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Editorial

It gives us great pleasure to be able to welcome some new volunteers to the JANZSSA team. Earlier this year we sent out a call for expressions of interest from members who would be willing to assist with the Editorial process. As a result, we are delighted to welcome three "Assistant Editors" to the Editorial team; Kelly Atherton and Jan Stewart from Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand; and Cheryl Brugman from The University of Queensland, Australia. Kelly, Jan and Cheryl will be assisting us with the double-blind peer review process for refereed papers, so authors and peer-reviewers can expect to hear from them from time to time as they deal with manuscripts that come to JANZSSA for review. Our call for interest also resulted in a number of other members offering to peer review and proof-read papers, so we send our thanks also to those who have offered their time in these ways. We are always looking for professionals and academics willing to peer review papers that are appropriate to their range of experience and knowledge, so if you haven't previously reviewed for JANZSSA and you would be willing to be added to our list of reviewers, please do let us know.

This edition of JANZSSA contains seven excellent papers - four refereed papers, two professional papers and one Best Practice Case Example. Amongst the refereed papers, different aspects of the student experience are explored through the research presented and analysed. Philomena Renner and colleagues examine a range of student attributes and their link to student success; Meryl Stone and colleagues explore the influence of institutional support programs on the success of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds; Nathan Wilson's qualitative study with Australian university students provides insight into students' perception of mental illness; and Todd Walton uses a case study approach to investigate student success following interaction with institutional support services. The professional papers provide perspectives on two very different topics; Russell Briese explores spiritual inclusivity within university chaplaincy services, while Christie White and colleagues explore the extent to which we include the student voice – the knowledge and experience that students can directly offer – into the development, evaluation and adaptation of student services. Finally, within a thought provoking Best Practice Case Example, Stephanie Charlotte Black reports on the development and use of a new scale – the Adult Filial Closeness Scale – to investigate the extent to which the sense of being close to one's parents, impacts upon personal happiness. Regular readers of JANZSSA may notice the change in terminology we are using from 'non-refereed' papers to 'professional papers'. For some time we have been uncomfortable with a 'deficit' description of the many interesting and valuable papers, written from a context of professional experience and knowledge, that receive editorial review rather a double-blind peer review. The term 'professional papers' seems to us to describe what they are, rather than what they are not; we also hope that more professionals will consider giving us all the benefit of their knowledge and experience through more such papers.

As the end of year rapidly approaches we would like to wish all our readers a very positive and productive end to 2016, and we hope to see as many of you as possible at the 2016 ANZSSA Annual Conference in the first week of December. At the conference website www.anzssa2016.com you will see that it is shaping up to be an exciting, not-to-be-missed event. The ANZSSA conference is always a great way to end the year, network with colleagues and to gain fresh ideas to carry forward into the start of the New Year. See you in 2017!

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Australian University Students' Perceptions of Mental Illness: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Depression and anxiety are common experiences for young adults in Australia (Yap & Jorm, 2011; Jorm, 2012). Social factors resulting from stigmatising social discourses, including that promulgated through the media are major contributors to mental health issues in this age group (Wright, Jorm & Mackinnon, 2011; Yap & Jorm, 2011). However, there is limited qualitative research in this area. This qualitative study used interviews to investigate the social perceptions of depression and anxiety among young Australians. Participants (n=10) were university students aged between 19 and 24 years. The findings have demonstrated confusion around diagnostic labelling, concepts of mental health issues, and the power of the media as both productive and counter-productive in its portrayal of mental health and illness. On the basis of these findings we propose that positive and pragmatic psycho-education programs should be implemented at a younger age, in order to normalise experiences of depression and anxiety earlier in life. This could possibly counter the stigmatising discourses that young people experience. These findings can be used to inform health policy for the prevention of mental health issues and mental illness in Australia. In keeping with the Commonwealth of Australia (2013) recommendations, terms of 'mental health issues' and 'mental illness' are adopted throughout this work.

Keywords

mental health, Australian young adults, depression, anxiety, mental health issues, mental illness, social perception.

Background

Mental health issues and emerging mental illness continue to present as significant areas of concern for young Australian adults, with onset often in mid-adolescence to early adulthood (Reavley, McCann, & Jorm, 2012; Yap, Reavley, & Jorm, 2012). This cohort has the highest rate of mental health issues for all age groups, with 26% of young people experiencing a diagnosable condition (ABS, 2009). Clinical depression and anxiety-related conditions are common for university students under academic stress, between the ages of 18 and 24 years (Adkins, Wang, Dupre, van den Oord & Elder, 2009; Yap & Jorm, 2011). Yet, stigma has been identified as a key factor preventing young people from seeking help in relation to their mental health (Jorm, 2012; Gulliver, Griffiths, & Christensen, 2010; Rickwood, Deane, & Wilson, 2007).

The literature on stigma has developed conceptually since Goffman's (1963) seminal work to include not only notions of difference, but also experiences of devalued identity through the processes of labelling, stereotyping, and discrimination (Yardley, 2008). Goffman's (1963) work

conceptualised stigma to be social phenomenon in which a personal trait or attribute is considered an undesirable deviation from the norm. Therefore, the stigmatised individual is overtly distinguished from other members of their culture. Stigma has been viewed as detrimental for mental health, further compounding a person's distress and impacting negatively on help-seeking behaviours. This is related to the embarrassment or fear of judgment that can arise from the lived experience of mental health issues (Gulliver et. al, 2010). Further, recent qualitative findings reported that mental health issues and mental illness are particularly difficult to empathise with because the experience is coupled with social stigma (Martinez-Hernaez, DiGiacomo, Carceller-Maicas, Correa-Urquiza, & Martorell-Poveda, 2014).

Stigma arises from multiple sources including family and friends, from interactions with health professionals and media (Gulliver et al., 2010). Fear of stigma from health professionals was acknowledged in previous studies with individuals fearing that they will be 'judged' or 'not taken seriously' (Rickwood et al., 2007). This may offer an explanation for the findings of a study which suggested that young people experiencing mental health issues / mental illness have a preference for self-reliance as part of their intervention outcomes (Gulliver et al., 2010), possibly as a result of their experiences of and knowledge of stigma. Such findings were further supported by literature suggesting that non-professional services and sources of support for mental health concerns have become increasingly popular amongst young people, especially with the rise of mobile technologies allowing health information to become more readily available (Proudfoot, Clarke, Birch, Whitton & Parker, 2013).

The growth of internet use may also have stigma-related implications for young people in their search for health services pertaining to mental health concerns (Burns, Durkin & Nicholas, 2009; Proudfoot et al., 2013). Recent studies presented mixed findings pertaining to 'self-guided' mental health interventions through various technological sources. Evidence supporting the use of self-directed mental health intervention is currently limited, despite the perceived notion that such interventions are increasingly relevant for young people (Lillevoll, Vangberg, Griffiths, Waterloo, & Eisemann, 2014).

The rise of 'app' technologies on mobile phone and tablets has triggered increased research into the importance and efficacy of publically accessible mental health care (Giota & Kleftaras, 2014). Potential risks include the lack of an evidence base in the design of many self-guided help programs, complications with the interplay of privacy issues, the nature of the clinical experience of mental health concerns (i.e., the participant's anxieties around public access of personal information and ethical considerations regarding non-professional health care access). For young people, such conflicts need to be closely examined with the increased use of e-health in the contemporary landscape (Jorm, Morgan, & Malhi, 2013).

Stigma reduction strategies in Australia have previously included mental health awareness campaigns and programs such as Mental Health First Aid, with an aim to improve understanding, or literacy of mental health within the broader community (Jorm, 2012; Jorm et al., 2006). Adequate mental health literacy could reduce stigma by increasing individuals' understanding of the reality of mental health concerns. There is some evidence to suggest that current mental health literacy efforts are helpful in positively changing health seeking *attitudes.* However, the same cannot be affirmed for a change of health seeking *behaviour* (Gulliver, Griffiths, Christensen & Brewer, 2012). Mental health literacy is particularly important for adolescents who, as mentioned above, are more likely to turn to their peers and family for support prior to seeking professional help (Jorm et al., 2006). Mental health literacy for adolescents will not only help the individual, but also help those peers that turn to them to help, thereby encouraging peer support amongst adolescents. Unfortunately, this group is amongst the least likely to develop mental health literacy through programs such as

Mental Health First Aid (Jorm et al., 2006; Kitchener & Jorm, 2006).

Despite the significant amount of work undertaken to improve mental health literacy to fundamentally reduce stigma, there remains a paucity of qualitative research which considers the social perceptions of mental health within the population of young Australian university students (Jorm, 2012; Jorm et al., 2006; Martinez-Henraez et al., 2014; Yap et al., 2012). Yet, they remain in a high risk age range for emergence of mental health issues and illness, whilst experiencing ongoing pressure due to study requirements and continual performance assessment. With this in mind, this study sought young people's (18-24 year olds) perceptions of common mental health issues, predominately depression and anxiety, alongside possible experiences of stigma. The research focused on the opinions of those both with and without a mental health diagnosis. The research questions were:

- Question 1: What are the perceptions of university students regarding anxiety and depression?
- Question 2: How does stigma of mental health issues and mental illness impact upon the help-seeking behaviours of 18-24 year olds?

Methodology

Ethical approval was granted by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Sydney. Semi-structured interviews were used to enable the collection of rich data that could be translated into meaningful themes using a thematic coding process structured around an iterative, reflexive method (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009). This method of analysis utilises an iterative process where data collection and analysis happen together allowing the data collection to develop in relation to the findings that emerge from the analysis. Srivastava and Hopwood (2009) noted that reflexive iteration involves "visiting and revisiting the data and connecting them with emerging insights, progressively leading to refined focus and understandings" (p.77). Initial interviews with set questions were undertaken with participants (see Appendix 1). The initial interviews were thematically analysed according to the research questions. As core themes developed from this analysis we modified our original questions (while keeping the core questions the same) in order to test the developing themes and drew out data to further our understanding.

Interview schedule

The interviews were 30-40 minutes in length, audio recorded and later transcribed verbatim.

The semi-structured interview schedule contained three parts: 1) the participant's personal account of depression and anxiety such as; "tell me about your experience of mental health issues or mental illness", 2) questions about the participants' understanding of both stigma and mental health services such as; "what does stigma in relation to mental health issues and mental illness mean to you?", and 3) video elicitation questions aiming to stimulate opinions about health campaigns and messages of mental health and illness in society such as; "to what extent are these video representations accurate?". In this context, video elicitation refers to the presentation of a video clip as a stimulus for discussion within the interview setting (Henry & Fetters, 2012). These video clips were sourced from mental health campaigns in both Australia and internationally, plus excerpts from film and television. The videos were selected for a range of reasons: 1) a Beyond Blue video about the social interactions of a person with depression; 2) a Headspace video dealing with anxiety, chosen as it was youth-focused; 3) a stigma video from a 'See Me' Scotland campaign, which added an international context and focused on the role of the media in relation to mental ill-health; 4) the *Unwell Song* by Matchbox 20 and a clip from the movie *Silver Linings Playbook*, selected as recent examples of media that are popular with young people, portraying the lived

experiences of mental health issues and mental illness.

Participants

Notice-board advertisements were posted across campuses at a metropolitan Australian university. Potential participants responded by telephoning or emailing the researcher where more information was provided. Ten participants agreed to participate in the study; a sample of this size is typically sufficient to enable rich saturation of themes (Whitehead & Annells, 2010). Participants provided written informed consent and interviews were conducted on the university campus and in private outdoor settings. Consent to digitally audio record and transcribe the interview was given prior to each interview. Each participant was allocated a pseudonym. The age range of the target sample was 18-24 years. The upper age range for the sample was determined because 24 is usually the upper limit for Australian youth mental health services and strategies (e.g. Headspace). Participant demographic data are described in Table 1. The mean age of participants was 21 years and 2 months with a range of 19-24 years; four out of ten participants had directly experienced a state of mental ill-health at least once. Nine of the ten participants were female.

Table 1 Participant demographic data

Participant ID/ Code	**Sex**	**Age**	**Highest Level of Education**	**Born in Australia?**	**Personal experience of mental ill-health?**
June	F	22 years	Studying undergraduate	Yes	No
Sarah	F	24 years	Master's degree	Yes	No
Shauna	F	19 years	Studying undergraduate	N/A	Yes – Bi-polar disorder
Rebekah	F	21 years	Studying undergraduate	No	No
Lesley	F	22 years	Studying undergraduate	Yes	Yes- Bi-polar disorder
Diana	F	22 years	Studying undergraduate	Yes	Yes-Depression and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
Belinda	F	19 years	Studying undergraduate	No	No
Laura	F	22 years	Studying undergraduate	N/A	No
Mary	F	20 years	Studying undergraduate	Yes	Yes- Depression and Generalised Anxiety Disorder
Alix	M	21 years	Studying Master's degree	Yes	No

N/A = No Answer.
NB. Names used are pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality of the participant.

Data analysis

Data were analysed using a basic thematic analysis where each line of speech was given a code; these were brought together and developed into themes (Fram, 2013). This involved the creation of open codes forming the preliminary analysis, descriptive coding describing the words of the individual, axial coding which formed the descriptions into key ideas and finally selective coding comprising the core themes most relevant in answering our research questions.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was ensured through a number of processes as suggested by Krefting (1991).

The lead author had been professionally trained in appropriate interviewing techniques. Theoretical triangulation was promoted as the research team came from different occupational and theoretical backgrounds. We also engaged in a memo-ing process in which the lead researcher reflected and re-worked the themes emerging from different levels of coding. Member–checking was conducted with two randomly selected participants (one participant with and one without lived experience of mental health issues / mental illness) with 100% agreement on final themes.

Findings

As the data collected did not significantly differ between those who were diagnosed with mental health issues or illness, and those who were not, the data from both sets of participants are presented together. The analysis of the data yielded four themes: mental health and social interactions; diagnostic labelling; understanding of mental health services available for the young adult population, and media representation of mental health for young adults.

Mental health and social interactions

The majority of participants listed an intrinsic or personal value in relation to the term 'mentally healthy'. Words such as *'energy' 'confidence' 'happiness'* and *'balance'* were used interchangeably across interviews (June, Shauna, Rebekah, & Belinda). The idea that mental health is directly linked with rationality was also a reoccurring theme: *'It's like a balance…like an ability to see things rationally…you see more… have a wider vision…and understand everybody's different.'* Rebekah expressed the general idea that engaging in objective thought processes allows one to work towards optimal mental health. Hence, for Rebekah, it was the ability to think logically through a situation that equated to a mentally healthy state of mind. Another respondent argued that it was being *'in-tune'* with oneself and one's surroundings, in addition to having an understanding of *'resilience'* (Sarah). Another stated that, *'It's being able to put things in perspective… not acting on your emotions straight away…being able to have that distance to… rationalise things.'* (Laura).

Most participants linked the impact of mental health concerns with social aspects of their lives, particularly how they are perceived within peer-group settings. The concept of *'concealing'* a mental health challenge in social situations was acknowledged by several respondents, for example: *'I don't think* [the mental health issue] *is because of… their friends… usually the friends don't even know much about the mental illness'* (Belinda). Alix illustrated this idea, *'I've had friends who have suffered from mental illness, and you wouldn't be able to tell…I think [for] fear of… not being able to disclose it to everybody … because [they're] unsure of what is going to happen.'* For these respondents, their concerns about mental health were linked with notions surrounding identity, belonging and *'fitting in'* (Belinda; Alix). Hence the choice not to disclose in a peer group setting derived from an individual's aim to protect themselves from the fear of ostracism, by *'changing the face'* of their illness around others. This may offer an explanation to Belinda's comment that it is *'hard to help'* a friend as individuals may be able to mask their experiences of mental health changes.

Diagnostic labelling

Participants expressed a sense of confusion surrounding diagnostic labelling of mental health issues and mental illness and held mixed opinions on the purpose of clinical diagnoses. June stated that, *'It* [diagnosis] *does create stigma, but it also helps people to deal with it.'* For this participant the diagnostic label was viewed as a pathway to change, yet at the same time it was a contributing

factor towards self-stigma. All ten participants commented on the magnitude of the stigma associated with mental health, stating that they had either witnessed or experienced social stigma at some point as a result of diagnostic labelling.

Clinical diagnoses were conceptualised as *'depersonalising'* (Rebekah) *'confusing'* (Shauna; Lesley) and *'not helpful'* (Shauna). For those participants diagnosed with a mood disorder, such as bipolar disorder, they had *'transitioned'* through different diagnoses, first using the broad diagnostic categories of depression and anxiety to describe their experience. At the time of their first episode, they did not know what it was to experience a mood disorder, they merely felt *'depressed'* or *'anxious'* and were labelled as such, yet later learned this was incorrect. Shauna stated, *'It's confusing… I've been probably told five different ones* [diagnoses]*... at some point… it doesn't really help anymore'*. Furthermore, Lesley stated *'I thought it was just anxiety and depression.'* For these participants, their understanding of their mental health changed through the application of a new diagnosis. They suggested that being diagnosed with a mood disorder, rather than the more common depression or anxiety which they understood, further complicated the perplexity they felt about mental health and illness.

The less common a diagnosis, the more stigmatised and confusing it was for both those who were given the diagnosis and those around them. Participants viewed mental health as being on a *'spectrum'* (Lesley, Diana, Alix) based on social discourses about the severity or threat of the particular diagnosis: '[There's] *definitely a significant difference in terms of the level of awareness'* (Belinda). Depression and anxiety were noted as being somewhat less stigmatised and therefore easier to discuss amongst peers: *'It was a lot easier to tell my friends that I had depression because it's a lot more common and talked about'* (Lesley). At the other end of the spectrum, psychotic and mood disorders as labelled by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders - 5 (DSM-5) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) were not relatable to everyday life situations and hence were more likely to be subjected to social stigma. Diana commented: *'schizophrenia [and] bi-polar are [at one end of the spectrum] … and anxiety's at the other end of the spectrum… coz everyone talks about it.'* Therefore, the relative frequency of social discourses around anxiety-related experiences normalised this diagnostic category and reduced stigma. At the other end of the spectrum however, negative social discourses surrounding psychotic conditions meant that psychosis was heavily stigmatised. June stated that the language surrounding these conditions was *'derogatory'*. When asked about the types of words that society uses to describe mental ill-health, the words *'crazy'* and *'out of control'* were cited more than once (Sarah, Shauna & Lesley), by participants both with and without a lived experience of mental health issues / mental illness.

Participants were confused about the classification of diagnostic categories related to mental illness. Perceptions of depression varied amongst the participants, from those who aligned it with psychosis, to those who related it to simply *'feeling* down' (Diana). Lesley reflected on depression as merely being a state of the *'mind slowing down significantly.'* Most participants commented on depression as being a concern when it occurred frequently as opposed to transient feelings of sadness. Sarah described depression as an issue when it *'perpetuates and keeps happening.'* Similarly, Laura suggested that it was, *'consistently feeling that way for a long time…like social withdrawal.'* Length of time that individuals had felt depressed and particularly loss of interest in socialising, were both seen as adequate measures for determining the difference between *'feeling down'* and *'clinical depression'*.

Anxiety-related disorders, such as social anxiety disorder and obsessive compulsive disorder, were more relatable concepts amongst the respondents. However, participants found anxiety disorders harder to conceptualise and define than depression and psychotic conditions. Of interest was that anxiety was a more relatable concept even for those participants who had not experienced it in a

clinical sense, despite the fact that half of the participants (both diagnosed and undiagnosed) were unclear about how to fully describe the experience. Since young people have generally experienced the sensation of being anxious, nervous and apprehensive in their everyday lives, anxiety was harder to define in terms of it being an illness. Comments such as, *'the person might just be anxious because of uni'* (Alix) and, *'people get classed under having it when they're just having a tough time'* (Sarah), suggest that regular feelings of worry were conflated with clinical anxiety: *'It could be the regular 'run of the mill' feeling'* (Alix). Most participants depicted anxiety in terms of its physical presentation. Shauna stated, *'I'm not that experienced with it… I'm just assuming it's when [they] get kind of nervous… panic attacks, that kind of thing.'* Hence, anxiety was not understood as a concrete disorder when compared to depression or psychotic illnesses.

Understanding of mental health services available for the young adult population.

Understanding of the availability and reality of mental health services for young people varied greatly amongst participants. A stronger knowledge of services available to young people was evident in the accounts of those who had experienced mental health issues / illness themselves. One area of shared understanding amongst all respondents related to online services, with all participants speaking about these services as an emerging and important area for help-seeking. The national mental health youth service 'Headspace' was cited as a place for seeking help by 3 out of ten participants. Those who had used the service held generally positive views about the organisation of the service, with the exception of Mary who stated that the structure could be more *'personal'* with *'more frequent appointments.'* Of participants with a diagnosis of mental health issues / mental illness, all 4 stated that talking based therapies were vital to their recovery. A number of participants were not confident about accessing counselling services available at their university. One participant was not aware that these services even existed: *'I didn't even know we had counselling services around the university.'* (Sarah). This is a significant knowledge deficit since university life and peer groups were listed as being the two biggest areas that depression and anxiety tended to impact (6 out of 10 participants).

When asked about how current services for young people could be further developed, all respondents considered that education about positive mental health and potential mental health changes was vital. Alix stated, *'There isn't enough* emphasis *placed on* [mental health awareness] *through education.'* Respondents felt that more emphasis should have been given to mental health in the high school curriculum. It was suggested that increased education about mental health would reduce stigma, since mental health would be able to be discussed more amongst peers, thus becoming a normative part of everyday discourse (June, Rebekah, Lesley & Alix).

When questioned about mental health services, stigmatisation from professionals providing the services had contributed to negative service experiences. This form of stigma was articulated as age-related discrimination: *'There's kind of that aspect to it where they just kind of think 'aw you're a kid, you're young…they don't really take you seriously'* (Shauna). A similar story was recollected by Laura about her friend receiving hospital services for depression: *'Every time* we *took her to hospital… we just kind of got looked at… they assumed drugs were involved… it was just because of our age and how we looked.'* Significantly, fear of negative responses from health professionals was mentioned within three of the 44 interviews with participants with a diagnosis of mental health issues / mental illness.

Media and mental health for young adults

Two conflicting perspectives were presented about stigma as related to mental health and the media. The first perspective was that the media can and does contribute to stigma, thereby having negative effects on young peoples' mental health and help seeking behaviours. The interesting

second was that the media, when used appropriately, can be a powerful tool for anti-stigma campaigns, thereby improving help-seeking behaviours and normalising mental health concerns. Showing the videos to participants elicited diverse reactions about the effectiveness of mental health campaigns. Essentially, participants had not connected with all of the mental health promotional campaigns. June stated: *'It's good to have a variety of tacks…* [mental health campaigns are] *not going to work well for everybody.'* Responding to the international campaign on stigma shown to participants, Lesley said the following: *'The use of… chatting online I think… was more interesting and realistic.'* Four of the participants preferred this video over those from the Australian health campaigns which participants were asked to watch. When analysing the differences between this video and the Australian campaigns, it appeared that it was the content related to social media that resonated most with the participants. The topic of social media was seen by participants as being relevant to the social lives of young people. Belinda commented:

> *In terms of the relationship with the mental ill-health type of stuff… I think I get a lot of that from social media… especially websites like Tumblr…that's the main one for expressing…like depression… problems with their mental illness.*

As this suggests, public social media sites, such as Facebook and Tumblr, were specifically mentioned as being spaces where conflicting images of mental health were presented. They could therefore present stigmatised views about mental health and illness which could be detrimental for young people. Conversely this is what is also helpful about these sites as they can be outlets for the expression of feelings and experiences and for seeking help and support from peers. In terms of addressing this issue through public health campaigns one participant stated *'I think the government really is trying* [to resonate with young Australians about their mental health] *…there's an effort...* [but]*… I don't know how much it's working'* (Laura).

Discussion

Considerations for health professionals

Participants' responses to diagnostic labelling and the appearance of a spectrum of perceptions of mental health issues and illness, highlight confusion about diagnostic categorisation. Given this, the attribution of a diagnostic label may further contribute to stigma as the label is often accompanied with cultural stereotyping. Current research supports this finding, while also suggesting that a fear of diagnosis is a contributing barrier for adequate access to mental health for young people (Martinez-Hernaez et al., 2014). A diagnostic label essentially pockets the individual into a social 'category' which in turn stereotypes the person within wider society, reducing them to a category and the associated stereotyped perceptions (Link & Phelan, 2001; Wright et al., 2011). As these stigmatising views are very prevalent in society, this can result in self-stigma and impact help-seeking behaviours (Jorm et al., 2006). Hence, our research suggests a move towards intervening on an individual's daily experiences associated with mental health changes rather than by a 'diagnosis to potentially alleviate social stigma around the label itself.

Participants had greater mental health literacy about more commonly experienced mental health concerns. Psychosis was viewed as less *'normal'* than feeling down or anxious and, was therefore less understood amongst participants. This misunderstanding means that individuals are more likely to draw on stigmatised social messages as opposed to their own personal understandings (Yap et al., 2012).

Several participants highlighted stigma in the context of professional services. Participants who reflected on their experience with utilising health services described a perceived judgment towards young people by health professionals because of their age. The experience of *'not being taken seriously'* was noted in the current study and also in previous literature (Rickwood et al., 2007). For

participants in this study, this undermined their trust in health professionals, thereby undermining their perceived value of the services they were receiving.

Fear of judgment from health professionals limits the individual's chance of attaining an effective and collaborative pathway towards change (Gulliver et al., 2010). The need for effective client centred care for this age group therefore necessitates increased education of health professionals to reduce stigmatisation of young people with regards to mental health. That is, health services should ultimately be reflective of hope and engagement between young adults and their peers and relevant health professionals. This will enhance help-seeking and subsequently, a young person's experience of collaborative recovery.

Future implications for young adult mental health literacy

It is essential that public health education resonate with young adults though maintaining relevance and practicality. Government efforts to promote positive mental health and challenge stigmas associated with mental illness, were acknowledged by several participants. Yet this study found that not all the mental health campaigns resonated with participants. Further research in mental health promotion should seek to decipher those aspects of the current health campaigns that are working well in different contexts. The use of social media within the international mental health campaign video utilised with participants in this study, was viewed as most positive in terms of inspiring participants to gain access to mental health services. The media appears to play a dual role in both contributing to and reducing stigma. Given increasing use of social media amongst this age group, these contradictions are a critical point for further research (Martins, 2004). As stated by Burns et al. (2009), increasing use of the internet has had a tremendous impact upon the way in which young adults relate to one another. Hence, integrating positive images of mental wellbeing within social media sites is an important strategy for promoting positive mental health, increasing awareness and access to mental health services.

For our participants, exposure to stigma led to a confused perception of the lived experiences of mental health issues / mental illness. Negative, stigmatised views also resulted from adverse experiences with mental health services, or limited access to psycho-education at a younger age. These experiences made individuals more susceptible to the influence of negative, extrinsic factors where they were less likely to develop a sense of resilience and rationality. In support of previous findings (Gulliver et al., 2010), participants of the current study highlighted the importance of resilience and self-reliance as key indicators of positive mental health, general wellbeing and recovery from mental health changes.

Yap and Jorm (2011) outlined that the first course of action, or first aid strategy, for a young adult caring for their own mental health is to confide in their peers. Yet our research showed that there are many barriers to this. For our participants, decisions not to disclose related to a fear of ostracism and concerns that their friends would not be able to relate to what they were feeling. Greater mental health literacy among this group combined with more effective public education strategies (Reavley et al., 2012) are required to address this situation. The need for early identification among peer groups is consistent with our findings (Curtis, 2010). Our findings suggested that young adults may be struggling with ways to achieve dynamic discussion around mental health with their friends, thereby missing out a key part of the prevention process.

Based on our findings, the authors argue that mental health literacy should be integrated at an earlier and more pragmatic level to help young adults achieve a sense of optimal mental health by their early 20s. This would facilitate a culture of hope, rather than fear. Our participants stated that early intervention for mental health issues may be improved through increased school education promoting mental health literacy. We suggest that positive, sustained psycho-education at a high

school-age level may help to ingrain practical approaches towards tackling mental health at a younger age, facilitating greater understanding of depression and anxiety by the time the individual reaches the critical age of young adulthood.

Another finding of this study was participants' confusion surrounding perceptions of the lived experiences of mental health concerns and illness. We found that a positive experience of effective service delivery and/or psycho-education can help the person overcome any negativity regarding extrinsic factors. That is, services aimed at improving overall mental health and wellbeing should be prioritised, over the alternative of focusing solely on mental health issues and illness in isolation (Gulliver et al., 2010). This idea is supported by the literature (Gulliver et al., 2010; Yap et al., 2012) where a proposed sense of strength in character; i.e. the development in positive intrinsic values, may then lead to the individual's sense of mental health, or the perception that mental health is an achievable reality. That is, at an institutional level, schools and universities should be at the forefront of mental health advocacy. Ideas include peer support programs, integration of mental health awareness (where feasible) into academic curriculum and increased access to and knowledge of wellbeing and counselling support services.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. Nine of the ten participants were female and therefore there may be a gendered bias, however this reflects the noted gendered disparity where females are more likely to seek help (Adkins et al., 2009). Future large scale research should employ a purposive sampling strategy to include more male participants. The small number of participants in the study means that the findings cannot be generalised. However, small qualitative studies do inform the wider literature and are useful as pilot exercises for the identification of issues to explore in future studies. Since the current study concerned a topic sensitive in nature, we cannot ignore the possibility that there was a social desirability bias. This refers to the phenomena where the participant highlights what they think the researcher wishes to hear to avoid judgment (Henderson, Evans-Lacko, Flach & Thornicroft, 2012).

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the authors recommend earlier and pragmatic psychoeducation within schools and universities to help to normalise common mental health issues such as depression and anxiety and to advocate for education around mood and psychotic disorders. Further development of mental health literacy programs, such as Mental Health First Aid is essential for young people to promote help-seeking behaviours and reduce stigmas. Mental health promotion campaigns using social media can be beneficial. Finally, the authors suggest that this study be replicated with a larger sample to test our findings. This could increase the evidence base for the development of appropriate services better targeted to alleviate the detrimental impact of stigma around mental health for young Australian adults.

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Appendix 1

Interview Script for Study

Personal memoirs:

- General demographic questions: age, sex, location, SES, highest level of education, born in Australia and ethnicity.
- Tell me a little bit about yourself and your experience with mental illness.
- Upon diagnosis, what steps did you take in order to seek help?
- Do you have any personal concerns regarding access to mental health services? What are your concerns?
- What does the word 'stigma' mean to you? How does this concept relate to mental illness in your perspective?
- What does the term 'mental health' mean to you? What does it mean to be mentally healthy?
- Do you feel that being clinically diagnosed as 'mentally ill' stigmatises you amongst your peers? Why/ why not?
- Could you personally recognise the symptoms of either a depressive or anxiety related illness? Could you list some notable experiences that an individual may have?
- What would you advise your friend to do if they confided in you about mental illness?
- To what extent do you believe the media portrayals of mental illness influence you personally? Do you think these portrayals are accurate/ fair?

General questions pertaining to stigma and access to services:

- How do you feel society perceives mental illness? Does your view differ depending on the illness itself? i.e. schizophrenia vs depression.
- Are mental health services stigmatised amongst your age group?
- What do you feel are the key concerns for a person with mental illness in the age bracket between 18-25 years? (in terms of career, social networks and family life)
- How would you suggest that health services could be improved for the youth population?

Video elicitation component:

- Depression and Anxiety campaign → Beyond Blue.
- Sarah vs the dread butterflies → Headspace.
- See me Scotland campaign.

➔ Question: Since all of these videos are aimed at the youth population (raising awareness on mental illness), which do you feel is more positive in regards to a) attracting your attention b) inspiring you to help yourself/ another? To what extent are these videos attempting to alleviate stigma, if at all?

- Unwell song.
- Silver-Linings playbook.

➔ Question: Since both of these videos are portraying the lived experiences of mental illness in everyday life, to what extent do you feel the videos are accurate in their representation? Is the protagonist relatable to real life experience in your perspective?

General questions on this segment:

- Which media portrayal held the most 'truth' in regards to the experience of mental illness in your opinion?
- What aspects of the chosen video made it positive in terms of its portrayal?

The Importance of Cognitive, Intrapersonal, and Interpersonal Attributes to Student Success: An Exploration of University Students' and Staff Views.

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Abstract

This study explored the importance of cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal attributes to student success among a large sample of university students and staff. This study also explored student and staff views of the role of the University in developing such skills. A list of 38 attributes was developed by the authors, with 30 items derived from the self-authorship model. Delivered via an online survey, including demographics and student characteristics, a total of 3065 students and staff participated. Results indicated that both students and staff viewed almost all of the attributes as important to student success, and only three attributes elicited a meaningful diversity of opinion. Differences in views were found to be associated with different student characteristics. The University was considered to be the most responsible for the development of cognitive skills (Students = 80%, Academics = 96%, Professionals = 91%), with less responsibility for intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. Overall, this study endorses student success as a multidimensional concept and provides support for the University's role in developing such skills and attributes.

Keywords

student success; self-authorship; university.

Introduction

Student success is a primary commodity of university education (Kuh, Kinzie, & Buckley, 2006). Typically conceptualised as academic achievement, notions of student success underlie and define much of the strategic dialogue and direction within universities, both in Australia and worldwide (Ewell & Wellman, 2007). In the university context, student success is idealised as the intellectual activity resulting in academic achievement, the acquisition of desired knowledge, skills and competencies, graduation, and post-university performance (Braxton, 2006; Gonsalves & Vijaya, 2008; Jennings, Lovett, Cuba, Swingle, & Lindkvist, 2013; Perna & Thomas, 2006). Such ideals are imposed on students and staff using policies and procedures, and influences upon policies and procedures such as lists of Graduate Attributes (de la Harpe, David, Dalton, Thomas, & Girardi, 2009; Oliver, 2013). However, when considered through the lens of developmental psychology, student success is multidimensional, extending beyond the outcomes of retention and graduation to include identity development, as well as cognitive and social maturity (Seifert, Henry, & Peregrina-

Kretz, 2014; Thompson, 2014).

In the university context, key elements of student success have been identified: mastering academic content, retention and graduation, personal success, individual variations, holistic processes, student engagement, and a sense of belonging (Seifert et al., 2014). The importance of these may vary according to role: senior administrators emphasised retention and graduation; academics emphasised content; and, students and professionals emphasised personal success (Seifert et al., 2014). Seifert and colleagues' (2014) research has not led to firm conclusions about the impact of differing views on student outcomes. The self-authorship model (Baxter Magolda, 1999, 2001; Kegan, 1994) may provide a comprehensive framework for examining student success. Self-authorship is the developmental process in which students transition from dependence on authority figures for their learning and sense of identity, to a state of developmental maturity. Within this model, student success involves cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal maturity which leads to the advanced capabilities of self-directed learning, reasoning, critical thinking and complex problem solving, self-identity, and collaborative relationships with others (Baxter Magolda, 2001, 2008; Strange, 2010).

However, previous research on self-authorship has been largely theoretical and qualitative. It is unknown to what extent maturity in the cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal domains is broadly valued and endorsed by university students, or academic and professional staff. Moreover, the factors that may influence views of student success, particularly among students themselves require more research. Worldwide, higher education is increasingly commercial and competitive. Globalisation has increased the number of international students studying in Australian universities, particularly from the Asia-Pacific region, and introduces a set of unique challenges (Arkoudis, 2015). Many students now attend part-time, combining work and study (Parr, 2015). Demand for a university education has increased (Parr, 2015) due to pressures of unemployment, workforce demands and political policies (Altbach et al., 2009). Universities strive to attract the best and brightest students, while also competing for private funding (Lee, 2014). Such pressures have caused universities to become increasingly concerned about rising costs, resulting in larger classes, staff cuts, higher fees and a reliance on technology for online learning (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009). These trends as a whole call into question the quality and purpose of higher education (Hill, 2015). A better understanding of the differing views of student success is essential to developing a framework that guides meaningful curriculum and co-curricular experiences.

The current study had two aims: 1) to explore any differences in the perceived importance of cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal attributes to student success in a large sample of staff and students; and 2) to explore staff and students' views of the role of the University in developing students' skills across these domains (i.e. the cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal domains, in addition to traditional academic skills).

Method

Participants and procedure

In the first semester of the academic year of 2015 (20 April – 4 May), all enrolled students (N = ~54,100) and staff (N = ~7,500) at a large metropolitan university in Sydney, Australia, were invited by email to participate in an online self-reported survey titled 'Student Success Survey'. This survey was also advertised in the online Student and Staff news emails. Students were sent a reminder email to increase response rate. A prize draw of three gift vouchers ($50, $100, $500AUD) was offered as an incentive for survey completion. Recruitment was conducted after the final date to withdraw from studies without financial penalty. Ethics approval was granted by the participating University's Human Research Ethics Committee.

Measures

Affiliation. Participants were asked to categorise their affiliation with the University as "student", "academic staff", or "professional staff". "Professional staff" referred to all non-academic teaching staff, including administrative, managerial and student support staff.

Demographics. To describe the sample, all participants were asked to report their age, gender, and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin, and all were given the answer option of "prefer not to disclose".

Student characteristics. Years at university (those with less than 12 months were recoded as one year). Student type (domestic/international). Study level (undergraduate/postgraduate). Study load (full-time/part-time). Self-perception of success: students were asked whether or not they considered themselves to be a successful student (yes/no/unsure). Primary language spoken at home (English/Non-English). First person in family to attend university (yes/no). Type of high school attended (Public or Private/Selective/Other). Employment: students were asked if they were currently in any level or type of paid employment (yes/no). Economic hardship: participants were asked how often they were able to pay for rent, food and household utilities (never/most of the time/all of the time) and those who reported "never" were classified as having experienced economic hardship.

Staff characteristics. Length of employment (years). Teaching experience (years). Teaching responsibilities (undergraduates/postgraduates/both).

Student Success. A 38-item list of attributes was developed to examine how important students and staff considered these attributes to be to student success (Appendix A). Of the 38 attributes, 30 were formulated using the self-authorship model (Baxter Magolda & King, 2007; Hodge, Baxter Magolda, & Haynes, 2009; Johnson, 2013) and conceptualised as cognitive (9), intrapersonal (11), or interpersonal (10) attributes. Eight additional attributes were included, based on the academic (2) and general (6) attributes that are consistent with the University policy on student experience and student success. The questionnaire was administered using a random sequence for item order to avoid response bias. All items were answered using a 4 point likert-type scale with responses answered as: "not at all important" (0), "somewhat important" (1), "important" (2), or "extremely important" (3) with an "I don't know" option available for all items. Answers given as "somewhat important" were re-coded to be "important" to yield a more meaningful representation, resulting in three primary categories: "not at all important", "important", and "extremely important".

Role of the University in student development. Participants were asked to indicate to what extent they felt that the University should emphasise the development of students' academic skills, cognitive skills, personal skills and social skills. Responses were given using ordinal categories: "not at all" (0), "a little/somewhat" (1), "a lot" (2), or "I don't know".

Analysis

The online survey was delivered using the internet application, Survey Monkey. Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 22. Descriptive statistics were generated to characterise the sample. To explore participants' perceptions of the role of the University in skill development, simple frequencies were reported. To determine the nature of the relationship between staff type (academic or professional) and perceptions of the University's role, a 2 x 2 chi-square analysis was conducted.

Results

Participants

A total of 3412 people visited the survey site, of which 347 decided not to complete the survey. The final sample consisted of *N* = 3065, which represented ~5% and ~7% of the total student and staff population, respectively. Of the final sample, 82% were students (*n* = 2503, *Mage*: 26, (*SD*): 9.5, age range: 17 – more than 70 years, 68% female), 8% were academic staff (*n* = 250, *Mage*: 46, *SD*: 10.8, age range: 24 – more than 70 years, 52% female), and 10% were professional staff (*n* = 312, *Mage*: 41, *SD*: 10.7, age range: 20 – more than 70 years, 68% were female).

In the student sample, 82% (*n* = 2052) were full-time and 80% (*n* = 1995) were domestic students. Overall, 60% (*n* = 1483) were undergraduate. The mean number of years studied at university was 3.5 (*SD*: 2.9) and 64% (*n* = 1603) considered themselves to be successful students. A total of 25% (*n* = 623) of students were the first person in their family to attend university, 62% (*n* = 1558) spoke English in the family home, and 61% (*n* = 1520) completed high school education at a private or selective school. A total of 59% (*n* = 1473) were in paid employment and 20% (*n* = 497) had experienced economic hardship.

In the academic staff sample, 21% (*n* = 52) taught undergraduates only, 23% (*n* = 58) taught postgraduates only, 48% (*n* = 119) taught both, and 8% (n = 21) were not responsible for teaching undergraduates or postgraduates in the 2015 academic year. The average number of years employed at the University was 9 (*SD*: 6.9) and the average number of years teaching was 12 (*SD*: 6.9), In the professional staff sample, the average number of years employed at the University was 6 (*SD*: 5.6).

Student success

The results for the Student Success measure are presented in Appendix B. Overall, all items were considered to be important to student success to some degree, with 30/38 items considered by over 95% of participants to be either "important" or "extremely important". In Appendix B, the attributes considered to be most important (i.e. 0% answered "not at all important") to student success are highlighted in mid grey. For three of the items, responses from students, academics and professionals were mostly divided (i.e., ~ equal % of "not at all important" and "extremely important"). These items were: "Becoming a leader who promotes others to do their best"; "Participating in social and cultural events"; and "A sense of belonging and connection to the University campus". Responses to these items are highlighted in dark grey in Appendix B.

Multivariate analyses (Table 1) revealed that certain student characteristics were associated with degree of importance. For the attribute *"Becoming a leader who promotes others to do their best"*, students who did not speak English in the family home, were of international student status, and in the earlier years of study, were significantly more likely to consider this attribute to be "extremely important". For the attribute, *"Participating in social and cultural events"*, students who had a full time study load, were of international student status, did not speak English in the family home, and experienced economic hardship, were significantly more likely to consider this attribute to be "extremely important". For the attribute *"A sense of belonging and connection to the University campus"* students who were female, did not speak English in the family home, and in the earlier years of study, were significantly more likely to consider this attribute to be "extremely important" to student success.

Role of the University in student development

Overall, students and staff indicated that the University had a role to play in student development in all four domains (Table 2). The University was considered to be the most responsible for the

development of cognitive skills (Students = 80%, Academics = 96%, Professionals = 91%), with less responsibility for personal and social skills; although, the majority still answered "a lot" for these latter domains. Less than 1% of respondents thought that the University had no role at all in student development, or, did not know how to respond. Academic staff were significantly more likely to state "a lot" for both academic (82% vs. 71%, $x^2 = 8.38$, df = 1, $p < .05$) and cognitive skills (96% vs. 91%, $x^2 = 6.09$, df = 1, $p < .05$) when compared to professional staff; although, the true differences were minimal. There were no significant differences between academic and professional staff for intrapersonal (55% vs. 64%, $x^2 = 5.8$, df = 1, $p = .06$) or interpersonal (55% vs. 64%, $x^2 = 5.8$, df = 2, $p = .06$) skill development.

Table 2. Participants' views on the University's role in student skill development

Skills	**Not at all**			**Somewhat**			**A lot**			**Don't know**		
	%			%			%			%		
	S	A	P	S	A	P	S	A	P	S	A	P
Academic	1	0	0	43	18	29	55	81	71	1	0	0
Cognitive	0	0	0	19	4	9	80	96	91	1	0	0
Personal	1	0	0	38	44	36	61	55	64	1	1	0
Social	1	0	0	38	44	36	61	55	64	1	1	0

Note: S = Students, A = Academic staff, P = Professional

Discussion

This study aimed to measure the importance of cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal attributes to student success among university students and staff. Overall, there was a clear level of agreement for almost all of the attributes. The few "I don't know" responses indicated that the overwhelming majority of participants were able to determine the importance of the included attributes. This suggests that students, academics, and professionals consider student success to be a multidimensional construct that encapsulates a range of cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal attributes, in addition to academic skills. There was however, considerable support for a more concrete interpersonal attribute *"Ability to manage time…*" suggesting that participants also considered skills such as multitasking to be important to student success. These findings endorse the self-authorship model and confirm that student success extends beyond academic achievement and is an intricate combination of intellectual and personal capacities (Thompson, 2014).

Student characteristics were associated with the differences in views. Students' gender, language spoken at home, international student status, and economic hardship were all independently associated with differences of importance for the contentious items. These findings confirm that student views are very much influenced by their cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. This is not surprising as a wealth of research has documented the inequalities faced by particular student groups, including those of international student status, ethnic minorities, and those with lower socio-economic status (Nora, Barlow, & Crisp, 2005; Walpole, 2003). As such, a generalised approach to student success may not be appropriate (Long, 2006; Perna & Thomas, 2006).

The majority of respondents believed that the University had some role to play in students' skill development for all four domains, with overwhelming support for cognitive development. Interestingly, only half of the students thought that the University had a dominant role to play in academic skill development. This is surprising given that academic skill development is a primary goal of university attendance. The findings suggest that students and staff did not consider the University to be wholly responsible for academic, personal, and social skill development, despite endorsing a multidimensional construct of student success. Rather, some respondents may have believed that the individual student or other external influences are responsible for this. Further research will clarify this.

The present study is limited by the low response rate and lack of male participation. Further, a number of other external and internal factors may influence student success, which were not examined by this study, such as grade point average, family expectations, faculty or discipline of study, unemployment rates, and location of the University (Kuh, Kinzie, & Buckley, 2006; Perna & Thomas, 2006; Tinto & Pusser, 2006). Exploring the influence of such factors on student success may be valuable, as would further exploring where, outside of the university setting, students are expected to develop the skills necessary for student success.

Conclusion

The current findings provide some clarification on the importance of the cognitive, intrapersonal, interpersonal domains to student success, but more research is needed. While a developmental view of education is supported by both students and staff, there is likely to be a lack of understanding about how the more holistic personal and social educational attributes, such as values, knowledge and identity (Thompson, 2014), can be cultivated within the current University curriculum. This calls for a broader discussion of the potential and purpose of the University in these areas and a broader dissemination of student development models may assist.

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Table 1. Multivariate associations between student characteristics and ratings of importance for the contentious attributes

	Attribute 1 "Becoming a leader…" N = 518 C-S R^2 = 14%				Attribute 2 "Participating in social events…" N = 494 C-S R2 = 14%				Attribute 3 "Sense of belonging…" N = 482 C-S R2 = 11%			
	B (SE)	OR	95%CI	*p*	B (SE)	OR	95%CI	*p*	B (SE)	OR	95%CI	*p*
Male	-0.03 (0.21)	0.97	0.64 – 1.46	.881	0.12 (0.21)	1.12	0.74 – 1.68	.590	-0.82 (.211)	0.45	0.29 – 0.66	**.000**
Public High school	0.06 (0.21)	1.06	0.70 – 1.60	.781	0.30 (0.21)	1.35	0.90 – 2.02	.151	0.34 (0.22)	1.40	0.91 – 2.14	.119
NESL at home	1.31 (0.26)	3.71	2.22 – 6.20	**.000**	0.82 (0.25)	2.28	1.39 – 3.74	**.001**	0.73 (0.26)	2.07	1.25 – 3.45	**.005**
Employed	0.23 (0.22)	1.26	0.82 – 1.92	.294	0.32 (0.22)	1.38	0.90 – 2.11	.137	0.07 (0.22)	1.07	0.69 – 1.65	.766
Economic Hardship	0.45 (0.30)	1.56	0.88 – 2.80	.131	0.60 (0.27)	1.83	1.09 – 3.08	**.023**	0.38 (0.26)	1.46	0.87 – 2.45	.154
First to attend university	0.13 (0.25)	1.14	0.69 – 1.88	.608	-0.08 (0.24)	0.92	0.58 – 1.48	.740	0.34 (0.25)	1.41	0.67 – 2.27	.166
Years at university	-0.15 (0.05)	0.86	0.79 – 0.94	**.001**	-0.06 (0.05)	0.94	0.86 – 1.03	.200	-0.14 (0.05)	0.87	0.79 – 0.95	**.002**
Full-time	0.10 (0.26)	1.11	0.67 – 1.84	.697	0.72 (0.27)	2.06	1.21 – 3.51	**.008**	0.01 (0.26)	1.00	0.60 – 1.68	.987
Postgraduate	-0.15 (0.25)	0.87	0.53 – 1.41	.560	0.35 (0.25)	1.41	0.87 – 2.29	.164	0.04 (0.26)	1.04	0.62 – 1.72	.894
International	0.82 (0.38)	2.27	1.08 – 4.78	**.030**	0.92 (0.33)	2.51	1.31 – 4.83	**.006**	0.09 (0.33)	1.10	0.57 – 2.10	.778
Successful student	0.37 (0.29)	1.45	0.82 – 2.57	.202	0.47 (0.29)	1.60	0.90 – 2.83	.109	0.48 (0.29)	1.61	0.91 – 2.84	.100

Notes: Attribute 1: Nag R^2 = 19%, −2LL: 603.66, model $\chi 2$ (11) = 79.37, $p < .001$. Attribute 2: Nag R^2 = 19%, −2LL: 609.51, model $\chi 2$ (11) = 74.51, $p < .001$. Attribute 3: Nag R^2 = 15%, −2LL: 586.75, model $\chi 2$ (11) = 56.12, $p < .001$.

Appendix A. Student Success Survey

In this study we are interested in finding out which factors you consider to be most important to your definition of student success.

In your opinion, how important are the following items to student success?

Creating a network of mutually supportive friends and peers	0	1	2	3	4
The ability to effectively communicate with peers and other people	0	1	2	3	4
The capacity to manage one's emotions	0	1	2	3	4
Being able to use different learning styles and study techniques	0	1	2	3	4
The willingness to express one's own opinions without the need for approval from others	0	1	2	3	4
The ability to appropriately reference and cite other people's work	0	1	2	3	4
Being able to effectively manage conflict in personal and professional relationships	0	1	2	3	4
The confidence to express and defend opinions	0	1	2	3	4
A competence in communicating with others in a variety of contexts, both written and spoken	0	1	2	3	4
Always abiding by the rules and regulations of the University	0	1	2	3	4
Developing a passion for life-long learning	0	1	2	3	4
The ability to manage time effectively	0	1	2	3	4
The willingness to identify strengths and weaknesses in one's self	0	1	2	3	4
Becoming a leader who promotes others to do their best	0	1	2	3	4
Actively engaging in teamwork and group activities	0	1	2	3	4
A sense of belonging and connection to the University campus	0	1	2	3	4
Participating in social and cultural events	0	1	2	3	4
A detailed understanding of all course content	0	1	2	3	4
Developing a sense of integrity and identity	0	1	2	3	4
The ability to make clear and reasoned judgments after evaluating evidence	0	1	2	3	4
Developing an understanding of different cultures and systems of beliefs	0	1	2	3	4
Tolerating uncertainty when making decisions	0	1	2	3	4
Being able to ask for help when it is needed	0	1	2	3	4
The capacity to think creatively and in unconventional ways	0	1	2	3	4
Work experience in a relevant field	0	1	2	3	4
Exposure to different types of learning environments and teaching methods	0	1	2	3	4
The ability to research and find answers to questions using a range of sources	0	1	2	3	4
Genuinely appreciating the perspectives of others	0	1	2	3	4
The capability to set goals and outline a course of action to achieve them	0	1	2	3	4
The ability to apply what has been learned to new situations and unfamiliar tasks	0	1	2	3	4
Being adaptable and flexible when collaborating with others	0	1	2	3	4
Developing an active interest in global issues	0	1	2	3	4
Knowing how to exercise self-care when feeling stressed	0	1	2	3	4
Taking responsibility for one's self and accepting the consequences of one's actions	0	1	2	3	4
Engaging in respectful and tolerant interactions with others	0	1	2	3	4
Developing clarity about personal values and beliefs	0	1	2	3	4
Accepting and managing change	0	1	2	3	4
Questioning and reflecting on content in order to generate new ideas	0	1	2	3	4

Notes: 0 = Not at all important, 1 = Somewhat Important, 2 = Important, 3 = Extremely Important, 4 = I don't know.
Mid grey = additional attributes not formulated using the self-authorship model.

Appendix B. The importance of attributes to student success.

Domain	Item	Not at all			Important			Extremely		
		%			%			%		
		S	A	P	S	A	P	S	A	P
Cognitive	The ability to apply what has been learned to new situations and unfamiliar tasks	0	0	0	45	46	52	54	54	47
	Questioning and reflecting on content in order to generate new ideas	1	0	0	58	56	62	41	44	38
	A detailed understanding of all course content	1	2	2	58	75	70	40	24	28
	The capacity to think creatively and in unconventional ways	1	0	1	54	63	64	44	37	35
	Developing a passion for life-long learning	3	3	3	51	54	61	45	42	36
	Exposure to different types of learning environments and teaching methods	2	5	2	66	72	70	32	22	28
	Being able to use different learning styles and study techniques	2	5	1	59	63	57	38	31	42
	The ability to make clear and reasoned judgments after evaluating evidence	0	0	0	41	26	38	59	74	62
	Tolerating uncertainty when making decisions	2	1	1	69	59	69	26	38	28
Intrapersonal	The capability to set goals and outline a course of action to achieve them	1	1	0	48	60	60	51	39	40
	Developing a sense of integrity and identity	2	0	1	54	51	49	43	48	50
	The ability to manage time effectively	0	0	0	25	36	38	75	64	62
	The willingness to express one’s own opinions without the need for approval from others	2	1	1	58	59	56	39	39	43
	Developing clarity about personal values and beliefs	3	6	2	64	68	68	33	25	30
	Being able to ask for help when it is needed	1	0	0	42	43	41	57	57	58
	Taking responsibility for one’s self and accepting the consequences of one’s actions	1	0	0	43	38	35	56	62	64
	The willingness to identify strengths and weaknesses in one’s self	1	0	1	49	60	59	49	39	40
	The capacity to manage one’s emotions	1	2	0	53	69	61	45	28	38
	Knowing how to exercise self-care when feeling stressed	1	2	1	45	54	50	53	44	49
	Accepting and managing change	1	3	2	57	68	59	42	27	39
Interpersonal	Genuinely appreciating the perspectives of others	1	1	1	58	56	54	40	43	45
	Creating a network of mutually supportive friends and peers	2	1	1	52	63	58	46	35	41
	Actively engaging in teamwork and group activities	4	4	3	69	71	70	27	25	27

	Developing an understanding of different cultures and systems of beliefs	5	9	2	62	59	64	32	31	34
	Being adaptable and flexible when collaborating with others	0	1	0	58	65	57	41	33	43
	Being able to effectively manage conflict in personal and professional relationships	1	2	1	54	67	56	44	30	43
	Engaging in respectful and tolerant interactions with others	1	1	1	54	55	46	45	45	54
	The confidence to express and defend opinions	1	0	1	46	55	45	53	44	54
	The ability to effectively communicate with peers and other people	0	0	1	35	32	27	64	67	72
	Becoming a leader who promotes others to do their best	11	19	12	70	72	76	18	8	13
	Participating in social and cultural events	14	15	8	72	77	84	13	8	8
	A sense of belonging and connection to the University campus	10	11	6	72	80	78	17	8	15
	Work experience in a relevant field	3	15	6	54	65	65	42	20	28
	Developing an active interest in global issues	7	10	6	71	76	78	21	14	16
Other	Always abiding by the rules and regulations of the University	5	6	2	69	77	75	25	18	22
	A competence in communicating with others in a variety of contexts, both written and spoken	0	0	0	45	35	39	54	65	61
	The ability to research and find answers to questions using a range of sources	0	0	0	42	33	39	58	67	60
	The ability to appropriately reference and cite other people's work	2	1	2	53	44	44	45	55	53

Notes: S = Students, A = Academic staff, P = Professional staff. Mid grey = items in which <1% of respondents stated "not at all important". Dark grey = contentious items with ~ equal ratings of "extremely important" and "not at all important".

The Influence of Support and Development Programs and Services on the Success of University Students from Low Socioeconomic Status Backgrounds

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Abstract

This project engaged a mixed-methods approach to explore how the success of students from low socioeconomic status (low SES) backgrounds was impacted by their interaction with support and development initiatives offered by the division of Student Life and Learning at UNSW Australia. A quantitative database study was used to determine the impact of intervention on several academic success indicators, and multilevel modelling was applied to identify significant results. Student interviews provided experiential accounts of support initiative interaction, which were drawn on to qualify the link between interaction and success. The initiatives examined were academic writing, disabilities, counselling, educational and careers support services, and co-curricular development programs. Findings show that low SES students accessed Student Life and Learning support initiatives at similar or (in the case of some initiatives) higher rates than their peers and that these interactions contributed in multiple and diverse ways to student success. The benefits provided by interactions were not limited to low SES students, although there is some evidence to suggest that academic improvements may be more pronounced for this cohort.

Introduction

It is well documented that students from low socioeconomic status (low SES) backgrounds face particular challenges in their pursuit of success in Australian higher education (see for example, Baik, Naylor and Arkoudis, 2015; Devlin, 2013; James, Krause and Jenkins, 2010; and Tones, Fraser, Elder and White, 2009). Devlin and McKay (2011) present certain characteristics (including family support, priorities and finances) that distinguish many low SES students and which may significantly impact on their university experiences. McIntyre, Todd, Huijser and Tehan (2012, p. 110) express the sentiment that "for some [low SES] students, engagement with the university experience resembles travelling to another country".

Despite these challenges, many students from low SES backgrounds are successful at university. A longitudinal survey study by Marks (2007, p. 27) found that "if students from a low socioeconomic background get to university, their background does not negatively affect their chances of completing the course". Indeed, the landmark *Bradley Review* of higher education commissioned by the Australian Government in 2008 found that although students from low SES backgrounds were under represented in higher education, the success rates[1] of these students were high – 97 per cent of those of their higher SES peers (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent & Scales, 2008). A subsequent study by Gale and Parker (2013) reported retention and success rates for low SES students at 96–98 per cent of those for all students.

Understanding the reasons why low SES students are successful at university regardless of the challenges they face is critical to ensure the optimal direction of policy and delivery of resources. This article explores the contribution of university support and development programs and services (referred to as *support initiatives* throughout this article) to this success. The benefits of providing university support initiatives have been acknowledged by authors such as, Bridgestock (2009);

[1] 'Success rate' is the proportion of units passed in a year compared to the total number of units enrolled, as defined by the 'Equity Performance Indicators' of Martin (1994).

Glaser, Hall and Halperin (2006); Simpson and Ferguson (2012); and Stone (2011). However, there are conflicting reports in the literature on the rate at which low SES students access this support. Gale and Parker (2013) found evidence from some institutions suggesting that low SES students access support services at higher rates than their peers, whereas Tones et al. (2009) propose that low SES students are *less* likely to make use of support services. Research into the impact that these services have on student success is problematic given that "for many initiatives, there are too many variables to control in any rigorously methodological way, which makes establishing causal relationships between initiatives and effects extremely difficult" (Naylor, Baik & James, 2013, p.35). As such, comprehensive study into the effectiveness of support initiatives has to date been limited (see Walton, 2016 in this issue for a review of previous studies), and there is a gap in our current understanding of how support initiatives are contributing to low SES student success.

In the current study, the authors have sought to address this gap by presenting quantitative and qualitative evidence to explore how the success of low SES students at UNSW is impacted by their interaction with support initiatives. This was achieved through: determining the rates of participation of low SES students in these initiatives; examining variances in academic success indicators as a result of interaction; and conducting student interviews to provide detailed accounts of student experiences. This article explains the relevance of the study at UNSW and describes the methodological approach taken. It then presents the findings on how service interactions impact low SES student success, followed by a comparison of this impact for low SES students and the cohort as a whole.

The UNSW Australia Context

Research conducted for this article took place at UNSW (The University of New South Wales) – a research-intensive university and member of the Group of Eight[2] with a population of approximately 50,000 students. The participation rate[3] for low SES students at UNSW is low – significantly below the national average. However, the success rates of this cohort are consistently high – above the national, state and Group of Eight averages despite the contextually low participation rate.

Considerable efforts are made at UNSW to support students from low SES backgrounds, particularly via the suite of support and development services and programs offered by the division of Student Life and Learning (SLL). However, no comprehensive study into the effect of these initiatives on the academic performance of students has previously been undertaken. This study addresses this gap by exploring how the success of low SES students was impacted by their interactions with SLL support initiatives. The initiatives included in the study were:

- **The Learning Centre (TLC) consultations.** Peer Writing Assistants at TLC support students with academic writing, structuring written assignments, developing arguments, and provide feedback on drafts of papers.
- **Registration with Disability Services.** Students can declare whether they have a disability at entry to UNSW. This allowed a direct comparison of students with a declared disability who registered with Disability Services with those with a declared disability who did not register.
- **Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS) consultations.**
- **Educational Support Service consultations.** Educational Support Advisors (ESAs) provide one-on-one appointments to students offering support with issues such as: academic

[2] The Group of Eight is a coalition of Australia's eight leading research universities.
[3] 'Participation rate' is the proportion of low SES students compared to all domestic students.

performance; goal setting; settling-in; and difficult personal circumstances. The ESA team was established under the Australian Government's Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) funding to provide targeted support to students from low SES backgrounds, students entering UNSW through alternative entry schemes and students identified as being at risk of attrition. However, the one-on-one appointments and workshops they offer are open to all students.

- **Careers and Employment consultations.**
- **Advantage programs.** UNSW Advantage accredits professional development and volunteering opportunities at UNSW for inclusion on the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement (AHEGS). These programs aim to broaden the student experience through developing professional skills, building competencies and enhancing leadership capacity. Only the UNSW Advantage accredited programs offered by SLL were included in this study, and these are referred to as 'Advantage programs' in the following analysis. Several of the Advantage programs were established under HEPPP funding to facilitate engagement with low SES students and provide opportunities to develop social capital. To achieve statistical power, analyses considered all of the students interacting with these activities as one group.

Methodology

A mixed-methods approach that included a quantitative (database method) and qualitative (interview method) phase was engaged. The statistical analysis of a large dataset allowed the impact of interaction to be quantified in terms of academic success, while interviews provided experiential accounts of support initiative interaction that could not be observed from the dataset. The benefits of using this mixed-methods design are explained in detail in Walton 2016.

The target group for this study was students from low SES backgrounds, and the sample was limited to local undergraduates. This sampling aligns with equity policy in Australian higher education following the Bradley Review (Bradley et al., 2008), which has sought to improve access, retention and completion rates for local, undergraduate students from low SES backgrounds. The SEIFA SA1 measure[4] was used to identify low SES students based on their home addresses.

Database method

Student demographic and academic information was sourced from the UNSW Student Information Management System and the data management software SAS Enterprise Guide 7.1 (SAS EG) was used to manipulate these data. Each of the SLL units provided available data on support initiative interactions until the end of semester two, 2014. Few of these records dated back further than ten years, with some units only having data for the past few years either because of the (young) age of the unit or program itself, or because of the age of the record-keeping software in place. The indicators that were used to determine academic success are given in Table 1.

Determining statistical significance in changes to the success indicators required high-level modelling incorporating the hierarchical structure and non-independent nature of the data. Multilevel modelling (MLM) was selected as the most appropriate statistical test for this purpose. MLMs are built in stages, with variables and effects added to each stage, and output indicating whether the latest model is a better fit than the previous one. The overall fit of a model is tested

[4] The Socioeconomic Index for Areas Index of Education and Occupation (SIEFA) is used in Australia to identify areas nationally as low (the bottom 25% of the population), medium (the middle 50%) or high (the top 25%) SES. The measure of area used in this study was Statistical Area Level 1 (SA1). There is much discussion around the best method to use to classify low SES (see for example Dockery, Seymour and Koshy, 2015), for this study SA1 was deemed the most consistent and reliable measure available, commensurate with the available student information.

using a chi-square likelihood ratio – the *–2LL* (negative two log-likelihood) or *deviance.* The smaller the value, the better the model fit. Significance of model improvement was calculated according to the chi-square distribution table with critical values of $\chi^2 = 3.84$ ($p < 0.05$) and $\chi^2 = 6.64$ ($p < 0.01$) at 1 df. The best fitting model is selected as the final model. WAM at completion and WAM before and after interaction were analysed using a linear MLM. A hierarchical generalised linear model was needed to analyse the categorical binary outcome variables of academic standing (good or non-good) before and after interaction and discontinuation count – this was done using a logistic MLM. Independent variables suspected to confound results can be placed in the model at any level as covariates. Statistical modelling of support initiative interactions showed that some variables had a greater influence on the model than others. ATAR, faculty, stage (i.e. number of years enrolled) and student ID had a consistent significant impact on the p-values of the MLMs, and were subsequently included in relevant analyses.

All data relating to the potential identification of individual students were removed and Student IDs were re-identified using a reversible anonymisation code known only to the project team. Data on student interactions with CAPS were fully de-identified before leaving the service owing to the particularly sensitive nature of the information.

Table 1. Indicators used to determine student academic success

Indicator	
Weighted Average Mark (WAM) before and after interaction	WAM is the average of a student's grades for all courses enrolled in a particular semester. The average WAM for all semesters enrolled *before* a student's *initial* interaction was compared with the average WAM for all semesters enrolled *after* a student's *initial* interaction.
Academic standing before and after interaction	At UNSW there are seven levels of academic standing ranging from 'good standing' to 'exclusion' which are allocated to a student after each semester. To measure success in this study, an academic standing of 'good' was assigned '1' and 'non-good' assigned '0'. The average standing (between 1 and 0) for all semesters enrolled *before* a student's *initial* interaction was compared with the average standing for all semesters enrolled *after* a student's *initial* interaction.
WAM at completion	WAM at completion was calculated by averaging a student's grades over all semesters of enrolment up to completion of the program. WAM at completion was compared for students who did not interact with a support initiative, students who did interact with a support initiative, and students who interacted with a support initiative in their first semester of enrolment.
Discontinuation rate	At UNSW students are assigned a 'discontinuation count' if they indicate to UNSW that they are no longer continuing with their program. The main difference between discontinuation and retention rates is that the discontinuation rate does not take into account those students who do not return to nor inform UNSW of their intention to discontinue (information that was not available for this study). The discontinuation rate was calculated as the number of students who enrolled for at least one semester and then discontinued, compared to the total number of students enrolled over the same time period. The discontinuation rate was compared for students who interacted with a support initiative and those who did not.

Interview Method

In-depth interviews were used to gain a deeper understanding of the issues encountered by low SES students at UNSW and their experiences with using support initiatives. Interviews were drawn on to explore the factors influencing student success and whether these were impacted by SES. As the database study could only elicit evidence on how support initiatives impact *academic* success, the interview responses were of particular interest for initiatives whose primary role did not involve direct *academic* intervention (e.g. completion of an Advantage program or counselling consultations). Student testimonies elicited through interviewing enabled further unpacking of data, identified otherwise overlooked connections, and in turn supported a better understanding of the

initiatives' influence on low SES students.

Participants were recruited via a questionnaire that invited respondents to provide a telephone number or email address if they agreed to be interviewed – a total of 22 interviews were conducted (20 in-person, two over-the-phone). Interviews were transcribed and then coded for thematic analysis using NVivo software. Themes were then analysed using the principles of narrative analysis, now commonplace in social research (Minichiello, 2008). Walton (2016) provides further insight into the applied interview methodology used in this study.

Support initiative influence on student success – Findings for low SES students

The participation rates (percentage of students interacting that were low SES) and ratios (percentage of low SES students interacting/percentage of low SES students in whole population) of students interacting with each of the initiatives are given in Table 2. These show that low SES students were over-represented in their interactions with all support initiatives with the exception of Disability Services. Encouragingly, they were particularly well represented at ESA consultations, a service providing targeted support for this cohort, and in Advantage programs, some of which were established to facilitate low SES student engagement.

Table 3 presents academic indicators before and after interaction with the initiatives and Table 4 gives the discontinuation rates for interacting and non-interacting groups. Table 5 compares grades at graduation for interacting and non-interacting students. ATAR is also included as an indicator of prior academic success of the interacting and non-interacting cohorts.

Table 2. Participation rates/ratios of low SES students interacting with support initiatives

Support Initiative	Participation Rate	Participation Ratio
TLC consultations	9.6%	1.04
Disability Services	8.5%	0.95
Counselling consultations	10.4%	1.14
ESA consultations	15.5%	1.65
Careers consultations	10.3%	1.13
Advantage programs	14.5%	1.61

Table 3. Student mean WAM and academic standing before and after initial interaction with support initiatives

		WAM Before	WAM After	Academic Standing Before	Academic Standing After	n
Low SES students	TLC consultations	62.3	65.3*	0.87	0.93	59
	Counselling consultations	63.3	62.7**	0.84	0.78*	307
	ESA consultations	58.7	60.6	0.67	0.76*	71
	Careers consultations	67.3	69.5	0.90	0.92	256
	Advantage programs	70.8	71.3**	0.99	0.95	125
All students	TLC consultations	64.9	67.1**	0.89	0.91	602
	Counselling consultations	64.3	65.0**	0.85	0.82**	3,085
	ESA consultations	60.7	62.7	0.75	0.75	507
	Careers consultations	67.7	69.5**	0.94	0.95**	2,414
	Advantage programs	70.7	71.6	0.97	0.95*	864

'n' = total number of students who recorded a WAM/standing in at least one semester both before and after initial semester of interaction, *significantly different at $p < 0.05$, **significantly different at $p < 0.01$.

Table 4. Percentage of interacting and non-interacting students discontinuing

		% non-interacting students discontinuing (n)	% interacting students discontinuing (n)
Low SES students	TLC consultations	6.8 (342)	5.2 (5)
	Disability Services	8.0 (20)	7.4 (6)
	Counselling consultations	7.2 (376)	6.3 (25)
	ESA consultations	5.3 (204)	9.5 (10)
	Careers consultations	7.3 (390)	3.9 (11)
	Advantage programs	7.5 (487)	0.8 (1)
All students	TLC consultations	5.8 (3,133)	4.2 (42)
	Disability Services	7.0 (193)	5.5 (53)
	Counselling consultations	6.0 (3,493)	6.5** (247)
	ESA consultations	4.7 (1,966)	7.5** (51)
	Careers consultations	6.2 (3,655)	3.1 (85)
	Advantage programs	6.5 (4,757)	0.8* (7)

. 'n' = total number of students discontinuing (given in brackets), *significantly different at $p < 0.05$, **significantly different at $p < 0.01$.

Table 5. WAM at completion and ATAR for non-interacting students, interacting students, and students interacting in their first semester

		WAM at completion			ATAR		
		No int. (n)	Initial int. any sem. (n)	Initial int. first sem. (n)	No int. (n)	Initial int. any sem. (n)	Initial int. first sem. (n)
Low SES students	TLC consultations	69.2 (1,666)	70.0* (25)	72.3 (9)	88.3 (1,280)	84.6 (18)	85.9 (8)
	Disability Services	66.4 (85)	69.1* (17)	75.8** (9)	88.8 (55)	85.1 (10)	85.5 (7)
	Counselling consultations	69.1 (1,819)	68.2 (154)	71.0* (16)	88.3 (1,388)	88.0 (116)	85.8 (12)
	ESA consultations	69.7 (1,063)	63.0 (11)	65.5 (2)	88.8 (825)	80.6 (10)	81.8 (2)
	Careers consultations	68.9 (1,830)	71.0** (143)	74.8 (6)	88.2 (1,394)	88.7 (110)	88.6 (4)
	Advantage programs	68.9 (2,396)	72.9** (55)	74.6 (2)	88.6 (1,802)	91.7 (50)	89.8 (2)
All students	TLC consultations	70.4 (19,702)	70.9 (335)	73.7** (74)	90.0 (15,287)	87.8 (204)	88.0 (40)
	Disability Services	68.6 (1,041)	69.7** (231)	71.2** (130)	88.0 (665)	85.8 (147)	85.6 (94)
	Counselling consultations	70.2 (22,301)	69.7** (1,491)	70.7 (164)	90.0 (17,090)	89.1 (1,037)	87.8 (100)
	ESA consultations	70.7 (12,473)	67.8 (98)	69.8 (8)	90.2 (9,786)	88.1 (74)	84.8 (5)
	Careers consultations	70.1 (22,361)	71.4* (1,431)	73.4 (106)	90.0 (17,003)	89.7 (1,124)	89.0 (76)
	Advantage programs	70.1 (29,559)	73.2* (430)	71.7 (26)	90.2 (22,143)	92.8 (357)	92.3 (23)

'n' = total number of students completing, and those completing who have a recorded ATAR ('n' values given in brackets), *significant at $p < 0.05$, **significant at $p < 0.01$.

The Learning Centre consultations

Given that the primary role of TLC consultations is to improve students' academic performance, the effect of an interaction can be directly assessed as a function of academic indicators – which do suggest that interaction is having a positive effect on low SES student success. This was evidenced by significantly improved grades after interaction, and significantly higher grades at program completion. Moreover, this was despite the fact that low SES students attending consultations had a lower mean ATAR than those who did not attend. This suggests that these students are behind their peers on entry, but effectively overtake them after interaction. Low SES students interacting also showed an improvement in academic standing and lower rates of discontinuation, although these results were not significant.

A number of student responses to the in-depth interview questions also attest to the positive influence of TLC consultations on their academic performance, for example:

> *It was very effective… someone would sit down with you, go through your essay and then in two or three weeks they'd follow up and give you feedback and assistance, and a bit of critique. I found that exceptionally helpful.*

Registration with Disability Services

Disability Services were only able to provide a list of students who had registered to use the service and the year of registration, but not information on individual appointments, it was therefore not possible to compare student grades before and after initial interaction (note this information is missing from Table 1). However, a study of grades at graduation showed that low SES students who registered with Disability Services completed with a significantly better mean WAM than those who did not register. Moreover, students who registered in their first semester had an average WAM at completion that was 9.4 percentage points higher than those that did not register. This was the highest recorded average WAM at completion for any interacting group in the study, despite registered students having considerably lower ATARs than those not registered. The average rate of discontinuation was lower for the group that had registered, although not significantly so.

The ability of Disability Services to support low SES students and improve their chance of success was also highlighted by interview participants. For instance:

> *I've got chronic depression and anxiety issues. Sometimes the stress has gotten to me, but I have got procedures in place with Disability Services, and that's been fantastic…There's only been a couple of times I've had to request an extension, and that's gone through with no dramas.*
>
> *It's great being able to get a doctors certificate that just says 'illness' and that's good enough, no questions asked. As well as just having that leniency of being able to get extensions (through being registered with Disability Services), it's so valuable, even just an extra week and extra time in exams.*

Counselling and Psychological Services consultations

Low SES students interacting with a counsellor had a significantly lower mean WAM after interaction than before, and demonstrated significantly worse rates of good academic standing. This would suggest that interaction is having a negative impact on student success; however, these findings must be addressed within the context of the cohort of students accessing the service. Recent studies conducted at Australian universities show that students who access university counselling services are experiencing high levels of psychological distress (for example Schweitzer, Klavich and McLean, 2009; Vivekananda, Telley and Trethowan, 2011). Andrews and Chong (2011) describe how experiences of mental health problems can have a considerable impact on academic performance, with counsellors reportedly well aware of the association between anxiety/mood disorders and issues such as impaired concentration, short-term memory loss,

impaired motivation, and increased lethargy.

Notwithstanding these issues, low SES students who interacted with a counsellor were no more likely to discontinue, and did not have significantly lower WAMs at completion than those who did not interact. This highlights the benefit of counselling intervention for many students. Testimony from the interviewed students who had attended consultations was drawn on to produce more complete accounts of interaction success. Students described multiple benefits from visiting the service, including gaining clarity around the issues affecting them:

> *They did highlight a lot of issues I didn't realise [I had]. I didn't realise how much anxiety affected uni for me, and I didn't realise how much it influenced my attendance. They were pretty good at dealing with things like that.*
>
> *I could sort of speak about my problems, and it really helped me process what was going on.*

Students also explained how counsellors helped in ways not necessarily limited to mental health:

> *CAPS was most helpful. Even if it is about something that's non-mental health related, I can still talk to them and see if they've got some strategies, or we can work together to figure out some strategies to cope with other things.*
>
> *I mean, they (CAPS) are good for those times when you're feeling low, and then you go and speak to someone and they sort of help you with your confidence to realise it's not the end of the world – you've still got a chance to try your best, to do whatever you can.*

Successful outcomes were also described in terms of positive experiences after referral:

> *I started an early psychosis treatment program through Headspace…seeing CAPS led into that. Without going to CAPS I would not have gone to Headspace.*
>
> *CAPS were good because they referred me to go and find some external [help]… which was what I needed.*

Educational Support Advisor consultations

Results indicate that the low SES group interacting with the ESAs were generally the lowest academic achievers in the study. Of all the interacting groups, these students exhibited: the lowest mean WAMs before and after interaction; the highest rates of discontinuation; the lowest mean WAM at completion; and the lowest average ATAR on entry.

Notwithstanding relatively lower academic success before interaction, many low SES students benefited from ESA intervention, with students showing a 9% improvement in rates of good standing after interaction – a significant result and the largest average gain of any group in the study. Student WAM also improved after interaction, with the mean increasing by 1.9 percentage points (though modelling showed that this was not a significant result).

There were few interviewees who mentioned having visited an ESA, but one student described how the service had contributed to their success as a student at UNSW:

> *I've always had trouble with time management. In high school I never worked out how to organise my time. At uni I've sort of just tried to work it out myself, which didn't really work… [The] ESA showed me how to do a weekly study timetable, and how to plan out assessments for the whole semester. I found that really helpful… It made a big difference.*

Careers and Employment consultations

Low SES students who had attended appointments with careers consultants graduated with a significantly better average WAM than those who had not attended and they had lower rates of discontinuation. These students also had higher WAMs and improved academic standing after interaction (though these results were not significant).

These results suggest that interaction with a careers consultant had a positive impact on low SES student success regardless of this service not being explicitly operated to serve this function. This finding may be explained by previous studies, which have shown that students who focus their school performance around career aspirations often perform better academically than students with less career clarity (see for example, Dennis, Phinney and Chuateco, 2005; Evans and Burck, 1992). Student testimony highlighted the influence of a careers consultation on obtaining this clarity:

> *I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life and so what they [the careers consultant] helped me with was narrowing down possible fields or industries and occupations that I can get with my current degree.*
>
> *It [the careers consultation] was steering [me] in the right direction, helping [me] figure out what [I] want; it was nice having that sort of guidance.*

Advantage programs

The results of this study suggest that completion of an Advantage program predicts improved academic success. Low SES students who completed an Advantage program were found to have a significantly higher mean WAM after interaction than before, and had a significantly higher average WAM at completion than those students who did not interact. Only one out of 132 low SES students who had completed an Advantage program subsequently discontinued.

The results also indicate that low SES students who had completed an Advantage program tended to be the highest achieving cohort of any group in the study. They had the highest average WAM before and after interaction, the highest rates of good academic standing, the highest mean WAM at completion (not including first semester interaction results), and the highest average ATAR.

Advantage programs are run to develop professional and leadership skills, rather than to directly influence academic success, so the link to this apparent positive impact is not implicit. Indeed, student interview testimony did not directly attribute these interactions to academic improvements, but rather they identified benefits such as improved mental health and social engagement, which in turn could compel students to succeed:

> *When I get to talk to people (during the volunteering program) I feel less stressed, and when you're less stressed it feels like you've got some of the load off you so you can focus back on your work.*
>
> *Through being involved in the student bodies, having a community and having friends, I've been able to limit the impact of being from a rural area and finding it hard to adjust or being unwell.*
>
> *For mental health [reasons], having a support network was probably the biggest [help]. Through [volunteering] I was able to overcome a lot of difficulties that I had, and I have been able to find ways to self-help and also have other people help as well.*

Some of the responses supported the finding that those who interact with these programs tend to be high achievers. When asked if they had accessed any of these programs, one student commented:

> *No. That's going a bit above and beyond, isn't it? I'm a bit more of a mediocrity kind of student [laughs]. I'm barely getting through the classes I'm doing.*

Whereas another student who had interacted stated:

> *I think looking back at when I was in primary school and high school, just going to school wasn't enough for me. I definitely feel like, especially at this university where there is a really big push toward gaining more out of your university experience, I'm constantly seeking new things to get involved in.*

Support initiative influence on student success – A comparison of low SES Students and all students

The benefits of interaction were not restricted to low SES students, but for the majority of the support initiatives, these benefits did appear to be more pronounced for this cohort. Findings from the database study for all students (local, undergraduates) show:

- Significant improvements in mean WAM after consultations with TLC, with those students interacting graduating with a higher WAM on average (significantly so for those interacting in first semester) despite lower ATARs. Interaction resulted in a non-significant improvement in academic standing and in the percentage of students discontinuing. These improvements reflected those of the low SES group, but the average gains in WAM and academic standing after interaction were greater for the low SES cohort, as was the average improvement in WAM at completion.
- Those registered with Disability Services graduated with significantly better grades at completion than those that did not register despite having lower ATARs on entry. Early interaction with the service had a positive impact, with those students registering in their first semester showing significantly improved grades at completion. The low SES cohort showed a greater average increase in WAM at completion for registering students, and for those registering in their first semester.
- Students who visited a counsellor had significantly higher WAMs after consultation than before, which is in direct contrast to the low SES group where there was a significant drop in WAM after consultation. The rates of good academic standing dropped after interaction, though the average drop was less than for the low SES group. The average decrease in WAM at completion was less than for the low SES cohort. However, the rate of discontinuation of interacting students was significantly higher. This was not the case for the low SES cohort, where the discontinuation rate was lower (although not significantly so).
- The relatively poor academic achievement exhibited by the low SES cohort was reflected in the average grades across all students interacting with an ESA. However, they did show academic gains after interaction. There was a similar increase in WAM before and after interaction, but the low SES group had a significantly greater gain in academic standing.
- Students who attended careers consultations showed significant average improvements in WAM and academic standing after interaction. They also had significantly higher mean WAMs at completion, and lower rates of discontinuation. The average gains for the low SES cohort who interacted with careers consultations were marginally higher across these academic indicators.
- Those completing an Advantage program were represented by a high achieving cohort overall. The gains from interaction were reflective of those of the low SES cohort in terms of WAM before and after interaction (though this gain was not significant for the whole cohort) and WAM at completion. The two groups had the same (relatively low) percentage of students discontinuing (1.8%).

These findings suggest that low SES students realise greater benefits from interactions with support initiatives than the population as a whole; although, students who interacted with CAPS were the exception to this. Analysis of student interview data was used to unpack this. Students were asked whether their SES had impacted on any issues they had faced or on their interactions with the support services. Many respondents identified that their (low) SES was in some way linked to problems they had encountered while studying, for example:

> *I've been flat broke. That's why I now live in the western suburbs instead of the eastern suburbs... Sometimes you'll skip uni to do an extra shift or something because you need the extra hundred bucks.*
>
> *I'm having to work a lot more than some, just to make sure that I can stay afloat.*
>
> *University is a hard thing to adjust to, especially if you do have issues with family or housing or money and stuff. It can get overwhelming.*

Several students noted that their low SES background meant that they were inclined to use the services. This provides some explanation for the finding that low SES students were over-represented in their interactions. For instance:

> *I would say I was probably more inclined to use the services being from a disadvantaged background… I think the mindset and culture in our society is if you're disadvantaged, you look for a service.*
>
> *Maybe it [being from a low SES background] has meant that I have engaged more with things on campus because they are specifically tailored to students, so they're free generally.*

Some students also linked the tendency of low SES students to seek free intervention to being less likely to access paid services:

> *For a lot of services, at first I'm always quite wary, (I think) oh do I need to pay? . But at the university, most of the services are free, so that has really helped.*
>
> *I guess it would be easier if I was from a super-rich family because they could just put me in to see some fancy pants psychiatrist that charges $300 a session. But instead I have to go see free ones.*

Most students did not directly link this increased usage to a perceived increase in benefit based on their SES. However, several students connected the (in this case low) socioeconomic indicators of parental occupational and education (James et al., 2008) to a lack of family support, leading to a greater requirement for services and positive outcomes from interaction:

> *Maybe I found the careers service so useful because my parents aren't professionals so they weren't able to teach me about the sort of graduate recruiting or networking… I imagine for a lot of the Law students, their parents are lawyers so they already have access to those sorts of circles, and they already know how it works… people seemed to understand what was going on a lot better than I did.*
>
> *I'm the first person in my family to go to university… My family don't know how to support me and they don't understand why I'm struggling with it (university) I think, because they don't understand how different it is from high school… Without them (CAPS and Disability Services) I would've just dropped out and given up. I definitely think if I didn't access those services I wouldn't still be studying.*

The findings for CAPS were somewhat conflicting in that low SES students appeared to be receiving less benefit from interaction in terms of academic grades, but more benefit in terms of retention. The impact on grades may be a function of the severity of issues faced by low SES students, rather than an indication of the effectiveness of the intervention for this group. It has been well established that mental health issues tend to be exacerbated in the low SES population. Ng, Muntaner, Chung and Eaton (2014, p.1) highlight "generations" of research confirming the link between SES and mental health, with the most deprived sections of society tending to experience the worst mental health outcomes. Andrews and Chong (2011) reported that student financial circumstances exert a significant negative influence, with this being the stand out risk factor for experiencing psychological distress, stress, anxiety and depression. However, student interview testimony provided some insight into the importance of counselling in their decisions to persist at UNSW despite the issues they faced, as one student explained:

> *I've had difficulties socialising. That's sort of something that gets you down and sort of puts the motivation on the backburner... I just didn't really fit in properly perhaps because I'm from a regional background and kind of didn't identify with the Sydney thing… It's just a completely different world… CAPS has blown my mind with how much it's sort of helped me keep some perspective and keep chugging along with my studies.*

Another student explained:

> *I have depression, and sometimes that sort of impacts on study… [I accessed CAPS because] I was trying to work out what I was doing with my degree. I didn't feel like I was fitting in to uni and I wasn't sure how to fix it… I called them (CAPS) when I was thinking about dropping out of uni and they were helpful then as well.*

Conclusions and implications for future research

This study addressed the gap in current knowledge of how support initiatives are contributing to low SES student success. It used a mixed-methods approach by providing quantitative evidence from academic success indicators, and detailed personal accounts of student experiences.

Results showed that attendances at support initiatives are well represented by students from low SES backgrounds and these interactions are contributing in unique and multiple ways to student success. The benefit they provide is not exclusive to low SES students, though there is some evidence to suggest that academic improvements may be more pronounced in this cohort. The research team acknowledges that many of the forces and influences that act upon low SES students are intangible, highly variable and contextually situational. Nevertheless, findings from this study build on the existing evidence (e.g. Tinto, 2010) that university support initiatives can have a positive influence on low SES student success.

This study was limited in that it took place wholly at UNSW. In order to corroborate, refute or extend the findings it is suggested that it be repeated at other institutions – possibly those where there are higher rates of participation of low SES students. Further study may also target other equity groups or examine the efficacy of faculty support programs and services. The study could also be extended to incorporate graduate success by using data from the Australian Graduate Survey.

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Using a Mixed Methods Approach to Investigate University Student Success after Support Service Interaction: A Case Study and Analysis

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Abstract

This article discusses methods for assessing academic success after a student's initial interaction with university support services. Student services are an important part of institutional support within Australian higher education and service efficacy and effectiveness assessments are likewise important for delivering optimal support. Methods of service assessment may vary in application but are likely to target academic performance, social wellbeing and/or mental health as potential success outcomes after service interaction. The author presents a mixed methodological approach as a novel way to counter potentially ineffective investigative techniques that can fall short of considering the broad contributions that a support service interaction can make to student success. The potential drawbacks of single-method approaches are considered, as are the obstacles to a mixed-methods design. The article draws on the work of previous mixed-method research to demonstrate the benefits of its application in examining support service influence on student success while paying particular attention to the work of Stone, Walton, Clark and Ligertwood (2016), whose methodology is unpacked and discussed in detail.

Keywords

University support services, mixed-methods, multilevel modelling.

Introduction

This article discusses the application of mixed methods in assessing the influence of student interaction with support services at UNSW Australia. Previous assessments of support service effectiveness are outlined to underpin the relevance of the proposed analytical method. A case study frames the context within which the approach has been trialled by the author, including ways in which the application succeeded, required adjustment, or failed. The article is structured to detail a particular method of the mixed-methods process, which is followed by a discussion surrounding how and why that particular method was engaged in Stone, Walton, Clark and Ligertwood (2016). The methods engaged by Stone et al. (2016) included a multilevel statistical analysis of a university database, the use of survey questionnaires, and in-depth interviewing.

Assessment of the effectiveness of support services

Millions of dollars are spent on intervention and support strategies in Australia (Devlin, Kift, Nelson, Smith and Mckay, 2012) and around the world (Robbins, Oh, Le and Button, 2009). "The problem facing Student Services units is the difficulty in finding empirical evidence of a demonstrable link between the services they provide for students and positive academic outcomes" (White, 2011, p.4). Robbins et al. (2009, p.1166) report that "despite the popularity of [higher education] interventions, our current knowledge about their effectiveness is very limited". A common limitation of support service studies is "they do not assess whether developmental programs have a causal effect on student retention" (Lesik 2007, p.585), which often translates into a potential lack of effort on behalf of some institutions in monitoring their support structures (Shah and Nair, 2011).

There are some examples of investigative reports into support initiative efficacy, such as the overseas-based studies of Burk and Bender (2005), Penalber (2005), Scrivener et al. (2008), Robbins et al. (2009), Seftor, Mamun and Schirm (2009) and Bettinger and Baker (2013). Locally, Nelson, Clark, Stoodley and Creagh (2014) utilise and promote maturity models to assess

institutional capabilities for student success, including support and interaction services. Devlin et al. (2012) used interview evidence to study the success of mentoring programs, sociability-enabling spaces and support networks for targeted students. Tones, Fraser, Elder and White (2009) explored the significance of support for mature-age students through similar qualitative approaches. McNaught and Beal (2012, p.200) sought to gain a better understanding of student needs and the efficacy of support services through a survey questionnaire design, concluding, "This survey did not capture demographic data specific to student backgrounds", adding "the collation of data could be useful".

Most studies into the effectiveness of student support services (such as those mentioned above) are largely qualitative in design, employing questionnaire and interview techniques to source data. Lesik (2007) expresses the opinion that similar studies are limited by a reliance on cross-sectional, retrospective designs despite the longitudinal nature of the research. In contrast, Lesik (2007) used a discrete-time survival analysis using logistic regression to map the impact of support program participation on academic performance and identify a positive quantitative relationship between student engagement with support programs and course retention. In another quantitative-focused study, Denny, Doyle, McMullin and O'Sullivan (2014) evaluated the success of a university access program for students from admission to exit by employing ordered probit models to correlate student success dependent on their involvement in an access program, while modelling the impact of varying levels of support (in terms of financial aid) over time. Denny et al. (2014, p.181) note that the majority of studies in this area focus on one support program and are almost exclusively North American in focus, "thus it is important to consider the likely effects of [support] programs in countries with different social and cultural contexts". In an Australian study, Wimshurst and Allard (2008) used multiple linear regression analyses to examine course and student characteristics in relation to academic performance, finding that personal and institutional factors interacted to increase the risk of failure. Similarly, French, Muurlink and Wilson (2014) utilised multiple linear regression analyses in an Australian context to determine relationships between variables of degree preference, grade point average (GPA), course load and support service engagement (including number of consults and number of workshops attended). Many of the statistical analyses reported in French et al. (2014, p.8) returned a non-significant result because of small sample sizes, which lead to the authors positing, "this study is effectively a pilot study for a larger analysis".

Discussions of methodological approaches to assessing the effectiveness of support services

Tinto (2010, p.51) writes "we have not yet been able to develop a model of institutional action that would help institutions make progress in helping students continue and complete their degrees". Gale and Parker (2014, p.734) remark that "future research [into the effectiveness of support services] needs to foreground students' lived realities and to broaden its theoretical and empirical base". "By looking at the impact of receiving different levels of treatment, this may help to illuminate whether these programs in conjunction with each other are effective" in helping students succeed (Lesik 2007, p.606). Naylor, Baik and James (2013, p.33) lament, "for many initiatives, there are too many variables to control in any rigorously methodological way, which makes establishing causal relationships between initiatives and effects extremely difficult". Belot, Canton and Webbink (2007, p.274) write that quantitative data in the form of statistics do not provide information on changes in student performance admitting "we cannot rule out the impact of other factors". Wimshurst and Allard (2008, p.694) discuss the possibility that "some finer-grained qualitative study might identify other factors not adequately captured in a largely quantitative study". What these authors highlight is that single-method approaches to investigating the influence of support services on students, either quantitative or qualitative, often fall short of elucidating the whole story. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to explore the relationship between student success and support service engagement may yield many of the desired outcomes

proposed in the literature (such as Devlin et al., 2012; Naylor et al., 2013; Gale and Parker, 2014), and extend much of the existing knowledge (Denny et al., 2014; French et al., 2014), albeit in a localised context.

Mixed methods

Issues of *causation* have been cited in previous support service investigations as detrimental to research outcomes. For instance, Lesik (2007) states that a common limitation among service effectiveness studies is their failure to establish causal effects, and Naylor et al. (2013, p.33) add that the amount of variables involved "makes establishing causal relationships between initiatives and effects extremely difficult". Conversely, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p.71) testify to the "power of mixed methodologies and mixed methods in investigating and establishing causation". A mixed method design has been described as combining quantitative and qualitative methods to address a research question, as opposed to a multimethod design, which does not imply constraints on including at least one of each method paradigm (i.e. quantitative *and* qualitative) (Mark, 2015). Qualitative methods, in conjunction with quantitative methods, have been used to enlighten difficult subjects, add depth to statistical generalisations and sing the otherwise mute melodies of feelings, emotions, attitudes and beliefs (Plano-Clark, Huddleston-Casas, Churchill, O'Neil-Green and Garrett, 2008; Winchester and Rofe, 2010). Likewise a quantitative approach can complement qualitative methods. These combinations can provide, among other insights, both individual and group data related to a research topic, triangulation of analysis, or they may be used to cross-check results from different angles and help establish cause and effect (Winchester and Rofe, 2010).

Mixed method research can be performed in different ways. Ivankova, Creswell and Stick (2006) and Suldo et al. (2009) describe the implementation of a mixed methods sequential explanatory design, whereby a quantitative phase is followed by a qualitative phase. Ivankova et al. (2006, p.5) state that "the rationale for this approach is that the quantitative data and their subsequent analysis provide a general understanding of the research problem", adding "the qualitative data and their analysis refine and explain those statistical results by exploring participants' views in more depth". This particular mixed-method approach could be summarised as constituting a sequential design with a multistage purposeful sampling scheme (as seen in Suldo et al., 2009).

A demonstration of how a mixed-method design can inform the influence of support services on higher education student success is offered by Stone et al. (2016) (in this issue). Stone et al. (2016) utilise a sequential mixed design that includes a qualitative narrative analysis of interviewed participants following a quantitative account of student support evaluation and academic success. The latter incorporated an ethnographic study of a select university cohort identified from population data. The use of large datasets to analyse student engagement with university support services – such as drawing on an entire university cohort consisting of all current and past students – has yielded significant results in past research (for example Chowdry, Crawford, Dearden, Goodman and Vignoles, 2013, who use linked databases to examine determinants of higher education participation, and Edwards and McMillan, 2015, who draw on information from a data collection of multiple institutions to explore predictors of student success). Moreover, small sample size has been referenced as an issue for a number of studies (for example Robbins et al., 2009; McNaught and Beal, 2012; Denny et al., 2014; French et al., 2014). Quantitative data analysis of a large student cohort in the context of service influence on student success must account for multiple factors (Rumberger, 1995; Gale and Parker, 2014). This can be partially achieved by using the statistical technique of multilevel modelling.

Multilevel modelling

A multilevel model (MLM) (also known as a hierarchical linear model) is a statistical analysis technique that is in many ways similar to a regression. However, a MLM can be employed when observations in a data sample are not independent – for example, a student within a faculty is more directly comparable to students in the same faculty as opposed to students in a different faculty. Regression models do not take this clustering of data into account. Studies that attempt to estimate effects of student- and faculty-level variables in a single model, either by including faculty-level variables in a student-level model or by incorporating aggregated values of student-level variables in a faculty-level model, can produce faulty results (Rumberger, 1995; Raudenbush and Bryk, 2002). Rumberger (1995, p.598) explains that the first technique produces aggregation bias, which underestimates the effects of variables estimated at the inappropriate level, and "the second technique fails to capture the effects of certain variables, such as socioeconomic status, that operate at both levels of analysis". Bell, Ene, Smiley and Shonenberger (2013, p.1) report that "research has shown that ignoring a level of nesting in data can impact estimated variances and the available power to detect treatment or covariate effects. As a corollary, MLMs tend to be used most commonly in educational data modelling where data tend to be nested (correlated) within levels – such as a student within a tutorial class, within a program, within a faculty (Raudenbush and Bryk, 2002; Twisk, 2006; van de Vijver, van Hemert and Poortinga, 2008).

Previous research illustrates the use of MLMs in the context of exploring support and development program contributions to student success. Stewart (2008) used multilevel modelling to investigate the extent of school- and individual-level factors on academic performance, while Allen, Robbins, Casillas and Oh, (2008) engaged multilevel modelling to investigate the effects of academic performance and social connectedness on retention and attrition behaviour. For Pan, Guo, Alikonis and Bai (2008), multilevel modelling facilitated an examination into the effects of intervention programs on student grades and retention. Pan et al. (2008) detail a study similar to that performed by Stone et al. (2016). Pan et al. (2008) were able to assess the influence of support programs, which were specifically targeted at first-year student retention and grades, on academic performance outcomes, and show that the programs had been effective in their contribution to student success. Pan et al. (2008) performed two separate analyses in response to the dichotomous and continuous nature of the outcome variables in their study – i.e. retained versus not retained (dichotomous) and student grades (continuous). Stone et al. (2016) similarly applied different variations of multilevel modelling to data.

Research undertaken in contribution to Stone et al. (2016) is drawn on to highlight the potential benefits of multilevel modelling to relevant scholarship. A practical example from this study is likewise presented later on in discussion of qualitative contributions to mixed methodologies.

Case study context: Multilevel modelling

Multilevel modelling was identified as a viable alternative to ordinary least squares (OLS) models, such as regression, during enquiries into the most appropriate way to analyse individual student grades before and after an initial support service interaction. One of the assumptions of OLS models is that individual scores are independent of each other. However, this is not the case for a student's scores before and after a service interaction, where scores are quite obviously related to each other – i.e. not independent – because they belong to a distinct individual. Analysing student grades before and after an interaction using OLS regression would require taking the average of scores before interaction and the average of scores after interaction for each student, which would result in the loss of much data. The use of a MLM allowed all student scores to be used and then nested within individual students. The same logic applies to students within a faculty, and student data nested within faculties were also considered in multilevel analyses.

McConney and Perry (2010) outline the widely recognised understanding that multilevel modelling is ideal for estimating unique associations of student- and faculty-level variables on student performance, while highlighting that:

"[A MLM] relies on often unspoken assumptions that relationships among variables under study are linear. The approach can thereby result in the unintended consequence that departures from linearity in relationships for particular subgroups of students within the dataset, which may become evident with a finer grained analysis, are masked.*"* (p.439).

Thus, the relationship between student success and support service interaction was approached by Stone et al. (2016) by drawing on database analysis in the form of multilevel modelling *in tandem with* the finer-grained methods of purposive questionnaire sampling and interview narrative analysis[1.]

Questionnaire

A MLM permits many demographic, academic, social or personal variables to be accounted for in the statistical analysis of interaction versus success. Variables might include age, birth country, grades, faculty, socioeconomic status, or personality traits – depending on available data. However, models do not take into account the multitude of other influences that may impact a student over the course of their academic career, influences that cannot be observed objectively. A questionnaire can be used to provide more detailed insights into these influences and the agents – internal and external to the higher education institution – to which students look for support, how helpful they find these, and how these factors vary within and between groups. In relevant examples, Burk and Bender (2005) surveyed students to ascertain the perceived effectiveness of support services, Belot et al. (2007) drew from questionnaire data in their assessment of higher education scholastic performance following the reduction of support intervention, and Robins et al. (2009) performed a meta-analysis of survey results regarding service effectiveness in order to direct future support. Yet the research conducted for these studies is described by the authors as limited. Specifically, Burk and Bender (2005) mention their inability to generalise results outward from their (small) sample, Belot et al. (2007, p.274) identify the influence of "unobserved factors" on their results as well as the need for an extended research scope, and Robbins et al. (2009, p.1178) state "our study did not take into account various institutional characteristics, system-level factors and other variables that might influence student academic performance". These conclusions suggest that questionnaire data can benefit from additional information, qualitative or quantitative, procured through multi or mixed methodologies. In addition, Secor (2010) states that a questionnaire provides a good supplement for interview-based research – as was the case in Stone et al. (2016).

Case study context: questionnaire

Stone et al. (2016) used a purposive sampling technique to target students that had interacted with support initiatives. An email calling for participation was distributed to the mailing lists of support service providers, which was a practical way to maximise response rates from students who had interaction history.

Questionnaire data primarily consisted of Likert-scaled responses to questions of support service effectiveness/helpfulness with regard to their contribution to the student's social, financial, emotional or academic wellbeing. Quantitative survey data can be used to complement or contest the outcomes of the other methods in a mixed method design. This may serve to refute conclusions

[1]Notwithstanding an account of how multilevel modelling can contribute to research, this article does not contain a detailed account of how to perform a MLM. Interested readers should refer to textbooks by Field (2012) or Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) for introductory explanations, and Bell et al. (2013) and Ene, Leighton, Blue and Bell (2015) for specific software instructions and background.

of service effectiveness or at least inform discussion regarding seemingly non-compliant results.

Nearly 800 questionnaires were completed for the Stone et al. (2016) study. However, interaction frequencies for individual services, combined with the separation of students into classifying groups, were low. As a result, statistically significant results were often hard to come by. This reduced the potential for questionnaire results to corroborate other data, and hence the questionnaire data were omitted in the analysis of the Stone et al. (2016) study.

The questionnaire was nonetheless valuable as student interview participants were recruited from questionnaire respondents. Participants were offered an opportunity to self-recruit for a follow-up interview at the conclusion of the questionnaire.

Semi-structured in-depth interviewing

In-depth interviewing can be used to gain access to, and understanding of, activities and events that cannot be observed from a database or reported in a questionnaire. An interview is a "conversation that is directed more or less towards the researcher's need for data" (Green and Thorogood, 2004, p.87). According to Minichiello, Aroni and Hays (2008, p.46), "Interviewing is the most commonly used form of qualitative research". The purpose of the interview is to explore and understand actions within a specific setting (the influence of support initiatives on student success), to examine human and environmental relationships and unpack why people feel or act in the ways they do (McDowell, 2010). The narrative required for this amount of detail is beyond the scope of a questionnaire or a database. This is because written responses and longitudinal information are not the only determinants of the student's 'story'. An interview captures language and narrative to help paint a fuller picture of the discourse surrounding interaction and success.

Semi-structured or focused interviews employ an interview guide that is content focused and deals with issues and themes judged by the researcher to be relevant to the research question(s) (Minichiello et al., 2008; Dunn, 2010). The content of the semi-structured interview is focused on the issues central to the research themes while allowing for greater flexibility and discussion than a questionnaire. This reduces statistical comparability between interviews, "but provides a more valid explanation of the informant's perceptions and constructions of reality" (Minichiello et al., 2008, p.51). A benefit of the focused interview is that the data derived are more systematic and comprehensible than in an unstructured interview, while the tone remains fairly conversational and informal. Drawbacks can arise if the interviewee is not adequately 'probed' for information, or when the pre-determined topics outlined beforehand by the researcher prevent other important issues from being raised by the respondent (Minichiello et al., 2008). A researcher with good preparation can avert these issues with good interviewing skills and knowledge of the research topic (Dunn, 2010).

An interview is unlike a normal, organic conversation and assumptions ensue in the relationship between the researcher and the researched. The research interview is a one-way process where the interviewer receives, but does not give – doing so might bias the participant's responses (Minichiello et al., 2008). Roberts (1981, p.30) explains that, "interviews are seen as having no personal meaning in terms of social interaction, so that their meaning tends to be confined to their statistical comparability with other interviews". Regardless, spoken testimony in combination with quantitative observation can make known and operationalise otherwise unseen connections in the data. This was observed by Stone et al. (2016), as explained in the following section.

Case study context: Semi-structured in-depth interviewing

Stone et al. (2016) prepared a list of semi-structured interview questions to uncover student experiences with support services at UNSW. Students were also asked about 'success' – what this

meant to them, what had influenced their success at UNSW and whether support service interaction had contributed. A sample of 20 or more interviews was identified as a sufficient size for attaining "saturation" (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006, p.59). A total of 22 interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. A thematic analysis of the interview data was undertaken using the NVivo 10 software package. NVivo software does not replace the analytical thinking process of qualitative research, as it does not develop propositions from the data. However, it does facilitate the retrieval of unsystematised text material in a fast, flexible way, using structured nodes of topics, themes or categories (Minichiello et al., 2008). Creation of nodes in NVivo first requires the import of the transcribed text document into NVivo where it can then be accessed for coding. Nodes in NVivo are an indexing system created by the user by extracting snippets or chunks of text. These text chunks are coded as a specific theme or topic, and represented as a node. Nodes are organised into meaningful categories by the researcher that can be modified, extended or deleted as coding progresses.

Interview data collected by Stone et al. (2016) supported much of what was revealed by the multilevel modelling technique regarding support service contribution to students' academic success. Moreover, interview data extended knowledge of how specific services support students and influence their success. The contribution of interview data to the mixed-method application of Stone et al. (2016) was most notable for support services that did not directly target academic performance, such as development and counselling programs and initiatives. Lived testimonies from student interviews unveiled how support services with a non-academic focus can contribute to (academic) success, which tended to implicate social inclusion, mental wellbeing or non-discontinuation/retention as success outcomes. In addition, interview data were drawn on to connect academic achievement to social and mental wellbeing by unpacking student narratives of university experiences, corroborating what has been expressed in the literature surrounding contributions to academic success (for example Payton et al., 2000; Zhao and Kuh, 2004; Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie and Gonyea, 2008; Harper and Quaye 2014; Johnson, 2016).

Concluding remarks

Many previous support initiative studies have based their analyses on a single method approach. It was the intention of the author to present a more encompassing account of the subject matter. This was approached by offering an examination that incorporates often-overlooked or out-of-scope methods and analyses in collaboration with each other. For instance, multimethod investigations have been called for in the literature (Tinto, 2010; Naylor et al., 2013; Gale and Parker, 2014), and the multilevel modelling technique is an underused tool in educational data analyses in the support initiative context – despite advantages for its use in scholarship (as seen in Pan et al., 2008; Stewart, 2008; Goldstein, 2011), as well as recent calls for its use (Edwards and McMillan, 2015).

The mixed-methods approach used by Stone et al. (2016) has helped to expand understandings of support initiatives at a specific higher education institution, as well as explore service impact on student success. While insights were provided into how success was influenced by support initiatives it is understood that many of the forces and influences that act upon students are abstract, inconsistent in their occurrence and circumstantial. Notwithstanding the fruitful harvest of data that can result from engaging mixed methodologies, the author acknowledges that services may contribute to success in ways that have not been assessed or identified in this article (or that of Stone et al. 2016). However, this also serves to highlight the salience of using multiple methods to gather as much relevant data as possible to inform analyses. Moreover, there is a large array of methodologies that draw from multimethod, integrative or inter- trans- and multi-disciplinary tenets, which may well contribute equally or more to education research than a mixed method approach.

The benefits of and need for employing mixed-method research of support services can be compounded by the lack of institutional incentive to self-assess student support structure efficacy (Shah and Nair, 2011). Difficulties can arise in mixed-method research from the requirement of time and resources needed for this type of approach, which, if considerable, could potentially restrict the data available to draw defendable conclusions from. This can be somewhat alleviated by techniques such as pooling previously collected data or ready-built databases, as well as a purposive sampling design to target specific groups. Though, while purposive sampling is often suited to certain studies it can possibly elide important data from excluded groups. In addition, qualitative research methods, and many quantitative methods, rely on assertions that have been interpreted from answers that may have been accidentally or intentionally falsified (Dumont, 2010). Some level of uncertainty must be considered when analysing self-reported data (Dumont, 2010).

Further to this point, reflexivity and the role of the interviewer and interviewee in research has scope for consideration in an interpretative analysis of support service influence. Interactions between people within the social arena are subject to rules concerning aspects such as power and authority, rapport and transference – a research interview is no different (Pile, 1991). For this reason, the neutral distanced relationship described by Roberts (1981) – where the researcher strives for objective observation outside the social realities being researched – may be optimal, but interaction and the consequent impact of embodied social characteristics of bias and prejudice nevertheless affect it. Language, bodies, clothes, gender, age, and so on, matter in the exchanges that take place in interviews (McDowell, 2010). From qualitative to interpretative research there is a shift from a distanced and abstract research position, towards an intersubjective relationship between the interviewer and the interviewed in which both attempt to create an understanding of what is taking place around them (Pile, 1991). Pile (1991, p.460) argues that acknowledging positionality (and limitations) in research is tantamount to its performance, stating, "problematizing the research process must be an integral part of any [research] that wants to question its own power and enable the power of others". An interpretative account of research discourse could add to a mixed-method design by deciphering the significance of the personal nature of the interaction and the consequent impact of embodied social characteristics that are central to the affects of language and analysis (Pile, 1991, 2010a; McDowell, 2010).

As this article has attested, mixed methods can provide an effective means of robust data collection. Multiple sources of data in multiple formats (i.e. quantitative and qualitative – and interpretative) are often needed to bolster research and inform sound policy and practice, especially in the higher education sector where student outcomes are influenced by numerous sources at varying levels. The benefits of mixed-method design have been highlighted in a number of contexts while pinpointing its contribution to a study on the impact of support service initiatives on student success. It is hoped that future research can draw on the experiences of Stone et al. (2016) to encompass the vast number of effects (and affects) that determine student success after support intervention.

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Professional Paper

I'm Not Religious, but I am Spiritual: Inclusive University Chaplaincy

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Abstract:

This paper explores the potential for university chaplaincy to be inclusive of the whole university community, and not only of those who are religiously inclined. The saying 'I'm not religious but I am spiritual' does suggest a recognition that all do have spiritual resources they can draw on as required. Indeed a spiritual revolution has been recognised amongst young Australians. Within the context of a worldwide renewal in interest in spiritual matters, chaplaincy can offer a service to the whole university community. Pivotal will be that it is done from a client-based standpoint.

Keywords

Chaplaincy, spiritual, spirituality, religious, religion, multifaith, inclusive,

Inclusive university chaplaincy

The overarching question dealt with in this paper is whether university chaplaincy is, or can be, inclusive of the whole university community. Does it, or does it have the potential, to provide something for everyone, and serve not only those who profess one or another faith?

Often chaplains are greeted on a university campus with questions like 'is this just for religious people?', or 'is this just for Christians?' One presumes that the most likely reason that such a response is elicited is that in Western countries, chaplaincy in all sorts of contexts, has for a long time been linked to and staffed by members of Christian denominations.

In the last decades there has been a decisive move from denomination-based chaplaincy to ecumenical and even multifaith models. The change means the emphasis is moving from local churches or religious communities sending their representatives onto university campuses where they 'have a presence,' to the universities as a whole taking increasing responsibility for pastoral care of those who make up their community. Hence the emphasis is moving from specific religious communities to the institution as a whole. This means chaplaincy services will be increasingly seen not as outreach from a local church, but as carried out for the well-being of the institution as a whole.

Hence the model where individual churches or other religious bodies are given access to their adherents in recognition of the right of the clientele to practise their religion is in many instances making way for institutions themselves to appoint spiritual carers to be available to meet the spiritual needs of all.

In this sense, chaplains are expected to be there for everyone. Indeed once we enter the realm of funds being expended by the institution, then ideally they should be clearly seen to be used for the benefit of all and not only for a select interest group.

The reality is, however, that chaplains are going to have one world-view or another, so if they are going to be inclusive and serve the whole institution, the primary challenge for individuals as practitioners is to set aside their own convictions and serve the institution from a clearly client-based standpoint.

In student consultations with chaplains, it may often be only well into a series of visits that it becomes evident which religious community, if any, the client has a present or past relationship with. A client will be treated without fear or favour, and simply on the basis of their needs. Indeed, client-centred integrity is preserved by not asking the question of religious affiliation or local practice, even if the answer might be of interest.

In that sense a multifaith or non-denominational chaplaincy does not mean that various faiths or religious communities must each be represented on the ground, but that each chaplain deals with all clients without fear or favour. At the same time, they are going to regard religious literacy as an important proficiency in order to empathise with a broad client base. This will be married to having significant and meaningful contact with local religious leaders, who can serve for advice and referral.

The assumption is that chaplains are dealing with general issues of life, and hence far more than specific religious needs. That university chaplaincy is, or can be, inclusive of the total university community might be something people could imagine when we consider the commonly used phrase, 'I'm not religious but I am spiritual.' The phrase is a handy way for people to fend off over-zealous religious individuals.

Spiritual but not religious

In terminology familiar to chaplaincy, as the premise of Brisbane's Multifaith Academy for Chaplaincy and Community Ministries states, 'Everyone has spiritual resources'[1]. The Academy then bases the importance of training chaplains on the fact that 'In a time of crisis, everyone may need support to help them draw on their particular spiritual resources.' Chaplaincy is about helping people tap into their own spiritual resources in order to deal with whatever is confronting them.

Sometimes chaplains do only seem to appear at a time of crisis. No wonder people in hospital might be alarmed to see a chaplain, since this could be a bad omen. Yet being spiritual is not only about recognising that you have resources to deal with crises. In the university context, while chaplaincy does at times deal with students in crisis, in the first instance chaplains take their place in adding to the student experience and making it as good as possible. In this vein, Griffith University's Student Services motto is 'aspiration – well being – development.' This broadens the field from having something to hold on to in times of crisis to finding meaning in general and being conversant with a world-view in particular. It thus adds quality to your life in the here and now, and indeed inspires you into the future. That is exactly where chaplaincy fits in the scheme of things.

Indeed in a best case scenario, spirituality should not be an escape from the world but a positive engagement with it. Precisely in the university context, one would expect a critical engagement of people and ideas. Yet we note that it is not uncommon for many people to so 'compartmentalise' their lives that they do not engage with views and ideas conflicting with their own, and even in a real sense remove themselves from the discussion, effectively opting out of conversation with others on any number of topics. In religious circles such behaviours belong to so-called cults or sects, where who you mix with and what ideas you are allowed to brush up against are controlled. Of course the religious do not have a monopoly on closed-mindedness or bigotry.

Digging into the phrase I am not religious but I am spiritual, it is important to differentiate between religion and spirituality. Being religious is something more specific than being spiritual. Spirituality may be determined or coloured by formal religion, of which there are a decent number in our world, and which are indeed represented in our university communities. Yet amongst the plethora of

[1] This is a type of motto, and as such is a footer on the Academy's bulletins: http://www.chaplaincyacademy.com/files/e-learning%20bulletins.html

religious options, with our consumerist mindset, people do feel quite free to pick and choose which parts of their preferred religion they wish to subscribe to.

Further, being spiritual without reference to any specific religion is also a recognised part of the landscape of a modern secular democracy like ours.

To get a more technical take on this, American theologian Sandra Schneiders insists that spirituality is a term which 'has broadened to connote the whole of the life of faith and even the life of the person as a whole, including its bodily, psychological, social, and political dimensions.' (Schneiders, 1989, p.679). She is suggesting spirituality is no longer the pursuit of a religious elite, but is 'the experience of consciously striving to integrate one's life in terms … of self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives,' and so includes potentially any spirituality, Christian or non-Christian, religious or secular. (Schneiders, p.684) How far this terminology has changed is clear by contrasting this to the Roman Catholic tradition, where to ask 'are you a religious?' actually means 'are you a member of a religious order,' i.e. a monk (priest or brother) or a nun? (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994, paragraphs pp.925 – 927)

What religion and spirituality have in common is that they seek to bring meaning to personal existence. It is all about finding meaning in life and making sense of why we are here and what life is about, or at worst somehow coming to terms with the apparent meaningless of it all.

An Australian spiritual revolution

The assertion that many people see themselves as spiritual but not religious is manifesting itself in a spiritual revival happening on our shores, a spiritual revolution according to David Tacey, author of books such as The Spirituality Revolution, and Re-Enchantment: The New Australian Spirituality. He says people are literally taking spirituality into their own hands. That is, people are interested in spiritual things, but are not necessarily taking the cue or direction from religious institutions in this regard.

I am now going to explore some of the areas where this new spirituality is showing itself in Australia. If indeed it is a matter of individuals taking authority into their own hands, i.e. a spirituality from below, not imposed from above, these things may resonate with our own experience.

I undertake this exploration with the view that chaplaincy can then connect and work with these senses of spirituality.

Yes, even the humble Aussie is thinking things spiritual. Goodness knows, their sources are varied and sometimes dubious. To whet our appetite, the previously-mentioned Multifaith Academy brings together a list: movies, soapies, social media, nature programs on television, visiting natural wonders, practising meditation, reading good literature, and enjoying the company of others[2]. All and more of these are no doubt able to contribute to a sense of transcendence and ultimate values.

As we track some specific themes, it seems appropriate, in deference to the original custodians of our land, to begin with Aboriginal spirituality. Barely a generation ago, there was minimal if any appreciation by the average Australian of Aboriginal spirituality. Such may well have been seen as superstitious and regarded as pre-scientific delusion. But slowly we are learning to appreciate that the Aboriginal people have a strong tie to the land, which is also a deep spiritual tie. It is a spiritual tie, because it is a tie which brings meaning to life and people. The land is the source of life, and so to be cut off from it is death. In a time of ecological awareness, society as a whole is starting to

[2] The reader is pointed to the Academy's website, http://www.chaplaincyacademy.com

discover that the land is our home and not just our tool. The land is the source of life, and to be cut off from it brings not only physical but also spiritual dislocation.

Aboriginal stories of creation and suffering, reread by Aboriginal people of the Christian faith, and reread in the light of Christian scripture, connect the Rainbow Spirit with God as creator. Their sufferings are experienced and reflected on in the light of the sufferings of Christ. There is an extraordinarily similar experience in many religions of sacred sites as places where rituals are held and prayers are said.

Indeed the Aboriginal sense of deep connection with the past is also something finding resonance with contemporary Australians. We witness a renewed interest in ancestry and people look to explore and find out something about the places their forebears have come from. We draw meaning for our lives from our past. We are, after all, 'spiritually, emotionally and psychologically the products of our families, our communities and our societies.' (Tacey, 2000, p 184) Where we come from shapes us.

Last but not least, Tacey rightly notes that the biggest issue for Australian society in regard to the Aboriginal people today is reconciliation, a deeply religious term. Deep in our hearts is a yearning to be at one with all.

Already we have moved in the discussion on Aboriginal spirituality towards another manifestation of contemporary spirituality, that of ecospirituality. That such a term has emerged is significant. There is a growing awareness in our time that the world as we know it could be in danger of no longer being able to sustain the population which inhabits it. Contemporary humanity has the hunger and thirst for more, and increasingly super-efficient tools which could lead to the wholesale destruction of our planet.

The land and environment have been seen simply as something to use for our own purposes. So far, it has been able to bounce back, but now it is showing signs of buckling under the pressure. The materialist mindset keeps us in consumer mode, seeking to grab what we can. People are starting to see that this is a dangerous and even self-destructive path.

On a deeper level we are rediscovering the interconnectedness of the many aspects of our planet, ecosystems, animal chains etc., and humans are starting to realise they are not above and beyond this whole web, but are indeed themselves part of it and have a role to play in it, ensuring its continued equilibrium.

Being in tune with the environment is acknowledgement that we are part of something bigger than ourselves. It is noteworthy that religious festivals have developed in congruence with the seasons. The festival of new life at Easter falls in the northern spring, and similarly the light and hope of Christmas coincides with the midst of darkest winter. Of course in this southern hemisphere and in an age of artificial light and heat, they may require a little reimagining.

The Anzac tradition is another space where spirituality is bubbling up to the surface. The recent 2015 centennial year of the event pivotal to the Anzac tradition means it is fresh in our minds. Great numbers of young Australians are making the pilgrimage (and I make use of this religious term knowingly) to a place of war and defeat, a place of suffering and senselessness. Precisely the futility of war is giving people a prompt to ponder questions of death and sacrifice.

While martyrs are honoured in many world religions, they are usually victims rather than combatants. A liberal dose of mythology is common, as is often the case in religion and spirituality. But there is something profound about sacrifice, and when the bugler moves into the hasty 'rouse'

at the end of the last post, there is a whiff of victory despite the defeat and loss that is so obvious. Its close proximity to Easter each year prompts an identification of some mutual themes.

Sometimes it is joked that Australia's true religion is sport. No doubt there are parallels between it and organised religion. Ritual is a central part of both, although whether one attends or how often one actively participates in these is another question. Both take us out of ourselves, and connect us to a wider community of people. Both are often held on to in difficult times for the individual, and people often maintain their faith in the institutions even when these institutions fail. Yet sport can probably not qualify as a form of spirituality since it does not inform our sense of meaning and transcendence. Some may disagree.

I am arguing that if we grant that each person has spiritual tools, chaplaincy is able to embrace all of those journeys, and walk with people who seek to consider the questions of life.

A worldwide renewal in interest in things spiritual

Taking a step back contextually, what is happening in Australia is in parallel to a general renewal in interest in things religious and spiritual worldwide. A watershed moment in the memory of many was the day of 'September 11' and its related events. Religiously motivated, the attacks brought religion and spirituality back on the scene. (Bouma, 2006, p.143) In an incredibly negative way, September 11 showed the 'power and vitality of religion.' (Bouma, p.143) In addition to this one event, Gary Bouma gives a whole list of examples of religious revitalisation, around the world and in Australia. He lists the trifecta of the rise of Muslim fundamentalism, the strengthening of the protestant right notably in the United States, and a burgeoning Pentecostal movement in Asia, Latin America and Africa. (Bouma, p.145) On a more local level he sees new religious vitality in the community through public displays of religiosity in such things as wearing religious garb and paraphernalia. This includes the hijab, jewellery in the form of religious symbols, turban, armbands, or even tattoos with religious messages. (I have met people sporting tattoos with rather clear religious messages and symbols, and sometimes the individual has sheepishly confessed that they have changed their perspective in the meantime!).

There is also a revitalisation in civic rites. Anzac Day events are a topic in themselves, as above, but also when tragedy strikes there is a perceived need to ritualise our grief, or at least let our leaders do it for us. Such events might include a national memorial service in times of disaster, or candlelight vigils at places of tragedy.[3] There is also the rise of mega churches such as Hillsong, and the prominence of high demand religious groups, for example the Roman Catholic Opus Dei movement. Indeed in the university context, student religious groups that are most conspicuous tend to be deeply conservative. The Student Christian Movement, a progressive religious group which is keen to dialogue on anything from gay marriage to science, contrastingly finds its heyday to be over. This is not to mention the deeply individual spiritual expressions that the New Age movement brings, although that movement belongs too now mostly to the past. (Bouma, chapter 7)

So while a few short decades ago it looked like secularisation was going to rule the day, and religion was on the way out, this proved to not be the case. Sociologists saw the onset of secularisation as a natural progression past religion, and religion as a stepping stone along the way to a new enlightenment. We were all going to 'grow up' and throw away our crutches and hocus pocus and live as enlightened people of the 21st century. I am not bold enough to hold this may not still well come to pass, but for the moment something else has happened.

[3] An example is a national memorial service in St Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne following a Malaysian Airlines disaster. Brisbane's Courier Mail had a blaring headline on its front page 'Pray for him!' in response to the horrendous injury to cricketer Phillip Hughes which led to his death

Why the renewal?

Why is there spiritual revitalisation? Science can be cold, and consumerism can be rampant, and maybe leave some asking whether there is something more meaningful than this. People can know all sorts of things about life and death, and how the body works, but what does it all mean? Tacey suggests the rapid shift in social conditions in recent years has led to a crisis of meaning, and names the erosion of public morality, family breakdown, public problems like drugs, crime and suicide as likely culprits. (Tacey, p.5-6) Using a sort of university image, it is almost like a young person who burns out on their new-found freedom.

It could be considered that the last couple of generations becoming less churched has left a hole in people's lives which has prompted a spiritual search in a different direction. If your parents never dragged you off to church or other worship, goodness knows, now you can do what you like, the thing your parents held in contempt may be precisely something to excite your interest now.

But before the religiously minded get too excited in the hope their edifices are again going to be filled with seekers of new religion, make no mistake: we regularly and rightly speak of our society as being secular. Australia is a secular nation. The cold figures of the most recent census have 25% of people saying they are 'nones,' of no religion. Being a secular nation means our society and also our universities can operate quite well without any specific reference to God or religion. Of course it does not mean there is no place for God or religion. In fact part of a secular mindset is that people have a freedom of religion, not only a freedom from religion, depending on individual preference. Holding specific religious allegiance or views are matters of private interest amongst individuals.

The key distinction useful in understanding what is happening is possibly what Australian social researcher Hugh Mackay suggests, namely that the Australian way is spirituality yes, but church no. Regardless of how spiritual we are or are not, the reality is that we are less 'churched.' In our multifaith context, we can probably add we are less 'synagogued,' 'mosqued' or 'templed' as well.

Despite this, one of the ironies of modern day multiculturalism is that religion is used as a way to label others or indeed to identify ourselves. There are always many more individuals in a national census that tick a box than are known to the institution the box represents. Huge numbers, but masses less and less engaged with a religion they might be 'culturally' attached to. We know the term 'secular Jew' as used in the United States, which is strictly speaking a contradiction. We also know the grief that young Muslims who don't understand their religion except as a form of protest wreak on the world. In both cases there is a cultural allegiance, but limited actual religious engagement.

Yet as we have seen, while we may be less churched, there is an argument to be made that Australians are more spiritual than ever.

Conclusion

I now move with some broad strokes towards a conclusion.

I am suggesting that the emergence of contemporary spirituality leaves the door open for chaplaincy to find its niche, and be an inclusive service. Also relevant for the university demographic, Tacey argues that the spiritual search is precisely a young people's phenomenon. In this regard it can be noted that, unsurprisingly, something like 70% of consultations in Griffith University's chaplaincy service are with people under 30 years of age. Hence the university context is potentially highly relevant in this renewal.

To be all embracing, chaplaincy must be bigger than promoting services which are ecumenical or

even multifaith. Spirituality is bigger than organised religion. Caring for and journeying with adherents of different world religions who find their way through our doors, and maybe helping them connect to local communities of their preferred brand of faith and life, will continue to be a bread and butter task for university chaplaincy. Caring for people of any world-view, whether or not this includes a recognised religion, is just as much a part of the deal.

The issue in universities is to take seriously the phrase 'I'm not religious but I am spiritual' and to affirm that 'Everyone has spiritual resources.' And to work with them as they desire in their 'aspiration – well-being – development.'

Chaplaincy is about helping people tap into their own spiritual resources. That many identify with the 'I'm not religious but I am spiritual' phrase might suggest chaplaincy in a diverse university context should be clearly seen to be for the benefit of all and not only for a select interest group.

Clearly this must be done from a client-based standpoint. The obvious challenge for chaplains is to set aside their own convictions and serve the institution and its people. As the new spirituality is from the 'bottom up,' chaplaincy will be a response to that, listening and fostering the growth of spiritual resources and how they develop in the individual. The chaplain's role is to walk with the individual in their spiritual journey, help them to identify their own values and develop their sense of meaning for themselves and the universe they inhabit. If it is from the bottom up, responsive to clients, it is not shareholder driven.

Precisely in the university context, one would expect people being empowered to a critical engagement of people and ideas. This means chaplaincy would assist people to have a positive engagement with their field of study, other disciplines and the world in general from their individual world-view.

For the universities themselves, it will become clear that prayer and reflection space does not belong only in international centres, but is rightly offered equitably to all of the university community. Indeed chaplaincy might be seen as a valued part of university life, and be supported and well-funded in all universities.

There will be some challenges. A rampant individualism is evident, although the desire of many young people to volunteer in places of need is a sign of hope. Fundamentalism is the most obvious danger, and it can come from any number of sources: Christian, Muslim, environmental, atheist. Withdrawal from society, away from dialogue and mutual understanding and respect are always lurking. And as in many areas of life, in spirituality there are many frauds and charlatans.

Religious revitalisation in a secular nation and university opens a space for chaplaincy. It may well be asked 'is this just for Christians?' even though the reality is clients are more likely not to be practising Christians or zealous adherents of any particular world religion.

University Chaplaincy can be inclusive to all, and for the well-being and health of the community in which it works.

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Professional Paper

Student Engagement in Service Delivery: Taking it to a Whole New Level

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Abstract

Student Services professionals have been sharing knowledges and good practice for many years with sector colleagues in higher education. This sharing assists professionals to inform planning and service delivery at their respective institutions. What if this sharing of knowledge was extended to students in higher education; the very people our services hope to support? A recent Australian and New Zealand Student Services Association (ANZSSA) conference engaged the thoughts and experiences of students in higher education. Student voices have always been an interesting and valuable component of Student Services staff members' professional development. Below is an account of a student voice who shared his own experience and those of his fellow colleagues at the 2015 ANZSSA conference but what he shares with us in this paper is not his student experience. This student voice articulates the take home messages of what he learned from Student Services staff at the conference – Student Services successes, Student Services challenges, and the Student Services context. His story is useful for reflection when considering student engagement. Do we merely take student knowledges and context then adapt our services accordingly? Alternatively, for greater impact and successful outcomes, do we meaningfully engage with students in mutually beneficial relationships where Student Services stories are shared with students?

Introduction

The concept of working with students to deliver programs out of Student Services in higher education institutions is not novel. Student Services have been running peer led initiatives and engaging student volunteers in the delivery of services for some time, for recent examples see Seeto, Sharp, Wills, and Styles (2013); Loane (2015); Baterna-Daluz (2014); and, Commons (2012). What appears to be missing from the literature about Australian Student Services is the practice of engaging students in the planning and decision making of Student Services in higher education. Recent reflections from a university student draw one's attention to such an idea as well as the thought that if Student Services were more forthcoming about sharing their challenges and context with university students, students are in a unique position to contribute to the future planning and decision making in delivering services and programs. Their perspective would be invaluable owing to the mere fact that they are the end users of such services and programs.

This paper will outline the roles that Student Services play in higher education. It will also outline the context for the origins of this paper. Importantly, this paper will share reflections from a student about Student Services in higher education. These reflections will lead to a discussion on the role of students in the development and review of planning and service delivery for Student Services.

Student Services in Australian higher education are those non-academic departments in higher education that are primarily responsible for welfare and advisory services. Student Services are established as retention units that support the student's transition and adjustment to university life and to aid the enhancement of the students' personal resources. Services often include counselling,

disability support, health, careers and employment programs, financial aid, scholarships, and accommodation advice. "The primary goals for student services are: 1) to assist students [to] make successful adjustment and transition to the university environment; and 2) to reduce enrolment attrition and enhance student retention" (Andrews, 2009, p. 182). The International Association for Student Affairs and Services (IASAS) (2016) recognises that Student Services exist in most higher education systems around the world and add "value to their educational and lifetime learning experience".

> *The mainstream activity of university life – the legitimation and dissemination of certain forms of knowledge – is taken as a given, as normative. It is students who must adjust to it in order to be successful. Support services provide the mechanisms for students to achieve this, if they do not come to university with the capacities and resources to achieve this on their own. (Gale, 2012, p. 249)*

The Australian and New Zealand Student Services Association (ANZSSA) is established to provide "development opportunities and sector representation for professional staff working in post-secondary student engagement, student participation, student wellbeing and student development" (Australian and New Zealand Student Services Association, 2015). It provides annual conferences which enable the sharing and dissemination of leading practice in the areas of student support while also providing a platform for the discussion of existing challenges that affect students in higher education as well as the challenges for student support departments. In 2015, the ANZSSA conference was held in Hobart, Tasmania in Australia and had a strong delegation of active students from the higher education sector. The theme for the 2015 conference was *visible, viable, valuable – traversing new landscapes in student engagement and development.* One example of the visibility of the student voice was the introduction of student panels discussing best practice and real life experiences taken from their own learnings. Interestingly, the student voices focussed on non-academic programs and peer support systems that students viewed as more important during orientation and the first few weeks of semester; rather than the traditional time management, how to write an academic paper and how to avoid plagiarism workshops that many institutions deliver to first year students. Connectedness, peer support, having a buddy, and focussing on how to have healthy relationships were all key themes resonating from the students' voice.

Listening to student voices is an important component of successful service delivery. The 2015 ANZSSA conference and the particular insights shared by one of the students extend on this student voice. Simon Playford is nearing the end of his Bachelor of Business and Law at the University of Southern Queensland. He is an active student representative and is the President of the USQ Student Guild. He was selected by the ANZSSA executive to be sponsored to attend the 2015 ANZSSA conference. His take home messages are provided below and are unexpected. They provide key points of reflection for Student Services departments.

The student experience: Simon Playford

It is a testament to the ANZSSA organisational committee that each year they sponsor students to attend this conference. I believe that a fundamental takeout from the 2015 ANZSSA conference is that student engagement itself plays a vital role in the growth of any Student Service department within a higher education institution. However, this conference has shown that engaging with students incorporates a wider scope than ever previously thought.

Throughout the conference, representatives from the Student Services sector and their respective universities introduced individual papers and presented a solid insight into their issues, successes and their interpretation of the future of Student Services. Additionally, there were struggles seen within this sector from both the metropolitan and regional higher education institutions, which reconciled that student engagement is becoming a complex issue across the nation and globe.

Furthermore, the particular learnings from the 2015 ANZSSA conference are as follows:

- The uncertainty surrounding the funding from Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program ("HEPPP") and Student Services and Amenities Fee ("SAF") creates vulnerability within the Student Services sector. Unfortunately, a repercussion of this uncertainty is that students are not properly engaged due to project/program funding boards. The boards may have concerns about risky investment of funding into contemporary Student Services programs due to low viability or return. This does not provide the stability employees need to perform and engage properly and in addition this creates disadvantage to student-led programs.
- Students need more support than ever before. A central theme of papers presented at the conference was in regards to the increase in varied avenues of support offered to students. Student Services has grown into an integral function of any higher education institution with services extending to emotional/wellbeing, academic, financial and career support. New formats of support and new ways of engaging students have unearthed and it does become challenging for Student Services to find and explore new avenues to support students.
    - Students are spending less time on campus at their respective institutions – this creates a problem for engagement to occur by the institution. However, papers reflected on the progress of contemporary ways to appeal to students and increase the time spent on campus. Such programs like leadership/future leaders programs, student representation programs, interactive campus life through health and recreation, and increased relationships with student unions/guilds have successfully been explored as seen within the presentations.
    - Student mental health awareness programs are increasing – an institutions' Student Services department becomes vital in the support of healthy bodies and healthy minds. The use of 'friends' and 'lecturers' to initiate support programs regarding mental illness have seen to be effective in combatting against this new issue.
    - With graduate roles becoming more competitive, career guidance within Student Services need to complement the students overall learning journey – Student Services have become a service that needs to be targeting students pre university right through until post graduate support. Especially, within this realm of career guidance and support. A paper suggested that frontline staff including lecturers need education around supporting and directing students to the appropriate department when they are confronted with a concern or issue. Additionally, targeting students first in family or disability support to guide them into university, particularly with online orientation and pre university support is becoming crucial for retention.
- Students Services utilisation of students to run programs/initiatives – this is a perfect way to reach to a wider audience especially with engagement becoming more of a challenge. Primarily, SAF is incorporated highly within this topic as most programs can be/are funded through this Commonwealth initiative. However, one paper commented on the fact that the institution's student association has created a bipartisan approach with professional staff and students working jointly on programs to deliver the intended key performance indicators and level of desired engagement. Additionally, beneficial outcomes could provide learnings for the students regarding career professionalism and staff understanding student perspective.
- Sexual assault on campus is soon to be more of a public issue – sexual assault and violence on campus is soon to become a controversial and public issue via the documentary "The Hunting Ground". This isn't a new issue for some institutions, however, this documentary will bring to light the incredibly disturbing acts that can occur at higher education

institutions and help create awareness of institutional complaint handling processes and procedures. This is a welcomed documentary and movement against sexual violence/assault. Students need to be incorporated into the institutions response to this anticipated movement to deliver the correct message to the students, staff and general the community.

- The ability ANZSSA gave to students and Student Services' representatives for open communication was undeniably valuable to both parties. This value was clearly evident through the exchanging of questions, particularly during the student panel sessions. Additionally, the opportunity to communicate was evident through networking between sessions, question time at the end of sessions and always the end of day activities; all offer insight into the student's mind. In delivering a unique opportunity for this communication, all the student speakers were from diverse backgrounds, including a regional university student, a New Zealand student and some local Tasmanian students. This particular element, that being, diversity of opinion, just reinforced how Student Services needs to be actively engaging students throughout any stage of an idea/plan/activity/service to truly gauge its service delivery. On a personal note, I felt I was valued during the ANZSSA conference, that the student panel sessions gave value to the student voice. The ability to answer questions from the Student Services' representatives not only gave value to the student opinion however, enabled the representatives to understand, gain insight and digest the unpredictable response they were given. In reflection, the student panel sessions reminded Student Services that students are stakeholders, students are a source of untapped knowledge, students are a source of revenue and students are the end-user or consumer of the product or service. To not engage students would be detrimental to any Student Services division in any educational institution.

Engaging students in Student Services

Simon's words draw our attention to the fact there is much context about Student Services programs, funding, and governance that we do not tend to engage students with. His story highlights that an informed student body can be positioned to advocate for and on behalf of Student Services. This thinking extends student engagement in Student Services beyond the active delivery of certain peer led initiatives. Simon's reflections can inspire Student Services to take student involvement to a new level – to be involved in the planning and decision making of services and programs more broadly.

Student engagement in higher education is not a new concept and is widely researched (Kift, 2009; Lizzio, 2006; Nelson, Clarke, Stoodley, & Creagh, 2014; Tinto, 2012). Much literature speaks to the argument of having a whole of institution approach to student engagement and recent research shows that students agree with that sentiment (White, 2014). Lizzio (2006) discussed the five senses model for creating a successful orientation and transition to university which is based on the themes of connectedness, purpose, capability, resourcefulness, and culture. McInnis (2004) discussed pressures of tertiary institutions to provide student satisfaction and a quality student experience to the extent where universities have to become more creative in how student support and services are generated. The process of traversing the application of universal design in learning and teaching is optimised by involving LSES students in all stages of development and implementation. Engaging students in the process and the adoption of guidelines and standards with sufficient and appropriate training of staff members and ongoing support are just some of the items detailed on pre-existing checklists for applying universal design in Student Services (Burgstahler, 2015). Students' engagement with their studies, with the university culture, and with one other is critical to student success (Broughan & Hunt, 2012). "Student engagement is critical to student learning success, progression and retention…" (Nelson et al., 2014, p. 4). The idea that engagement is a "two-way street" (Kuh, 2009, p. 697), where there are responsibilities placed upon the university and the

student to ensure that there are opportunities availed and that conditions are suitable, can be extended to informing the development of Student Services.

One particular example of higher education mapping the student voice into the planning and development of services and programs is that of SAF. Student input into the decisions around how SAF is used at each institution is mandated by the Australian Government. The *Student Services, Amenities, Representation and Advocacy Guidelines (Representation Guidelines)* state that a formal process of consultation with democratically elected student representatives is undertaken to determine the use of proceeds from the generation of SAF at each institution (Australian Government, 2013). This is a useful benchmark for Student Services departments to consider when exploring the methods for engaging students into the planning and decision making of their services. At the very least, it is a strong signal that the Australian Government supports student engagement in the management of its activities. Student engagement is not only to benefit the student experience, student success and student outcomes. Universities are under pressure to have sophisticated pictures of student lives and their experiences to inform future policy and strategic planning initiatives. Therefore, innovative ways of connecting and engaging students to inform future planning is something that needs to emerge for tertiary institutions.

Concluding comments

ANZSSA provides a strong platform for students to engage with Student Services' professionals. One opinion in relation to this history is that Student Services have used this opportunity to understand further the student experience and hear student views in relation to services. Student engagement needs to go beyond attempts to enhance the student experience. Student engagement can provide mutually beneficial outcomes for both the student and Student Services departments in higher education. Student Services can do better at sharing their context with students and subsequently engage them in the planning and decision making of the department's intended programs and services. This valued student voice creates a unique opportunity for Student Services to take the evolution of its Service to a whole new level.

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The Development of the Adult Filial Closeness Scale (AFCS): An Investigation of the Relationship between Self-Reported Closeness with Parents and Happiness

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Abstract

A vital element of psychological well-being, or happiness, is a good relationship with one's parents. This study explored the relationship between adult filial closeness and happiness. To measure adults' closeness to their parents, the Adult Filial Closeness Scale (AFCS) was developed, and its reliability and construct validity were verified with a sample of 75 participants, aged 18 to 71 (61.3% female). Happiness was measured using the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ). Male and female scores did not differ significantly on the AFCS and OHQ. The hypothesis that there would be a positive correlation between the AFCS and OHQ measures was not supported for participants at both the younger and older ends of the age spectrum; however, it was supported for the main adult group. In line with previous research, this study emphasises the role a close relationship between children and their parents has on the happiness of the offspring and on the success in many life activities, ranging from academic endeavours to maintaining healthy behaviours. Suggested future research should focus on overcoming the limitations of the study related to sampling and order effects.

Keywords

Filial closeness, relationship with parents, Adult Filial Closeness Scale, Oxford Happiness Questionnaire, happiness, secure attachment

Positive psychology strives to understand and improve psychological well-being. This refers to positive emotions including happiness and hope, positive traits including resilience and courage and positive institutions that enable human flourishing and optimal function (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). A recent paper in the current issues rubric of the February 2016 issue of InPsych, the bulletin of the Australian Psychological Society, summarised a 32-year longitudinal study into what factors predict a positive and happy life trajectory (Sanson, 2016). The research found that childhood and adolescent development play an important role, and the relationship with parents and other authority figures is one of four major factors in this area. Numerous other studies have found that happiness strongly correlates with extroversion, social skills and self-esteem (Argyle, 2013; Argyle & Lu, 1990; Argyle & Martin, 1991; Argyle, Martin, & Crossland, 1989; Cheng & Furnham, 2003). Extroversion, social skills and self-esteem, in turn, are correlated with secure early attachment (Argyle & Lu, 1990; Cheng & Furnham, 2003; Lee, Hamman, & Lee, 2007). Therefore, happiness can be expected to correlate with secure early attachment.

Family relationships and attachment have been shown to be relatively stable over time (Claes, 1998; Lee et al., 2007), therefore early attachment is assumed to be at least partially approximated by how close an adult respondent is to their parent (i.e., adult filial closeness). In other words, a good present relationship with one's parents would be indicative of secure early attachment, which, in turn, is related to happiness. Therefore it is expected that happiness is correlated with adult filial closeness, aligning with previous research that states that good relationships with one's parents are vital for psychological well-being (Cheng & Furnham, 2003; Lee et al., 2007). The purpose of the present study is to investigate the relationship of happiness with adult filial closeness.

Closeness is vital to human beings and therefore critical to relationship research (Dibble, Levine, & Park, 2012). Measures are available for adolescent filial closeness, parental closeness and adult social closeness (Berscheid, Snyder, & Omoto, 1989; Claes, 1998; Dibble et al., 2012; Hook, Gerstein, Detterich, & Gridley, 2003; Lee et al., 2007), but no measurement is available to specifically measure adult filial closeness. Therefore, the present study developed and validated a measure of adult filial closeness, that is, a measure of how close an adult respondent is to their parents.

A useful measure of filial closeness needs to consider several important aspects. An obvious contributor to closeness is physical proximity, as exemplified by number and duration of contact, frequency and type of shared activities, frequency of personal conversations and level of self-disclosure (Claes, 1998). Furthermore, closeness embodies affective, cognitive and behavioural interdependence between two people (Dibble et al., 2012). This is represented by frequency, strength and diversity of interaction (Berscheid et al., 1989) and mutual impact (Dibble et al., 2012). A measure of closeness should also consider intimacy, which is characterised by support, self-disclosure and affection (Hook et al., 2003).

The Adult Filial Closeness Scale (AFCS) was developed for this study as a measure of an adult's closeness to their parents. The draft contained 20 items that measure the following aspects of filial closeness: frequency and duration of contact, frequency of shared activities, frequency of personal conversations, level of parental and filial self-disclosure, perceived strength of the relationship from parental and filial points of view, affective, cognitive and behavioural dependence of the parent on the child and vice versa, frequency and strength of impact on the child and on the parent and peer perception. However, following feedback from five peer reviewers, four items (relating to affective and behavioural dependence of child on parent, strength of impact of parent on child and duration of contact) were removed, as they were judged to be irrelevant to the assessed individual's affect or subject to possible misinterpretation. Moreover, several items were modified to avoid ambiguity, and four items were reversed to create a more balanced scale. Lastly, the order of items was randomised using a random-number generator. The result was a 16-item questionnaire (see appendix).

Participants had to rate their agreement with each item on a six-point Likert scale ranging from one ("strongly agree") to six ("strongly disagree"). This scale was chosen as it has no neutral option, which encourages participants to express a preference. Total scores (factoring reverse scores) ranged from 27 to 96, with higher values indicating more filial closeness.

The present study examined adult filial closeness and happiness, and it was hypothesised that there would be a positive correlation between the two. However, there are possible age confounds at both ends of the age spectrum. A younger age correlates with more favourable life events (e.g., graduation, wedding, birth of child, etc.) and better health and, therefore, with increased happiness (Argyle & Lu, 1990). Conversely, happiness has also been shown to increase with old age (Argyle, 2013). Older people experience less negative affect and distress and highest levels of life satisfaction in most areas except health (Headey & Wearing, 1992). Therefore, it would be expected to see increased happiness at both ends of the age spectrum, regardless of other influences. To control for age-related confounds, the sample was blocked into three age ranges: young adults (less than 25 years, N=7), adults (26 to 50 years, N=59) and older adults (above 50 years, N=9). The hypothesis that filial closeness is positively correlated with happiness was tested on the three age ranges.

Method

Participants

Participants included psychology students of the University of New England, Armidale, Australia, and other participants recruited via email and social media (Facebook, 2015). Data were collected from 75 participants (61.3% female) aged 18 to 71 (*M*=38.75, *SD*=10.80).

Materials

Participants' levels of happiness were measured utilising the OHQ (Hills & Argyle, 2002), which was distilled from the Oxford Happiness Inventory (Argyle et al., 1989). The OHQ contains 29 items (e.g., "I feel that life is very rewarding"), which are scored on a six-point Likert scale ranging from one ("strongly agree") to six ("strongly disagree"). Hills and Argyle (2002) validated their scale with a sample of undergraduate students (*N*=172), demonstrating high scale reliability (α=0.91), as well as convergent validity with a number of well-known published scales. The AFCS, as described above, was utilised to measure participants' closeness to their parents.

Procedure

The Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England, Armidale, Australia, granted ethics approval for this study. Participants were invited via email and social networking (Facebook, 2015) to participate in the survey. An anonymous online survey (Qualtrics, 2015) was constructed, informing participants of their rights and seeking consent to participate. Demographics were collected (i.e., age and gender), followed by administration of the AFCS and OHQ measures. Participants were prevented from backtracking, but time limits were not imposed. Results were analysed using SPSS (IBM Corp., 2015) with α=.05.

Results

Reliability analysis

When assessing internal consistency of the AFCS, all 16 items were acceptable (α=.94), with no negative inter-item correlations. Item 3 ("I feel my parents value their relationship with me") performed best, as it had the highest item-total correlation, $r(73)$=.82, and removing the item would have decreased the scale's internal reliability slightly (α=.93). Item 1 ("Things my parents do or say have an emotional impact on me") performed worst, as it had the lowest item-total correlation, $r(73)$=.22 and, when deleted, the internal consistency increased marginally (α=.94). However, even the worst performing item still exhibited acceptable characteristics; therefore, all items were retained. Subsequent analyses were based on participants' responses to all 16 items. For a summary see Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Information and Cronbach's α for the Adult Filial Closeness Scale (AFCS) and the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ).

Measure	Male *M* (*SD*) (*N* = 29)	Female *M* (*SD*) (*N* = 46)	Total *M* (*SD*) (*N* = 75)	Cronbach's α
AFCS	72.66 (13.28)	74.22 (17.96)	73.61 (16.23)	*.94*
OHQ	125.62 (21.25)	127.24 (21.40)	126.61 (21.22)	*.87*

There were no gender differences on the two scales. Independent-samples *t*-tests were conducted to compare AFCS and OHQ measures for male and female participants. For both analyses, Levene's Test was non-significant, therefore equal variances could be assumed. The difference between male and female scores was non-significant and small for both, the AFCS ($t(73)=-0.40$, $p=.688$, 95% CI [-9.28, 6.15] $d=-0.10$) and OHQ (t (73)=-0.32, $p=.750$, 95% CI [-11.71, 8.47] $d=-0.08$; see Table 1 for means and standard deviations). Therefore, gender was not controlled for in further analyses.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analyses were performed blocked by age: young adults (18 to 25 years, N=7), adults (26 to 50 years, N=59) and older adults (51 to 71, N=9). For the younger age block, the AFCS and OHQ exhibited a small non-significant correlation ($r(5)=-.01$, $p=.978$, $r^2=.02$). For the older age block, the AFCS and OHQ exhibited a medium to large non-significant correlation ($r(7)=-.43$, $p=.246$, $r^2=.19$), indicating that the hypothesis that there would be a positive correlation between the AFCS and OHQ measures was not supported at the outer edge of the age spectrum. For the main age block, the AFCS and OHQ exhibited a significant medium-to-large correlation ($r(57)=.33$, $p=.012$, $r^2=.11$). Therefore, the hypothesis that there would be a positive correlation between the AFCS and OHQ measures was not supported for participants at both outer ends of the age spectrum; however, it was supported for the main adult sample.

Discussion

This study explored the relationship between adults' self-reported closeness to their parents and happiness. In the process, the AFCS was developed, pilot-tested and verified as an internally consistent measure. Male and female scores did not differ significantly on either the AFCS or the OHQ. The hypothesis that there would be a positive correlation between the AFCS and OHQ measures was not supported for participants at both outer ends of the age spectrum; however, it was supported for the main adult sample. This supports the premise that happiness is correlated with adult filial closeness and aligns with Cheng and Furnham's (2003) findings that happiness is related to the quality of the relationship with one's parents, except for participants at the outer ends of the age spectrum.

Limitations to the current pilot study included the small sample size and the gender imbalance towards female participants. Furthermore, the large age range rendered the study vulnerable to age-related confounds, as happiness is reported to increase at both outer ends of the age spectrum. Younger age correlates with more favourable life events and better health and therefore with increased happiness (Argyle & Lu, 1990). Conversely, happiness has also been shown to increase with old age (Argyle, 2013), as older people experience less negative affect and distress and highest levels of life satisfaction in most areas except health (Headey & Wearing, 1992). Therefore, it would be expected to see increased happiness at both ends of the age spectrum, regardless of the relation with one's parents. It is suggested to replicate this study utilising a large sample with better gender balance and a narrower age range. Moreover, the study consistently administered the AFCS before the OHQ. This might have potentially caused order effects; for instance, respondents may have tired as the study progressed (Cozby & Bates, 2012) and become less diligent in their self-reports on the last administered OHQ compared to the first administered AFCS. Future research might attempt to replicate this study utilising a counter-balanced design to control for fatigue and other order effects.

Closeness to one's parents, as a proxy for early attachment, is related not just to happiness, but also to success in many life activities: Success in activities ranging from academic

endeavours to maintaining health interventions depends on the initiation and sustainability of desired coping behaviours, which are strongly influenced by self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977); self-efficacy, in turn, is influenced by individual personality traits, such as extroversion (see Vollrath, 2006 for a review); extroversion, social skills and self-esteem, in turn, are correlated with secure early attachment (Argyle & Lu, 1990; Cheng & Furnham, 2003; Lee, Hamman, & Lee, 2007). This further emphasises the importance of familial closeness for many aspects of life. Therefore, it is suggested that more research should be conducted in establishing reliable measures that allow for estimating early attachment at a later stage in life. This study exemplified but one such measure.

In conclusion, this study linked happiness with adult filial closeness. In line with previous research (Cheng & Furnham, 2003; Lee et al., 2007), this emphasises the role that a closer relationship with one's parents has on the life-long happiness of the offspring. In the process, the AFCS was developed, and its reliability and validity were verified. Suggested future research should focus on overcoming the limitations of the study related to sampling and order effects.

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Appendix

Adult Filial Closeness Scale (AFCS)

Please circle - M / F

Please write your age: _____

INSTRUCTIONS:
Please read the following statements and indicate how much you agree or disagree by circling the corresponding number next to each statement below.

1 = strongly disagree
2 = moderately disagree
3 = slightly disagree
4 = slightly agree
5 = moderately agree
6 = strongly agree

Item #	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Things my parents do or say have an emotional impact on me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	I don't have a good relationship with my parents.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	I feel my parents value their relationship with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	I can usually depend on my parents when I have a problem.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	I feel good about the relationship I have with my parents.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	My parents often share personal information with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	I usually can't be bothered to help my parents.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	My relationship with my parents is important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9	Living close to my parents makes me happy.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	I'd rather avoid sharing activities with my parents.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11	I often have personal conversations with my parents.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12	I don't have much contact with my parents.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13	My parents are very affectionate towards me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14	It is natural to have close relationships with one's parents.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15	I have strong affection for my parents.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16	I often disclose my private thoughts to my parents.	1	2	3	4	5	6

This scale measures the respondent adult's closeness with their parents.

Hypothesis: High scores on the Adult Filial Closeness Scale will be positively correlated with high scores on the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire.

Scoring: A higher score indicates more closeness and a lower score indicates less closeness between the respondent and their parents.

Reverse-score items: 2, 7, 10, and 12.

JANZSSA Submission Guidelines 2016

Manuscripts for submission to JANZSSA must be submitted electronically at

https://submissions.scholasticahq.com/sites/janzssa-journal-of-the-australian-and-new-zealand-student-services-association

JANZSSA publishes *Refereed* (peer-reviewed by double-blind process) and *Professional* papers; which are reviewed by the Editor/s of JANZSSA to ensure their suitability for publication. Within the Professional category are included full-length papers as well as shorter *Best Practice Case Examples, Book Reviews, Reports* and *Conversation Pieces.*

Word Processing platform

All articles should be submitted electronically using Microsoft Word or in another commonly used word processing format able to be converted to an MS Word document.

Language and spelling

JANZSSA uses Australian English so please adjust your spell check in Word to ensure compliance.

Journal format

JANZSSA is published in an A4 format.

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Abstract is required:

All manuscripts submitted must include a brief (<250 words) abstract.

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Any diagrams and tables included in the text must be no larger than 21 cm in depth x 17 cms wide.

Any drawings included are inserted with **Paste Special** function so that the drawing is stable in the body of the text.

Text within a table is preferred as centred or left margin aligned.

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JANZSSA is published in black and white so use of colour in graphs, diagrams and drawings may mean that the nuanced meaning in the various components of the chart, graph etc lost. Please ensure that the differences in charts, diagrams and graphs etc are clearly defined using variations of colour within a grey scale.

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Referencing protocol is the APA Referencing System. Examples of the APA Referencing system are easily found using an internet search. Below are two examples from Australian Universities.

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http://libguides.murdoch.edu.au/APA

Suitable content for articles submitted for publication in JANZSSA:

Manuscripts may include comment and debate on current issues, reports of student services in practice, policy matters, research projects, and reviews of relevant books. The guiding editorial policy is that manuscripts are of interest to student service staff, and are of a high standard.

JANZSSA publishes both Refereed and Professional papers:

Authors who wish to submit an item to be published as a refereed article must include a written note to that effect at the time of submission. If an author does not specify for inclusion in the refereed section the editors will consider the article for publication in the professional section.

Refereed (double–blind peer reviewed) Manuscripts:

JANZSSA uses a double-blind peer review process for refereed articles. The editor of JANZSSA will consult with the Editorial Board to identify at least two expert referees (who may not necessarily be members of ANZSSA). Each referee will be unaware of the identity of the other referee/s. Each of the referees will be provided with an electronic copy of the article from which the author's name has been removed.

As author/s you should also remove other identifying information, and replace any such words or sentence with "words removed for purposes of author anonymity" so that you are not identifiable as the author/s once the author names have been removed.

Referees will submit a report back to the editor that contains one of three recommendations. These are:

1. That the manuscript be accepted (usually with minor amendments to be approved by the Editor/s of JANZSSA).
2. That the manuscript be revised and re-submitted with major amendments to be approved by the reviewers
3. That the manuscript not be accepted for the refereed section. (Reviewers may choose to recommend that it be accepted as a professional paper, with or without amendments)

Reviewers may also choose to make annotations and suggested amendments within the body of the manuscript. Reveiwers will be asked to ensure that their identities are not revealed in the track changes or annotations made as these may be sent back to the author/s.

Referees will also return the electronic copy of the manuscript, which may contain annotations and suggested amendments to the paper. Referees will be asked to ensure that their identities are not revealed in the track changes or annotations made.

At least two referees must be in agreement for an manuscript to be published as a refereed paper.

Professional manuscripts:

Manuscripts submitted for publication without being peer-refereed will be published at the discretion of the editors.

Best practice case examples to showcase:

JANZSSA includes in its non-refereed section examples of best practice and innovation emerging in Student Services.

Contributions for this section are invited.

Contributions to this section would normally be descriptive and not evaluative.

Length of submissions can vary but the upper word limit will normally be 1500 words. Contributions of longer length may be returned to the author for editing.

A Showcase Best Practice Report Template is available from the Editors. See contact details below. Use of the template is not compulsory and is offered simply to assist if required.

Reports, Reviews and Conversation Pieces:

Reports and discussion pieces on aspects of policy and practice within Student Services and the Post-Secondary Education sector are invited. Short reviews of books, articles, journals, reports which would be of general interest to JANZSSA readers are also very welcome.

Quality submissions:

All submissions for publication are required to comply with the layout requirements, and edited for grammar, punctuation and spelling accuracy prior to submission to the JANZSSA co-editors. Manuscripts will be returned to authors for corrections, if required, prior to consideration for publication or distributed for peer review.

Submission deadlines:

JANZSSA publishes issues in April and October each year.

Deadline for submission of professional manuscripts, reports or reviews, and contributions to the section, Best Practice Case Examples:

- January 31 for the April issue
- July 31 for the October issue.

Deadline for submission of refereed manuscripts:

- October 30 for the April issue
- April 30 for the October issue.

Enquiries:

Any queries regarding submission format should be directed to either of the co-editors. See contact details below.

JANZSSA Co-editors

Annie Andrews
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Before submitting your manuscript:

Please refer to the following check list and complete these actions prior to submission of the manuscript.

Please check:

- JANZSSA page layout has been used
- JANZSSA font type and font size requirements have been used
- JANZSSA referencing system (APA style) has been used throughout and that all references are included in full.
- Spelling, grammar and punctuation reviewed.
- All diagram and table contents are position and text correct (i. e. text abbreviations used are consistent throughout diagram or table and that text is centred or left margin aligned.).
- Drawings included are inserted with Paste Special function so that the drawing is stable in the text.
- Do print and read for final corrections.
- De-identified version of paper as reviewer copy completed and attached (if the manuscript is for submission for the refereed section of JANZSSA).

The editors would like to acknowledge the contribution of the following people in the production of JANZSSA:

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Information about ANZSSA

The Australia and New Zealand Student Services Association provides development opportunities and sector representation for professional staff working in post secondary student engagement, student participation, student wellbeing and student development throughout Australia and New Zealand. Through meetings, seminars, workshops and conferences, experienced practitioners share information, ideas and research within their areas of expertise.

ANZSSA is focused on:

- The quality of the student experience
- Supporting and empowering students to achieve their educational and life goals
- Enhancing student wellbeing and development
- Improving student success and persistence
- Providing outreach to students at-risk
- Raising institutional student retention rates

Membership

Whilst ANZSSA is based in Australia and New Zealand, anyone is welcome to join us, no matter where you may be located. Full details of current membership categories and registration costs are available via the ANZSSA website members' page at www.anzssa.org

Belonging to ANZSSA will connect you to a community of professionals across many institutions and support areas – including:

International offices - Counselling - Health services - Housing services - Student guild advocates - Learning support - Grievance/Conflict Resolution officers - Chaplaincy and other faith officers - Careers - Academic advisors - Recreation services – First year experience and transition services - Mentor programs - Equity staff - Financial advisers - Student advisors - Disability support - Welfare advisors - Volunteer and leadership program coordinators - Directors and Heads of operational areas.

Professional Development Activities

The ANZSSA Annual Conference attracts international participants as well as delegates from across Australia and New Zealand.

Regional and State meetings range from informal workshops to visiting speakers and annual conferences.

Members Discussion Board located on the ANZSSA web site at www.anzssa.org provides opportunities for members to share information and collaborate on programs and issues.

Publications

JANZSSA, the Journal of ANZSSA, is published and distributed to members twice per year. Members are encouraged to contribute a variety of material: scholarly articles, information communications, comments, book reviews, and items of interest to the general membership can all be accommodated.

Website

http://www.anzssa.com

The ANZZSA web site is a comprehensive resource offering a broad range of information to professionals working in student support and student services' roles.