Does the Gender of Learning Assistants Have an Impact on Reported Student Relationships?

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**Background**
- Male students underestimated their female counterparts performance in STEM classes\textsuperscript{1}
- Male students are less likely to attribute their academic success to others and report outward social connections than female students\textsuperscript{2}

*To what extent does gender affect reported relationships between students and Learning Assistants?*

**What Learning Assistants Do**
- Assist in high density lecture courses where individual attention is hard to provide to students by the lecturer, allowing for a more non-traditional class
- Learn teaching and learning skills through a pedagogy course, workshops, and weekly meetings with faculty members presiding over the course
- Facilitate discussions of small groups in lectures and promote active and collaborative learning among students

**Methods**
- Used course data collected from introductory level biology courses at NDSU through a series of semesters
- Analyzed surveys completed by students on who they reported interacting with and the level of importance of those interactions
- Utilized social network analysis to dissect reported relationships based on gender

**Discussion**
- There was a statistically significant positive correlation between degree centrality and course grade
- Among sections that had mixed male and female LAs, female students had a significantly greater average degree centrality
- There were no significant differences in how often or important students of either gender reported relationships with Learning Assistants

**Future Work**
There are plans to continue this work, answering questions that were not yet addressed. To do so, we plan to do the following:
- Analyze how students rank the importance of the Learning Assistants with respect to their own gender and the genders of the LAs
- Look into how often and with what weight students report relationships with their peers depending on their gender
- See what networks are created in these courses and how gender plays a role in interconnectedness

**Social Network Analysis**
Social network analysis is a method of data analysis that focuses on “relationships among social entities, and on the patterns and implications of these relationships”.\textsuperscript{3}

**References**

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