**INTRODUCTION**

Since 2004, Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) has conducted the College Student Mental Health Survey (CSMHS) every 2-3 years to better understand mental health experiences of UM students. Previous phases of the survey have focused on rates of occurrence as well as specific aspects of college student mental health (i.e., trauma, internet use, multi-dimensional stigma, etc.). These newsletters are available on the CAPS website (under "research") and are also available in hard copy upon request (see 'contact us' at the end of the newsletter).

For Phase IV, we chose to focus on college student help-seeking behaviors and "positive psychology" (i.e., personal and psychological assets associated with wellbeing). Specifically, we asked UM students about their hope and resiliency. We were interested in understanding students’ experiences of mental health and how this might be impacted by hopeful and resilient ways of thinking and behaving. For example, we wanted to know more about the differences between people who experience depression with either high or low levels of resiliency and hope. Would students with high hope or resiliency report less depression compared to students with low hope or resiliency?

In the sections that follow, we provide (1) a snapshot of the 2012 self-reported mental health concerns of UM students, (2) an analysis of help-seeking behaviors of UM students from 2004 to present, and (3) an examination of the importance of hope and resiliency for college student mental health and help seeking.

**THE RESEARCH PROCESS**

We invited 20,000 randomly selected students to participate via e-mail in our on-line survey. A broad range of students participated from November 2012 to January 2013. Of the 20,000 students selected, approximately 15% (N =3100) returned usable responses.

The respondents closely resembled a representative sample of the University of Michigan population percentage of men and women. Asians and Caucasians were slightly overrepresented and African Americans and Latinos were slightly underrepresented.

Like previous versions of the CSMHS, a significant portion of the survey involved completing the Counseling Center Assessment for Psychological Symptoms (CCAPS; Locke et al., 2011), an instrument originally created at UM CAPS.

The remainder of the survey contained validated assessments measuring a variety of positive and negative psychological issues. These assessments asked students to self-report their perceived hope, resiliency, and stigma for seeking psychological help.
2012 Mental Health Concerns

Like previous versions of the survey, we asked participants about their current mental health concerns using the College Counseling Center Assessment of Psychological Symptoms (CCAPS). The CCAPS consists of 62 items scored on a five point scale (0 = not at all like me, 4 = very much like me) and taps eight mental health concerns for college students: depression, anxiety, social anxiety, eating concerns, family distress, hostility, substance abuse, and academic distress.

Clinical Vs. Non-Clinical

Average CCAPS Scores for Clinical and Non-Clinical Samples

- Students who reported that they had been diagnosed with a mental health issue (i.e., a clinical sample) scored significantly higher across all CCAPS domains.

Career Destination Differences

- Undergraduate students interested in pursuing Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math (STEM) careers reported significantly lower CCAPS scores compared to other career destinations. However, there were no differences in academic distress.
- Undergraduates interested in pursuing a career in the arts or humanities scored significantly higher CCAPS scores than any other career destination.
We examined help seeking across genders from 2004 to present, the intersections of gender and race in help seeking, help seeking stigma, and differences in targets and situations for help seeking.

**Gender, Race, and Help-Seeking**

- 36% of students have had some form of mental health counseling in the 2012 sample, and 21.9% of students reported that they were currently in counseling.
- Over time, both men and women are seeking more help for mental health concerns.
- Women seek help at a higher rate than men from 2004 to present.

**Men and Women’s help-seeking 2004 to 2012**

![Graph showing help-seeking trends for men and women from 2004 to 2012]

**Percent of Help-Seeking by Race and Gender 2012**

![Graph showing help-seeking percentages by race and gender in 2012]

- Asian American men and women reported significantly less current and past psychological help seeking compared to Latina/o students.
- Overall, women reported more help seeking than men, with the largest difference between Latina/o students.
**Help-Seeking Behaviors Continued**

### Help-Seeking Stigma

- We asked students to rate the degree to which they would feel stigmatized by their academic departments if they sought counseling for a mental health issue.

- There were no differences in academic stigma across gender, career destinations, or class level. However, White students reported lower academic stigma overall compared to all other racial categories.

- As the graph to the right illustrates, students with a mental health diagnosis reported significantly less academic stigma compared to students without a diagnosis.

### Help-Seeking Targets

- We asked students to rate how likely they would seek help from various targets (e.g., friends, parents, mental health professional) in two different circumstances: (1) for dealing with personal issues, and (2) for dealing with suicidal thoughts (see graph below).

- Higher scores = greater likelihood of seeking help from that target.

- For personal problems, more students reported they would be willing to talk to a friend or parent.

- For suicidal thoughts, more students reported they would rather talk to a mental health professional compared to any other help-seeking target.

- Mental health professionals and medical doctors were the only help-seeking targets that increased in the suicidal thoughts condition.

### Average Academic Stigma Scores Clinical vs. Non-Clinical Samples

![Graph showing average academic stigma scores for Clinical and Non-Clinical samples.]

### Average Help Seeking Target scores for Personal Problems and Suicidal Thoughts

![Graph showing average help seeking target scores for personal problems and suicidal thoughts.]

- **Personal Problems**
  - Friend
  - Parent
  - Mental Health Professional
  - Medical Doctor

- **Suicidal Thoughts**
  - Friend
  - Parent
  - Mental Health Professional
  - Medical Doctor
  - No Help
We examined two different personal characteristics associated with positive wellbeing, as these are common constructs in the field of positive psychology: hope and resiliency.

- **Hope** (McDermott & Snyder, 1999)
  - One’s sense of agency and planning to accomplish goals for the future.
  - Sample item: *I meet the goals that I set for myself.*

- **Resilience** (Connor & Davidson, 2003)
  - The personal qualities that enable one to thrive in the face of adversity.
  - Sample item: *I am not easily discouraged by failure.*

### Positive Psychology and Mental Health

- A significantly greater percentage of students reported levels of positive psychology over and above the midpoint for each scale (e.g., above 3 for a 1 to 6 scale) compared to students who reported levels of mental health concerns over and above the midpoint for each CCAPS domain.

The table below demonstrates that increases in students’ self-reported hope and resiliency were associated with significant decreases in reported mental health concerns measured by the CCAPS. Thus, as scores increased on these positive measures, scores on the CCAPS tended to decrease.

### Correlations Between Hope, Resiliency and CCAPS Domains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hope</th>
<th>Resiliency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>-.589</td>
<td>-.580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>-.374</td>
<td>-.349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Anxiety</td>
<td>-.507</td>
<td>-.505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating Concerns</td>
<td>-.240</td>
<td>-.213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Distress</td>
<td>-.323</td>
<td>-.289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostility</td>
<td>-.300</td>
<td>-.312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Use</td>
<td>-.026</td>
<td>-.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Distress</td>
<td>-.591</td>
<td>-.495</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All ps < .001; Noteworthy correlations are flagged in bold
Positive Psychology and Mental Health continued

• Hope and resiliency buffered the relationships between perceived stress and depression, suggesting that these variables may serve as protective factors for reducing the likelihood of transforming stress into depression symptoms. In other words, students with high hope and resiliency may be less likely to transform their day-to-day stress into depression.

Single Item Responses for Students with High Hope vs. Low Hope

• The single-responses from the CCAPS below further illustrate the importance of hope in warding off mental health problems.

• Students with high hope reported significantly fewer problems overall compared to students with low hope.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>High Hope</th>
<th>Low Hope</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have thoughts of ending my life</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel isolated and alone</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's hard to stay motivated for my classes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am unable to keep up with my school work</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am afraid I may lose control and act violently</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I drink more than I should</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel self-conscious around others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am dissatisfied with my weight</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Positive Psychology Continued

Single Item Responses for Students with High Resilience vs. Low Resilience

- Students with high resiliency reported significantly fewer problems overall compared to students with low resiliency.
- Items were scored on a 0 to 4 scale, and means for each item are displayed below.

[Charts showing comparisons between high and low resilience for various items]

Other Interesting Positive Psychology Findings

- There were no significant racial differences on hope.
- African American participants scored significantly higher in resiliency than Asian American participants. Otherwise, there were no significant racial differences in resiliency.
- Men and women did not score differently on hope or resiliency.
We hope these research findings help clinicians and other student support professionals better understand our University of Michigan students. The findings presented in this newsletter were statistically significant and meaningful so they have important clinical and practical implications.

2012 Mental Health Concerns and Help Seeking

Our findings suggest that students, regardless of age, gender, or race, are more likely to experience problems with social anxiety and academic distress compared to other mental health concerns. When students talk about being alone in their difficulties making friends or struggling with schoolwork, UM staff, friends and family can let them know that these are widespread challenges.

The present survey found that help seeking behaviors are on the rise since 2004. Men across all races and ethnicities are seeking help in greater numbers, but they are still far outnumbered by women seeking help. One barrier to help-seeking may be the degree to which it has been stigmatized; however, students who have struggled with mental health issues reported significantly less stigma of help-seeking from their academic departments compared to students without mental health concerns. It will be good for students to know that their expectations of stigma are not likely to be realized if they choose to disclose their help-seeking.

Our findings also shed light on our students’ choices in their help seeking behaviors. Specifically, students reported they would prefer to seek help from a friend or family member compared to a mental health professional for “personal problems.” However, students reported they would be most likely to seek help from a mental health professional for dealing with “suicidal thoughts.” These data support two recent CAPS led initiatives: “do something – help yourself; help a friend” and “do something: stop student suicide – we can all change the story.”

The Importance of Positive Psychology

Lastly, Phase IV of the CSMHS yielded striking results about the importance of positive mental health in the form of hope and psychological resilience. These findings highlight the overarching strengths of the University of Michigan student population. While many, but not all, students endorsed various mental health concerns, nearly all students reported high levels of hope and resiliency. Moreover, hope and resiliency also appeared to be protective factors against a variety of mental health concerns. As illustrated in the single item responses, students with high hope or high resiliency reported far fewer problems with suicidal ideation, academic distress, social anxiety, hostility, and substance use compared to students with low hope and low resiliency. Such findings highlight the importance of strengthening college students’ strengths and helping them foster their innate and learned abilities to overcome adversity and remain hopeful for the future.

References

Additional Information:
http://caps.umich.edu/research

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