

# Occupational Therapy and Peer Mentoring: A Collaborative Approach to Enhancing Services with Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities

Jacqueline Bartolai, OTS, Lorissa Bergman, OTS, Joshua Luna, OTS, Nicole Schutte, OTS, Alexis Veliotis, OTS

Elmhurst College, Elmhurst, Illinois



## Background

- Increased development of post secondary programs for students with intellectual disabilities<sup>9</sup>
- Programs utilize peer mentors to facilitate life skills and adaptive social behavior<sup>3,5</sup>
- Gap in literature on how these peer mentors are trained in social skill intervention

**Central research question:** Can a video modeling module improve perceived competence and readiness of peer mentors to utilize coaching methods to enhance social participation skills for students with intellectual disabilities on a college campus?

## Objectives

- Explore gaps in the literature regarding how peer mentors are trained in social skill intervention with individuals with intellectual disabilities
- Determine if video modeling modules are an efficient method of improving perceived competence and readiness of peer mentors who are utilizing coaching methods to enhance social participation skills for students with intellectual disabilities on a college campus
- Explore methods of training for peer mentors
- Ultimately, enhance independence in social participation and occupational engagement for students with intellectual disabilities

## Methods

A mixed methods approach to collect quantitative and qualitative data.

- Quantitative: provide objective data about perceived knowledge and readiness
- Qualitative: provide data of peer mentors perspective on usefulness of video module

A video module grounded in the CO-OP approach will depict a successful and supportive interaction between life coach and mentee.

## Overview of Literature



### Social Skill Deficits

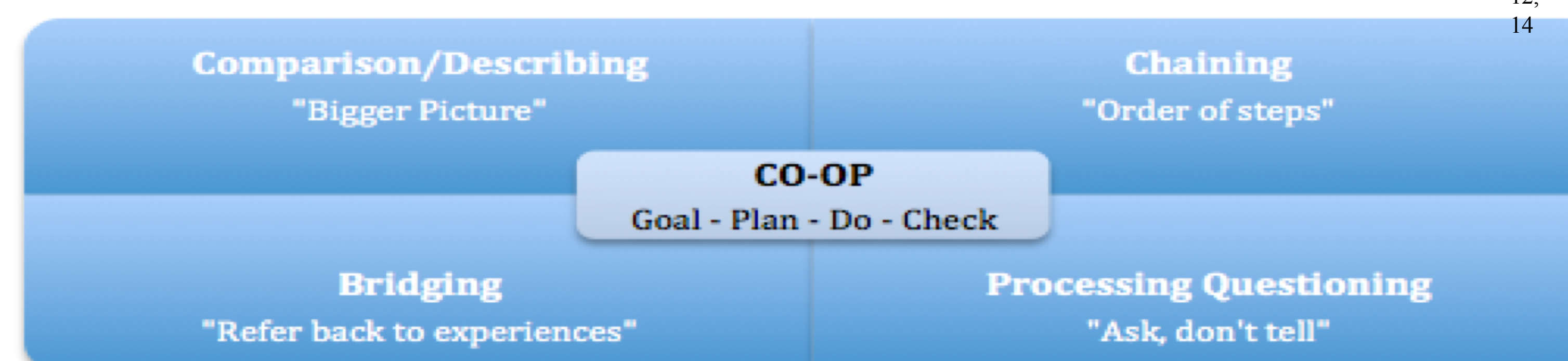
The DSM-V indicates that one of the three diagnostic criteria for intellectual disabilities is "a deficit in adaptive behaviors, which limits functions in one or more activities of daily life such as communication, social participation, and independent living across home, school, work, and recreation"<sup>1</sup>.

### Peer Mentors

- A peer mentor, also referred to as natural support or life coach, is typically another college student who helps "...support the student with ID to successfully navigate the campus culture such as supporting a student to actively engage in a class, tutoring, academic coaching outside of class, and socializing either on or off campus"<sup>8</sup>
- Research supports that mentors need further training and support on how to transfer their knowledge to their mentee on topics such the development of time management, balancing work, school, and social life, assisting with academics and learning, and with social skills<sup>4</sup>

### Video Modeling

Video modeling is based on the social learning theory which states "individuals will repeat behaviors that they have seen others perform, even across settings and in the absence of reinforcement."<sup>14</sup> Video modeling as an educational mode can provide a clearer understanding of material that is presented, is more effective with context-specific environments, and is an overall helpful tool based on feedback from participants who have viewed videos in relation to educational modules.<sup>2,10</sup>



11,  
12,  
14

## Implications

- Further opportunity for research on effective coaching methods
- Exploration of coaching method for occupational therapists to use with different populations
- Video modeling/educational modules as an approach to coaching
- Training others to use CO-OP strategies to facilitate social interactions
- Consideration of other areas of occupation in education modules

## Discussion/Conclusion

- Coaching has been an expanding topic in occupational therapy practice that can be used with peer mentors
  - Peer mentors can help students with intellectual disabilities work on social skills, accomplish goals, and ultimately achieve greater independence<sup>7,8</sup>
- Strengths - collaboration between the MOT students and staff and the ELSA program
- Challenges - time constraints, scheduling with busy MOT curriculum
- Takeaways - OT can make a difference in community practice, rewarding to be able to apply OT theory and concepts to an organization right on campus

## Next Steps

- Participants will attend a scheduled meeting by their faculty advisor, along with the researchers, to view the video module. At this meeting the pre and post module viewing surveys will be completed by the participants.
- Two to three weeks after viewing the module, researchers will conduct semi-structured interviews with participants. The data collected from the pre and post module viewing surveys and the semi-structured interviews will be analyzed by the researchers.
- Findings from the study will be presented to the peer mentor faculty advisor and ELSA director.