# AUTISM SA RESEARCH FORUM



# **Acknowledgment of Country**

We acknowledge this land that we meet on today is the traditional lands for Kaurna people and that we respect their spiritual relationship with their country.

We also acknowledge the Kaurna people as the custodians of the Adelaide region and that their cultural and heritage beliefs are still as important to the living Kaurna people today. We also pay respects to the cultural authority of Aboriginal people attending from other areas of South Australia and Australia present here today.

# **Todays Schedule**

- 10am- Autism SA Professional Practice Committee- Niki Welz, Amanda Harris, Professor Robyn Young, Ass Professor Verity Bottroff (unavailable)
- 10.10am- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for people on the autism spectrum in a Therapeutic Group Greg Healy & Zoran Bekric (Autism SA)
- **10.30am-** Evaluation of the Autism SA Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Adult Group- *Dr Julia Harries & Dr Neil Kirby (Adelaide University)*
- 10.50am- Exploring the social-emotional and academic experiences of girls on the autism spectrum during the first two years of secondary school-Pam Jacobs (Griffith University)
- **11.10am-** Use of Video based modelling techniques to facilitate the development of conversational behaviours to adolescents with ASD and Complex Communication Needs- Dr. Abi Thirumanickam (Flinders University)
- **11.30am-** Looking at the experiences of students on the spectrum and their families of the transition to university'- systematic review- Alison Nuske (Flinders University)



- 11.50am- Closing
- **12.00pm-** Networking *opportunity to speak directly with the PPC and Researchers*

# The role of the Professional Practice Committee

- A form of the PPC was created at the beginning of Autism SA in 1964
- Comprises of members from both within Autism SA and external to Autism SA to ensure a range of viewpoints and experiences are represented
- ✓ In addition to Ethics approval, reviews research applications for their relevance and impact upon the autism community in South Australia.
- ✓ Is responsible for approving projects promoted through Autism SA.
- Provides advice on matters relating to delivery of support services and provision of treatments, interventions and therapies.



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CONFEDENCE.

ASIA PACIFIC AUTISM

SUBSCRIBE TO THE

# **Autism SA**

# **Professional Practice Committee**

Current members are;

- Niki Welz: Training, Consultancy and Research Manager (Autism SA)
- Amanda Harris: Senior Clinical Psychologist, Diagnostic Services (Autism SA)
- Professor Robyn Young: Professor College of Education, Psychology and Social Work (Flinders University)
- Associate Professor Verity Bottroff: College of Nursing and Health Sciences (Flinders University)
- The PPC are currently seeking a member who has experience, or a passion for, research in the autism field. Individuals on the spectrum are strongly encouraged to apply. Email nwelz@autismsa.org.au



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CURRENTLY RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS



**RESEARCHERS: HOW TO APPLY** 



PAST RESEARCH PROJECTS



THE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE COMMITTEE





### WHAT'S ON

A NEW STATE OF THE ART SENSORY AND SOCIAL SPACE FOR AUTISM THANKS TO VARIETY



Read More

AUTISM SA ANNUAL **REPORT 2016/17** 



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## RESEARCH

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# How to apply

## How to apply

The Professional Practice Committee considers research applications throughout the year and it usually takes around 2-3 weeks to reach an outcome.

For a research project to be considered, the Committee requests that you submit the following:

- Completed 'Request to Research' form
- Copy of your ethics proposal **and** ethics approval
- Copy of advertisement, pamphlet, etc
- Any research instruments that will be used relevant to this part of the researcher project (eg. interview script, questionnaire, survey software)
- Once the above has been received, the Committee will review your proposal and contact you with a response.



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#### RESEARCH

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# **Past Research Projects**

## **After the project**

Researchers are required to provide;

- A brief summary report (1-2 pages) and paragraph abstract of the outcomes and findings for distribution to the wider autism community
- One copy of the final report for inclusion in the Autism SA resource centre.
- Summary and final report are uploaded to the Autism SA website



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**RESEARCHERS: HOW TO APPLY** 



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#### WHAT'S ON

A NEW STATE OF THE ART SENSORY AND SOCIAL SPACE FOR AUTISM THANKS TO VARIETY



Read More

AUTISM SA ANNUAL **REPORT 2016/17** 



Read More

#### ASIA PACIFIC AUTISM CONFEDENCE.

## RESEARCH

Autism SA supports research into autism.

# How to be involved

- Research applications vary in the input required
- Some may require 5-10 minutes to complete a survey while others may require a face-to-face interview and follow up interviews
- Often seeking a range of individuals and professionals who are apart of the wider autism community
- Some benefits can include having your experiences, viewpoints and opinions represented in SA research; connecting with researchers and the wider autism community; knowledge of what research is occurring in SA



# **RESEARCH FORUM**

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for people on the autism spectrum in a Therapeutic Group

> Greg Healy & Zoran Bekric (Autism SA)

# **Autism and ACT Group**

- For Carers and adults with autism
- Can support mental health issues
- 6-10 Participants
- 8 weeks for 90 minute sessions
- Running twice a year for 9 years



# **Therapeutic Aims**

To teach an individual to:

- More effectively manage their problems.
- Change their relationship with their thoughts and feelings.
- Spend more time doing what they love.



# ACT

- Acceptance Commitment Therapy
- Behavioural Therapy
- Focusses on Psychological Flexibility
- Accepting that suffering is normal
- Values Guided Action
- Aim is to create a meaningful life



# **Autism and ACT**

- Inflexibility
- Single-minded
- Perfection
- Seeks Control
- Visual
- Motivation

- Flexibility
- Perspective
- Defusion
- Acceptance
- Visual and tactile
- Do what matters



# **Sessions Include**

- Mindfulness exercises
- Discuss new concepts
- Experiments and sharing
- New strategies
- Listening to each other

service@clipartof.com





# Mindfulness means paying attentio in a particular way; on purpose in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally. ~Jon Kabat-Zinn



## **Everyone can notice**





Exploring what we can see, hear, touch and taste

## **Mindfulness Activities**

- Start with external before internal
- Eating and drinking
- Objects of interest
- Pleasurable sights, sounds, sensations
- Movement
- Noticing the breath





## **Start with Values**

- Values focus is unique to ACT
- Discovering values
- Creates motivation







# **Benefits of Group Therapy**

- Safe place
- Many different perspectives
- Peer support
- Encouragement
- Journey together
- Promote social skills





# Feedback

- 1<sup>st</sup> session immediate gains
- Assisted with visualising
- Considerable life changes





# **General Findings**

- Improved sleep
- Accepting what they can control
- Shift in perspective
- Valued living





## References

- Harris R. (2009) ACT Made Simple: A quick start guide to ACT basics and beyond.
  Oakland CA: New Harbinger Publications Inc.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2009) Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life. New York: Hyperion.
- Howlin, P. (1997) Autism: Preparing for adulthood. London: Routledge.
- Attwood, T. (1998) Asperger's Syndrome: A Guide for Parents and Professionals. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

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- Boyd, B. (2003). Parenting a child with Asperger syndrome: 200 tips and strategies, London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Hayes, S.C., Strosahl, K.D., & Wilson, K.G. (2012) Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: The process and practice of mindful change (2nd Ed.) New York: The Guilford Press.
- Harris R. (2007) The Happiness Trap: Stop Struggling, Start Living. Wollombi NSW: Exisle Publishing Limited.

# **RESEARCH FORUM Evaluation of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for people on** the autism spectrum in a **Therapeutic Group**

Dr Julia Harries & Dr Neil Kirby (Adelaide University)

'ISM SA

# THE UNIVERSITY

Neil Kirby and Julia Harries Wellbeing Research Unit School of Psychology

**EVALUATION OF THE AUTISM SA ACCEPTANCE** 

AND COMMITMENT THERAPY GROUP

## adelaide.edu.au

## **Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Group**

- Group program for adult clients with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and parents/carers.
- Aims to:
  - *Help participants manage issues such as anxiety, stress, addictions, depression, and burnout;*
  - *Teach skills needed to handle difficult thoughts and feelings.*
- Two groups run each year at Autism SA (for 8+ years).
- Participants asked to complete the *Automatic Thoughts Questionnaire (ATQ)*<sup>1</sup> at program beginning and end.
- Wellbeing Research Unit asked to evaluate the program using the pre- and post-intervention ATQ collected.

## **Automatic Thoughts Questionnaire (ATQ)**

- 30-item measure of frequency of occurrence and belief in negative thoughts that contribute to development and maintenance of mental illnesses.
- Four factors measured:
  - 1. Personal Maladjustment and Desire for Change (*e.g. I'm so disappointed in myself*)
  - 2. Negative Self-Concepts and Negative Expectations (*e.g. I'm a loser*)
  - 3. Low Self-Esteem (e.g. I hate myself)
  - 4. Helplessness (e.g. I can't finish anything)
- Two rating scales using a 5-point scale:
  - 1. Thought frequency (1= not at all, 2 = sometimes, 3 = moderately often, 4 = often, 5 = all the time)
  - 2. Belief in thoughts (1 = not at all, 2 = somewhat, 3 = moderately, 4 = very much, and 5 = totally)

## **Participants**

• Pre- and postintervention ATQ responses for 35 participants.

• Two thirds of participants were carers.

	Person with ASD	Carer	Total
	(n = 14)	(n = 21)	(N = 35)
Gender			
Male	11 (79%)	5 (24%)	16 (46%)
Female	3 (21%)	16 (76%)	19 (54%)
Marital Status			
Single	12 (86%)	4 (19%)	16 (46%)
Married	1 (7%)	16 (76%)	17 (49%)
Divorced	1 (7%)	1 (5%)	2 (5%)
Employment status			
Employed	7 (50%)	21 (100%)	28 (80%)
Unemployed	7 (50%)	-	7 (20%)
Highest education level			
Year 10	4 (29%)	-	4 (11%)
Year 12	3 (21%)	4 (19%)	7 (20%)
Degree	7 (50%)	17 (81%)	24 (69%)
Intellectual Disability			
Yes	1 (7%)	-	1 (3%)
No	13 (93%)	21 (100%)	34 (97%)



## Mean Total ATQ Scores (/150)



• Significantly lower post-intervention means (improvements) for both the frequency and believe in negative thoughts overall for both groups.

Person with ASD

## **Findings**

Carer

🛯 Total

#### Personal Maladjustment and Desire for Change (/25)



#### Low Self-Esteem (/10)



#### Negative Self-Concepts & Negative Expectations (/35)



#### Helplessness (/10)



**\*\*\*** Significant change (improvement)

The University of Adelaide

#### Slide 35

## Summary

- Whilst not all participants improved on ATQ measures, significant group mean reductions were obtained for:
  - Negative thought frequency: Total ATQ score and Negative Self-Concepts and Negative Expectations Score;
  - Belief in negative thoughts: Total ATQ score; Personal Maladjustment and Desire for Change score; Negative Self-Concepts and Negative Expectations Score; and Helplessness Score.
- No significant changes in frequency or belief associated with low self-esteem.
### **Recommendations**

- Program evaluations should be ongoing and include:
  - Longer term follow-up of participants (e.g. 3-months after completion)
  - Use of qualitative questions (e.g. what was the most valuable aspect of the program for you, what worked well, examples of improvements, what could be changed or improved, any other suggestions for inclusion)
  - Quantitative and qualitative assessment of whether the program has also increased positive thoughts and feelings associated with personal adjustment, desire for change, self-concept, self-esteem, and personal empowerment.



# THE UNIVERSITY of ADELAIDE

**CRICOS PROVIDER NUMBER 00123M** 

# **RESEARCH FORUM**

Exploring the social-emotional and academic experiences of girls on the autism spectrum during the first two years of secondary school







Exploring the social-emotional and academic experiences of girls on the autism spectrum during the first two years of secondary school.

> Pam Jacobs PhD Candidate Griffith University

### Aim of Research Project

The aim of the research is to investigate the experiences and perspectives of adolescent girls on the autism spectrum during the first two years of secondary school.

## **Research Questions**

#### Two questions guide this research:

- What do girls on the autism spectrum say about the extent to which they are supported to engage sociallyemotionally and academically during the first two years of secondary school?
- What do mothers of girls on the autism spectrum say about the extent to which their daughters are supported to engage socially-emotionally and academically during the first two years of secondary school?

## Survey

The survey is **<u>Stage 1</u>** of this research project. 18 girls completed the survey.

Girls could do the survey independently or with help.

- 50% completed survey independently.
- 39% had some help from their mother
- 11% had help from their mother across the whole survey.

## **Survey Sections**

Demographics Transition **Sensory Things** Communication Social-Emotional Academic The Future

# Demographics

Mean age was 12.7 years • 50% were in Year 7

- 50% were 12 years old
  39% were in Year 8
- 33% were 13 years old
   6% were in Year 9
- 17% were 14 years old School Year 2018

#### States

- 50% were from Victoria
- 33% were from NSW
- 11% were from Queensland
- 6% were from ACT

# Demographics

#### School Sector

- 45% attended Independent Schools
- 33% attended Government Schools
- 22% attended Catholic Schools

## School Size

- 77% schools had an enrolment over 600
- 6% were under 300 students

# Transition

#### **Feelings about Transition**

66% OK





#### 17% Not Good

## **Transition - Positives**



# **Sensory Things**

Sensory issues at school					
Often	50%				
Sometimes	39%				
Never	11%				

All the girls with sensory issues experienced anxiety. 56% girls who often had sensory issues also often felt anxious at school.

44% of these girls felt anxious sometimes.

# **Sensory Things**

#### Girls reported these issues were a concern.

•	Noise	94%
•	Crowds	<mark>81%</mark>
•	Feel of clothes and other things	38%
•	Balance and coordination / PE/ Sport	31%
•	Smells	31%
•	Visuals	19%
•	Fine Motor	19%

# Communication

# Do you enjoy talking with peers at school?

- Yes 44%
- Usually 39%
- Seldom 11%
- No 6%

Do you enjoy talking with peers outside of school

• Yes 55%

- Usually 28%
- Seldom 11%
- No 6%

# Communication

Do you enjoy talking with adults/teachers at school?

- Yes 22%
- Usually 28%
- Seldom 33%
- No 17%

Do you enjoy talking with adults outside of school?

• Yes 22%

- Usually 33%
- Seldom 39%
- No 6%

# Communication



# Social-Emotional - Feelings about school

#### Like School?

- Always 17%
- Sometimes 50%
- No 33%

#### Want to go to school?

- Yes 44%
- Sometimes 28%
- No 28%
   <u>Confident in class?</u>
- Yes 11%
- Sometimes 50%

No

39%

Confident outside of class?

- Yes 45%
- Sometimes 33%
- No 22%

# **Social-Emotional - Feelings**

Worried / Anxious at school • No 17%							
•	No	0	•	Sometimes	61%		
•	Sometimes	50%	•	Yes	22%		
•	Often	50%	5	Sad about goi	ng to school		
	Worried / Anxious about						
	going to sc	hool	•	No	44%		
•	No	33%	•	Sometimes	28%		
•	Sometimes	28%	•	Yes	28%		
•	Yes	39%					

Sad at school

# **Social-Emotional - Friends**

Have friends?	78%	16%	6%
Would like more friends?	17%	72%	11%
Easy to make friends?	28%	28%	44%
Conversation is difficult?	54%	46%	0%
Easy to keep friends?	39%	55%	6%
See school friends out of school?	28%	39%	33%
Do friendships affect feelings about school?	53%	18%	29%
Do friendships affect your schoolwork?	12%	3 <mark>5</mark> %	53%

## Social-Emotional – Bullying & Exclusion

### Bullying

- Yes 83%
- No 17%

#### Left Out / Ignored

- Yes 33%
- Sometimes 22%
- No 45%

# Social-Emotional – Types of Bullying



Verbal - name calling, teasing, swearing etc.
 Covert - quiet, hard for others to see it happening
 Overt - everyone can see it
 Physical - hitting, pushing tripping etc.
 Other. Please tell me about it?
 Sexual - inappropriate suggestions, touching etc.
 Cyber-bullying - social media, email, texts

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## Academic – Helpful to Learning



- Help in class
- Help out of class
- Help to organise my work
- Help with time management
- Extra time to complete work
- Verbal explanations of written assignments
- Written / visual explanation of verbal instructions
- Tasks given in sections or chunks
- Pre-teaching of new work
- Other. Please tell me what this is.

## Academic – Barriers to Learning





- I do not understand written assignments
- I do not understand verbal instructions
- I am not confident to ask questions
- I cannot get organised to start work tasks
- I cannot finish assignments on time
- I worry about social things
- I feel anxious
- l feel sad
- Other. Please tell me what this is.

## The Future

#### How do you feel about the future?





Stage 2 research involved 5 mother-daughter dyads of volunteers from girls who completed the survey.

The girls and their mothers each participated in a semistructured online interview.

The interviews were conducted in September and October 2018.



# Thank you for your interest.

# **RESEARCH FORUM**

Use of Video based modelling techniques to facilitate the development of conversational behaviours to adolescents with ASD and Complex Communication Needs

> Dr. Abi Thirumanickam (Flinders University)



# Use of Video- based modelling techniques to facilitate conversational behaviours in non-verbal adolescents with autism

Research Forum Autism SA: Adelaide, 2018



: abirami.thirumanickam@flinders.edu.au

: @AbiAThiru

Abi Thirumanickam, PhD., CPSP Assoc. Prof Pammi Raghavendra, PhD. Julie McMillan, PhD.

Willow your Stoopbryggo

# Social communication & Autism





Thirumanickam, 2017





- Evidence Based Practice (Wong et al., 2015)
- Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1971)

Learning by observing actions and consequences in social contexts

- Instruction mode = video clip
- Instructor = familiar OR unfamiliar
  - Adult, peer, animation: Video
     Modelling (VM)
  - Self: Video SELF-Modelling (VSM)
- Perspective
  - First: Point-of-View Modelling (PoVM)



- Instructor = familiar OR unfamiliar
  - Adult, peer, animation: Video
     Modelling (VM)
- Video production





- Instructor = familiar OR unfamiliar
  - Self: Video SELF-Modelling (VSM)

#### Video production

	ata > 5.FID_5tddy_5_2015 > Fi		
Name	Date modified	Туре	Size
Areakfast_1	20/08/2015 4:14 PM	VLC media file (.m	3,324 KB
_Breakfast_2	20/08/2015 4:18 PM	VLC media file (.m	1,788 KB
Breakfast_3	20/08/2015 4:19 PM	VLC media file (.m	2,058 KB
_Breakfast_4	20/08/2015 4:20 PM	VLC media file (.m	2,658 KB
Areakfast_FINAL	20/08/2015 4:21 PM	VLC media file (.m	12,816 KB
A Fav_Hol_1	20/08/2015 4:27 PM	VLC media file (.m	3,312 KB
_Fav_Hol_2	20/08/2015 4:29 PM	VLC media file (.m	2,148 KB
🛓Fav_Hol_3	20/08/2015 4:31 PM	VLC media file (.m	2,220 KB
A Fav_Hol_4	20/08/2015 4:32 PM	VLC media file (.m	1,632 KB
A Fav_Hol_FINAL	20/08/2015 4:32 PM	VLC media file (.m	11,754 KB
20150803124735	7/08/2015 1:09 PM	VLC media file (.m	816,864 KB



- Perspective
  - First: Point-of-View Modelling (PoVM)



# PhD Research

- Systematic Review Findings
  - adolescents/adults
  - complex communication needs
- <u>Aims:</u>
- Determine the effectiveness of <u>VM and VSM</u> in facilitating reciprocal conversational interaction in <u>adolescents</u> with ASD and
- Determine (potential) differential effects between the model types (self vs. other)



Participant	Language age <sup>a</sup>	Self-recognition	Communication device	Communication	Sensory/
				characteristics	Behaviour characteristics
Sam	6;3	100%	<ul> <li>Proloquo2Go<sup>1</sup></li> <li>Intermediate core- vocabulary <sup>c</sup></li> </ul>	<ul> <li>No speech sounds</li> <li>Uses gestures and finger-traces letters of the alphabet</li> <li>Prefers typing messages on</li> <li>keyboard</li> <li>Able to construct as least 3-word sentences using his AAC to express request and comment</li> </ul>	None observed or reported
Lily	< 2;0 <sup>b</sup>	100%	<ul> <li>Proloquo2Go</li> <li>Customized vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Can produce one- word utterance using speech</li> <li>Unintelligible speech</li> <li>Able to construct 3- word sentence to request desired item using her AAG</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Reported sleep difficulty (often appears tired)</li> <li>Hand-flapping and rocking behaviors,</li> <li>Chews on chewy tubes or clothing</li> </ul>
Dan	2;3	100%	<ul> <li>Proloquo2Go</li> <li>Customized vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Echolalic speech</li> <li>Speech always starts with "I want" and ends with "please"</li> <li>Able to construct 3- word sentence to request desired</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Self-harming behaviors (picks on his skin and bruises)</li> <li>Humming and rocking behaviors</li> </ul>
# PhD research (cont.)

#### • MEASURES:

 Independent variable: Type of packaged intervention Least-to-

most

prompting

- VM + prompts
- VSM + prompts
- Dependent variables:
  - Averaged % of correct scripted conversation
    - Independent (without additional instruction)
    - Prompted (with additional instruction)
  - Number and type of prompts per session (during intervention)



# PhD research (cont.)

- Single subject
- Production of video clips
  - Video modelling
  - Video self-modelling
- Baseline + Baseline Probes (Generalization)
- Intervent (Generaliza tion)
- Mainten (Generaliza Jation)

tion)

(Generaliza



# PhD Research findings

	Packaged Video Modelling (VM)				Packaged Video Self-Modelling (VSM)				
Participan t	р	R-IRD	87.89%	CI	р	R-IRD	87.89% CI		
Sam	.02	.69	[.12, .9	6] .	.00	.84	[.28, 1.00]		
Lily	1.00	.11	[34, .5	53]	.22	.35	[24, .62]		
Dan	.02	.69	[.12, .9	6] .	.00	.84	[.28, 1.00]		
Pete	.00	.87	[.39,1.0	. [00	.00	1.00	[.55, 1.00]		
	Small/Questionable Mo			Moderate	Hig	<sup>h</sup> ──→ 1.0/10	► 1.0/100%		
Flinders	0.50/50% 0.70/70%								

- Model effect?
  - Mixed findings :
  - influenced by type 1 participant – VM = VSM (high effect) model
  - 2 participants VSM >VM

(Bellini & Akullian, 2007; Mason et

Learning may **NOT** 

• 1 participant – VM = VSM (small effect<sup>2013b</sup>; Sherer et al., 2001; Shukla-Mehta et al., 2010)

### IMPLICATIONS:

- Creation of video clips
  - Peer as models 30 mins
  - Self as models 90 mins
- Using adults as model may be more time and resource efficient (Mason et al., 2013)

Flinders More research is needed to evaluate adults as models

#### Importance of Systematic Instruction

- ASD + AAC = prompts ++ response
  - Banda et al. (2010) vs. Copple et al., (2015)
  - Error-correction procedure

- Current study participants: ASD + ID + Complex Communication Needs
- Learning the navigational pathway



#### Potential factors influencing variability in the degree of prompting

- Number & Type of intrusive prompts reduced over the course of the intervention
  - Overall variable







■ Independent ■ Repetition ■ Verbal ■ Navigation ■ Gestural ■ Modeling ■ Physical

#### Potential factors influencing variability in the degree of prompting

- Pre-occupation
- Prompt-dependence
- Communication competence



#### Core vocabulary availability and training

- Flat battery, "forgot-to-bring-device", delet
- Participants with Core-Vocab Template vs. Participants with Personalised Template
- Types of Personalised Templates
- Opportunities for engagement in a vast range of activities
- Opportunity to <u>have a voice</u> even in the event of a device malfunction



#### The possibility of using PoVM

- People who use AAC vs. Natural Speech
- Linguistic Competence, Operational Competence (Light & McNaughton, 2014)
- Learning the navigational pathway
- PoVM presented from the vantage point of the learner
  - May facilitate developing Operational and Linguistic Competence, while simultaneously learning the target behaviour



- Language abilities NOT a possible influence treatment effect
  - Consistent with findings from previous study (Sherer et al., 2001)
  - Higher language abilities ≠ better engagement with video model/instruction

Part.	Age	Sex	Language age	Self-recognition	R-IRD (VM)	R-IRD (VSM)	
Sam	11;2	М	6;3	100%	0.69	0.84	
Pete	11;0	М	2;5	100%	0.87	1.00	



## Future research focus

- First study : to use VM/VSM to teach conversation to adolescents with autism, who use AAC
- Importance of additional instruction for individuals using AAC systems – Operational Competence
  - Focus on combining different AAC intervention techniques with video-modelling
  - E.g., Aided language stimulation
- Exploring the use of Point-of-view modelling
- Adults as models for participants with ASD, who use AAC



## **Reference List**

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# **RESEARCH FORUM**

Looking at the experiences of students on the spectrum and their families of the transition to university'- systematic review

## Alison Nuske (Flinders University)





## Transition to Higher Education for students on the Autism Spectrum

Alison Nuske, PhD Candidate Flinders University, 2018

## Background

- Increasing prevalence of ASD (Baio, 2018)
- Increasing number of students on the autism spectrum enrolling in higher education (Mulder & Cashin, 2014)
- Transition to higher education is a complex process
  - Adult learning environment
  - Requires students to self-disclose and advocate for themselves
- First year of university = increased risk for student attrition or failure (Bell et al., 2017)

## **Systematic Literature Review**

- Review question: What are the experiences of individuals with autism and/or their family members regarding transition to higher education\*?
- 11 articles for review
  - United States = 4
  - Sweden = 2
  - United Kingdom = 2
  - Australia = 1
  - Belgium = 1
  - Republic of Ireland = 1

Discussed through lens of bioecological theory model (Bergen, 2008; Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

\*higher education = University, TAFE, College

Bioecological theory model of transition to higher education in Australia.



Adapted from (Pinder-Amaker, 2014)

## Individual

#### Challenges associated with the characteristics of ASD

- Social communication difficulties
- Sensory processing difficulties
- Need for structure and routine
- Difficulties with planning, time management
- Independent living skills

### Strengths

- Strong memory
- Dedication
- Focus
- Eye for detail

## Individual (cont.)

#### **Self awareness and Disclosure**

- Self-awareness can vary (may not identify that they need assistance)
- Delay in disclosing/seeking assistance
  - Doubts about disclosure
  - Wanting to "fit in"
  - Deficits in self-determination skills

#### Mental health and wellbeing

- Increased stress and anxiety
- Stress and anxiety can be improved by timely support and early preparation and planning

## Support

#### **Family support**

- Emotional and psychosocial support
- Often take on active role in disclosure or initiating access to support services

#### **Professional support**

- Support
- Help with planning, providing information
- Need knowledge and understanding of ASD
- Honest, reliable. Provide clear and easy to understanding information

## Collaboration

- Transition should be a collaborative effort
- Pre-planning from school years

#### **Challenges to collaboration**

- Awareness of rights and responsibilities as outlined in relevant legislation
- Privacy legislation
- Adult learning environment

## Where to form here?

- Explore experiences of students themselves in the transition to HE
- Will also seek to gather information from family members
- Will seek information from university staff as well (academic and professional)

## **Next steps**

- Ethics application has been submitted
- Currently in process of developing survey
- Online survey (2019)
- Focus groups (2019 and 2020)

## What this study hopes to achieve

- An opportunity to better understand the experiences of students on the autism spectrum and their family members during the transition to university.
- An opportunity to also examine the experiences, understanding and knowledge of university staff.
- Develop evidence based practices for transition support.
- Inform future recommendations for training and staff development.

# Thank you

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# **RESEARCH FORUM**

## **Networking Opportunity**



Thank you Niki Welznwelz@autismsa.org.au Or www.autismsa.org.au



