

Transfer Mental Health

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Mental health issues are a prominent and growing concern on college campuses. Although there are many resources on UCLA campus that contribute to student well-being, there are certain populations who may be in need of specialized support. Transfer students in particular encounter several risk factors that may make their transition to a four-year university all the more difficult. However, much of the literature surrounding the transfer experience focuses on academic achievement and pays scant attention to mental health outcomes. This study explores the relationship between being a transfer student and subsequent mental health outcomes. In addition, we explored the effectiveness of campus mental health resources in the student population.

1.1 Summary

The UCLA Student Mental Health Study examines how different entry pathways to college education (e.g., transfer or traditional routes) influence student mental health. The study also examines how institutional resources can improve mental health in the face of the existing challenges students encounter.

This is an anonymous online survey taken in one sitting (approximately one hour). The survey is compiled of twenty short questionnaires that ask about demographic information, mental health symptoms, utilization of UCLA resources/communities, student perceptions of UCLA resources/communities, and other experiences you may encounter as a student.

N = 368

1.2 Keywords

transfer student, mental health, risk, resilience, social

1.3 Background

The college climate is one in which stress is becoming increasingly prevalent. In fact, the 2008 national survey of counseling survey directors reported an increase in crisis counseling on college campuses (Gallagher, 2008). Reports of depression and suicide are also of increasing concern on college campuses (Mackenzie et al., 2011). Within the college population, there are a subset of students who have transferred to the university from a community college. This population comprises a large portion of UCLA in particular, as the institution offered admission to nearly 5,600 transfer students in the year 2018 alone (Vazquez, 2018). Historically, transfer students come from working class backgrounds and struggle to balance school with their financial responsibilities (Rhine & Milligan, 2000). Studies show that the transition process from community college to a four-year institution can be difficult because transfers experience potential risk factors such as: low social connectedness, financial issues, and transfer shock (Townsend & Wilson, 2010; Rhine, Milligan, & Nelson, 2000; Packard et al., 2011; Mehr & Daltry, 2016; Rhine et al., 2000).

Although we know that social support is vital to a successful college transition, transfer students often live off campus, focus heavily on attaining their degree and have job responsibilities, which further isolate them from socializing with their peers (Townsend & Wilson, 2010). Unfortunately the literature shows that academic and social factors such as the ones stated above, often accumulate in high attrition rates and student dropout, a phenomenon so popular it is now referred to as “transfer shock” (Rhine et al., 2000).

Other studies show that transfer students also experience mental health issues such as depression and anxiety (Au, 2011; Mackenzie et al., 2011; Gallagher, 2008). Although UCLA offers resources such as Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), recreational services and programs to ease the transition process, how such programs relate to the transfer student experience or their mental health outcomes remains unknown. Though transfer students are a particularly vulnerable population who experience an abundance of risk factors, the existing literature heavily focuses on transfers academic outcomes with relatively scant attention paid to their mental health outcomes.

Moreover, there is no one study that investigates mental health in the context of social and institutional risk and resilience factors within the transfer student population, which limits the clinical utility of the existing data. In this study, we examined mental health outcomes within first-year transfer and traditional college students at UCLA, and assess interpersonal (e.g., social), and institu-

tional (e.g., psychological service access) risk and resilience factors that could moderate the mental health outcomes.

1.4 Specific Aims

1. Determine if there are differential risk and resilience factors experienced by first-year transfer students and first-year traditional students at UCLA.
2. Identify whether first-year transfer students experience higher mental distress than traditional first-year students at UCLA.
3. Establish whether risk factors (which are hypothesized to be higher in transfer students) are associated with poorer mental health outcomes.
4. Determine if resilience factors can moderate the association between risk factors and mental health outcomes in the transfer student population.

Chapter 2

Methods

2.1 Measures

2.1.1 Information

Title	Name	Description	Reference
Demographics	Transfer Mental Health Demographics	Assesses demographic information including student status, racial identification, and school information	Made by BABLab

2.1.2 Mental Health

Title	Description	Reference
bai	Beck Anxiety Inventory	Assesses anxiety through student self-report of anxiety symptoms within the last month (Beck et al., 1988)

Title	Description	Reference	
dass	Depression Anxiety Stress Scale	Student self-report designed to measure three related negative emotional states: depression, anxiety, and tension/stress	(Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995)
pss	Perceived Stress Scale	Assesses how various situations affect perceived stress through self-report of feelings and thoughts over the last month	(Cohen et al., 1983)
wemwbs	The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale	Assesses mental well-being through self-report by asking participants to indicate which feelings and thoughts best describe their experiences over the last two weeks	(Tennant et al., 2006)

2.1.3 Proposed Risk Factors

Title	Description	Reference	
commuting_status	Commuting Status Questionnaire	Assesses school commute distance, school commute time, and if the student lives on campus	Made by BABLab

Title	Description	Reference
imposter_syndrome	Clance Imposter Syndrome Self-Assessment Tool	Assess if the student carries imposter syndrome characteristics and to what extent (Clance, 1985)
dmi	Dweck Mindset Instrument	Assesses if the student has a fixed or growth mindset (Dweck, 2016)
financial_burden	Financial Burden Questionnaire	Assesses to what extent the student feels financially insecure Made by BABLab
familial_obligation	Familial Obligation Questionnaire	Assesses level of familial responsibilities Made by BABLab
transfer_shock	Transfer Shock Questionnaire	Assesses how smooth the student perceives their transition and how prepared they felt for UCLA rigor Made by BABLab

2.1.4 Proposed Resilience Factors

Title	Description	Reference
grittiness	Angela Duckworth Grit Scale	Assesses passion and perseverance (Duckworth et al., 2007)
mpss	Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support	Assesses feeling of support from family, friends, and significant others (Zimet et al., 1988)
psqi	The Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index	Assesses quality and patterns of sleep (Buysse et al., 1989)

Title	Description	Reference	
financial_wellbeing	CFPB Financial Well-Being Scale Questionnaire	Assesses feelings of financial security and concern	(Consumer Financial Protection Bureau)
free-time	Free-time Questionnaire	Assesses amount of time student engages in time for themselves and things they enjoy	Made by BABLab
dedication	Dedication Questionnaire	Assesses how devoted the student is to their studies and school goals	Made by BABLab
caps	Satisfaction with UCLA Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Questionnaire	Assesses use of CAPS, how satisfied they were with the services, and how accessible they feel the services are to the community	Made by BABLab
tsp	Satisfaction of UCLA Transfer Student Program (TSP) Questionnaire	Assesses use of TSP, how satisfied they were with the program, possible barriers to attendance and if the program facilitated their transition	Made by BABLab
club_involvement	Campus Club Involvement Questionnaire	Assesses feelings of campus connectedness through club involvement and possible barriers to access	Made by BABLab

Title	Description	Reference	
recreational_activities	Use of UCLA Recreational Activities Questionnaire	Assesses utilization of campus recreational facilities and its relationship to feelings of stress	Made by BABLab

2.2 Procedure

Students answered surveys anonymously online through RedCap. These surveys assess domains of student experience, as well as potential outside barriers that may inhibit successful transition to UCLA. In addition, the questions ask the participant to document their experiences or use of certain campus resources that may buffer against the relationship between being a transfer student and poor mental health outcomes. The questions also assess the participants' mental health through a variety of questionnaires which ask about the participants' thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

2.2.1 Questionnaire Order

1. Demographics
2. Pss
3. Bai
4. Club_involvement
5. Psqi
6. Dass
7. Wemwbs
8. Commuting_status
9. Caps
10. Dedication
11. Dmi
12. Familial_obligation
13. Financial_burden
14. Financial_well_being
15. Free_time
16. Fsp
17. Tsp
18. Grittiness
19. Imposter_syndrome
20. Perceived_social_support

- 21. Recreational_activities
- 22. Transfer_shock

2.2.2 Attention Checks

- 1. Financial_well_being: *It is crucial that you are paying full attention to the study. Please tick "Very well"*
- 2. Perceived_social_support: *To ensure that you are giving this study your complete attentiveness, please select "Strongly Agree"*
- 3. Caps: *For this question, please click number 3*

2.2.3 Recruitment

Participants were recruited through one of two methods: For Psychology affiliated students, recruitment occurred through SONA systems, which is an online system used to schedule and manage the UCLA Psychology Department human subject pool. In addition, to obtain data from the wider (non-Psychology) community at UCLA, we also had a non-SONA based version of the questionnaire (using RedCap). The survey was open for the Spring 2020 term, and all survey respondents during those quarters were included in the final analyses.

The following materials were used:

Flyer:

Video Advertisement:

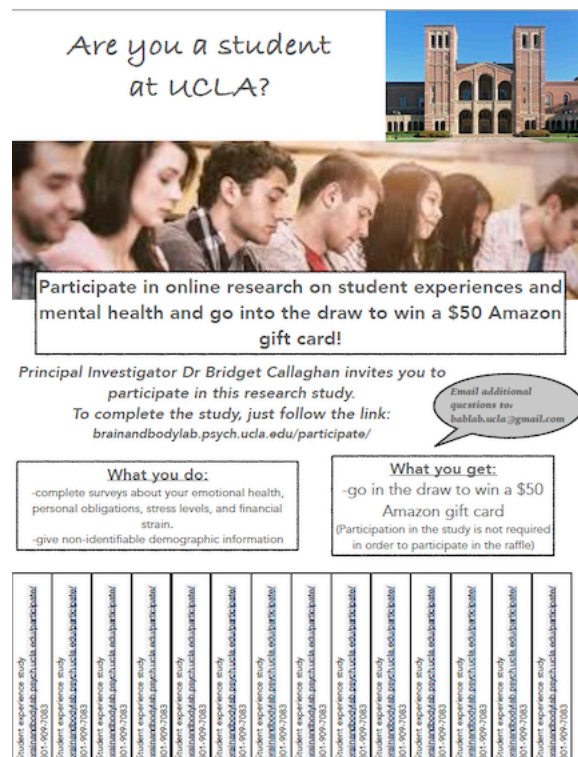


Figure 2.1:

Chapter 3

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