Are university widening participation activities just-in-time or just-out-of-time? Exploring the (mis)alignment between the timing of widening participation activities and university decision-making among students from low socioeconomic backgrounds

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Abstract

When is the best time to engage high school students in widening participation (WP) activities? With qualitative data from 46 university students at six Australian universities who are from low socioeconomic status (LSES) backgrounds, this study explored WP's timeliness. It was found that a) the timing of the decision to go to university can occur at any point in compulsory schooling; b) LSES students experienced the bulk of WP in senior high school, being the years after they have selected the university stream; c) students in the university stream were exposed to WP activities while those in the non-university stream were excluded; and d) participants recommended that WP should begin earlier and be concentrated in the lead up to the forced streaming decision that occurs in Year 10. Overall, earlier WP exposure that is synchronised with high school streaming processes would optimise WP activities aimed at increasing LSES university participation.

Introduction

The benefits of higher education are far-reaching. A university experience, however brief, delivers social benefits (Norton & Cherastidtham, 2018) with the attainment of a qualification elevating the quality-of-life of individuals, their families and communities (Baum, Harris, Kelly & Mitchell, 2017). Efforts to increase university participation among underrepresented groups have been supported by successive Australian governments, particularly since the Bradley Review of Higher Education (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent & Scales, 2008). The core equity groups identified by the Australian Government include people from LSES backgrounds, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, people with disability, people from non-English speaking backgrounds and people from regional and remote areas (Brett, 2018; Department of Education, Employment & Training [DEET], 1990). People who are first in their family to go to university, mature aged, refugees and LGBTIQ[1] are also recognised as groups that may benefit from WP activities (Bennett et al., 2015; Brett, 2018).

Australia's WP agenda aims to uplift aspirations and increase participation of people from core equity groups in post-compulsory education. Across the sector, WP efforts have grown and while WP occurs across the entire student lifecycle, most activity is concentrated, and rightly so, in the pre-access stage (ACIL Allen Consulting, 2017; Bennett et al., 2015). The key messages of WP activities tend to be two-fold—myth-busting and highlighting the benefits of a university experience (Cupitt, Costello & Mitchell, 2015). Not only has WP grown in terms of frequency of activities and reach into communities not previously serviced, but the breadth and depth of WP activities has brought hope and opportunity to those who have not traditionally gone to university (Bennett et al., 2015; Frawley et al., 2017; Halsey, 2018). While WP efforts to date have increased participation by people belonging to these core equity groups, parity—the central measure for success of the foundational DEET (1990) *A Fair Chance for All* equity framework—is yet to be achieved (National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education, 2017).

WP has matured in the last decade and the plethora of activity suggests that another factor is at play, that with some fine-tuning, can bring about parity. Perhaps it is less to do with the frequency, reach, breadth and depth of WP outreach design, but rather the timing of WP exposure to high school students and whether it is in sync with high school students decision making processes and the streaming of students into either a university stream or non-university stream for senior high school. The recent work of Gore et al. (2017b) found that the decision to go to university among people from LSES backgrounds occurs at a younger age today that has either been assumed or was the case in the past. This suggests that the timing rather than the design of WP may need to harmonise with the decision-making process of today's high school students. Are WP practitioners delivering messages after the decision has been made? Are current WP practices just-in-time or just-out-of-time with university decision-making among high school students? Hence, the aim of this study was: *To explore if there is a (mis)alignment between the timing of WP activities and university decision-making among students from LSES backgrounds.*

Background

WP seeks to achieve social justice by addressing educational inequalities (Gale & Parker, 2013). The central remit of WP outreach is to elevate aspirations to go to university among people from disadvantaged backgrounds (Jury et al., 2017). To achieve this outcome, much of the WP focus centres on mitigating key barriers to aspiration to go to university, including the negative influence of poverty, geographic

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[1] Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer or Questioning

isolation and a lack of educational infrastructure, which coalesce to result in lower educational attainment, curbed career choices and diminished interest in university (Cupitt, Costello, Raciti & Eagle, 2016; Whitty, Hayton & Tang, 2015). Essentially, those from privileged backgrounds who have more capital, be it financial (i.e. income, assets) or social (i.e. networks, shared norms and understandings), have a greater capacity to aspire to more prestigious occupations and to go to university than those with relatively less capital (Bourdieu, 1977; Cupitt et al., 2016). Other types of capital (e.g. human, social, resistance) exist and play a key role in influencing university participation. Cultural capital is an embodied state comprising of an array of knowledges, skills and abilities that influence the potential for social mobility, nurturing and interacting with other forms of capital such as aspirational, familial and navigational capital (Yosso, 2005). Cultural capital underpins this study, with a particular interest on the repercussions that financial and social capital have on university participation (see Harvey, Burnheim & Brett, 2017; Norton & Cherastidtham 2018; Tomaszewski, Perales & Xiang, 2017).

A lack of financial capital is undeniably a significant inhibitor of participation in university by people from LSES backgrounds (Harvey et al., 2017). University study for LSES students often involves substantial living and study expenses and an increased likelihood of undertaking more hours of paid employment over the course of their degree (Norton & Cherastidtham, 2018). Non-participation in university constrains career possibilities, employability and social mobility (being the ability to move between social strata) and, hence, obstructs improvements in peoples' quality-of-life that would result by moving from LSES to middle or high socioeconomic status (Cupitt et al., 2016; Heckman & Mosso, 2014). In addition to low financial capital, many students from LSES backgrounds experience low social capital which also negatively influences the

decision to go to university but in a more deep-seated, pervasive way. Financial and social capital are entwined. Low social capital appears to restrict career and university aspirations at the outset of the decision to go to university, while financial capital seemingly forestalls the decision to go to university at a later stage, often after early aspirations have crystallised and the individual is exploring opportunities (Savickas, Porfeli, Hilton & Savickas, 2018).

In recent times, social capital has attracted the interest of education policymakers (ACIL Allen Consulting, 2017). Social capital is broadly defined as the ability for a person to interact with and draw information from their personal and social network and is an essential component in developing navigational capacity and upwards social mobility (Woolcock, 1998; Yosso, 2005). Related to this study, people from LSES backgrounds possess fewer non-school sources of information from which to draw information about career and post-school education options, relying heavily on schools to inform them about career options, the benefits of a university qualification as well as to pique their interest, sooth their concerns, challenge their beliefs about themselves and university and inspire them to go to university (Tomaszewski et al., 2017).

Aspiration is an ill-defined notion that intersects with socioeconomic status and the decision to go to university. While there is a correlation between LSES status and aspiring to go to university, this link is not universal or absolute and care should be taken to not presuppose this correlation for all people from LSES backgrounds (Cupitt et al., 2016; Gore et al., 2017c). Indeed, how LSES is defined and measured has been debated for some time and remains unresolved (Zacharias, 2017). What is known is that socioeconomic status is linked to career aspirations and prior academic achievement. High school academic achievement is influenced by socioeconomic status but still tends to be used as a predictor of interest in going to university to acquire a

qualification that is required for careers that typically lead to higher incomes (Gale et al., 2010; Gore et al., 2017b). Simply, most people identify a preferred career in the first instance and then ascertain if a university qualification is required or advantageous to entering their preferred career. While there are many benefits of a university qualification, for most people its primary purpose is distinctly utilitarian and pragmatic—to access a preferred career (Reiss & Havercamp, 1998) and to be part of a professional group of individuals who possess special knowledge and skills and who can apply these in the interest of others (James, 2017).

In terms of identification of a preferred career, until recently it has been presumed that career interests were predominantly shaped during senior high school (Year 11 and 12). However, Cupitt et al. (2016) and Gore et al. (2017b), for example, found that career aspirations among people from LSES backgrounds develop much earlier, perhaps even as early as Year 5 (late primary school). Gore et al.'s (2017b) seminal work found that different careers were most appealing at different stages throughout a student's education. For example, interests in science were highest during middle high school, whereas interests in education and engineering became more prevalent towards the end of senior high school. However, Fleming and Grace (2014) found that student aspirations were highest during Year 7 (junior high school) but steadily dropped because of the influence of LSES and associated social capital. Furthermore, career interests also differed by gender. Gore et al. (2017b) found that both males and females develop interests in careers typical of their gender stereotypes. Boys were found to prefer science, mathematics and computing, while girls favoured humanities, social sciences and home sciences (Fleming & Grace, 2014).

Regarding prior academic achievement, high school grades are indicative of career-driven aspirations to go to university. However, people from LSES backgrounds often (but not always) achieve lesser educational outcomes (Gale &

Parker, 2013). Lower grades in high school are at odds with the perceptions of students from LSES backgrounds that they needed to be 'smart' to succeed in certain, higher-status careers that required a university qualification (Gore et al., 2017b). Where students from LSES backgrounds perceive themselves to be below average in terms of academic ability, they are more likely to study at a Vocational Education and Training (VET) institution despite knowing that a university qualification was the better option in terms of entry to their preferred career (Cupitt et al., 2016; Gore et al., 2017a). Of those students from LSES backgrounds with lower grades who made the choice to go on to university, many experienced restrictions in terms of fewer degrees being available to them (Gale & Tranter, 2011), which may not align with their preferred career in the first instance but could be a stepping stone towards their preferred degree and career. This suggests that exposure to WP in the early phases of career ideation would circumvent the seemingly vicious cycle—early, uninhibited aspiration that is circumscribed by LSES influences and limited social capital which in turn leads to lower academic achievement that ultimately limits post-school choice and ability to enter a preferred career. Early WP could connect with students from LSES backgrounds at the point of early aspiration, encouraging and nurturing academic achievement (Gore et al., 2017b) and advising of alternative pathways to university and their preferred career.

Method

Using a case study methodology, qualitative data were collected from 46 students enrolled at six universities in the state of Queensland, Australia who were part of a formal WP consortium. Care was taken to select participants who had previously attended a high school involved in a statewide WP initiative targeted at LSES communities. A total of 408 high schools in Queensland in low SES areas were identified and each school was

clustered according to the partner university in the WP initiative that had been assigned to deliver WP outreach to them. Participants must have completed Year 12 at one of these schools in the period between 2014 and 2016 during which time they should have had a minimum of two opportunities to participate in a school-based WP activity. Data were collected via focus groups and interviews with 22 (47.8%) participating in face-to-face focus groups and 24 (52.2%) participating in interviews, which were predominantly via phone. Female participants (n = 30, 65.2%) outnumbered male participants (n = 16, 34.8%), which was not unexpected as more females participate in Australian higher education than males (Australian Government Department of Education & Training, 2018). Furthermore, efforts were made to ensure geographic representation with participants from urban, regional and remote locales. Specifically, participants originated from across the state having attended a high school classified by the Australian Statistical Geography Standard as Inner Regional (n = 20, 43.5%), Major Cities (n = 21; 45.6%), Outer Regional (n = 3, 6.5%), Remote (n = 1, 2.2%) and Very Remote (n = 1, 2.2%) respectively.

The process of recruiting participants required the generous assistance of staff at each of the six universities. University staff who were involved in the statewide WP initiative where provided with the detailed criteria for participants. These staff then identified eligible students from their internal university records, selecting those students from any of the identified schools irrespective of where they were in their university's cluster for the WP project. There were no constraints on the enrolment status, campus location, year of study or degree enrolled in by the participants. Once eligible students were identified, an email script and research project information sheet was provided for university staff to send to potential participants. University staff also arranged rooms for face-to-face focus groups and interviews at their campuses and assisted in scheduling these with the participants.

Focus group and interview data were digitally audio recorded. A commercial transcription company produced verbatim transcripts that were collated with hand-written field notes and reflective memos. First, a single coder who collected the most data engaged in manual, thematic analysis commencing with an inductive approach to identify and code themes as well as the interplay between themes and the presence of related, mitigating factors such as the influence of regionality. The prominence of the themes was supplemented with counts of the number of mentions or related responses from participants. A second coder undertook a similar practice independently. Both coders engaged in a series of meetings, coming to a consensus about the themes before further feedback was sought. Next, an interactive workshop with WP academic and practitioner colleagues (n=9) helped refine and consolidate the themes, with final clarifications made in terms of data interpretation, pattern identification and the veracity of the findings.

Findings and discussion

Four interconnected themes emerged from the analysis of the data: the timing of the decision to go to university can occur at any point in compulsory schooling, LSES students experienced most WP in senior high school, being the years after they selected the university stream, students in the university stream were exposed to WP activities while their non-university stream counterparts were not and participants recommended that WP should begin earlier and be concentrated in Year 10[2] so as to synchronise with the senior

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[2] In Australia, children undergo thirteen years of formal education (plus non-compulsory preschool or kindergarten), usually starting at age 4, 5 or 6, and finishing at age 16, 17 or 18. Year 10 is the tenth full year of compulsory education and usually the fourth year of Secondary school.

high school streaming processes. Each of these themes are discussed next.

Theme 1: The decision to go (or not to go) to university can occur at any point in compulsory schooling

Participants were asked when they had made the decision to go to university and this question drew mixed responses. While around one-third of the respondents reported that they made their *final* decision to go to university in senior high school (Year 11 and 12) after choosing to take the university stream in Year 10 to keep their options open. Others had firmly made the decision in middle high school (Year 9 and 10) or primary school. As a female participant from a regional setting expressed:

> I don't know when I did decide to come to university. I just kind of always knew that I wanted to. I think if I had to try and pinpoint, somewhere around fourth grade. Third or fourth [grade]. (LSES Female, Regional)

For these primary school deciders, the decision was made prior to any WP exposure. This also indicates that others similarly made the decision *not* to go to university earlier in compulsory schooling and pre-WP exposure. Furthermore, around one-fifth of participants could not pinpoint the exact moment when they made the decision to go to university. This group conveyed that going to university was inevitable and the natural next step for them. For example, as one participant stated: "I was always sure I'd come [to university] but just what I'd do didn't come to me until recently really" (LSES Male, Outer Regional).

Overall, the decision to go to university can occur at any point in compulsory schooling, but there appears to be a misalignment between WP activities and the university decision process for around half of the LSES high school student

cohort for which WP exposure comes too late but does serve to affirm their decision rather than shift their decision.

Theme 2: LSES students experienced the bulk of WP in senior high school, being the years after they had made the decision to be in the university stream

When asked about their WP experience, around two-thirds of participants indicated that most exposure occurred in senior high school by which point in time they had already chosen the university stream. Streaming occurs in the mid-to-late part of Year 10 and is in many respects a forced decision point. This streaming decision process is known in Queensland as Senior Education and Training (SET) planning. SET Plans are used to help structure learning in Year 11 and 12 (i.e. senior high school) and require students to articulate their career goals and thus the need or want for a university qualification. In effect, SET planning separates students into two streams being the university stream[3] for those interested in going to university in pursuit of their career goals; or the non-university stream for those who plan to complete apprenticeships or other post-school careers that do not require a university qualification.

For many participants their first exposure to WP was prior to SET planning, by which time around one-third of the LSES participants had firmly made the decision to go to university. Around one-third of participants wanted to keep their options open but were predisposed to going to university and the remaining third were undecided but were aware they needed to make a streaming choice. As the decision to go to university is typically protracted, participants' stories indicated that for most the decision process had been underway for some time. The data were examined to ascertain if

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[3] In Queensland this is known as the OP (Overall Position) pathway. In other Australian states and territories this is similar to the ATAR (Australian Tertiary Admission Rank) pathway. ATAR is a final grade acquired from the final year of school and usually based on an exam score. Both OP and ATAR are used to determine tertiary admission.
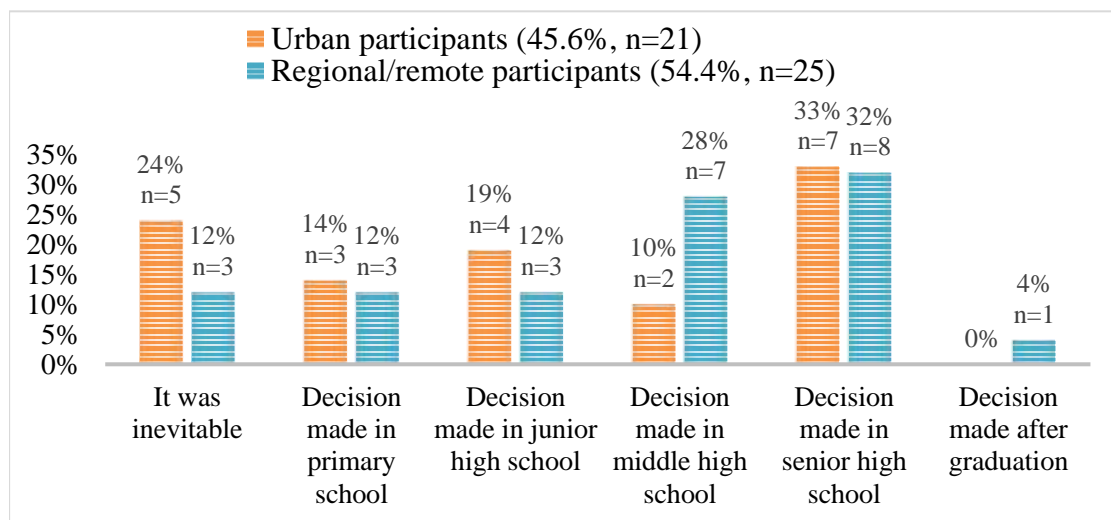
Figure 1. Comparing when LSES urban and LSES regional students decide to go to university

there was a difference between university decision timing for urban students compared to students from regional/remote locations. Furthermore, the data were examined to assess if there was a (mis)alignment with WP activities which are concentrated in senior high school. Figure 1 presents a tally of participants responses.

Figure 1 shows that urban LSES students were much more likely to perceive going to university as inevitable or were more likely to decide to go to university in primary or junior high school than regional/remote LSES students. As the decision was made in primary or junior high school, this might explain why fewer urban students decided in middle high school relative to regional/remote students. Overall, the data confirmed Theme 1 for both urban and regional/remote LSES students in that the decision to go to university can occur at any point in compulsory schooling. Importantly, in terms of Theme 2, Figure 1 shows that present WP activities targeted at LSES senior high school students who are already in the university stream (thus, have decided or are

predisposed to going to university) bolsters or affirms their choice which is likely to aid in converting their intention to go into actual enrolment. Also, efforts to extend more WP activities to middle high school (Year 9 and 10) and late primary school (Year 6) would be beneficial for all LSES students.

Theme 3: Students in the university stream were exposed to WP activities while their non-university stream counterparts were excluded

Many students first WP exposure occurred in the lead up to SET planning in Year 10 (middle high school). It was after they had chosen the university stream that the bulk of their WP exposure occurred. Participants recounted that in senior high school those in the university stream were quarantined from those in the non-university stream. WP and any university-related information were targeted at those in the university stream and participants' stories suggested that those in the non-university stream did not receive this information and were not given any further opportunity to

switch streams from non-university to university[4]. Participants felt that this stream separation and perceived lack of opportunity to switch streams contributed to a significant opportunity loss for non-university stream students who, because of non-exposure, simply "…didn't know any better" (LSES Female, Outer Regional). However, with the passing of time, the implications stream choice became clear:

> I was talking to a friend the other day and she just dreaded what she was doing [for a job]. I felt that was so unfair for her because she might [have had] a chance of going to uni. But the student guidance officer just said "no… because you're going to pull everyone down." (LSES Female, Urban)

Theme 4: Participants recommended that WP should begin earlier and be concentrated prior to the forced streaming decision in Year 10

The previous themes revealed a misalignment in the timing of students' university decision-making process (from first inkling to firm choice), SET planning in Year 10 and the bulk of exposure to WP in senior high school. For some, such as those who had made a firm decision to go to university early, experiencing the bulk of WP while enrolled in the university stream in senior high school conveyed a sense of 'preaching to the converted' in that they felt they did not need to be persuaded to go to university, but rather were looking for affirmation and details about logistics (e.g. accommodation), support (e.g. scholarships), degree choices, university life (e.g. class attendance, grading system) and so forth. Asked when WP exposure should begin, participants recommended that WP should start earlier than it is at present, with first exposure in late primary school or junior high school (Year 7 and 8). Participants also noted that WP should be

offered in a more substantial way in early middle high school (Year 9) with the bulk of WP best delivered in the early-to-mid part of Year 10, dovetailing in with the lead up to SET planning for senior high school subject selection. Some indicative quotes include:

> I reckon Year 6 or 7 [for first WP exposure] because by that stage you kind of have - if you've set yourself up academically by that stage, you're going to continue on through high school. That's my opinion, and if you know that putting in the effort in high school will have an outcome, if you already get that mindset into them in Year 6 or 7 they're set up for university. So, they have that goal in high school to get to university, and if they've spent say two or three years underachieving in high school then they'll be less motivated, I guess, to go to university. So, if you've already made them think about it in Year 6, Year 7, for example, I reckon that's a better incentive. They've got a goal through high school. (LSES Male, Inner Regional)

> Year 9 would be good [for first WP exposure] because they still need that time to talk to their parents and friends as well to decide. If straight-up Year 10, they only have a few weeks until the SET plan. (LSES Female, Urban)

> I think probably Year 10 is a good time [for the bulk of WP exposure]. Gets you thinking about the activities, like when you're choosing a subject and your future career. Obviously in Years 8 and 9 it's good to have maybe just some general [WP] activity, but not so much - yeah, not too intense with the information. (LSES Male, Urban)

Figure 2 summarises additional insight gained by mapping participants' journey based on the data collected.

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[4] The Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (2016) allows students to change streams in Year 11 and 12, but this is usually from the university stream to the non-university stream. Students in the non-university stream may be able to apply for university using a tertiary selection rank, however only around 10% of non-university stream students do apply.
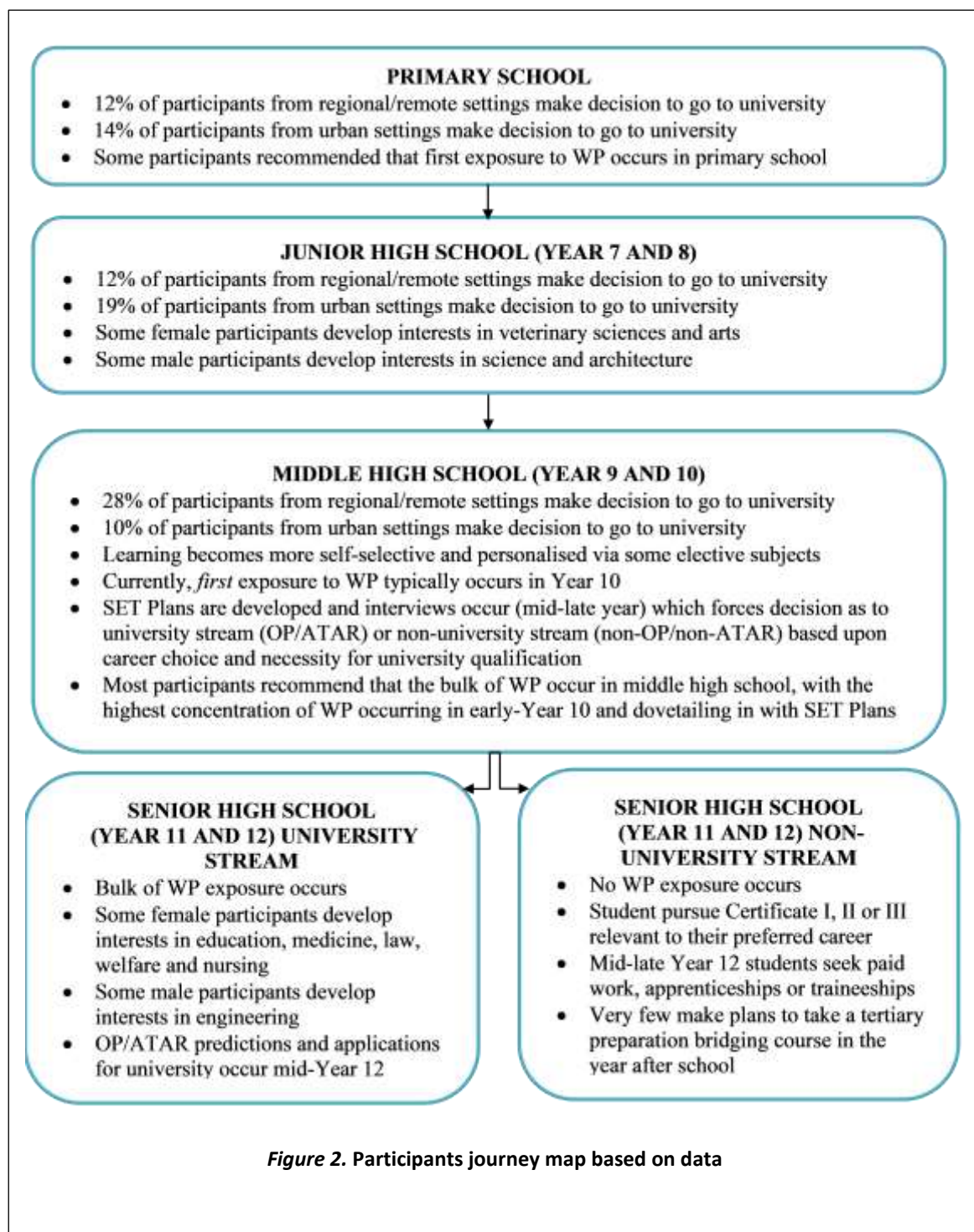
PRIMARY SCHOOL
- 12% of participants from regional/remote settings make decision to go to university
- 14% of participants from urban settings make decision to go to university
- Some participants recommended that first exposure to WP occurs in primary school

JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL (YEAR 7 AND 8)
- 12% of participants from regional/remote settings make decision to go to university
- 19% of participants from urban settings make decision to go to university
- Some female participants develop interests in veterinary sciences and arts
- Some male participants develop interests in science and architecture

MIDDLE HIGH SCHOOL (YEAR 9 AND 10)
- 28% of participants from regional/remote settings make decision to go to university
- 10% of participants from urban settings make decision to go to university
- Learning becomes more self-selective and personalised via some elective subjects
- Currently, *first* exposure to WP typically occurs in Year 10
- SET Plans are developed and interviews occur (mid-late year) which forces decision as to university stream (OP/ATAR) or non-university stream (non-OP/non-ATAR) based upon career choice and necessity for university qualification
- Most participants recommend that the bulk of WP occur in middle high school, with the highest concentration of WP occurring in early-Year 10 and dovetailing in with SET Plans

SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL (YEAR 11 AND 12) UNIVERSITY STREAM
- Bulk of WP exposure occurs
- Some female participants develop interests in education, medicine, law, welfare and nursing
- Some male participants develop interests in engineering
- OP/ATAR predictions and applications for university occur mid-Year 12

SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL (YEAR 11 AND 12) NON-UNIVERSITY STREAM
- No WP exposure occurs
- Student pursue Certificate I, II or III relevant to their preferred career
- Mid-late Year 12 students seek paid work, apprenticeships or traineeships
- Very few make plans to take a tertiary preparation bridging course in the year after school

Figure 2. **Participants journey map based on data**

Conclusions, implications and recommendations

First, career and university aspirations can develop at any time during compulsory schooling and appear to develop earlier than previously thought. Around one-third of LSES participants are crystallising and exploring career and university options prior to the current schedule of WP exposure for which *first* exposure tends to occur in Year 10. Indeed, for LSES female students in urban settings university aspirations are developing in primary school. Aspirations of LSES individuals to go to university prior to any WP exposure supports Cupitt et al.'s (2016) conclusion that neither low financial or social capital signals a lack of aspiration. While Gore et al.'s (2017c) study focused on the aspirations of Indigenous students, this study reaches a similar conclusion for LSES students. Collectively, this study and others like it (e.g. Gore et al., 2017b) provide insight that early career and university desires may be uninhibited aspirations or dreamings of what may be possible for some students. Over time these uninhibited aspirations are constrained, or even suppressed, by low financial and social capital barriers. As a result, LSES students become hemmed into a limited range of career options that will most likely exclude going to university.

Second, the evidence of this study corroborates the findings of recent studies (e.g. Gore et al., 2017b) that the timeliness of existing WP practices requires attention. The misalignment of WP exposure is twofold—first exposure typically occurs just prior to the Year 10 forced streaming decision and then the bulk of WP is delivered during senior high school to those who have already selected the university stream. Hence, the streaming decision, being the critical turning point in the journey to university, is typically made with negligible WP exposure. Also, of concern is the absence of WP exposure for those LSES students in the non-university stream in senior high school, even though provisions are made for students to switch streams or apply for a tertiary selection rank. It is likely that the decision as to when WP exposure occurs and who is exposed is determined to some extent by schools. Schools interact with universities in two main ways— via university-led WP and university marketing divisions. Perhaps schools are unaware that the remit of university-led WP is to elevate the aspirations of students from LSES backgrounds to go to *any* university, which is in contrast to university marketing efforts that typically centre on recruiting students from all socioeconomic status backgrounds who are in the university stream to their specific institution. As WP is a collaboration between universities and schools, it may also be the case that WP practitioners are engaging predominantly with senior high school students as this has been the status quo. While engaging senior high school students may have been effective in the past, as WP was just-in-time, for a growing proportion of the current generation of LSES school students, particularly those from urban areas, WP is increasingly just-out-of-time.

The implication of this study's findings is that WPs greatest influence is likely to occur when early career inklings are taking place. Currently, first exposure occurs too late and the bulk of WP is delivered in senior high school at the point of affirmation (Year 11) and/or confirmation (Year 12) of the decision to go to university. For optimal outcomes it is recommended that WP occur at two, earlier critical points: crystallisation of career and university aspirations (Years 6 to 9, first WP exposure); and, b) forced streaming (Year 10, the bulk of WP delivered prior to SET planning). It is recommended that a programmatic approach to WP be adopted with messaging aligned with LSES students' decision-making process. For example, uncomplicated WP messaging along the lines that university is an option for all could have profound consequences for LSES students in primary school or junior high school. Year 10 WP messaging that centres on exploring options

for careers and degrees, visiting campuses and interactive workshops would be advantageous. Senior high school WP messaging for those students in the university stream that focuses on university life, navigating a university environment (e.g. enrolment, classes, textbooks, assessment), financial concerns (e.g. scholarships), logistical issues (e.g. accommodation, transport) and social worries (e.g. not fitting in) would be beneficial. Finally, and importantly, WP practitioners are strongly encouraged to seek greater access to senior high school LSES students in the non-university stream.

This study collected qualitative, cross-sectional data from Queensland. Future research that replicates this study in other Australian states and territories is encouraged. Drawing from this study's findings, a larger quantitative study that uses experimental design and/or is longitudinal in nature conducted among LSES Australian university students or LSES high school students would be fruitful areas of future research.

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