

JCU ePrints

This file is part of the following reference:

Koder, Deborah A. (2008) *A survey of Australian psychologists in aged care: the relationship between training, attitudes and professional practice with older clients*. PhD thesis, James Cook University.

Access to this file is available from:

<http://eprints.jcu.edu.au/2119>



A survey of Australian psychologists in aged care: The relationship
between training, attitudes and professional practice with older clients.

Thesis submitted by

Deborah-Anne KODER BscPsych(Hons)UNSW; M.Psych(USyd)

in June 2008

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in the Department of Psychology

James Cook University

STATEMENT OF ACCESS

I, the undersigned author of this work, understand that James Cook University will make this thesis available for use within the University Library and, via the Australian Digital Theses network, for use elsewhere.

I understand that, as an unpublished work, a thesis has significant protection under the Copyright Act and;

I do not wish to place any further restriction on access to this work

Or

I wish this work to be embargoed until

Or

I wish the following restrictions to be placed on this work:

Signature

Date

STATEMENT ON SOURCES

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

.....
(Signature)

.....
(Date)

ELECTRONIC COPY

I, the undersigned, the author of this work, declare that the electronic copy of this thesis provided to the James Cook University Library, is an accurate copy of the print thesis submitted, within the limits of the technology available.

Signature

Date

STATEMENT ON THE CONTRIBUTION OF OTHERS

I wish to acknowledge the receipt of two Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences grants to financially support this work. The FAESS grants principally contributed to the printing and mailing of the national surveys.

All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the Human Ethics Committee of James Cook University (Appendix 1).

Professional editing and proof reading was carried out by Kate McAllan and Gillian Hamilton.

Professor Edward Helmes has contributed to all publications contained herein, advising on the following areas: conception of study, design, data interpretation, conclusions and editorial advice. Dr. Alistair Campbell advised on statistical analyses concerning Study 3 (Student Survey) and Study 6 (Comparison study). Dr. Kaarin Baikie advised on data analysis in Study 1 (Pilot Survey).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the tireless efforts and guidance of my principal supervisor, Professor Edward Helmes, whose expertise in the field of geropsychology and ageism was invaluable in the preparation of this thesis. Feedback from various members of the Department of Psychology, James Cook University, during the formal evaluation process was also very helpful.

Professor Nancy Pachana, National Convenor of the Australian Psychological Society's "Psychology and Ageing" Interest Group, must be thanked for her support in recruitment. Those psychologists and trainees who completed surveys are also acknowledged as well as Heads of School and course co-ordinators who supported this work.

Dr. Kaarin Baikie and Dr. Alistair Campbell, co-supervisor, provided statistical advice with Robyn Gaydon helping with typesetting and mail outs.

REMOVED AT AUTHOR'S REQUEST

I would like to dedicate this work to them on behalf of those who have been denied an education on account of race, creed or gender. I hope the words contained within promote awareness of another form of prejudice: ageism.

ABSTRACT

The proportion of Australian adults aged over 65 years is due to increase over the next 20 years with corresponding increases in mental illness. A growing demand for clinical psychology services to older adults is expected yet overseas surveys indicate a low rate of specializing in working with the over-65 age group. The status of geropsychology in Australia is examined through exploratory analysis of survey data from a practising psychologist sample and from a post-graduate psychology trainee sample. Six published studies are reported that examine the relationship among training, personal contact and attitudes, and the relative contributions of these three factors to decisions on working with older adults among Australian psychologists. Pilot research highlights the importance of interest in working with older clients and additional training external to formal degree courses in discriminating between those psychologists who specialised in aged care compared to generalist practitioners. A national survey of psychologists identifies clinical exposure to older adults while training and negative expectations of subjective ageing as additional factors predicting specialist category membership. Low rates of professional involvement with older clients in general highlight the corresponding dearth of psychologists specialising in aged care service provision, a finding congruent with overseas research. The positive influence of clinical contact, as opposed to the absence of predictive ability for personal contact, is also emphasized in a survey of post-graduate psychology students. Professional attitudes, such as confidence and interest in working with older adults, are other predictors of interest in working with older clients among students. The use of the Reactions to Ageing Questionnaire in

several analyses also highlights the importance of affect in influencing behaviour, with professional attitudes predicting personal attitudes towards ageing, as opposed to personal contact or formal training. The final study underscores the role of contextual relevance, with training contributing to more variance in interest in working with older adults among trainees, as compared to practitioners whose professional interest was influenced more by attitudes. The contact hypothesis is not confirmed in this research in either the student or the practitioner samples. Strategies to promote the field of clinical geropsychology across a variety of settings, ranging from training to clinical service delivery are discussed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1-LITERATURE REVIEW	10
I. Introduction.....	10
II. The history and status of geropsychology in Australia	13
III. Surveys of psychological services to older adults: International perspectives...	17
IV. Predictors of interest in working with older adults.....	20
V. The role of attitudes and their effect on behaviour.....	29
VI. Ageism: Attitudes towards the elderly	32
CHAPTER 2-OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY	42
I. Research questions.....	42
II. Outline of study.....	44
CHAPTER 3-PILOT STUDY PUBLICATION	45
Study 1: Koder, D.A. & Helmes, E. (2006). Clinical psychologists in aged care in Australia: A question of attitude or training? <i>Australian Psychologist</i> , 41, 179-185	
CHAPTER 4-NATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST SURVEY PUBLICATION	71
Study 2: Koder, D. A. & Helmes, E. (in press). Predictors of working with older adults in an Australian psychologist sample: Revisiting the influence of contact. <i>Professional Psychology: Research and Practice</i>	
CHAPTER 5-DESCRIPTIVES OF THE COMBINED NATIONAL SAMPLE PUBLICATION.....	100
Study 3: Koder, D.A. & Helmes, E. (2008). The current status of clinical geropsychology in Australia: A survey of practising psychologists. <i>Australian Psychologist</i> , 43, 22-26	
CHAPTER 6-NATIONAL SURVEY OF POST-GRADUATE PSYCHOLOGY TRAINEES PUBLICATION	117
Study 4: Koder, D.A. & Helmes, E. (in press). Predictors of interest in working with older adults: A survey of post-graduate trainee psychologists. <i>Gerontology and Geriatrics Education</i> , 29(2)	
CHAPTER 7-THE RAQ ANALYSIS: PREDICTORS OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS PERSONAL AGEING PUBLICATION.....	142
Study 5: Koder, D.A. & Helmes, E. (in press). Reactions to ageing among Australian psychologists. <i>Australasian Journal on Ageing</i>	

CHAPTER 8-COMPARISONS BETWEEN PRACTITIONERS AND TRAINEE PSYCHOLOGISTS PUBLICATION	154
Study 6: Koder, D.A. & Helmes (2007). Interest in ageing: Comparisons between present and future psychologists. <i>Paper presented at the 2nd Biennial Australian Psychological Society “Psychology and Ageing” National Conference, Geelong, November, 2007</i>	
 CHAPTER 9-DISCUSSION	 172
I. Summary of research questions and main findings	173
II. Theoretical implications of findings	177
III. Practical implications of findings	184
IV. Recommendations.....	191
V. Limitations of the present study and future research.....	197
VI. Conclusion.....	199
 REFERENCES.....	 201
 APPENDICES.....	 224
Appendix A - Ethics approval	
Appendix B - Pilot survey	
Appendix C - Pre-contact letter main survey	
Appendix D - Cover letter main survey	
Appendix E - Main survey	
Appendix F - Trainee survey cover letter	
Appendix G-Trainee survey	
Appendix H-Statistical results	

LIST OF TABLES

STUDY 1

Table 1	Comparison between generalists and specialists on demographic variables.....	68
Table 2	Comparison between generalist and specialist psychologists on training.....	69
Table 3	Comparison between generalist and specialist psychologists on attitudinal variables.....	70

STUDY 2

Table 1	Comparison between generalists and specialists on demographic and training variables.....	92
Table 2	Comparison between generalist and specialist psychologists on contact variables.....	93
Table 3	Comparison between generalist and specialist psychologists on attitudinal variables.....	94

STUDY 4

Table 1	Pearson correlation coefficients for interest in working with older clients and independent variables.....	139
Table 2	Hierarchical regression model summary.....	140
Table 3	Summary of hierarchical regression: Training, contact and attitudinal Variable coefficients.....	141

STUDY 5

Table 1	Summary of standard multiple regression: Variable coefficients with total RAQ score as DV.....	151
---------	--	-----

STUDY 6

Table 1	Comparison between practitioner and trainee Psychologists on independent variables.....	166
Table 2	Hierarchical regression model summary: Practitioners and trainees.....	167

Table 3	Hierarchical regression: Comparison of independent variables between practitioners and trainee psychologists.....	168
---------	---	-----