



Academic Belongingness:

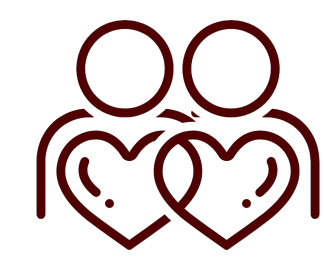


Do students benefit from peer mentorship?

Caitlyn Bower, Katelyn R. Robinson, Sophia Steelman, Sin-Ning C. Liu, Heather C. Lench
Texas A&M University



Introduction



Academic Belongingness

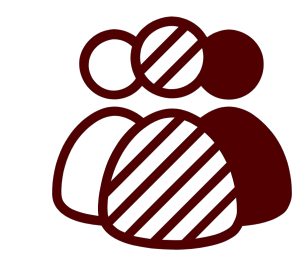
- Academic belongingness contributes to academic success
- Defined as “the extent to which individuals feel like a valued, accepted, and legitimate member in their academic domain”

PSYCMentor

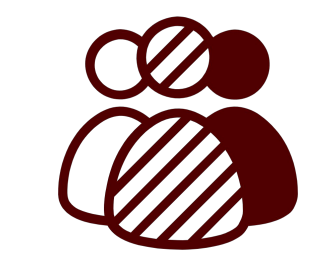
- Peer mentorship program launched in Fall 2020 by the Psychological & Brain Sciences Department (PBSI)
- Paired with the new first-semester experiences course
- Designed to provide a welcoming environment to help students acclimate to the psychology department/Texas A&M, as well as leadership opportunities for upperclassmen
- Focused on providing information, campus resources, extracurricular activities

RQ1 Were the mentees’ ratings of Academic Belongingness statistically significantly different between the middle of the semester and the end of the semester?

RQ2 Do the mentees’ demographics (i.e. race, gender, sexual orientation, parental education, ability status) impact whether a mentees’ ratings of Academic Belongingness differed significantly between the middle of a semester and the end of the semester?



Method



Participants

Race

White (72)
 Black or African American (7)
 Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin (14)
 Asian (18)
 American Indian or Alaska Native (1)
 Middle Eastern or North African (1)
 Of two or more races (34)

Gender

Men (12)
 Women (135)

Ability Status

No disability (102)
 Has a disability (41)

Sexual Orientation

Heterosexual/straight (127)
 Homosexual/gay/lesbian (5)
 Bisexual (12)
 Choose to self-identify or more than 1 selected (2)

Parental Education

Less than a high school diploma (7)
 High school diploma/GED (12)
 Some college, or trade school/Associate’s degree (20)
 Bachelor’s degree (51)
 Master’s degree or higher (57)

Methods

- First-semester students were asked about their experiences in the middle & end of the semester
- 16-item measure of Academic Belongingness
- 1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree
- Sample items:
 - I feel at home at Texas A&M University
 - Being at Texas A&M is an enriching experience
 - Sometimes I feel I don’t belong at Texas A&M University (R)



Results



Belongingness

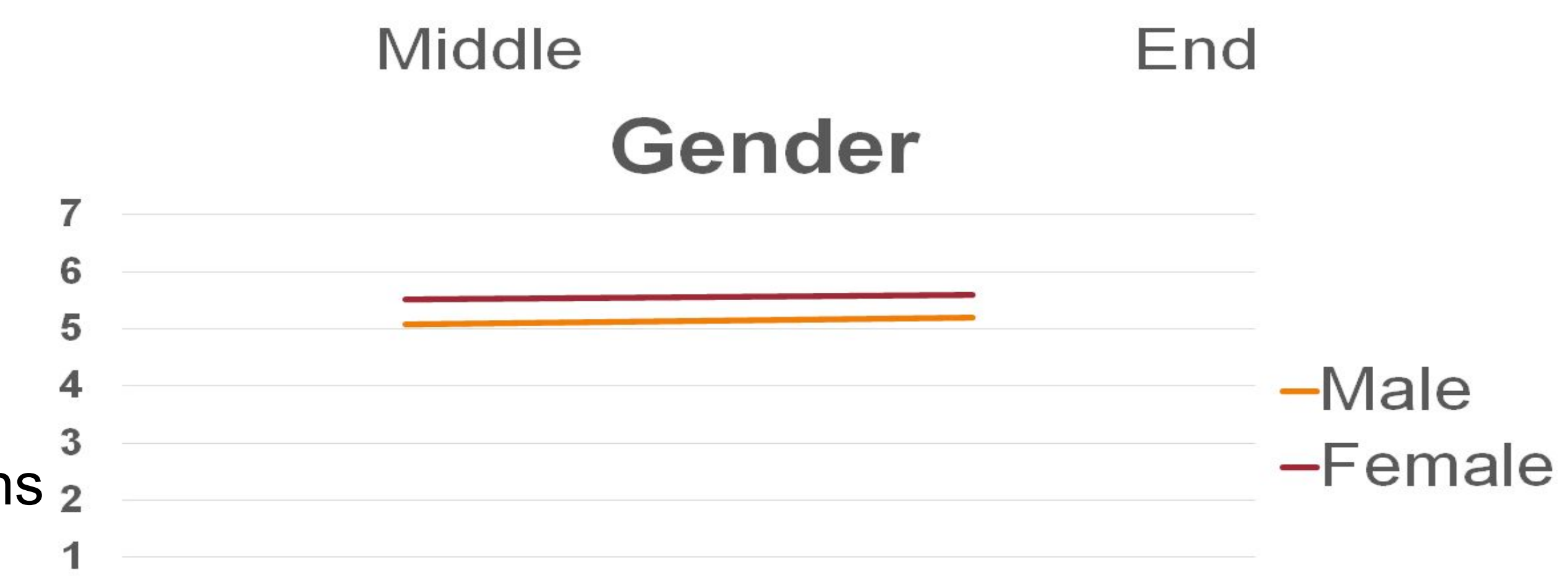


Time

Main effect of Time: significant
 $F(1, 148) = 4.12, p = .04, \eta^2 = .03$

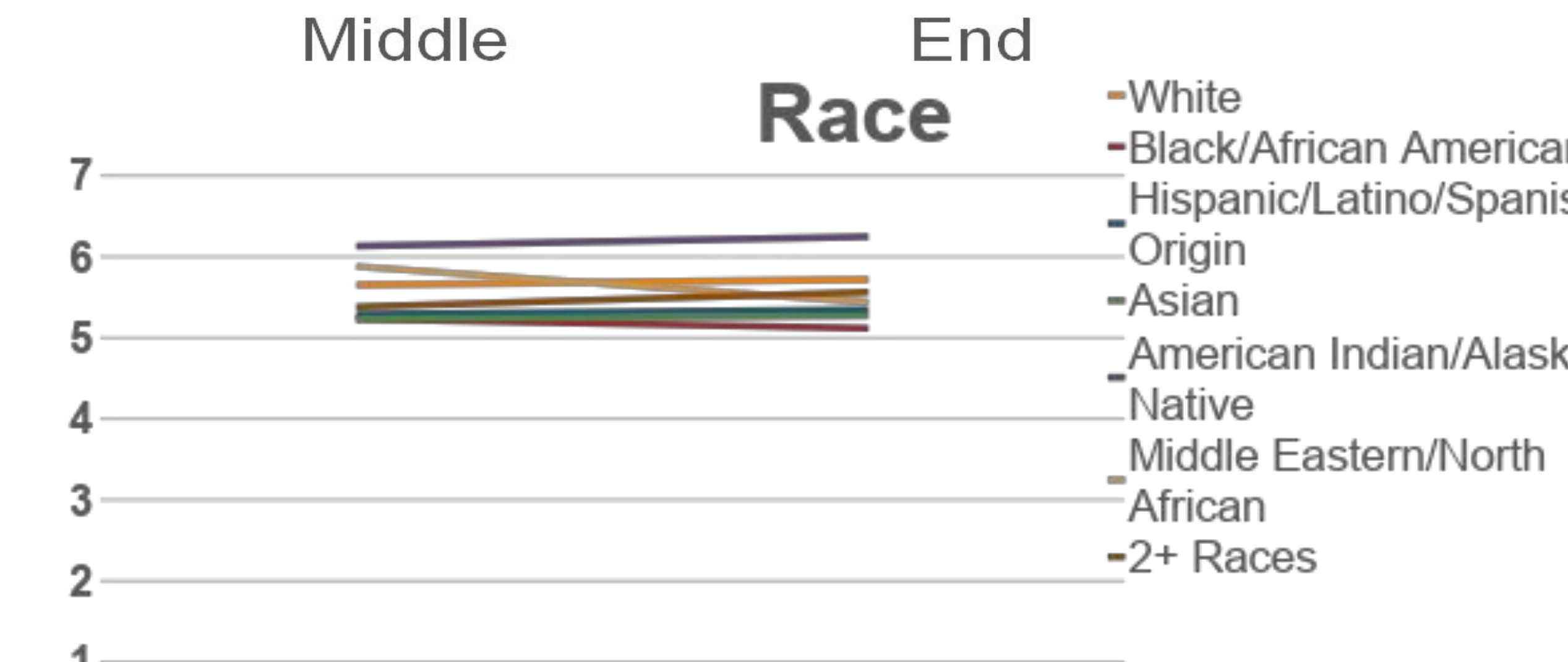
Gender

Main effect of Time: ns
 $F(1, 145) = 1.76, p = .19, \eta^2 = .01$
 Main effect of Gender: significant
 $F(1, 145) = 4.72, p = .03, \eta^2 = .03$
 Interaction effect of Time x Gender: ns
 $F(1, 145) = .08, p = .78, \eta^2 < .01$



Race

Main effect of Time: ns
 $F(1, 140) = .01, p = .91, \eta^2 < .01$
 Main effect of Race: significant
 $F(6, 140) = 1.74, p = .04, \eta^2 = .09$
 Interaction effect of Time x Race: ns
 $F(6, 140) = .66, p = .68, \eta^2 = .03$



Ability Status

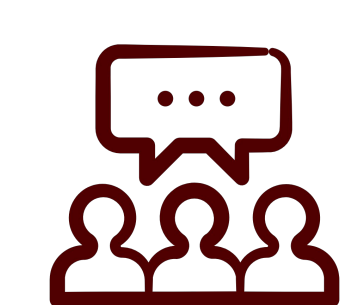
Main effect of Time: $F(1, 141) = 2.95, p = .09, \eta^2 = .02$ ns
 Main effect of Ability Status: $F(1, 141) = .11, p = .74, \eta^2 < .01$ ns
 Interaction effect of Time x Ability Status: $F(1, 141) = .02, p = .90, \eta^2 < .01$ ns

Sexual Orientation

Main effect of Time: $F(1, 142) = .24, p = .63, \eta^2 < .01$ ns
 Main effect of Sexual Orientation: $F(3, 142) = 1.07, p = .37, \eta^2 = .02$ ns
 Interaction effect of Time x Sexual Orientation: $F(3, 142) = .26, p = .85, \eta^2 < .01$ ns

Parental Education

Main effect of Time: $F(1, 142) = 2.34, p = .13, \eta^2 = .02$ ns
 Main effect of Parental Education: $F(4, 142) = .72, p = .58, \eta^2 = .02$ ns
 Interaction effect of Time x Parental Orientation: $F(4, 142) = .93, p = .45, \eta^2 = .03$ ns



Discussion



- Overall, students’ ratings of Academic Belongingness were higher at the end vs. middle of semester
- Sexual orientation, parental education, ability status did not impact Academic Belongingness
- Race and gender did impact Academic Belongingness
- Race and gender both had unequal group numbers, and the smaller groups may have skewed results

- Mentees were transfers & freshmen; all were in PBSI for the first time, many in A&M for the first time, making it essential to foster their sense of belongingness
- PSYCMentor launched COVID; mostly virtual format making it both more important and more difficult to foster belongingness given the circumstances
- First generation college students often face more challenges, but in this study they reported similar levels of belongingness compared to students who were not first generation