
Guidance	14.32	1.82	14.50	1.64	-0.68	.499	0.10
Reassurance of worth	13.12	2.04	13.47	1.71	-1.42	.166	0.19
Social integration	14.21	1.63	13.85	1.54	1.56	.129	0.23
Attachment	13.52	2.08	13.76	2.07	-0.66	.515	0.12
Opportunity for nurturance	13.06	1.79	12.52	1.91	1.60	.119	0.29
Reliable alliance	14.85	1.46	14.67	1.57	0.71	.482	0.12

**Effects of gender.** Table 12 presents the results of independent samples t-tests conducted to determine the effects of gender on pre-test scores. In an analysis of all three groups together, gender did not have a statistically significant effect on pre-test scores for any of the six dimensions of the SPS. For only one of the PWB dimensions, autonomy, gender was shown to have a statistically significant effect on pre-test scores ( $p = .045$ ); the mean score for males on this dimension was 38.52, compared to a mean of 39.43 for females. Despite this one area of significance, the overall results of this analysis lend support to the hypothesis that gender did not have a significant effect on pre-test scores. For the tables containing the effects of gender for each of the three groups separately, see Appendix F.

**Effects of race/ethnicity.** Independent samples t-tests were conducted to determine the effects of race/ethnicity on pre-test scores. For this analysis, given the very small number of non-white students in each group, the three groups were combined. In an analysis of all three groups together, race/ethnicity did not have a statistically significant effect on pre-test scores for any of the six dimensions of PWB. For only one of the SPS dimensions, reliable alliance, race/ethnicity was shown to have a statistically significant effect on pre-test scores ( $p = .012$ ), with a mean score of 14.91(SD = 1.33) for White students and a mean score of 13.09 (SD = 4.28) for Non-White students. Despite this one area of significance, the overall results of this analysis lend support to the hypothesis that race did not have a significant effect on pre-test scores. Table 13 contains the full results of this analysis.



Table 12

*Comparison of Male and Female Pre-test Scores for All Groups (n = 64)*

Instrument scale	Males (n = 21)		Females (n = 43)		t(11)	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
<b>Ryff Scales of Psychological Wellbeing</b>							
Autonomy	38.52	5.99	34.93	6.89	-2.04	.045	.054
Environmental mastery	37.24	6.97	38.14	7.10	0.48	.633	0.13
Personal growth	44.19	5.05	44.93	5.38	0.53	.600	0.14
Positive relations with others	42.29	7.34	41.77	7.41	-0.26	.793	0.07
Purpose in life	42.14	5.83	43.12	6.42	0.59	.560	0.16
Self-acceptance	39.67	9.21	40.58	7.55	0.42	.674	0.11
<b>Social Provisions Scale</b>							
Guidance	14.67	1.71	14.30	1.79	-0.77	.442	0.21
Reassurance of worth	13.00	1.70	13.37	1.88	0.77	.446	0.20
Social integration	14.00	1.61	14.47	1.49	1.14	.257	0.31
Attachment	13.67	1.83	13.26	2.15	-0.75	.455	0.20
Nurturance	12.48	2.20	12.34	1.94	0.67	.506	0.18
Reliable alliance	14.52	1.37	14.98	1.37	1.24	.219	0.34

**Effects of year in school.** A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine the effects of year in school (first-year, sophomore, junior or senior) on pre-test scores for all three groups (coaching facilitator, coaching participant, and comparison). Ideally, this analysis would have been conducted on each group separately, but given the relatively small sample sizes for each group, the three groups were combined for this analysis.

As the results in Table 14 indicate, this analysis revealed that year in school did not have a statistically significant effect on pre-test scores for any of the six dimensions of PWB. For only one of the SPS dimensions, reliable alliance, year in school was shown

to have a statistically significant effect on pre-test scores ( $p = .003$ ). A post hoc analysis using the Scheffé method determined that the mean score for first-year students (15.58) and the mean score for junior students (15.25) were both statistically different from the mean score for senior students (13.79). Despite this one area of significance, the overall results of this analysis lend support to the hypothesis that there were no significant effects of year in school on pre-test scores for the entire sample population of 64 students.

Table 13

*Comparison of White Students' and Non-White Students' Pre-test Scores for All Groups*

Instrument scale	Race/Ethnicity				$t(63)$	$p$	Cohen's $d$
	White ( $n = 53$ )		Non-White ( $n = 11$ )				
	M	SD	M	SD			
<b>Ryff Scales of Psychological Wellbeing</b>							
Autonomy	36.25	6.69	35.25	7.49	0.35	.728	0.15
Environmental mastery	37.72	7.48	38.45	4.30	-0.31	.754	0.10
Personal growth	45.11	5.11	42.64	5.11	1.44	.156	0.48
Positive relations with others	42.25	7.49	40.45	6.65	0.73	.466	0.24
Purpose in life	42.66	6.08	43.46	7.02	-0.38	.702	0.13
Self-acceptance	39.81	8.58	42.55	4.57	-1.02	.310	0.34
<b>Social Provisions Scale</b>							
Guidance	14.53	1.78	13.31	1.64	1.06	.293	0.69
Reassurance of worth	13.28	1.73	13.09	2.30	0.32	.752	0.10
Social integration	14.38	1.43	14.00	2.00	0.74	.462	0.25
Attachment	13.45	2.03	13.09	2.17	0.53	.597	0.18
Opportunity for nurturance	12.79	2.09	12.36	1.69	0.64	.526	0.21
Reliable alliance	14.91	1.33	13.09	4.28	2.60	.012	0.86

**Summary of quantitative analysis.** In this section, quantitative analysis in the form of dependent samples t-tests revealed significant increases in numerous dimensions of wellbeing for both of the intervention groups (coaching facilitators and coaching participants). The comparison group demonstrated significant increase in only one dimension of wellbeing. A one-way ANOVA determined that the comparison group was well-matched to the two intervention groups in that pre-test means were not significantly different between the three groups. Independent samples t-tests determined that neither race nor gender had an overall effect on pre-test means. An additional one-way ANOVA determined that year in school did not have a significant overall effect on pre-test means. The results of these subsequent analyses support the argument that changes in wellbeing as measured by the PWB and SPS can be attributed to participation in peer group coaching in this case.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

This study employed two means of collecting qualitative data. First, the survey completed by all three groups contained an open-ended question which asked students for a description of their current state of personal wellbeing. Second, students in the coaching facilitator and coaching participant groups who completed both the pre- and post-test surveys were invited to participate in individual interviews with the researcher. Analysis of the qualitative data gained from both of these methods yields a response to the second research question: How do students describe their experience in the peer group coaching program, and how, if at all, do they consider the program to be beneficial to their own wellbeing?

Table 14

*The Effects of Year in School (First-year, Sophomore, Junior or Senior) on Pre-test Scores*

Instrument scale	SS	MS	F (3, 60)	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$
<b>Ryff Scales of Psychological Wellbeing</b>					
Autonomy					
Between	107.8	35.95	0.78	.211	.04
Error	2784.4	46.41			
Environmental mastery					
Between	137.9	45.97	0.93	.432	.04
Error	2964.5	49.41			
Personal growth					
Between	24.3	8.09	0.28	.837	.01
Error	1707.5	28.46			
Positive relations with others					
Between	62	20.81	0.38	.771	.02
Error	3325	55.42			
Purpose in life					
Between	72.9	24.29	0.62	.605	.03
Error	2349.5	39.16			
Self-acceptance					
Between	495	162.86	2.74	.051	.12
Error	3608	60.41			
<b>Social Provisions Scale</b>					
Guidance					
Between	14.06	4.69	1.55	.211	.07
Error	181.55	3.02			
Reassurance of worth					
Between	5.25	1.75	0.52	.672	.03
Error	202.75	3.38			
Social integration					
Between	6.33	2.11	0.90	.449	.04
Error	141.42	2.36			
Attachment					
Between	16.85	5.62	1.37	.261	.06
Error	246.38	4.11			
Opportunity for nurturance					
Between	17.03	5.68	1.42	.246	.07
Error	239.91	3.99			
Reliable alliance					
Between	24.97	8.32	5.30	.003	.21
Error	94.14	1.57			

Participants were assigned pseudonyms for this analysis. Four coaching facilitators agreed to be interviewed for this study. Audrey and Marnie were female junior coaching facilitators. Ray and Domingo were senior male coaching facilitators. Nine coaching participants agreed to be interviewed for this study. Aaron was a male sophomore coaching participant. Alicia, Ellie, Nora, and Hannah were female sophomore coaching participants. Chris and Miguel were first-year male coaching participants. Kasey was a male junior coaching participant. Wyatt was a senior male coaching participant. See Table 15 for presentation of this information in tabular form, with the addition of race/ethnicity for each interviewee.

Table 15

*Roles and Demographics of Individual Interviewees.*

Name	Role	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Year in School
Aaron	Participant	Male	White	Sophomore
Alicia	Participant	Female	White	Sophomore
Audrey	Facilitator	Female	White	Junior
Chris	Participant	Male	White	First-year
Domingo	Facilitator	Male	African American	Senior
Ellie	Participant	Female	White	Sophomore
Hannah	Participant	Female	White	Sophomore
Kasey	Participant	Male	White	Junior
Marnie	Facilitator	Female	White	Junior
Miguel	Participant	Male	Latino	First-year
Nora	Participant	Female	White	Sophomore
Ray	Facilitator	Male	African American	Senior
Wyatt	Participant	Male	White	Senior

Change scores for interviewees were calculated on each of the 12 dimensions of the two instruments used in this study to determine whether or not this sample offered a reasonable representation of the total sample of coaching facilitators and coaching participants who completed the quantitative surveys. A complete table of these change scores can be found in Appendix G. In particular, this examination sought to determine whether or not students who volunteered for interviews may have experienced more frequent increases in wellbeing as measured by the quantitative instruments than those who did not volunteer. Overall, this group of students experienced a range of changes which included both increases and decreases on each of the 12 dimensions, which lends support to the argument that this sample represents the larger group(s) well.

**Overall interview themes.** For the purposes of this analysis, the use of the term “nearly all” refers to ten or more of the thirteen participants, “most” refers to six to ten participants, and “some” refers to fewer than six participants. When discussing themes for fewer than six participants, I provide precise numbers. Interviewees often referred to the peer group coaching program by its recognized name on campus, “Be U.”

Overall themes that arose across interviews with both coaching facilitators and participants fell into five categories, generally relating to the semi-structured interview questions: skills gained, appreciation for the peer group coaching space, contributions of peer group coaching to their personal wellbeing presently, contributions of peer group coaching to their future personal wellbeing, and an overall positive experience with peer group coaching. Themes within each category are presented by frequency of occurrence, with the most frequently occurring theme discussed first.

***Skills gained.*** Interviewees were asked what skills they gained as a result of participation in peer group coaching. Themes within this category include: listening, self-reflection, asking good questions, and practicing non-judgment.

*Listening.* When asked what skills they gained from participation in peer group coaching, all 13 interviewees indicated having gained listening skills. Given that a significant portion of the students' training centered on the development of listening skills, this theme is not surprising. Students identified an increased ability to be more focused when listening to others, and an ability to be fully present in conversations without thinking about what to say next. This increased presence when listening sends an important message to others. As Ellie said,

A good listener doesn't only listen, but they also ask questions and provide positive or negative feedback about the story they are sharing with you. It is also key to remember that they are sharing this with you, and giving them full attention helps them know that you care about them and about what they are talking about.

Interviewees very clearly attributed participation in the coaching program as positively contributing to their listening skills. Hannah exemplified this well, stating,

Listening is a big one, because I didn't feel like I was that great at listening to people before [Be U], because I would just get kind of distracted, and start thinking about other things...but now it's just more focusing on the person that's talking, and...actually responding to them when it's appropriate.

Similarly, Kasey felt that he learned how to be a better listener through participation in peer group coaching:

I would say that deep listening was something that I definitely gained during my time with the Be U groups. I learned to appreciate and listen to my fellow group members because we were able to share a lot of intimate details with each other.

Chris articulated well how his experience in peer coaching groups changed the way he interacts with others outside of the groups:

I started to focus more on how I was communicating with others. So throughout the semester I started—it's not like I was trying to coach others, but I was stopping myself when I was trying to throw solutions at them because from my experience in Be U I was realizing that that wasn't a productive way to fix things...and that's like the biggest change over the semester, just in my communication with others and my listening skills. I started paying more attention to what people are telling me.

Alicia also found herself being a better listener outside of the groups:

With the deep listening aspect, I tried to incorporate it into my everyday conversations and to be more present when I was talking with my friends or being engaged in the class or even like just one-on-one conversations with anyone.

Similarly, Marnie reported using these skills outside of the coaching groups: "Listening without an intention to craft an amazing response or to solve the problem is something that I use every day now." Overwhelmingly, all of the students interviewed articulated an increase in their ability to listen more effectively to others.



*Self-reflection.* Eight of the 13 interviewees spoke of the practice of self-reflection as a skill they gained through participation in peer group coaching. Audrey learned not only the value of this process but also the fact that it need not be time-consuming, stating, I've learned a lot of things. Probably the main thing is that I'm able to self-reflect and that it is something that is possible for...to do over a short period or short increments or over a long period of time. And it's not something that takes a whole day of the week but it's good time to just spend, even an hour out of your week that has quite a powerful advantage on life and being able to know myself betters the community around me.

Marnie found fulfillment in the practice of self-reflection, stating,

Knowing what's important to me, I think was really important because we have such limited time as college students so knowing what's important to me and like reflecting on that and being able to put my time into those things that gave me a lot of fulfillment this semester.

Marnie went on to discuss how she might use the understanding gained through self-reflection to guide her choices in the future:

I think I have a lot better awareness of who I am and so I have a lot better awareness of what I need and how I want to live my life and so hopefully in the future I will be making decisions based on what's best for me.

Ellie eloquently stated one of the benefits of regular self-reflection when she said, "After joining Be U, I feel like I have a better sense of myself and a better understanding of who I am."

Kasey articulated the ways the practice of self-reflection led to revelations about his ability to solve his own problems: “I learned that talking through my problems definitely aided in finding a solution. And if not finding a solution necessarily, just finding kind of peace with the issue and being able to accept it.” Similarly, Domingo shared,

Really, it comes out of you. And I think that’s important because what that tells me is that I’ve got what I need, and it’s not necessarily about someone telling you to do something, but really owning that it’s inside of you. And you’ve just kind of got to let it out, and unleash it, and find it. And for me, that comes through questions and really searching for that within you.

This practice of self-reflection appeared to lead to increased self-awareness on the part of these particular interviewees, in that many of them mentioned some means of knowing themselves better, whether related to values or problem-solving strategies.

*Asking good questions.* The practice of coaching centers around asking questions that invite an individual to “go deeper” in their own understanding of an issue or situation of consequence for them. Often, these questions are open-ended and invoke some reflection on the part of the individual receiving coaching. Five of the interviewees reported an increase in the ability to ask what they referred to as “good questions.” For Chris, these questions are open-ended and lead to “productive conversation.” Chris went on to add, “Another skill I gained was question asking, finding the right open-ended questions. I was also able to realize when I was about to say something that might not be productive.” Within this theme, Domingo, a senior facilitator, stated,

I think asking the right questions is another whole dynamic, because when I ask you the right question, then I can get to the meat of what you're dealing with. So asking more 'What,' 'how,' 'when' questions to them, that's a more positive response, and I think that has been something that I've gained a lot of experience in Be U.

Similarly, Nora discussed the practice of "making sure I was asking the right questions...you're going to want one that gets a little more information out and to really show that you care about them." Nora also discussed how this skill translated to her relationships outside of the coaching groups, stating,

I tried to take what I learned, like asking questions, into everyday life. I know talking helps me and so I would try to get other people to talk if they had something wrong. I'd try to ask the right questions.

For these interviewees, the skill of asking good questions contributed not only to their experience in peer group coaching, but also to their relationships outside of coaching sessions.

*Practicing non-judgment.* Four of the students interviewed indicated that they gained skills related to practicing non-judgment of others. Ellie believed that this skill will translate into her professional career: "I'm going to be a teacher, so that's important to me to be able to sit and listen to other people without interrupting or making judgments about anything." For Alicia, this practice of suspending judgment meant she was able to make connections with students that she may not have otherwise. She stated,

The skill of being willing to not judge others like right away because the people who were in my Be U group...we ended up having a lot in common but I would have probably never guessed it just based on first appearances. And not that I didn't have that skill, but [Be U] definitely reinforced it.

Similarly, Kasey identified the ways in which this practice might influence his relationships outside of the peer coaching groups:

And so instead of immediately jumping to conclusions and saying, 'Oh, well they do this, and this and this; they must be a bad person.' You know, I kind of try and understand it from their current point of view, and I think that these groups really helped me take my time when, I don't know, approaching the understanding factor of like meeting new friends; kind of like seeing where they come from; kind of wear their shoes essentially. I don't want to judge them right away; I want the backstory.

As these quotations demonstrate, the ability to practice non-judgment also translated outside of the coaching sessions.

***Appreciation for peer group coaching space.*** Students expressed appreciation for the unique space provided to them in peer group coaching, particularly related to the peer coaching groups as an outlet for stress, non-judgment, and trust/confidentiality.

***Outlet for stress.*** Five of the interviewees identified the peer group program as an appreciated outlet for stress. Students indicated that having an anticipated time and place to discuss stressful elements of their lives allowed them to focus better between coaching sessions. For Wyatt,

I noticed a huge difference in even my mental abilities between the semesters I was doing Be U and the semesters that I wasn't, basically when I had those outlets and when I didn't...I just felt like I was more attentive in my classes and I was able to finish my homework and be more focused while I was doing it because I wasn't distracted by the things going on in my life. Basically I knew there was a time and a place that I could talk about those rather than having to worry about them all the time.

Similarly, Ellie identified a feeling of catharsis after sharing in her peer group coaching sessions:

What I was talking about in my Be U group was something that wasn't really controlled by me...it was kind of something that I just like let off, and I was able to focus on other things, and not that all the time. That was really nice and I was able to just kind of let it go.

Ray identified a similar feeling, stating, "Sharing your stories with the students in your group...just kind of letting go of things you want to keep secret, and knowing—just getting a sense of relief that you don't have to worry about that as much." Miguel identified the particular benefits he saw related to participation in peer group coaching during his first year in college:

I would say that at the beginning of the semester, at the beginning of our sessions, I felt I became more stressed, I know it's probably just because of the transition, this is like a new life. I'm a first year, so that was tough. But as I went on, I felt

the stress relieved, I felt a lot more calm and I didn't go home as often. I felt more at home here.

Clearly, the peer coaching groups provided a helpful outlet for these students relating to stress.

*Non-judgment.* The theme of non-judgment also emerged in what the students indicated that they appreciated about the practice of peer coaching—four interviewees discussed appreciation that their peers in the coaching group practiced non-judgment. Ellie said, “I was able to express myself, without any judgment at all, just with guidance and with help, especially from the facilitators, even though they were all in this thing together.” Similarly, Hannah stated,

I don't think I could have asked for a better experience, because I was able to really express what I wanted, and not be judged or anything. It took a lot of courage to be able to speak up about something really personal to me.

Chris discussed his experience of talking with his non-judgmental coaching group:

I gained a lot from being able to bounce ideas off of other people when I know they're not going to judge or throw advice or solutions at me. I found it really helpful when I came into the peer coaching group with a thought on my mind and just kind of start talking, and all of a sudden 20 minutes later, I feel really good about this thing that I was unsure of how I was even going to talk about it.

Similarly, Alicia shared,

[Be U] helped me emotionally. And I felt like I gained better wellbeing in my emotional and mental health just because I was able to express myself, and

without judgment...I was able to get help from other people that I usually don't get. And so I feel like my wellbeing of my mental health has definitely improved and gotten stronger. So I'm really excited to do this again, because I want to continue to, like, be there for other people, too, not just for myself, but be there for other people.

Clearly, these students found value in the ability to express themselves to others in a non-judgmental space.

*Trust/Confidentiality.* The practice of non-judgment discussed above, as well as an agreement of confidentiality, led to an increased sense of trust in the group for four interviewees. Nora simply stated, "I could trust them." Ellie discussed how the closeness and confidential nature of her group led to some emotional moments:

There were a lot of times that we ended up crying just because a lot of the things, the stories we told are actually really touching, and really emotional, and really important to people. It was great to have—I think there were seven or eight of us in this group—that we were able to trust in each other, that everything that was said here stays here.

Ray and Kasey both discussed the development of this trust. In Ray's group,

A few people in our group...had some tough stories to tell, and eventually they just wanted to get it off their chests, and because we started to know each other a lot better, they felt more confident in sharing their stories.

Similarly, for Kasey, “I was very comfortable after maybe like the first or second meeting, I was able to feel a little bit more comfortable with trusting the group. I learned how to be a little bit more open and honest.”

Ellie went on to speak more about the benefits of confidentiality within a coaching group, saying,

I met a lot of really great people, and I feel like I made that connection that I could trust them, because they were all in the program together. We all knew, you know, we wanted to do this Be U peer coaching, and we all wanted the same initial results; we wanted to be able to trust each other and be able to express some certain things that we can't express with everybody. It was just a confidential kind of space...we don't want to spread things around, so I gained trust in other people, which was great.

For these interviewees, the agreement of confidentiality led to a trust within their groups that allowed them to freely confide in each other.

***Influence of peer group coaching on present personal wellbeing.*** Interviewees spoke of influences of participation in peer coaching groups on their current state of personal wellbeing. Themes within this category include intentional time to think about wellbeing and accountability.

*Intentional time to think about wellbeing.* Nearly all of the students indicated that having intentional time to think about their personal wellbeing during the week held numerous benefits. For some students, this led to a sense of accountability to attend to their own wellbeing. Marnie stated,



I learned about my own wellbeing and kind of how I defined it and when I'm kind of out of balance. I got a lot better at recognizing that and a lot better at improving various aspects of my own wellbeing, which has been really great for me.

Similarly, Nora, a sophomore coaching participant, said,

My favorite thing was when we would do the [wellbeing] wheel and then you can kind of see when you've colored in, how balanced your life is and every week we'd try to do that and then see what I should work on for the next week. It would be concentrating more on building my faith or making sure my social life is healthy.

Alicia, another sophomore coaching participant, had a similar experience:

We had [the nine dimensions of wellbeing] written [on a white board] and they just stayed there all semester. So we would...just talk about the nine aspects and...it was nice to be able to look back and [ask] 'what's our high' and 'what's our low' and what we can do to make all of them 'highs.'

Domingo shared similar thoughts about the nine dimensions of wellbeing, stating, "Really, the nine dimensions were beneficial; to be able to split those nine categories up, and kind of give it a language is important really; constantly thinking about those nine dimensions I would say really helped." Students also found value in spending this focused time on wellbeing in conversation with others. As Nora shared,

It opens your eyes a little bit to see something you might not have seen before. When I've been talking and someone summarizes what I'm saying or asks a question in a different way that can open my mind to a different part of my

definition of wellbeing and that was really nice sometimes because you just don't think of it in that way.

Audrey pointed out that this intentional time to think about wellbeing led to some self-accountability:

I think it helped me have more good self-reflection and be able to see when I would need more time to myself or if I was doing good in my daily life. Like if I would be like, I am doing really well with my wellbeing this week, then looking for ways to improve upon that.

Chris discussed his increased awareness of the concept of wellbeing as a result of participation in the coaching groups:

I'd say that I gained a lot of knowledge about personal wellbeing from being in the coaching groups. Things that I didn't really think of ever doing, like, grounding, led to a significant change in my focus level and my mindful presence.

Again, these students identified intentional time to focus on wellbeing as having a positive contribution on their sense of personal wellbeing.

*Accountability.* Students were asked what influence the peer group coaching had on their behaviors during the semester they were in the program. Five of the interviewees spoke explicitly of the effect of accountability within the group. As Audrey stated,

It's helped me to become more accountable in my actions and it's helped me to...focus on different aspects of my wellbeing that I probably wouldn't focus on otherwise through using the model as well as through, like, listening to other people think of things they could improve on.

For some, this accountability took the form of implementing advice from others in the group. For example, Kasey stated:

Any advice that I would receive from the members of the group, I would try and implement a little bit during the week. I know that for instance, I'd kind of fallen behind in one of my courses, and they had suggested a different way that I can start making work up, and trying to catch back up into my class, instead of trying to do it all at one time, periodically try and do it, so I could knock off a little bit extra every single time while maintaining the normal course load. And so with these weekly meetings, I was kind of able to hold myself kind of responsible for these little checkmarks that I would have. So it influenced my organizational behavior when it comes to how I would plan the upcoming weeks; I'd kind of try to implement the advice that I received from my friends.

For others, the accountability within the group related to specific goals. For Domingo:

I would say that it really got me thinking a lot about my behaviors. And really goal setting; I mean like how to set a goal, you know, accountability is important; having that group. And really just broader how to set a goal; it seems so we talk about big things as really hard, but really simple. You set a goal; you have a team of people you're accountable to; you make sure that it's reachable; you make sure that it's done; that it's timely; you make sure that you can do it; that it's achievable. And I think learning how to set goals is something that really has shaped my behavior a lot...Like I have a goal of working out this year, so I'm more intentional about it; I've got an accountability partner; I've got multiple

accountability partners; I'm calling them; they're calling me. Like, "We're going to get this thing done." And I think I can attribute that to Be U, because we would do that every week and it would be a reminder.

Alicia also discussed the feeling of accountability with her group, stating, "I'd also say that after spending like an hour, I'd also be able to kind of keep it in check with other people as well and that's powerful to have that pure sense of accountability." For Alicia's group,

We would give affirmations to other people about what they had progressed on. It was funny, like none of us really recognized all the things we had improved on but that we were there to really show each other what we had already done for ourselves.

Kasey articulated well the power of accountability within a peer coaching group when he said,

And so when I go to these meetings, I want to participate and I want to interact. So it kind of made me talk about things that were on my mind, maybe that had gone on that week, and that I was hoping to happen. So it kind of, I don't know, it ignited the fire, and made me, I don't know, start toward, kind of commence the healing processes or problem-solving processes.

The process of holding each other accountable clearly contributed to students' behaviors related to wellbeing during the semester in which they participated in peer group coaching.

*Influence of peer group coaching on future personal wellbeing.* Interviewees not only discussed contributions of peer group coaching to their current sense of personal wellbeing, but also identified ways they anticipate that the experience in peer group coaching will influence their personal wellbeing in the future. Themes within this category include continued attention to wellbeing, career influences, and relationship influences.

*Continued attention to wellbeing.* Most of the students shared plans to continue attending to their wellbeing in the future. For some, this will take the form of continued reflection and personal accountability. Alicia stated,

I think that as I move forward in my life...it's good to just have [the nine dimensions of wellbeing] to reflect on and be aware of. If I'm not satisfied with something, to have that awareness of what I am not satisfied with and what I can do to work on that and how am I going to get to where I want to be.

Similarly, for Nora,

Talking through my problems and knowing how to ask the right questions will come in handy later in life. Also, looking at those categories on the wheel will help me someday to see how my wellbeing is at that time in my life.

Some students identified more short-term influences, such as how attention to one's wellbeing can lead to better time management in college. Kasey shared that having learned the positive influence of goal-setting on his wellbeing will influence his choices. "It definitely is going to help me in the future plan out my study sessions, and my homework nights and things like that for this upcoming semester."

*Career influences.* Related to the influence of peer group coaching on their future behaviors, many of the students indicated that their time in the program contributed in some way to their professional futures. For some, this meant gaining clarification on what type of career they might want to pursue. For example, Wyatt shared:

Thinking about a career in the future I suppose I would want to choose one where I have some time to actually get time off so it's not like seven days, ten hours a day kind of thing. I don't really care about the hours during the week as long as I have some days off to think about and worry about other things and handle other aspects of my life. I know that this is important to have after being in Be U, it's important to have 'me time' and something that I can come back to and just have a check in point during the week at least once...just having that in my life is important and so I am going to make a conscious decision to keep that in my life wherever I go moving forward.

Others indicated that the skills they gained from participation in the peer group coaching program may have influenced them to be more effective professionals in particular fields. Ray indicated, "I want to be a hockey coach later in life, so using these leadership skills...can help me know more about what people are like and how I can help them with their problems." Similarly, Miguel said,

I want to be a psychiatrist or psychologist...so the listening is going to help with that and being able to help others in listening to their stories and their struggles and seeing how I can be of help to them.

Ellie related the experience to her specific plans to become a teacher and how the skills she gained through peer group coaching will help her be more effective:

The students aren't going to all have the same issues, or you won't ever know if they don't come and talk to you if they have something going on. And just to be able to learn how to sit there and listen to different scenarios is also very helpful. I want to be able to sit there with different aged kids, you know, I want to be able to listen to what they have to say, and to be able to be there for them. As a teacher, you don't want to just teach them lessons, you want to give them life lessons, and teach them things outside the curriculum, and I feel like being at a personal level, and being able to listen to them is really going to help me do that. So I think this has definitely helped me become more of a listener.

Other interviewees were less specific, but indicated generally that they would use skills gained from this experience in their professional career. For Nora, "Work will get stressful and knowing how to calm down will be important. Taking time out of my day to just sit and relax or close my eyes." This realization came early in the program for Chris: "Within the first two or three Be U sessions, I was already starting to realize how important this is going to be for interactions with professors, friends, family, even coworkers and bosses in the future."

*Relationship influences.* Three of the interviewees discussed the ways in which participation in peer group coaching might influence their future relationships. Audrey shared,

I would say that everything I've learned throughout this program continues to influence me in like my daily life, and also most likely in the future as well that I'm able to listen to others actively as well as being able to ask them open-ended questions.

Similarly, for Chris, "From Be U I started gaining skills that I found to be and still think will be useful as a parent and as a friend to others and that's like the big takeaway I think I got from Be U." Wyatt discussed the ways in which he might be better equipped to respond to challenges relating to relationships in the future, stating,

And then just kind of the whole deep thinking and evaluation process that goes along with the Be U format and how other people kind of come out of a problem differently. Just using that to make decisions better in, kind of, life-changing circumstances, if I had a parent that's dying or something like that then I can use these thought methods to move ahead and kind of deal with the problem in a healthy manner.

Within this category of the influence of peer group coaching on their future wellbeing, interviewees clearly identified their intentions to continue focusing attention on their wellbeing, as well as influences on their future careers and relationships.

***Overall positive experience.*** Finally, five of the interviewees indicated an overall positive experience with peer group coaching. According to Hannah, "It really helps with just everything in general." Wyatt expressed a desire to increase participation in peer group coaching, stating, "I think everyone should have a chance at it." Ellie summed up her experience with peer group coaching by sharing,



My overall experience has been so positive and putting that into words is so hard to do, that I don't even know how to. It was an experience that I will never forget, the people that I will always hold close, and friendships that will last a lifetime.

This section identified overall themes that arose across interviews with both coaching facilitators and participants. These themes fell within the categories of skills gained, appreciation for the peer group coaching space, contributions of peer group coaching to present and future personal wellbeing, as well as an overall positive experience with peer group coaching.

**Qualitative survey question themes.** In both the pre- and post-tests, students were asked the following question: "Describe your current state of wellbeing in one or two sentences." A qualitative analysis was conducted to determine themes for each of the three groups (coaching facilitators, coaching participants, and comparison) on both the pre- and post-test responses, as well as to determine frequency of responses within each theme.

**Coaching facilitators.** Twelve coaching facilitators completed both the pre- and post-tests. On the pre-test, three (or 25 percent) of the coaching facilitators indicated that they felt "content" or "okay" with their current state of wellbeing. Six of the coaching facilitators indicated that they felt their wellbeing was "undistributed," "out of balance" or that some areas of their wellbeing felt better than others. One student shared, "I feel good in many dimensions of my life but there is lots of room for improvement in others." Two of the facilitators said they felt "stressed and overwhelmed" on the pre-test.

On the post-test, ten (or 83 percent) of the coaching facilitators shared positive emotions around their current state of wellbeing. Six of these attributed their current state of positive wellbeing to their experience with peer group coaching. One said,

I would have to say that my wellbeing has improved since joining Be U. Talking about difficult (or even mundane) topics with peers has made me realize that I am not alone in them, and gaining some perspective from others has helped me achieve a greater sense of wellbeing.

Four of the coaching facilitators said their state of wellbeing was “pretty good” or positive in some manner but did not attribute this state to their experience in peer group coaching. Two of the coaching facilitators indicated that they felt “subpar” or “stressed” at the post-test.

***Coaching participants.*** Eighteen coaching participants completed both the pre- and post-tests. On the pre-test, five (or 28 percent) of the coaching participants indicated that they felt “peaceful,” “content,” or “balanced” with their current state of wellbeing. For example, one student said, “I currently feel that I have a well-balanced life, and that I am happy.” Six of these students indicated that their wellbeing was “okay” or “adequate.” For one student, “I think my current state of wellbeing is okay because I am happy with myself. There are some categories that I need to improve on like faith, financial, and health.” On the pre-test, six of the coaching participants indicated negative emotions around their wellbeing and mentioned being “stressed” or “overwhelmed.”

On the post-test, nine (or 50 percent) of the coaching participants indicated that they felt “good” or “content” about their current state of wellbeing. Five of these students

indicated that they felt “better” about their wellbeing and attributed this to their time in peer group coaching. For example, one student said, “Our group was very productive. We really got close toward the end of the semester, and we were able to help each other out immensely.” Six mentioned feelings of stress related to final exams. One student expressed negative emotions related to personal wellbeing, and one student said they felt “better, but not because of the group.”

**Comparison group.** Thirty-four students in the comparison group completed both the pre- and post-test. On the pre-test, 12 (or 35 percent) of the students in the comparison group indicated that they felt “good” or “content” with their wellbeing. For one student in this category, “My current state is very contented with life, and excited for what it has to offer in the future.” Seven used words like “happy” and “healthy” to describe their current state of wellbeing. Four students indicated that “some parts” of their wellbeing was good and some “need[ed] improvement.” Two said their wellbeing was “okay” or “average” at the moment. Eight mentioned feelings of stress or being overwhelmed, and two expressed negative emotions related to their current wellbeing.

On the post-test, 23 (or 68 percent) of the students in the comparison group expressed feeling “good,” “content,” or “confident” with their current state of wellbeing. Two students used the “healthy” or “happy” language to describe their current wellbeing. Three of these students mentioned a feeling of “balance” or “stability.” Four students in the comparison group said they felt “better” about their wellbeing, but did not attribute this change to anything specific. Three students in this group indicated that their wellbeing “could improve.” Eight of these students identified feelings of stress or being

tired. One student expressed negative emotions relating to their wellbeing, stating, “Struggling with depression.”

Analysis of the qualitative responses to this open-ended survey question reveals a range of emotions around personal wellbeing at both the pre- and post-test administration times for each of the three groups. However, students in both of the intervention groups were more likely to attribute positive emotions related to personal wellbeing at the post-test to their participation in peer group coaching, whereas students in the comparison group did not attribute a positive sense of personal wellbeing to anything in particular.

### **Relationship between Quantitative Results and Qualitative Themes**

A second round of qualitative analysis (independent from the overall thematic analysis above) entailed an additional examination of the interview data to further illuminate the dimensions with statistically significant positive change on the PWB and SPS instruments. Initially, I had planned for this mixed methods analysis to entail categorization of interviewees based on rates of change on the 12 dimensions of the quantitative instruments (i.e., to determine if differences in interview themes existed between those who experienced higher change and those who experienced low, no, or negative change). However, upon examination of the change rates for interviewees (see Appendix G) I concluded that this categorization would not be particularly meaningful for this discussion.

As an alternative, initial codes for this phase of qualitative analysis were developed based on the respective instrument authors’ (Ryff, 1989; Cutrona & Russell, 1987) definitions of each dimension on the PWB and SPS. Table 16 presents the details

of this process. This phase of qualitative analysis considered coaching facilitators and coaching participants as two separate groups and provides illumination of the quantitative changes for each group as presented earlier in this chapter. As this analysis was conducted independently from the previous qualitative analysis, some quotes that appeared above also appear in this section.

***Coaching facilitators.*** Coaching facilitators demonstrated statistically significant improvement in the PWB dimensions of environmental mastery, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Data from interviews with four coaching facilitators offers support for, as well as insights into, the significant increases in these areas.

*Environmental mastery.* Ryff (1989) defined the concept of environmental mastery as an “individual's ability to choose or create environments suitable to his or her psychic conditions” (p. 1071). An individual scoring high on this dimension “has a sense of mastery and competence in managing the environment; controls complex array of external activities; makes effective use of surrounding opportunities, [is] able to choose or create contexts suitable to personal needs and values” (Ryff, 1989, p. 1072). Within this theme, coaching facilitators discussed leadership skills relating to mastery of their external environment as well as their ability to manage their personal wellbeing as a result of participation in peer group coaching.

Three of the four facilitators interviewed indicated that participation in the peer group coaching led to an increase in leadership skills, particularly relating to the ability to

Table 16

*Themes from Quantitative Dimensions and Illustrative Quotes*

Instrument Scale	Definition provided by instrument author (theme)	Sample interview quote(s)
<b>Ryff (PWB)</b>		
Environmental mastery	“Individual’s ability to choose or create environments suitable for his or her psychic conditions” (Ryff, 1989, p. 1072)	“I really love the part how we set goals every week, and it really comes out of you. Then you set your goals and you go do it.” (Domingo, coaching facilitator)
Positive relations with others	“Has warm, satisfying, trusting relationships with others; is concerned about the welfare of others; capable of strong empathy, affection, and intimacy; understands give and take of human relationships” (Ryff, 1989, p. 1072).	“Getting to know brand new people can help you know more about what people are like, and just how you can help their problems and how they can help you out as well” (Ray, coaching facilitator).  “I learned to listen better so I could apply that to people that weren’t in my group or my friends outside of the group and classmates” (Miguel, coaching participant).
Purpose in life	“Has goals in life and a sense of directedness; feels there is meaning to present and past life; holds beliefs that give life purpose; has aims and objectives for living” (Ryff, 1989, p. 1072).	“Knowing what’s important to me and like reflecting on that and being able to put my time into those things gave me a lot of fulfillment this semester” (Audrey, coaching facilitator).
Self-acceptance	“Holding positive attitudes toward oneself” (Ryff, 1989, p. 1071).	“I have a lot more self-compassion with, like, ‘Okay, I am just going to try this and if it fails that’s okay’” (Marnie, coaching facilitator).

Table 16 Continued

Instrument Scale	Definition provided by instrument author (theme)	Sample interview quote(s)
<b>Social Provisions Scale</b>		
Reassurance of worth	“Recognition of one’s competence, skills, and value by others” (Cutrona & Russell, 1987, p. 39).	“I think that I learned that I’m more likable than I generally think I am. I think before I did this I felt a little bit like maybe I would annoy people by talking to them, or just, I don’t know, this strange feeling I had. But in the group, I didn’t feel like that, and I think that affected my social interactions outside of the group as well, because I actually felt like they were listening to me as well, and I think that helped me recognize when I actually am annoying people, which isn’t that often” (Hannah, coaching participant).
Attachment	“Emotional closeness from which one derives a sense of security” (Cutrona & Russell, 1987, p. 40).	“I gained a lot from being able to bounce ideas off of other people when I know that they’re not going to judge or kind of like throw advice of solutions at me” (Chris, coaching participant).
Opportunity for nurturance	“The sense that others rely upon one for their wellbeing” (Cutrona & Russell, 1987, p. 40).	“Checking on people, I like to make sure that people are doing well and know if they have someone to talk to...when I think about others, it makes me feel better about myself” (Miguel, coaching participant).

facilitate conversation. Audrey said, “I would also say through a leadership perspective, I’ve learned how to effectively communicate to other groups and a group of people.”

Similarly, Marnie indicated that she, “Learn[ed] how to facilitate and really empower

other people to kind of take responsibility for where the conversation is going rather than just asking a question and everyone kind of going around answering.” For Ray, these leadership skills had an internal as well as an external effect: “So it just kind of influenced me...to use leadership skills to, you know, overcome your own fears and just being a leader inside the classroom as well.”

Marnie articulated her ability to make changes in her own wellbeing, stating, “I got a lot better...at improving various aspects of my own wellbeing which has been really great for me.” She went on to say,

I think it made me more aware of the importance of wellbeing in my life and like I’ve said before, it gave me the ability to recognize when I’m slipping away from my normal healthy lifestyle. And it definitely gave me some tools...to start figuring out how to get back into my normal well self.

Similarly, Audrey shared, “If I would be like, I am doing really well with my wellbeing this week, then looking for ways to improve upon that.” Domingo discussed the benefit of goal setting in the context of environmental mastery, stating, “I really love the part how we set goals every week, and it really comes out of you. Then you set your goals and you go do it.” Through their experience with peer group coaching, Domingo and the other facilitators found a sense of mastery over their environments, both external and internal.

*Positive relations with others.* According to Ryff (1989), an individual scoring high in this dimension “has warm, satisfying, trusting relationships with others; is concerned about the welfare of others; capable of strong empathy, affection, and



intimacy; understands give and take of human relationships” (p. 1072). Coaching facilitators spoke of their experience getting building relationships within their coaching groups, as well as how the skills they gained might translate to other relationships outside of the coaching groups.

Marnie, in discussing the skills she gained through participation in peer group coaching, said, “A lot of interpersonal relationships probably grew because of those skills.” Similarly, Audrey highlighted her abilities to “listen to others actively and ask them open-ended questions” as skills she will use later in life in building relationships. Ray discussed his perception that “getting to know brand new people can help you know more about what people are like, and just how you can help their problems and how they can help you out as well.”

*Purpose in life.* Ryff (1989) stated that a high-scorer in this dimension “has goals in life and a sense of directedness; feels there is meaning to present and past life; holds beliefs that give life purpose; has aims and objectives for living (p. 1072). This element was clear for Marnie when she shared, “Another piece of my wellbeing [that was clarified with the group] was like a contribution piece and feeling like I have a purpose and that even though I have a really busy college lifestyle that I’m still making sure to live my life serving other people.” Ray shared that he intends to become a hockey coach in the future, and that he plans on “using these leadership skills” gained from his experience with peer group coaching in his professional field. Audrey spoke of being able to be more intentional with her actions based increased awareness of her values and purpose as a result of peer group coaching: “Knowing what’s important to me and like

reflecting on that and being able to put my time into those things gave me a lot of fulfillment this semester.” She went on to say,

I have a lot better awareness of who I am and so I have a lot better awareness of what I need and how I want to live my life and so hopefully in the future I will be making decisions based on what’s best for me.

*Self-acceptance.* For Ryff (1989), the concept of self-acceptance is defined as “holding positive attitudes toward oneself,” (p. 1071), and involves “acknowledg[ing] and accept[ing] multiple aspects of self, including good and bad qualities” (p. 1072). A number of the coaching facilitators identified increased self-acceptance in various ways. Marnie discussed an activity within her group in which group members helped each other define important elements to their personal wellbeing. Marnie said, “One of these for me was authenticity and making sure that I am constantly like just being who I am and not trying to please other people and those kinds of things.” For Marnie, “I have a lot more self-compassion with, like ‘Okay, I’m just going to try this and if it fails that’s okay.’” This statement exemplifies the acceptance of “multiple aspects of self” identified by Ryff (1989) relating to this dimension.

Audrey discussed the benefits of self-reflection stating,

I am able to self-reflect...and that’s not something that takes a whole day of the week but it’s a good time to just spend, even an hour out of your week and that has quite a powerful advantage on life and being able to know myself better and the community around me.

Domingo discussed the practice of trusting himself, which relates strongly to the concept of self-acceptance:

It comes out of you. And I think that's important because what that tells me is that I've already got what I need, and it's not necessarily about someone telling you to do something, but really owning that it's inside of you. And you've just kind of got to let it out, and unleash it, and find it. And for me, that comes through questions and really searching for that within you.

As the data above demonstrate, coaching facilitators clearly articulated an increase in self-acceptance as a result of participation in peer group coaching.

***Coaching participants.*** Coaching participants experienced statistically significant change in the PWB dimensions of Positive Relations with Others and Self-Acceptance; this group also experienced significant increases on the SPS dimensions of Reassurance of Worth, Attachment, and Opportunity for Nurturance. Data from interviews with nine coaching participants offers support for and insights into these changes in the quantitative data.

***Positive relations with others.*** As indicated above, this dimension on the PWB scales relates to having satisfying and warm relationships with others and the capability for empathy toward others (Ryff, 1989). Coaching participants discussed their experience in building positive relationships with others both within and out of the peer coaching groups.

Chris articulated his attempts to practice empathy with others and the challenge of letting go of a desire to “fix” situations for others: “I was stopping myself when I was

trying to throw solutions at them 'cause from my experience in Be U I was realizing that wasn't a productive way to fix things." For Chris, the skills he gained through peer group coaching will carry into future relationships. He went on to say, "within the first two or three Be U sessions I was already starting to realize how important this is going to be for interactions with professors, friends, family, co-workers and bosses in the future."

Similarly, Miguel indicated, "I learned to listen better so I could apply that to people that weren't in my group or my friends outside of the group and classmates." Kasey discussed his new strategy for meeting potential friends, developed as a result of participation in peer group coaching:

You know, I kind of try and understand it from their current point of view, and I think that these groups really helped me take my time when, I don't know, approaching the understanding factor of like meeting new friends; kind of like seeing where they come from; kind of wear their shoes essentially. I don't want to judge them right away; I want to know the backstory.

Hannah discussed the fact that her group spent time together outside of the coaching sessions because of the friendships they had created:

Yeah, I mean there were only three of us, so it was just kind of like close, and intimate, and we were all really friendly, and we did things outside of the group together too. It just felt like we were meeting up to chat once a week and it was just like a group of friends doing that.

Nora had a similar experience in her group, and said, "It was a good group and kind of learning to build a relationship with them and just say hi whenever you see them." Ellie

had very positive things to say about the friendships forged in her group, stating, “I have made some of the best friendships that anyone could ask for and for that, I am truly thankful. It was an experience that I will never forget, the people that I will always hold close, and friendships that will last a lifetime.” Clearly, peer group coaching increased the coaching participants’ perceptions of having satisfying and positive relationships with others.

*Self-acceptance/Reassurance of worth.* As discussed above, the self-acceptance dimension on the PWB scales entails the ability to view oneself positively. The SPS provision of reassurance of worth is defined very similarly by Cutrona and Russell (1987), who explain it as “recognition of one’s competence, skills, and value by others” (p. 39), and also equate this dimension with the idea of self-efficacy. Given the similarities between these dimensions, they have been combined into one theme for the purpose of this analysis. Coaching participants discussed their experience with increased self-acceptance and reassurance of worth as a result of the peer coaching program. Hannah had a relatively profound realization within this theme, stating:

I think that I learned that I’m more likable than I generally think I am. I think before I did this I felt a little bit like maybe I would annoy people by talking to them, or just, I don’t know, this strange feeling I had. But in the group, I didn’t feel like that, and I think that affected my social interactions outside of the group as well, because I actually felt like they were listening to me as well, and I think that helped me recognize when I actually am annoying people, which isn’t that often.

In a similar vein, Miguel discussed what he had learned about himself:

[I learned] that I am better in listening than talking. You know, when it was my time to share whatever it was we were talking about I just found myself stumbling through words a little bit. So I was definitely lot better listening and giving feedback to people on what they said.

The dynamic of the peer group coaching process allowed Miguel to spend more time listening, which he identified as a personal strength.

Chris articulated his newfound ability to trust himself when discussing the process of seeking help from others, “And all it was, was me answering my own questions.”

Similarly, Kasey shared, “I learned that talking through my problems definitely aided in finding a solution. And if not a solution necessarily, just finding a kind of peace with the issue and being able to accept it.”

When asked what she had learned about herself through participation in peer group coaching, Ellie articulated well the concept of self-acceptance.

It also kind of gave me more trust and confidence myself. Like I said before, that I could come, and then it’s okay to ask for help; I don’t have to just do everything myself. I like doing things certain ways, but it’s also important to let other people take the reins too, and kind of me be the follower too. I don’t always have to be the one that instigates things. So that it is okay to ask for help, and it’s okay to express what you’re feeling, because you can’t always hold it in.

A number of other participants focused on increased understanding of themselves through peer group coaching. Chris said, “A skill I gained was, I don’t know, how to

word this as a skill, but kind of like how to understand myself better.” Similarly, Kasey discussed his increased self-understanding and how he will apply it toward the goal of academic success:

I’ve learned over the last maybe, I don’t know, four or five months that I’m very goal-oriented, and I like clear-cut, concise guidelines. So instead of maybe just thinking about, “Oh, I’ll do my homework later,” I will make a kind of a chart saying, “Okay, I’m going to have this much done at this time.” Or “I’m going to have at least half of it done by the next week.”

The quotations above provide substance and insights related to the quantitative increases in the areas of self-acceptance and reassurance of worth for coaching participants.

*Attachment.* The provision of attachment on the SPS is categorized as concerning the presence of “affectional ties” (Cutrona & Russell, 1987, p. 40). Cutrona and Russell (1987) define attachment as “emotional closeness from which one derives a sense of security” (p. 40). The nature of the peer coaching groups seemed to contribute to a sense of attachment among participants, particularly relating to a space of non-judgment and trust.

As Chris stated, “I gained a lot from being able to bounce ideas off of other people when I know that they’re not going to judge or kind of like throw advice or solutions at me.” Hannah discussed the security of having a coaching group that was removed from the situations she needed to work through:

I think it helped, because at the time that I’d like joined Be U, I had some issues, but after like a few weeks, they didn’t seem as big, because I’d talk to them – to

people that actually like – they didn't have any connection to the issues at all, but they were willing to listen, and give me advice so that was nice. And it was just kind of not stressful to talk to them about it, since they didn't know the people at all.

Similarly, Nora identified the relatively quick building of trust among her group members, stating, "Talking about my problems and feelings and even the first or second week, I didn't know these people very well but I knew we were all there for one purpose. I could trust them." Kasey explained how trust was built in his group:

I learned to appreciate and listen to my fellow group members, which turned out to be very close friends of mine now, because we were able to share a lot of intimate details with each other in these meetings because of the mutual respect for each other's stories and experiences.

The trust she felt with her group allowed Ellie to share honestly in ways she might not have otherwise:

I also learned how to open myself too; at first I didn't know anybody in the groups, so I was kind of worried about sharing some personal things. And later on when people started sharing things, I felt, you know, they trust me into keeping their things a secret, even though they don't know me. I feel like that I could do the same thing, and it was nice to be able to kind of express things that I can't express at home or with somebody that I know, because they're going through the same thing. So it was nice to be able to trust myself that I could open up to other people.



She went on to explain the power of confidentiality:

It was an emotional experience. I mean there were a lot of times that we ended up crying just because a lot of the things, the stories that were told are really touching, and really emotional, and really important to people. It was great to have - I think there were seven or eight of us in this group – that we were able to trust in each other, that everything that was said here stays here. I could express anything I wanted to and those six others would be right there to pick me up and support me. I am so happy that I have that support from others that I just met and from those that care deeply for me and my wellbeing.

Wyatt expressed similar appreciation for his group:

It helped with my emotional wellbeing by being able to talk about issues that I had going on in my personal life and just kind of sort those out and different perspectives on it from the different group members as they were asking me questions and also challenging myself to think more about it with those questions. So I would be able to wrestle those topics that were causing me issues, during those Be U sessions rather than having to be distracted with it and try to deal with at a different time of the day.

Hannah identified a unique aspect of her group that made her feel that she could confide in and trust them, stating, “In the group, we were very talkative a lot of the time, but also willing to let each other listen. And so it felt more two-way than it normally does.”

Kasey discussed the ways his group’s dynamic helped him find motivation to move forward in solving his own problems:

It kind of made me talk about things that were on my mind, maybe that had gone on that week, and that I was hoping to happen. So it kind of, I don't know, it ignited the fire, and made me, I don't know, start toward, kind of commence the healing processes or problem-solving processes.

Finally, Alicia's group encouraged each other to recognize progress in themselves, leading to increased trust and closeness between group members. Alicia shared,

I didn't really realize that some of the things that I had worried about or not been satisfied with at first that I had actually progressed through. And I didn't realize that but we would always kind of reflect on each other and say like just like give affirmations to other people about what they had progressed on. It was funny like none of us really recognized all the things that we had improved on but that we were there to show each other what we had already done for ourselves.

Coaching participants clearly valued the sense of trust in their groups, which provides support for the quantitative increase in the area of Attachment.

*Opportunity for nurturance.* Cutrona and Russell (1987) define the opportunity for nurturance provision as relating to self-esteem and involving "the sense that others rely upon one for their well-being" (p. 40). The nature of peer group coaching as it occurs in this particular instance encourages students to not only confide in others, but also to assist others in working toward their own sense of personal wellbeing.

Hannah articulated this reciprocal process well when she said, "I talk to them about my problems, but they also talk to me about their problems. And their problems are oftentimes a lot more serious than mine." Students have an opportunity to help others

work through struggles or challenges in the practice of peer coaching. Similarly, for Alicia, “I think it was cool to watch other people kind of at first struggle with like some different dimensions that maybe I struggled with and then as a group we just kind of talked it out. And it was cool to watch other people progress.” Miguel enjoyed this element of peer group coaching and the way it made him feel, stating, “Checking on people, I like to make sure that people are doing well and know if they have someone to talk to...when I think about others, it makes me feel better about myself.”

Chris discussed a realization that may help him be of more assistance to others in the future:

I like to see things positively and so when somebody throws something at me that's like a personal thing to them I'm just like, 'Oh,' it's like the positive twist on it and for me that just works to help me. But as I've learned from the experience in Be U, it doesn't really work that way. I started paying more attention to what people are telling me, and that was a big thing, too.

Similarly, Kasey articulated his newfound listening skills and how they might allow him to assist others, stating, “I really gained a nice perspective on how to listen, not necessarily to judge what they're saying, but maybe how their feeling on certain topics.” For Wyatt, “A lot of deep listening skills, just listening to other people talk about their issues and kind of questions that I could ask in those situations.”

Kasey explained what the process of helping others in his coaching group looked like, stating,

I had a deeper connection with them in a large respect, due to their honesty, and trust in me, that I was able to withhold some of my own biased opinions on certain activities. And give them an honest opinion on how their actions could kind of play out, or how I could possibly help them.

Ellie discussed how the skills she gained in peer group coaching allow her to be a more helpful friend to others:

I listen to people all the time; I'm helping three people with depression right now. So I'm used to just sitting back and listening, because they're all so different, and so I don't want to judge or make assumptions about anything, so I just sit back and listen. And when they're done, then I kind of interject, and you know, ask questions and give feedback.

Nora had similar reflections about the importance of listening to others:

From listening to the other people, when they talk and tell about whatever they need to. And then making sure that I ask the right questions because you know, you might ask something that offends them or that's just, you know, 'yes or no' answer, you're going to want one that gets a little more information out and to really show that you care about them.

Ellie related the opportunity for nurturance within peer group coaching to her future career as a teacher:

I liked being able to sit there also and listen to other people talk about their things, because I wanted to help other people, and I'm going to be a teacher, so that's important to me to be able to sit and listen to people without interrupting or

making judgments about anything. So I feel like that was really important and I really liked that about it too.

Miguel had a similar revelation relating to his professional future, stating,

My career path is I want to be a psychiatrist, psychologist kind of thing so the listening is going to help with that and being able to help others in listening to their stories and their struggles and seeing how I can be of help to them.

As these quotes demonstrate, the nature of peer group coaching allows for students to feel that they play a role in assisting others in working toward an increased sense of wellbeing, so the quantitative increase in this area is not surprising.

As this qualitative analysis reveals, data from the four individual interviews with coaching facilitators lends support and partial explanation for the quantitative changes in the PWB dimensions of environmental mastery, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance for this group. Data from the nine interviews with coaching participants illuminates the statistically significant changes in the PWB dimensions of positive relations with others and self-acceptance, as well as the SPS dimensions of reassurance of worth, attachment, and opportunity for nurturance.

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I presented analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data collected in this study, as well as a second iteration of qualitative analysis to help explain areas of significant increase on the quantitative measures for coaching facilitators and coaching participants. In the next chapter, I offer interpretations of these findings, and

discussion of implications for research and practice based on the results of the current study.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions**

Previous chapters of this dissertation have offered context for the current study based on existing literature, posed specific research questions to be addressed by this study, described in detail the methods used in this particular study, and presented the results. This chapter contains a summary of the findings, discussion of the findings in the context of existing theory and previous research on coaching, implications for student affairs practice and future research, limitations, and overall conclusions.

### **Summary of Results**

This study addressed the following research questions: 1) What effect, if any, does participation in a peer coaching group program have on the wellbeing of students as measured by quantitative measures of wellbeing, and 2) How do students describe their experience in the peer group coaching program, and how, if at all, do they consider the program to be beneficial to their own wellbeing? A third, emergent research question also informed the scope of this study, and invited examination of the qualitative data to provide explanation for areas of significant quantitative change in the wellbeing of study participants.

The first question was addressed in the first, quantitative phase of this study, and sought to understand the effects of participation in a peer group coaching program on student wellbeing via the use of validated quantitative measures of wellbeing. The second question was addressed in the second, qualitative phase of this study, and included interviews to determine students' own perception of the peer group coaching experience. The third, emergent question required integration of the two sets of data gained in both

phases of the study, and involved examination of areas of convergence between the two sets of data.

**Quantitative.** Statistical analyses were conducted to determine whether or not students in the coaching intervention groups (coaching facilitators and coaching participants) and students in a comparison group experienced statistically significant change on two measures of wellbeing. All three groups showed some statistically significant positive change on a number of the scales of the two instruments used on this study. The two coaching intervention groups demonstrated significant increases at  $p < .05$  in more dimensions of wellbeing than the comparison group. Coaching facilitators ( $n = 12$ ) demonstrated statistically significant increases in the PWB dimensions of environmental mastery, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Coaching participants ( $n = 18$ ) experienced statistically significant increases in the PWB dimensions of positive relations with others and self-acceptance; this group also experienced significant increases on the SPS dimensions of reassurance of worth, attachment, and opportunity for nurturance. A combined group of coaching facilitators and participants ( $n = 30$ ) showed statistically significant increases on PWB dimensions of environmental mastery, positive relations with others, and self-acceptance, as well as on the SPS dimensions of reassurance of worth, attachment, and opportunity for nurturance. A comparison group of students ( $n = 34$ ) participating in a leadership series showed statistically significant positive change in the PWB dimension of autonomy, and no statistically significant change on any of the other eleven dimensions of the two instruments used.



***Qualitative.*** Semi-structured interviews with 13 individuals revealed themes relating to skills gained, appreciation for the peer group coaching space, contributions of peer group coaching to present and future personal wellbeing, as well as an overall positive experience with peer group coaching.

Students were asked one qualitative question related to their sense of personal wellbeing at both the pre- and post-test administrations of the survey containing the quantitative instruments. Comparison of the themes in this qualitative survey question related to wellbeing on the pre- and post-tests revealed that while a similar percentage of respondents reported positive perceptions of the personal wellbeing on the post-test, students in the intervention groups tended to attribute their positive sense of wellbeing to participation in peer group coaching, while students in the comparison group did not attribute their positive perception of personal wellbeing on the post-test to anything in particular.

***Relationship between quantitative and qualitative.*** This analysis entailed the use of codes produced from authors' (Cutrona & Russell, 1987; Ryff, 1989) definitions of the subscales in which coaching facilitators and coaching participants showed significant positive change on the PWP and SPS. Qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews provided insights into why these increases may have occurred for each of the two intervention groups. This quantitative analysis provided support in the students' own words for the quantitative changes on the scales of the two quantitative instruments used, and provided examples of what these changes meant in the lives of students who took part in the peer group coaching program. This analysis offered a means of triangulation

of the quantitative analysis, in that interviewees spoke in some manner to each of the areas of significant quantitative increase, and therefore validated the quantitative results.

### **Discussion of Results**

This study was designed to explore the impact of participation in peer group coaching on the wellbeing of undergraduate students. Several conclusions can be drawn from the results of this study. Overall, the results of this study support the creation of peer group coaching programs as a means of structured peer support for undergraduate students. Both the quantitative and qualitative results lend support to the argument that peer group coaching holds numerous benefits for students. Additionally, the results of this study align with previous research in the areas of coaching and college student development.

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) discussed the challenges inherent in attempting to evaluate the effects of a particular intervention or experience on the development of college students and termed this the study of “*within-college effects*” (p. 9). Particularly, given the significant development in many areas that happens for nearly all college students—psychosocial, cognitive, and moral, to name a few—researchers must employ rigorous methodologies in order to attribute changes to a particular experience. This challenge certainly applies in this case, as this study attempted to evaluate the impact of a specific intervention on the wellbeing of college students. The use of a comparison group for the quantitative analysis in this study addresses this potential concern to some extent, as well as the inclusion of qualitative data, which provided participants’ own evaluation of the effects of their experiences with peer group coaching.

The results of this study align with the findings discussed in Chapter Two of Green, Oades and Grant (2005), who found that a coaching intervention group showed significant changes between pre- and post-test administrations on the PWB dimensions of personal growth, environmental mastery, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance, while a comparison group who did not receive coaching showed no such changes (Green, Oades, & Grant, 2005). Among students in the two coaching intervention groups in this study, significant increases occurred between pre- and post-test scores on all of the PWB dimensions discussed by Green, Oades, and Grant (2005), aside from personal growth.

Bowman's (2010) study on PWB in college students provides a useful context for examination of the results of this study. Bowman (2010) found that students who attended large research universities experienced greater gains in self-acceptance, purpose in life, and positive relations with others than students who attend smaller liberal arts colleges. Bowman (2010) offered that this difference between research and liberal arts institutions may be a function of the considerable social options at larger institutions, which afford students greater opportunity to foster friendships, reflect on their own development, and ascertain their vocational interests. In this study, students at a small liberal arts college who participated in peer group coaching demonstrated gains in self-acceptance, purpose in life, and positive relations with others. Given these results, it could be argued that the practice of peer group coaching provided the opportunity for students to build community, reflect on their personal development, and to find clarity

relating to their vocational interests—areas which Bowman (2010) posits to be lacking at some small liberal arts institutions.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the American College Health Association (2012) reported that 86.4 percent of college students reported feeling overwhelmed while in college. Additionally, Pierceall and Keim (2007) found that in their study of 212 undergraduate students enrolled in introductory psychology courses, 75 percent fell into a “moderately stressed” category, and 12 percent fell into a “highly stressed” category. In a sample of 145 undergraduate students, Hudd et al. (2000) found that 52.1 percent reported high levels of stress during the course of a typical semester. Given the statistics provided by the ACHA and the findings of these two studies, it could logically be argued that some portion of the students in this study experienced stress at some point throughout their time in the peer group coaching program. In fact, within the individual interviews conducted for this study, students identified the peer coaching groups as an outlet for stress. For example, Wyatt, a coaching participant, shared:

I noticed a huge difference in even my mental abilities between the semesters I was doing Be U and the semesters that I wasn't, basically when I had those outlets and when I didn't...I just felt like I was more attentive in my classes and I was able to finish my homework and be more focused while I was doing it because I wasn't distracted by the things going on in my life. Basically I knew there was a time and a place that I could talk about those rather than having to worry about them all the time.

Ellie, also a coaching participant, had a similar experience, stating:

What I was talking about in my Be U group was something that wasn't really controlled by me...it was kind of something that I just like let off, and I was able to focus on other things, and not that all the time. That was really nice and I was able to just kind of let it go.

As these quotes, as well as others included in Chapter Four illustrate, the experience of peer coaching provided at least one stress-relief strategy for the students who participated in this study. Given the prevalence of stress among college students, peer group coaching may be one possible programmatic solution for some students.

The feelings of sadness, loneliness, anxiety and being overwhelmed experienced by many college students, as discussed in Chapter Two, may be attributed in part to the many intrapersonal transitions students experience while in college (Evans et al., 2010; Towbes & Cohen, 1996). Students constantly attempt to navigate and cope with these transitions in areas such as personal identity, sense of purpose, relationships, independence, and values clarification (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Goodman, Schlossberg and Anderson (2006), in their study of adults experiencing transition, posited four sets of factors that may influence one's ability to cope with transition: situation, self, support, and strategies. The practice of peer group coaching provides a somewhat structured means of coping with transition when considering these four sets of factors, as illustrated by a number of the qualitative themes revealed through interviews in this study. The coaching sessions provided a consistent and supportive *situation* for the students. Within this situation, students were encouraged to exercise *self*-reflection. Students indicated in the interviews that they engaged in a great deal of self-reflection as

a result of participation in the peer coaching groups. Also, the students interviewed articulated feeling a high level of *support* within the coaching groups. Finally, the training and ongoing coaching sessions provided the students with *strategies* for coping with transition, such as the ability to coach themselves in environments outside of the coaching sessions. The coaching groups offered a useful dynamic, which assisted the students in coping with the challenges inherent in the college experience. The peer coaching groups offered a supportive space for the students to focus on themselves, which participants found valuable.

The students spoke at length in interviews about having gained personal insight through the process of self-reflection via peer group coaching. In particular, the students reported learning that they hold the answers to their life's problems and do not necessarily need the advice of others. For example, Domingo, a coaching facilitator, shared this insight:

It comes out of you. And I think that's important because what that tells me is that I've already got what I need, and it's not necessarily about someone telling you to do something, but really owning that it's inside of you.

This intrapersonal development is an important measure of coaching success (Grant, 2008). Additionally, the development of the intuition of being able to trust one's "internal voice" aligns with Baxter Magolda's (2008) concept of self-authorship. Individuals who negotiate the phase of *internal foundation* within self-authorship "are grounded in their self-determined belief system, in their sense of who they are, and in the mutuality of their

relationships” (Evans, et al., 2010, p. 186). Ellie’s reflection on self-acceptance articulates well her journey toward self-authorship as defined by Baxter Magolda (2008):

It also kind of gave me more trust and confidence myself. Like I said before, that I could come, and then it’s okay to ask for help; I don’t have to just do everything myself. I like doing things certain ways, but it’s also important to let other people take the reins too, and kind of me be the follower too. I don’t always have to be the one that instigates things. So that it is okay to ask for help, and it’s okay to express what you’re feeling, because you can’t always hold it in.

Ellie’s comments here, as well as the overall qualitative themes discussed in Chapter Four, support the argument that participation in peer group coaching contributes to the development of self-authorship in college students.

Both the quantitative and qualitative results in this study show that students experienced an increase in feelings of community and social support as a result of participation in peer group coaching. Quantitatively, statistically significant increases in the areas of positive relations with others, attachment, and opportunity for nurturance lend support for this argument. Qualitatively, students in the interviews identified benefits of the coaching groups related to a sense of community and of the creation of a trustworthy support system. For example, Kasey, a coaching participant, discussed the development of a sense of community within his group:

I learned to appreciate and listen to my fellow group members, which turned out to be very close friends of mine now, because we were able to share a lot of

intimate details with each other in those meetings because of the mutual respect for each other's stories and experiences.

In considering the prevalence of loneliness among college students (American College Health Association, 2014; Ponzetti, 1990), the specific benefits relating to community and social support may be especially valuable to participants in peer group coaching. In his study on college students, Astin (1993) found that students' self-ratings on emotional health were negatively affected by a perceived lack of student community. Additionally, high levels of perceived social support among college students are associated with low levels of depression and anxiety (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988). While college seemingly provides a ready-made community for students, in reality, many of them feel singular in their experiences, which may result in a somewhat incongruous sense of loneliness among a sea of peers. Peer group coaching can offer some relief to these challenging emotions. If students find a sense of community and social support within the peer coaching groups, they may also experience less loneliness, decreased anxiety and a greater sense of emotional health.

The quantitative and qualitative results of this study also support the argument that participation in peer group coaching contributed to the students' sense of eudaimonic wellbeing, defined in Chapter Two as the concept of living in accordance with one's *daimon*, or true self (Waterman, 1993). Individuals experience eudaimonia when they are holistically engaged and their life activities are congruent with deeply held values (Waterman, 1993). The statistically significant changes in the area of self-acceptance for both coaching facilitators and coaching participants, as well as in the area of purpose in



life for coaching facilitators, can be considered relevant to a discussion of eudaimonic wellbeing. These results suggest that students in the peer group coaching program experienced some clarification of values and how to align their choices with their personal values. On the qualitative side, within individual interviews, students in this study spoke about knowing themselves better as a result of participation in peer group coaching, and their intention to make future choices that align with that knowledge. As Marnie, a coaching facilitator, shared:

Knowing what's important to me and like reflecting on that and being able to put my time into those things that gave me a lot of fulfillment this semester.

Similarly, for Audrey, another coaching facilitator,

I have a lot better awareness of who I am and so I have a lot better awareness of what I need and how I want to live my life and so hopefully in the future I will be making decisions based on what's best for me.

As these two interviewees articulated well, students who took part in the peer group coaching intervention experienced movement toward increased eudaimonic wellbeing.

Given that the comparison group was comprised of students participating in a programmatic series related to leadership, their increase on the SPS subscale of autonomy is not particularly surprising. This finding supports the work of Foubert and Grainger (2006) who also found that students participating in leadership-related activities reported greater development in moving through autonomy toward interdependence than those who did not. Additionally, since the program in which they participated did not have a specific focus on wellbeing (whereas the peer group coaching intervention did), it is not

surprising that in responding to the qualitative question about their personal sense of wellbeing in the survey, students in this group did not attribute any improvement in their perception of wellbeing at the post-test administration to participation in the leadership series. This is in contrast to students in the intervention groups, who were more likely to contribute any improvement in their perception of wellbeing at the post-test do participation in the peer group coaching program.

As this section has presented, the findings of this study support the findings of others within the areas of both coaching and higher education literature. The findings of this study suggest that the practice of peer group coaching holds numerous benefits for college students, and should be explored as an effective means of peer support given the challenges experienced by many students.

### **Limitations**

Several limitations of this study may restrict the generalization of its results. An ideal mixed methods study of the effects of peer group coaching on college student wellbeing would have been based on a larger sample population, particularly for quantitative data collection and analysis. Additionally, in this study, students in all three groups volunteered to participate in extracurricular activities and may not be representative of the general population of undergraduate students. The fact that the site for this particular study was a small, private, liberal arts institution may limit its generalizability to other types of institutions, for example, larger public institutions. Further, the study design may have induced a demand effect; that is, participants may have felt the need to report enhanced wellbeing in order to please the researcher.

While the instruments used in this study allowed for a relatively holistic examination of wellbeing on the part of subjects, both are primarily intended to measure psychological elements of wellbeing, and do not explicitly address areas of physical, spiritual, and financial wellbeing. The multidimensional models of wellbeing in used at many institutions of higher education (including the study institution) often include attention to these dimensions. Later in this chapter, I suggest the use of a particular instrument that more accurately assesses wellbeing related to dimensions other than psychological in future research within this subject area.

An additional limitation relates to the training coaching facilitators received for this particular iteration of the peer group coaching program at the study institution. Students were offered four, three-hour training sessions related to peer group coaching; however, attendance at these trainings was not consistent and not all coaching facilitators received the full training. This concern has subsequently been addressed at the research site, in that the most recent training for coaching facilitators took the form of a four-week immersion course within the academic curriculum. Students received academic credit for taking the course, and were therefore significantly more committed to attending the course and engaging with the training material presented.

### **Implications and Recommendations for Higher Education/Student Affairs**

Results of this study suggest that the practice of peer coaching holds numerous benefits for undergraduate students. College student development theory outlines the common struggles that students face in college as they navigate transitions, identity development, and clarification of values and purpose (Evans, et al., 2010). Given the

numerous benefits of peer group coaching identified by this study, the practice of peer group coaching should be embraced by student affairs professionals as one means for mitigating some of the challenges students face, such as feelings of loneliness and being overwhelmed (Ponzetti, 1990). The need for mental health support among college students is steadily increasing (Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010), leaving on-campus counseling centers unable to sufficiently serve student populations (Gallagher, 2008). Peer group coaching may be a reasonable “first stop” for students who are struggling with lower-order concerns and may lessen the demand for professional mental health services. The results of this study support the idea that the creation of peer coaching groups may be a means toward better supporting student mental health across student affairs divisions and not just within counseling centers.

Until coaching becomes more prevalent in higher education, the implementation of an effective peer group coaching program will likely involve collaboration with coaching practitioners outside of higher education, as was the case in this study. Implementation of a peer group coaching program may be relatively economical, in that monetary costs may only involve one-time compensation of trainers, which should be considered a significant benefit in times of budgetary stress at many institutions of higher education.

This study was conducted in part to provide evaluative data for the research site. The results of this study are currently being used for program evaluation at the study institution, as results have been disseminated to stakeholders and will be utilized to inform the future iterations of the program.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Further research should seek to contribute to this conversation with both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The current study justifies larger studies on the benefits of peer group coaching for college students, as well as other populations. The two instruments used in this particular study differed in their total item numbers and response scales, which may have influenced the extent to which statistically significant changes occurred on each instrument between pre- and post-test administrations. The PWB instrument has a higher number of questions (54 total; nine per dimension) than the SPS (24 total; four per provision), as well as a larger response scale (1-6, as compared to 1-4) so it may have been more likely for individuals to demonstrate change between administrations on the PWB than on the SPS. Given this ceiling effect of the SPS, I recommend the use of instruments that allow for greater variation in response.

The Multidimensional Wellness Inventory (Mayol, Scott, & Schreiber, 2014), currently in the process of being validated, may prove to be an effective instrument for studies of this nature. This inventory was created to measure nine constructs of wellness, which the authors identify as “physical-exercise, physical-nutrition, mental, social, spiritual, intellectual, environmental, occupational and financial” (Mayol, Scott, & Schreiber, 2014, p. 5). This instrument merits consideration for future research on college student wellbeing, as it includes items explicitly related to physical, spiritual, and financial wellbeing, areas not explicitly considered by either of the instruments used in this study.

Future research might also seek to evaluate the effects of peer group coaching for particular groups of undergraduate students for whom peer support has been proven to be beneficial, such as ethnic minority, first-generation students (Dennis, Phinney, & Chuateco, 2005). Additionally, given the results discussed here, the psychosocial support offered through peer group coaching may hold benefits for graduate students (Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2000) as well as undergraduate students.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

This study examined a shift in thinking about college student mental health, which has historically been deemed a “crisis” in need of a solution. Certainly, the very real challenges facing undergraduate students should not be ignored; however, as the literature in Chapter Two made clear, additional means of addressing student needs are required given the strains on counseling center staff, as well as other student affairs staff. A focus on student wellbeing within the context of positive psychology can serve to augment work in student affairs.

The results of this study reveal that participation in peer group coaching holds numerous benefits for undergraduate students. Students in this study involved in peer group coaching experienced quantitative benefits related to areas of intrapersonal as well as interpersonal development. Qualitative data collected in this study revealed that students in the peer coaching groups provided non-judgmental, confidential spaces for each other, which translated into a perception of increased social support. The results of this study suggest the creation of peer group coaching as an effective means of providing support for undergraduate students.

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## Appendix A

## Peer Group Coaching Facilitators Training Schedule

**Facilitator Training**

*Be U Facilitator Training combines expert training, compelling videos, guest speakers, and extensive class exercises to give you the knowledge and skills to effectively facilitate a Be U Peer Coaching Group. Whether you are an experienced or a first-time facilitator, this training will enhance your abilities and confidence to succeed.*

Attendance is **REQUIRED** of all Fall 2014 student facilitators.

**Register by  
Monday,  
September 8<sup>th</sup>  
at 12:00pm!**

"My favorite thing about Be U is being able to sit down once a week and allow myself time to step back and think about what's going on in my life outside of my busy schedule. Sometimes it's easy to forget about some of the dimensions of your wellbeing, but I've found that setting aside time to focus on where I am with my personal wellbeing has made me more conscious of how I can continue to grow in each of these areas."  
- Emily Marquette '15

Day One: Monday, September 8		
6:00 PM	Welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gathering &amp; Introductions</li> <li>Be U Vision &amp; Mission</li> <li>What is Coaching? Value &amp; Purpose of Facilitator</li> </ul>
6:15 PM	Motivational Interviewing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define Motivational Interviewing</li> <li>Experience &amp; Analyze a Coaching Session</li> </ul>
<b>Break</b>		
7:30 PM	Mindful Listening & Empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define &amp; Practice Mindfulness</li> <li>Draw on Cognitive &amp; Affective Listening</li> <li>Harness the Power of Empathy</li> <li>Apply Mindful Listening &amp; Empathy in Dyads</li> </ul>
8:45 PM	Group Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Questions &amp; Resources</li> <li>Mindfulness Practice</li> <li>Be U Closing</li> </ul>
9:00 PM End of Day One		

Day Two: Wednesday, September 10		
6:00 PM	Welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grounding</li> <li>Kristi Vickers-Douglas</li> </ul>
6:15 PM	Mayo Clinic Model with Kristi Vickers-Douglas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mayo Clinic Wellness Coaching Model</li> <li>Practice: Change Talk, Resistance &amp; Rumination, Transparency, Openness, &amp; Meaningful Experiments</li> <li>Experience an Interactive Group Coaching Session</li> </ul>
<b>Break</b>		
8:00 PM	Mayo Clinic Model with Kristi Vickers-Douglas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement Mayo Wellness Model in Triads</li> <li>Synthesize &amp; Respond to Model</li> </ul>
8:50 PM	Group Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be U Closing</li> </ul>
9:00 PM End of Day Two		

**Expert Trainers**

- Elizabeth Bakalyar,  
Certified Health Coach  
- Kristi Vickers Douglas  
PhD, LP, Mayo Clinic

**Guest Speakers**

- Michele Rusinko  
- Gretchen Koehler

**Materials**

Training material are provided online via Moodle.GAC.edu

## WELLBEING INITIATIVE



Day Three: Monday, September 15		
6:00 PM	Welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grounding</li> <li>• Implement Grounding Techniques in Dyads</li> </ul>
6:15 PM	Visioning for Wellbeing with Michele Rusinko	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define Essential Parts of a Wellbeing Vision</li> <li>• Engage in Affirmative Vision Writing</li> <li>• Develop Strategies to Assist in Vision Creation</li> </ul>
Break		
7:15 PM	Empathic Redirection & Positive Reframing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand Negative Rumination</li> <li>• Learn Skills to Reframe a Group Conversation toward Positive Action</li> <li>• Apply Core Coaching Skills in Triads</li> </ul>
8:00 PM	Coaching Groups Session 1: Facilitators 1 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the Facilitator Quick Reference Guide</li> <li>• Practice Transparency within a Group Setting</li> </ul>
8:45 PM	Group Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Synthesize Groups in the Spirit of Positivity</li> <li>• Questions and Additional Resources via Moodle</li> <li>• Be U Closing</li> </ul>
9:00 PM End of Day Three		

**Certificate**

Earn a Group Coaching Facilitator Certificate of Completion for successful attendance and participation in this 12-hour training course plus required practice

**Ongoing Training**

3 additional evening training sessions during fall semester (optional):  
 - Wednesday, October 15<sup>th</sup>  
 - Wednesday, November 5<sup>th</sup>  
 - Wednesday, November 19<sup>th</sup>

**Facilitator Registration Deadline**

Monday, September 8, 2014 at 12:00pm

Day Four: Wednesday, September 17		
6:00 PM	Coaching Groups Session 2: Facilitators 3 & 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the Facilitator Quick Reference Guide</li> <li>• Continue Techniques of MI to Evoke Wellbeing Visions &amp; Move Toward Meaningful Experiments</li> </ul>
6:45 PM	Mind/Body Exercises for Stress Management with Gretchen Koehler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate the Mind &amp; Body to Reduce Stress</li> <li>• Understand the Connection between Managing Stress &amp; Wellbeing</li> <li>• Specific Practices for Personal and Group Use</li> </ul>
7:15 PM	Coaching Groups Session 3: Facilitators 5 & 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the Facilitator Quick Reference Guide</li> <li>• Study the Format &amp; Language of Experimentation &amp; Responding to Change Talk &amp; Resistance</li> </ul>
Break		
8:00 PM	Barriers & Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine Ground Rules, Confidentiality, Boundaries, Roles, Emergency/Non-Emergency Responses</li> <li>• Barriers &amp; Resources in Be U Group Implementation</li> </ul>
8:30 PM	Group Closing & Celebration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete Evaluations &amp; Research Components</li> <li>• View Compilation of Training &amp; Practice Gratitude</li> </ul>
9:00 PM End of Training (Total Classroom Time = 12 hours)		

**Register Today**

Contact the Wellbeing Center staff with your name, email, and phone number:  
 - 507-933-7607  
 - wellbeing@gustavus.edu

**Program Schedule**

Required Participant Training: Wednesday, September 24, 2014 from 6:00pm – 9:00pm

Groups meet for 8 sessions beginning: Sunday, September 28 and concluding Friday, December 6

Meetings will not take place October 18 – 21 (Fall Break) or November 26 – 30 (Thanksgiving Break)

## Appendix B

### Sample Emails Sent to Study Participants

#### **Email to coaching facilitators:**

Hi, BeU Coaching facilitators!! Thanks for agreeing to participate in my study. If you complete this survey and the one I'll send in December, you'll be entered into a drawing to **win a \$100 Visa gift card**. Please fill out this survey before Monday. It only takes about 10 minutes. Thank you!! Please don't hesitate to contact me with questions.

#### **Follow this link to the Survey:**

[\\${1://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}](#)

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

[\\${1://SurveyURL}](#)

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:

[\\${1://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}](#)

#### **Email to coaching participants:**

Hi, BeU Coaching participants!! Thanks for agreeing to participate in my study. If you complete this survey and the one I'll send in December, you'll be entered into a drawing to **win a \$100 Visa gift card**. Please fill out this survey before Monday. It only takes about 10 minutes. Thank you!! Please don't hesitate to contact me with questions.

#### **Follow this link to the Survey:**

[\\${1://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}](#)

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

[\\${1://SurveyURL}](#)

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:

[\\${1://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}](#)

#### **Email to comparison group:**

Hi, GOLD students!! Thanks for agreeing to participate in my study. Please take 10 minutes to complete this survey before Monday. Please don't hesitate to contact me with questions.

#### **Follow this link to the Survey:**

[\\${1://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}](#)

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

[\\${1://SurveyURL}](#)

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:

[\\${1://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}](#)

## Appendix C

### Consent form Included in Survey Instrument

#### **CONSENT FORM FOR BEU COACHING FACILITATORS/PARTICIPANTS**

University of Minnesota/[study institution] Peer Group Coaching Study

You are invited to participate in a research study on the impact of Wellbeing Peer Group Coaching on student development. You were selected as a participant as you are taking part in the BeU Coaching program during the fall of 2014 at [study institution] College. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Jayne K. Sommers at the University of Minnesota.

#### **Background Information**

The purpose of this study is to determine the effects of participation in Wellbeing Peer Group Coaching training and groups on student development in particular areas.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I ask you to do the following things:

- Participate in the BeU Coaching training September 2014
- Take the pre-assessment survey prior to the first meeting of your coaching group • Participate in the BeU Coaching experience during the fall 2014 semester
- Take the post-assessment survey in December 2014
- If invited, participate in individual interviews with the researcher in January 2015

#### **Risks and Benefits of being in the Study**

The study has several risks: First, practices of self-assessment and personal exploration may trigger emotional or mental upset, particularly if there is a history of trauma or abuse. Resources and support will be available to students should any concerning issues arise.

The benefits to participation are: There is no direct benefit to subjects who participate in this study. Training to be a facilitator of such groups may lead to increased skills of communication, supporting changing of behaviors, group process, and awareness of wellness resources. Participating in such groups may lead to increased skills with self-awareness practices, healthy life behaviors, and mindfulness.

#### **Compensation:**

If you complete both the pre- and post-surveys included in this study, you will be entered into a drawing to win a \$100 [study institution] Bookmark gift card. Your chances of winning are dependent on the number of other students who complete both surveys.

You may be invited to participate in a 50-minute individual interview about your experiences in the BeU Coaching program to take place in January. If you are invited to

participate and complete the interview, you will receive a \$10 [study institution] Bookmark gift card.

**Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. Study data will be encrypted according to current University policy for protection of confidentiality.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota or [study institution] College. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is Jayne K. Sommers. If you have questions, I encourage you to contact me at 612-968-5069 or [somme278@umn.edu](mailto:somme278@umn.edu).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Yes

No

## Appendix D

## Semi-structured Interview Script

<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p>Thank you for taking the time to participate in my research about your experiences with the peer group coaching program. My name is Jayne Sommers and I represent the University of Minnesota. I am attempting to gain information about the peer group program. You were invited here because you have participated in the program during the past semester.</p> <p>During this interview, we will be discussing your experiences in the peer group coaching program. There are no right or wrong answers, so please respond however feels appropriate to you.</p> <p>In later reports I produce using what you've shared with me, I will not attached individual names to particular comments. You may be assured of complete confidentiality.</p> <p>Our interview is scheduled to last 45 minutes.</p> <p>Do you have any questions before we begin?</p>
<p><b>Questions</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What skills did you gain from participation in the wellbeing peer coaching groups?</li> <li>2. What, if anything, did you learn about yourself through participation in the wellbeing peer coaching groups?</li> <li>3. How do you define your personal wellbeing?</li> <li>4. How, if at all, did participation in the wellbeing peer coaching groups contribute to your sense of personal wellbeing?</li> <li>5. In what ways has participation in the coaching groups influenced your behaviors during this semester?</li> <li>6. How will the knowledge and skills you've gained during your participation in the coaching groups influence future choices, if at all?</li> <li>7. Is there anything else you'd like to add about your experience in the wellbeing peer coaching group program?</li> </ol>
<p><b>Conclusion</b></p> <p>Again, thank you for participating in this interview. I will be in touch as my process progresses. In particular, I will invite you to provide feedback on the transcript of this interview as well as my analysis of themes that come up across my interviews with other students who have participated in the coaching program. Do you have any questions before I turn off the recorder?</p>



## Appendix E

## IRB Approval Letters from University of Minnesota and Study Institution

## UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Twin Cities Campus

Human Research Protection Program  
Office of the Vice President for ResearchD528 Mayo Memorial Building  
420 Delaware Street S.E.  
MMC 820  
Minneapolis, MN 55455  
Office: 612-626-3634  
Fax: 612-626-6061  
E-mail: [irb@umn.edu](mailto:irb@umn.edu) or [ibe@umn.edu](mailto:ibe@umn.edu)  
Website: <http://research.umn.edu/subjects/>

August 12, 2014

Jayne K Sommers

RE: "Sommers Dissertation: Peer Group Coaching Among Undergraduates"  
IRB Code Number: 1407P52401

Dear Ms. Sommers

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) received your response to its stipulations. Since this information satisfies the federal criteria for approval at 45CFR46.111 and the requirements set by the IRB, final approval for the project is noted in our files. Upon receipt of this letter, you may begin your research.

IRB approval of this study includes the consent form received August 12, 2014 and recruitment materials received July 18, 2014.

The IRB would like to stress that subjects who go through the consent process are considered enrolled participants and are counted toward the total number of subjects, even if they have no further participation in the study. Please keep this in mind when calculating the number of subjects you request. This study is currently approved for 60 subjects. If you desire an increase in the number of approved subjects, you will need to make a formal request to the IRB.

For your records and for grant certification purposes, the approval date for the referenced project is August 5, 2014 and the Assurance of Compliance number is FWA00000312 (Fairview Health Systems Research FWA00000325, Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare FWA00004003). Research projects are subject to continuing review and renewal; approval will expire one year from that date. You will receive a report form two months before the expiration date. If you would like us to send certification of approval to a funding agency, please tell us the name and address of your contact person at the agency.

As Principal Investigator of this project, you are required by federal regulations to inform the IRB of any proposed changes in your research that will affect human subjects. Changes should not be initiated until written IRB approval is received. Unanticipated problems or serious unexpected adverse events should be reported to the IRB as they occur.

The IRB wishes you success with this research. If you have questions, please call the IRB office at 612-626-5654.

Driven to Discover™



Ms. Sommers,

This letter is to inform you that you have continued approval to conduct research on the [REDACTED] College campus for the BEU Peer Coaching Program. Your copy of the Participants Survey and project update for the next steps has been placed on file. When you receive IRB approval from the University of Minnesota, please forward a copy to myself for record.

Thank you for keeping us updated on your research. Best of luck with your project.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'David A. Menk'.

David A. Menk  
Director of Institutional Research

## Appendix F

## Tables of Full Analyses of Effects of Gender for All Groups

Table F1

*Comparison of Male and Female Pre-test Scores for Facilitators (n = 12)*

Instrument scales	Males (n = 4)		Females (n = 8)		t(11)	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
<b>Ryff Scales of Psychological Wellbeing</b>							
Autonomy	40.25	5.32	34.25	7.23	-1.46	.175	0.89
Environmental mastery	41.75	5.44	35.63	6.90	-1.52	.158	0.94
Personal growth	42.75	4.64	44.25	4.65	0.53	.610	0.32
Positive relations with others	48.25	6.50	38.75	7.42	-2.17	.055	1.33
Purpose in life	44.25	9.40	38.13	5.92	-1.19	.261	0.86
Self-acceptance	46.00	4.97	35.13	6.36	-2.97	.014	1.82
<b>Social Provisions Scale</b>							
Guidance	15.25	1.50	13.86	1.46	-1.53	.158	0.94
Reassurance of worth	14.25	2.06	12.75	1.83	-1.29	.227	0.79
Social integration	14.75	1.50	14.00	1.93	-0.68	.514	0.41
Attachment	14.75	1.89	12.63	2.13	-1.68	.124	1.03
Nurturance	12.75	1.71	13.50	2.07	0.62	.548	0.38
Reliable alliance	14.75	1.26	14.50	1.69	-0.26	.801	0.16

Table F2

*Comparison of Male and Female Pre-test Scores for Participants (n =18)*

Instrument scales	Males (n = 6)		Females (n =12)		<i>t</i> (11)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Ryff Scales of Psychological Wellbeing							
Autonomy	37.17	4.02	34.17	7.27	-0.93	.365	0.47
Environmental mastery	37.33	6.44	40.08	7.05	0.53	.601	0.40
Personal growth	45.83	5.82	45.58	5.65	-0.09	.929	0.06
Positive relations with others	45.83	5.38	42.17	6.71	-1.16	.263	0.58
Purpose in life	41.17	6.11	46.00	5.48	1.70	.108	0.85
Self-acceptance	41.83	6.34	40.50	8.33	0.08	.936	0.17
Social Provisions Scale							
Guidance	15.12	0.98	14.42	2.15	-0.80	.433	0.38
Reassurance of worth	13.33	1.03	13.58	1.38	0.46	.652	0.20
Social integration	14.50	1.38	14.58	1.16	0.13	.894	0.06
Attachment	14.00	1.55	12.75	2.05	-1.31	.209	0.66
Nurturance	10.83	2.14	12.12	2.25	1.20	.246	0.58
Reliable alliance	14.83	1.12	15.00	1.20	0.28	.734	0.14

Table F3

*Comparison of Male and Female Pre-test Scores for Comparison Group (n =34)*

Instrument scales	Males (n = 11)		Females (n =23)		t(11)	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
<b>Ryff Scales of Psychological Wellbeing</b>							
Autonomy	38.10	7.27	35.57	6.83	-1.20	.238	0.36
Environmental mastery	35.80	7.50	38.00	7.18	0.92	.365	0.30
Personal growth	43.90	5.23	44.83	5.65	0.50	.622	0.17
Positive relations with others	39.00	6.34	42.61	7.79	1.70	.111	0.49
Purpose in life	42.10	4.50	43.35	6.23	0.68	.499	0.22
Self-acceptance	36.60	10.48	42.52	6.83	2.12	.042	0.73
<b>Social Provisions Scale</b>							
Guidance	14.20	2.05	14.39	1.75	0.31	.759	0.10
Reassurance of worth	12.50	1.69	13.48	2.13	1.52	.139	0.49
Social integration	14.57	1.50	13.60	1.70	1.94	.062	0.59
Attachment	13.20	1.87	13.74	2.18	0.85	.403	0.26
Nurturance	13.20	2.05	12.96	1.69	-0.48	.637	0.13
Reliable alliance	14.5	1.56	15.13	1.36	1.64	.110	0.44

## Appendix G

## Change in Pre- and Post-test Scores for Interviewees

*Change in Pre- and Post-test Scores for Interviewees*

	Survey Instrument											
	Ryff Scales of PWB						Social Provisions Scale					
	AU	E	PG	PO	PL	SA	G	RW	SI	AT	N	RA
Facilitators												
Audrey	0	3	-5	8	6	7	3	3	4	5	-1	-1
Domingo	-4	4	-6	-2	-3	-8	0	-2	-2	0	0	1
Marnie	2	3	-3	3	8	9	0	-3	-1	1	0	0
Ray	2	2	-2	1	3	1	-1	-1	2	0	1	-1
Participants												
Aaron	-10	9	-7	-2	5	-4	-2	-2	0	-3	0	2
Alicia	1	-1	5	-3	3	-1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Chris	0	-1	-1	5	-1	6	2	2	2	1	1	2
Ellie	-1	-4	0	-3	3	4	0	2	0	0	2	0
Hannah	2	1	0	6	1	9	0	1	-1	2	4	-1
Kasey	6	-2	5	9	1	14	0	0	-1	4	2	1
Miguel	4	-4	-1	0	-6	2	0	0	-1	-1	1	0
Nora	0	-3	0	6	1	2	1	0	0	0	1	-4
Wyatt	2	2	2	4	5	5	2	2	1	1	-2	1

*Note.* AU= Autonomy, E = Environmental mastery, PG = Personal growth, PO = Positive relations with others, PL = Purpose in life, SA = Self-acceptance, G = Guidance, RW = Reassurance of worth, SI = Social integration, AT = Attachment, N = Opportunity for nurturance, RA = Reliable alliance.