being a/part

A survey of young people’s experience of belonging.

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Acknowledgements

The team responsible for the Being a/part project...

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What is Being a/part?

- 2nd Anglicare national research project
- Strength based study
- Explored role of sense of belonging and perceived social support in mitigating the poor outcomes that result from childhood adversity.
Who took part in being a part?

- 17 to 21
- Anglicare clients at time of research
- Resilient young people who could handle more distressing questions
- 16 Anglicare network members

Requirements for participation

![Australia map with red markers]
Belonging is ... when you get a feeling of happiness in your chest

-- participant, age 18
Preparation

- One major ethics application (Anglicare Victoria)
- 2 organisational ethics
- 7 statutory ethics
- Webinar training workshops
Who took part in being a/part?

Cultural identity (n=254)

- Aboriginal: 87.80%
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander: 11.40%
- Neither Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander: 0.80%

Anglicare Australia
Who took part in being a part?

Placement/ living stability up to age 17 (n=247)

- 25.90% Lived in 1 to 2 places
- 28.90% Lived in 3 to 5 places
- 22.00% Lived in 6 to 10 places
- 23.30% Lived in more than 10 places

Alicare Australia
Who took part in being a part?

Current living arrangements (n=254)

- Living with parent(s): 26.80%
- Living with other person with parental...: 1.60%
- Living with another relative: 8.70%
- Living in supported accommodation: 14.60%
- Living in share accommodation: 14.60%
- Living alone/independently: 21.30%
- ‘Other’ living arrangements: 12.60%
Sometimes all we need in life is for someone to just listen to us.

-- participant
Who took part in being a part?

Highest level of completed education (n=252)

- Primary school: 0.40%
- Some secondary schooling - Year 9 or below: 14.20%
- Year 10: 26.80%
- Year 11: 22.40%
- Year 12: 21.70%
- TAFE: 11.00%
- Undergraduate degree: 1.60%
Who took part in being a part?

Current engagement with education (n=250)

- Not attending any learning institution: 47.60%
- Attending high school: 14.60%
- Completing an apprenticeship or traineeship: 3.50%
- Attending a private college or institution: 9.10%
- Attending university: 9.80%
Who took part in being a/part?

Employment status (n=120)
Who took part in being a part?

Generalised psychological distress

- Low: 70.10%
- High: 29.90%
What did we want to find out?

Does perceived social support and sense of belonging mediate the relationship between childhood adversity, quality of life and psychological functioning in young adulthood (that is, are young people differentially vulnerable to poor outcomes in young adulthood according to perceived social support and belongingness)?

What that means is...

How does social support and sense of belonging help promote positive outcomes for young people who’ve experienced adversity?
What did we want to find out?

Perceived social support from:
- Family
- Friends
- Significant others
- Community

Sense of belonging as influenced by:
- Psychological distress
- Childhood adversity
Some Definitions

**Significant other**—These are important people in the young person’s life and who are distinctly separate from friends and family.

From the comments in the survey it is clear that significant others can often be support workers, teachers and other adults with whom they feel a connection.
[the support worker] listened, gave me a feed, lets me come back to talk whenever I want.

-- participant, age 20
Some Definitions

**Perceived social support**—A young person’s subjective evaluation of the quality of support that is available from family, friends and broader social networks. This is distinct from support that is actually received.

**Sense of Belonging**—The interconnectedness of an individual with others and the environment. It also includes assessments of the ‘self’ in relation to those factors. In the context of this study, a sense of belonging, can frame how a young person accounts for their role in particular contexts, either in a physical or relational setting.
Young people with higher current levels of generalised psychological distress feel they have less support from significant others.
Hard to trust people too many judgements.

-- participant, age 19
It is so vital to get support otherwise the feeling of [being] lost is overwhelming.

-- participant, age 19
As the level of perceived social support from significant others increased, the likelihood of the young person being engaged with education decreased.
I’ve surrounded myself with positive people and my course is going well and my life feels like it is back on track.

-- participant, age 19
Young people who feel they are **highly supported** by their family, friends and significant others feel **more connected** to their communities.
people feel just happy around know talk respect comfortable accepted about like home feelings good care happy ready talk include invited smile always go help glad without glad with anything...
Why is it important?

- Trust and meaningful engagement
To know that when/if ever rock bottom looks like it is right in front of me; knowing that I have at least one person I can rely on. It also means that I know I have comfort within someone even when I don’t have comfort left within myself.

-- participant, age 20
Feeling of worthiness, people paying an interest in me, and people actually wanting to include me in outings and activities.

-- participant, age 17
Why is it important?

- Trust and meaningful engagement

- A pathway to engagement is not without risk
It’s a tough one to answer, I guess for me it’s not feeling that I don’t belong.

-- participant, age 18
I'm not supported by my family and I wish I had someone who would make me the most important thing in their life.

-- participant, age 21
Why is it important?

- Trust and meaningful engagement
- A pathway to engagement is not without risk
- It teaches us that we should be looking to broaden connections for young people.
They [the support services] offer a great amount of support for young people such as myself, they have a welcoming environment and the staff are loyal and easy to speak with.

-- participant
Me and my siblings were beaten severely and the people whose job it was to do something sat back and let it happen.

-- participant, age 18
what works best for me when being supported is when someone listens to me, is consistent, write out a plan with me, reflective listening and supports me to make the best decisions for me. Remembering my name would be good too, because I’m not a barcode or a case file number I’m a human ... an individual with a voice.

-- participant, age 18
Final comments

For support workers and policy makers and for those of us in the community...

The **Significant Other** exists outside the family environment and is separate to the disappointments and disrupted attachments of the young persons past.

The focus should be on determining how to identify and encourage potential significant others to embrace this responsibility of treading the fine line between being a powerful source of support and further reinforcing a negative world view for the young person.
Final comments

We hope that these findings trigger a rethink of the importance of our roles in the lives of young people.

Too often we underestimate our influence or don’t see that young people are listening to and are shaped by us.

The trust that young people place in us is a gift.

It must be protected and nurtured so that they may go on to find and connect with other important people in their lives.
A friend in the Governor General
Thanks for listening!

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Happy to take business cards to send you a copy of the reports!