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Editorial

Welcome to a bumper edition of JANZSSA!

It is particularly exciting to see in this edition, not only an increase in the number of refereed papers, but also three papers authored or co-authored by fellow Student Services' professionals from North America. The inclusion of these papers reflects the strong relationship that ANZSSA has developed over the past decade with NASPA, the USA Association for Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education.

Every two years, under a formal exchange arrangement, ANZSSA and NASPA co-host delegates at each other's major conferences. Both Marjorie Savage and Stuart Brown submitted their articles after attending and presenting at ANZSSA's 2009 conference in Brisbane. Brett Perozzi, along with Australian co-author Andrew O'Brien, was inspired to submit to JANZSSA through meeting Jim Elliott, our well-known previous editor, while Jim was leading the ANZSSA delegation at NASPA's 2010 conference in Chicago. All three papers provide an interesting perspective not only on Student Services in the United States' higher education sector, but also in terms of comparing and contrasting with the sector in Australia and New Zealand. We hope that this international cross-fertilisation of ideas will continue to be a feature of JANZSSA.

This edition also contains a number of well-researched, timely and thought-provoking 'home grown' papers, including Xanthe White's on student poverty, Elizabeth Tindle's on student internet use, O'Brien & Mooney's on measuring outcomes, and Genna Ward's on the increasing use of Mindfulness therapies in counselling settings. We hope that you enjoy the diversity of ideas and topics contained within the following pages.

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Co-editors JANZSSA

The Global Practice of Student Affairs: A United States and Australian case study

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Abstract

This paper compares and contrasts the practice of student affairs within two public higher education institutions in two countries: the United States of America and Australia. Through an in depth comparison, a range of differences emerged among the functional components of the organisations. The distinct features that emerged can inform the theory and practice of student affairs as it relates to student services and learning. A major finding was that the underlying philosophy or theory of each organisation had a significant impact on the approach to student development, academic collaboration, and strategies adopted at the local, institutional level.

Student affairs functions serve a key role in most academic systems, and it is recognised that no one student affairs system has all the answers (Haddad & Altbach, 2009). Globally there are increasing indications that the practice of providing services to students is evolving into the profession of student affairs (Fried & Lewis, 2009). In considering the development of student affairs as a profession in the international arena combined with enhanced technology for communication, there are abundant opportunities for the international higher education community to look to one another for both questions and answers. It is possible to work across borders and oceans to develop knowledgeable, contributing citizens and healthy, high-functioning organisations for our ever-globalizing society. A 2005 study tour of Australian universities by 41 graduate students and student affairs professionals organised by the American College Personnel Association (ACPA), Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA), and the Association of

College Unions International (ACUI) (Anastasi, 2006) brought the authors together, one as a tour faculty member and the other as a host. A key discovery during this tour was the difference in focus on student development amongst Australian student services and US student affairs staff. As a follow-up to this tour, the authors sought to develop a deeper understanding of the similarities and differences between American and Australian higher education, and student affairs.

An examination of the functions, organisation, and emergent themes between two international partner organisations in the United States and Australia provides a framework for comparison and potential cooperation. The purpose of this comparison is to explore underlying philosophies and practices that drive policy development, organisational procedures, and the unique ethos of the two organisations.

Overview

Both the Australian and US higher education entities selected for this study are unique in their own right, yet are essentially representative of their institution types within each country. Similarly, the organisations that represent the units of analysis are unique, yet present striking features that set them apart from one another. Three levels of analysis are embraced in the study; the institution, the student affairs "division," and the department. The department is the entity used as the primary unit of analysis.

The centrality within student affairs/services and within the university is pivotal to this study, which also recognizes college union activities as unique and integral student affairs entities (Perozzi & O'Brien, 2009). While "student services" is the operating label in Australia, "student affairs" will be used throughout this paper.

The theoretical underpinning of each organisation and how that ideology is derived and reinforced is a centrepiece of the analysis between these two international entities. Several internal and external factors influence the leaders' behaviours and the culture of each organisation (Perozzi, 1998). The philosophies driving the structural organisation of student affairs functions are significant in the analysis. A key element is the continued learning that can take place by making side by side comparisons across international lines. It is possible to improve the quality of education globally by posing common questions and looking to one another for answers and collaborative solutions.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative methodology (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) in a multiple case study format (Yin, 2004). Two university departments

are the primary units of analysis. Data were gathered about the student affairs divisions and the universities overall in addition to the department-specific data.

Triangulation (Jick, 1979) was achieved by using three different qualitative methods. The first method was document analysis, the second was unstructured interviews, and the third was direct observation (Trochim, 2006). Document analysis took place in the early stages of the study and interviews and observation took place throughout.

Documents of the organisations were readily available in electronic, print, and web-based formats. Both researchers reviewed documents of each organisation, yet each researcher was primarily responsible for procuring and reviewing documents from their respective institutions.

Informal interviews were conducted at both sites, by both researchers. These were one on one interviews as well as group interviews, or focus/discussion groups. Both researchers visited the other countries twice, with time spent on each campus observing, as well as interacting with staff of the organisations, institutions, and other country-specific colleagues.

The researchers worked at the case institutions throughout most of the duration of the study. This was a benefit of the study in terms of access to documents and personnel, yet is also a limitation in terms of potential biases. The researchers were able to observe specific behaviours and philosophical perspectives of leaders, multiple constituents, and key stakeholders. Both authors were participant and nonparticipant observers at different points throughout the study.

In concert with qualitative methodology, themes were allowed to emerge from the data. These themes were tested throughout the study during interviews and through observation. At an early stage of the research the emerging themes were reflected against the pre-developed set of criteria for analysis and categorised into a ranking from high to low impact. This was an effort to narrow the field to relevant criteria that would be used to ameliorate the themes during the analysis. This process is further described in the analysis section.

Results

The results are presented in a side by side format rather than one individual case at a time. This allows for more comparison within categories and among themes rather than full description of the two cases.

The results are presented in a logical sequence from broad to specific.

The sections provide data in order to ameliorate salient points and demonstrate similarities and differences, as well as emergent concepts from the comparisons among the selected programs and services.

Table 1 - Introduction to the Institutions

	United States	Australian University
	University	
Established	1885	1958
Public \ Private	Public	Public
	State funding	State Act
	Federal funding	Federal funding
Setting	Urban and suburban	Suburban and regional
Student Numbers	63,000	55,000
Budget	\$1.1 B (USD)	\$1 B (USD)
Number of locations	4 in one metro area	6 in Australia
		2 in other countries
Major Faculties	22 Schools and Colleges	Law
	250 Majors	Medicine
	Business	Business & Economics
	Liberal Arts & Sciences	Science
	Fine Arts	Arts
	Engineering	Engineering
	Education	Education

Source: Web sites and documents from the specific universities Names omitted to protect confidentiality

The Institutions

Table 1 provides basic information on the first level of analysis about the institutions that host the primary units of analysis (the departments) for the study.

Student Affairs Divisions

Functional areas of student affairs have been outlined by Dungy (2003). The second level of analysis at the two institutions ("division") is presented in Table 2. The table also illustrates to which vice presidential area each functional area reported. Since childcare and parent programs are not included in Dungy's work, they have been added as additional functional areas.

 Table 2 - Location of Student Affairs Functional Activities

	United States	Australian University
		Australian University
	University	
Academic advising	Primarily decentralised	Decentralised amongst
	amongst schools &	faculties
	colleges	
Admissions	Admissions Office: Vice	Prospective students and
	- President (VP) -	recruitment:
	University Student	Vice-President (VP)
	Initiatives (USI)	Advancement
Assessment, research	Senior Vice-President	Pro Vice-Chancellor
and program evaluation	(VP) and University	Quality: Provost
and program evaluation	Planner	Quality: 110 vost
Athletics/Sport*	Separate Vice-President	Sport: Campus Life: Vice
Transcress por	(VP) for Inter-collegiate	-President (VP)
	Athletics	Administration
	Aunctics	Aummstration
Campus safety	Department of Public	Facilities and Services: VP
Campus sarcty	Safety reports to	- Administration
	Executive Vice-	- Administration
	President (VP) -	
	Administration and	
G 1 1 1	Finance	
Career development	Career Services	Careers and
	Office: VP - USI	Employment: Campus
		Life: VP - Administration
Childcare	Memorial Union	Student and
	(MU):	Community Services:
	VP - USI	VP - Administration
College or student	Memorial Union:	Campus Life is equivalent
unions	VP - USI	to College Union; reports
		to VP - Administration.
		Student government or
	Student governments	student associations are
	(graduate and under-	incorporated separately
	.0	
	graduate)	from the university
L	l .	

Table 2 - Location of Student Affairs Functional Activities (cont'd)

	United States University	Australian University
Community service and service learning programs	MU Community Service Program: VP - USI Service Learning Program (University College): Provost	Service learning is less common in the Australian system with community service activities provided across both academic and student affairs
Commuter services and off campus housing	Off-campus and Commuter Student Services, through Residential Life: VP - USI	Most students live off campus; no specific commuter program. Commuter services provided by Campus Life.
Counselling and psychological services	Counselling and Consultation: VP - USI	Student and Community Services: VP - Administration
Dean of students office	Seen as "chief student affairs officer:" VP - USI	No equivalent role or position
Dining and food services	MU: VP - USI	Campus Life: VP - Administration
Disability support services	Disability Resource Centre: VP - USI	Student and Community Services: VP - Administration
Enrolment management	VP - USI	Student Administration: VP - Administration
Financial aid	Office of Student Financial Assistance: VP - USI	Student and Community Services: VP - Administration
Fundraising and fund development	Foundation (separate 501 (c) (3) organisation)	Provided by the VP - Advancement
Graduate/ Postgraduate and professional student services	Memorial Union (MU): VP - USI	Provided by the Graduate School and Faculties
Greek affairs (Fraternity and Sorority)	MU: VP - USI	Not provided in Australia
Health services	Campus Health Services: VP - USI	Student and Community Services: VP - Administration

Table 2 - Location of Student Affairs Functional Activities (cont'd)

	United States University	Australian University
International student services	International Students Office: VP - USI	Student and Community Services: VP - Administration
Judicial affairs	Student Life: VP - USI	A combination of Faculty and Vice President Administration
Leadership	MU/Residential Life:	Campus Life:
programs	VP - USI	VP - Administration
Lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and trans-gender student services	MU: VP - USI	Provided by Student Government
Multicultural student services	Multicultural Student Services: VP- USI	Student and Community Services: VP - Administration
Orientation and new student program	Orientation through Admissions. New student programs through Transitions and Parent Programs; both report through VP - USI	Student and Community Services: VP - Administration
Parent programs	MU: VP - USI	Provost
Recreation and fitness programs	Campus Recreation: VP - USI	Sport: Campus Life: VP - Administration
Religious programs and services	Student Life: VP - USI	Student and Community Services: VP - Administration
Registration services	Registrar: VP - USI	Student Administration: VP - Administration
Residence life and housing	Residential Life: VP - USI	Residential Services: VP - Administration
Student activities	MU: VP - USI	Campus Life & Student Government
Women's centres	MU: VP - USI	Provided by Student Government

Adapted from Dungy, G. (2003)

^{*}Bolded items represent functional areas reporting through the primary units of analysis.

United States Student Affairs Functional Area Reporting

Student affairs functions at the United States university included more units than represented by Dungy (2003) (e.g., Adult Re-entry Program, and Child and Family Services). However, based on the student affairs units represented in Dungy's work, the United States university units reported to the following six vice presidential areas:

- Vice President for University Student Initiatives 28 Student Affairs reports here as one of several divisions
- Foundation 1 Fundraising/development arm of the institution
- Executive Vice President Administration and Finance 1 Policy, safety, fiscal analysis
- Provost 1
 Chief academic officer
- Vice President for Intercollegiate Athletics 1 Competitive sports teams
- Senior Vice President and University Planner 1
 Master planning; facilities, capital, and academic

Australia Student Affairs Functional Area Reporting

At the Australian university, the lack of a student affairs vice president was highlighted by the types of activities being designated as administration rather than academic or student affairs. The allocation of the student affairs functions at the Australian university were as follows:

- Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) / Provost 4
 Faculty responsibility, Graduate Programs and Academic Affairs
- Vice President Advancement 2 Recruitment and Fundraising
- Vice President Administration 21
 Major divisions of Campus Life, Community Services, Student Administration
- Student Government 3
 Student and Sexuality services
- Not provided 3
 Greek Affairs, Dean of Students and Service Learning not provided

A summary of the primary units of analysis (departments) is provided in Table 3.

Table 3 - Summary of Student Affairs Units

	United States University	Australian University
Name of portfolio	Memorial Union	Campus Life
Major	Campus Centre(s)	Campus Centres
activities	"Student Life" (clubs,	Sports and Recreation
	fraternities, service learning)	Bookshop and Retail
	Food Service	Food Service
	Student Transition & Parents	Careers and Employment
	Student Governments	Student Government
	Child Care	support
Reporting	VP - University Student	VP - Administration
	Initiatives	
Governance	Advisory Board - 8 students	Board of 3 university and 3
	(student president), 2 faculty, 2	student representatives with
	staff, 1 community member	local campus service
		councils
Budget	\$35M/7M (USD)	\$45M (USD)
Funding	\$28M Contract food service	\$8M Student fees
	\$3.2M University support	\$2M University grants
	\$3.8 M Self-generated	\$35M Sales and other
		income
Staff	250	300
		1

Source: US Institution Advisory Board minutes, organisational chart, financial statements (2006); Australian University Campus Life Board Papers (2006); Names omitted to protect confidentiality.

One challenge associated with comparing the two institutions is the different organisational locations of the functional activities, which made it difficult to gather information and ensure "apples to apples" comparisons. This is further complicated at the Australian university where the student affairs function was not recognised as a discrete functional division at the senior level of university management. The US institution was specific regarding student affairs within the university with a vice president role dedicated to these functions. In the Australian university, there was no such comparable role. Student affairs functions were in several portfolios with the majority of functions included in the Vice President Administration portfolio, which was dominated by the portfolios of Buildings and Grounds, Information Technology, and Human Resources.

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Analysis

The development of the criteria for analysis began shortly after one researcher visited the other institution and the two authors agreed to work together on the project. The criteria were developed from a broad review of the literature, primarily from higher education and student affairs literature.

Criteria for Analysis

Comparing and contrasting student affairs practice is a complex task that requires a well defined set of criteria. This section contains a brief review of the literature that was consulted in preparing the criteria for the study. Table 4 provides the full scope of the criteria embraced for this study.

Table 4 - Criteria for Comparison and Contrast of Student Affairs Activities

	Issue	Relevance	Sources
A	Overview of Student Affairs Programs	Provides context and background	(Barr, 1993; Dungy, 2003; Komives & Woodard, 1996, 2003)
В	Standout/Flagship Programs	Focus or perceived strategic advantages reflect organisational priorities and provide insights into the organisations	(Thompson & Strickland, 1999)
С	Funding	Approaches to funding influence strategies and outcomes	(Schuh, 2003)
D	Organisational Structure and Location	Structures and reporting relationships impact overall approach and other criteria	(Barr, 1993) (Kuh, 2003)
Е	Multi-Campus Dimensions	Multiple locations bring additional challenges and opportunities	(Mintzberg, 1993, 1983)
F	The Role and Responsibility of Student Representatives	Student learning is seen as paramount; role of student representatives provides insights into a number of criteria	(Dunkel & Schuh, 1998) (Boyle, 2009; Gledhill, 1999); Perozzi, 2009)

Table 4 - Criteria for Comparison and Contrast of Student Affairs Activities (cont'd)

	Issue	Relevance	Sources
G	Approach to Student Affairs in- cluding use of theory	Provides insights into each organisation while influencing outcomes	(Komives & Woodard, 1996, 2003) (Bliming, Whitt, & Associates, 1999) (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998)
Н	Role and Development of Student Affairs staff	Aligns with outcomes and provides confirmation or other- wise with espoused approach to student affairs	(Barr, 1993) (Winston & Creamer, 1997) (Whitt, 2006) (Dalton, 2003)
I	Academic Collaboration	Recognised as vital for organisational and student success	(ACPA/NASPA, 2004)
J	Assessment of Outcomes	Assists with improvement, relevance, and connections	(Upcraft & Schuh, 1996)
K	Research and Contribution to the Profession	Fosters reflection, improvement and development of profession while providing evidence of approach to student affairs	(Komives & Woodard, 2003)
L	Challenges and Responses to Local Issues	An opportunity for comparison, learning, and collaboration	(Kramer & Associates, 2003)
М	Challenges and Responses to Political and Society Issues	An opportunity for comparison, learning, and collaboration	(ACPA/NASPA, 2004)

When initial themes were reflected against the criteria developed for comparison, it became evident that there was a large amount of data available and individual criteria supported comparison in different ways. Some criteria provided for broad understanding and background, others highlighted points of difference or similarity, and others stood out as being of major significance for learning and further work. Depending upon the extent to which individual criterion impacted the organisations or the comparisons, they were ranked generally from high to low to

provide focus for the presentation of results. The ranking assisted by creating broad parameters for the researchers based on initial themes and findings. Rankings were defined as:

- High issues of significance for learning and future research.
- Medium issues of similarity and difference that contribute to and support major findings.
- Low issues of background and understanding but often similar and not seen to be of major distinction.

The analysis section ameliorates concepts that fall within the "High" ranking category only. The ranking is presented in Table 5.

Table 5 - Ranking of Criteria

Table 5 - Ranking of Criteria			
	Standout/Flagship Programs		
	Multi-campus dimensions		
	Approach to Student Affairs Including Use of Theory		
High	Role and Development of Student Affairs Staff		
	Academic Collaboration		
	Challenges and Response to Local Issues		
	Role and Responsibility of Student Representatives		
Medium	Assessment of Outcomes		
	Research and Contribution to the Profession		
Overview of Student Affairs Programs			
	Funding		
Low	Organisational Structure		
	Challenges and Response to Political and Society Issues		

Standout/Flagship Programs

Strategy (Lipton, 2003) and goals (Collins & Porras, 1994) form part of a vision for an organisation while a number of scholars (Baker, 2000; Cravens, 2000; Thompson & Strickland, 1999) see specific skills, capabilities, products, and services as potential forms of strategic and competitive advantage. By considering the flagship or key programs of each organisation, it is possible to examine vision and strategy in action, increase understanding of what each organisation sees as important, and where they allocate key resources. A noticeable difference in the flagship programs of the two organisations in this study is the influence of underlying theory and philosophy on key programs.

United States University Examples

The Memorial Union has an extensive student employment program.

This program begins with the systematic recruitment of student employees and concludes with exit evaluations designed to gain a measure of the growth and development that has taken place for each student employee. The program consists of orientation sessions, supervisory retreats, training sessions (a collaborative effort with another department), and recognition events for all union student employees. Each of these activities is designed to help students learn, develop, and gain valuable life skills through their employment experiences. In addition to the learning that takes place on the job and through training, the Memorial Union serves as a laboratory for students to practice skills and apply knowledge they learn in the classroom with many major-appropriate positions such as marketing, hospitality management, and business administration.

Tied to the employment program is a comprehensive assessment program. The program is designed to achieve four primary goals:

- Gather data on utilisation of programs and services
- Monitor customer satisfaction
- Track persistence and graduation rates of select students
- Measure the degree to which students learn and develop

While student learning is the primary focus of the assessment philosophy it is important to approach assessment from multiple perspectives. These four segments of the assessment program work together to form a comprehensive approach. Basic data collection on use of programs and services can be used to make management decisions about placement of programs, signage, operational hours, etc. Reacting to customer input is also an important aspect of the organisation, and tracking institutional indicators such as student retention is critical. The ultimate assessment effort is measuring the value added in terms of student learning as a result of their interaction with the department's programs and services.

Australian University Examples

Campus Life at this university sees a series of collaborative programs as their flagship or stand out programs, which have been developed to enhance the student experience and provide something additional to the standard student activities: sport, careers, food, bookstore, and campus centre programs. Specific flagship programs involve:

- Future Leaders (a leadership program for groups of 16 students)
- Employability workshops (a series of eight employability workshops run throughout the year)

 Community events (a series of staff and student fitness events held as part of wider community running, walking, and cycling events)

Important characteristics of these programs include:

- Each program was developed as a response to customer feedback and/or in response to the university strategic plan;
- A lack of resources as well as the size and complexity of the challenge represented major obstacles to success;
- The development of each program was motivated by the implementation of management theory to foster collaboration across the campus life operation and the wider university.

A notable contrast between the two universities in terms of flagship programs is the driving or motivating factors that support the ideologies behind the programs or services. The United States institution has developed programs that emanate from an education and student learning background; whereas, the Australian institution has responded primarily from a customer service and management perspective. This is not to suggest that the United States university does not recognize service issues or that the Australian university does not recognize student learning benefits; however, the prime motivation for the two organisations is different and each one draws on the theoretical background and education and training of the local student affairs leaders.

Multi-Campus Dimensions

There are inherent advantages and disadvantages when a university has multiple campus sites. The convenience for students and the ability to reach a greater number of constituents increases, yet without an organisational overlay that supports a multi-campus structure, student convenience can be hampered. Convenience can be disadvantaged both by diffusion of services and programs, and quality degradation due to ambiguous reporting and accountability. A primary challenge is the relationship or role of "branch" campuses to the primary campus (Dengerink, 2001).

In terms of the multiple campus composition of the two institutions studied there were many similarities. Both operated under a single accreditation in their home country. Like non-university organisations operating at multiple sites, both universities experienced specific management challenges related to having a "head" office and "main" location (campus). Issues of communication, engagement, priority, favouritism, lack of local knowledge, and travel were common to both

institutions. Other common multi-campus challenges included the cost of duplication and economies of scale, service access, dual reporting relationships, balancing local and central decision making, cost allocation methods, dealing with many local communities, and how best to promote multiple locations.

A major challenge for student affairs in the two institutions was the delivery of programs and services across multiple sites that provided a consistent student experience and also met competing student, faculty, community, and university administration expectations. Some of the specific challenges related to consistency of services offered and requirements for different services at different locations. Both institutions have one large campus with a wide range of services and facilities, which are untenable to be offered at small and regional campuses. As well as creating financial and economies of scale challenges, some staff are required to regularly move between locations with considerable time spent in travel. Staff based at larger or smaller campuses have trouble understanding the local issues impacting others.

Approach to Student Affairs Including Use of Theory

The importance of translating theory into practice is recognised by Upcraft (1993) who also recognizes that there are challenges for both practitioners and those developing theory. Boyle (2009) articulates the need for practitioners to understand theory and apply it to work with students. The connection between theory, practice, and outcomes is widely acknowledged in the literature with Drucker (1994) and van der Heijden (1996) both outlining the connection between the theory of the organisation and the outcomes achieved. The following sections outline the key theoretical frameworks evident in each organisation.

United States University - Memorial Union

The practice of the Memorial Union has been pre-eminently guided by student development theory and putting these theories into practice. Evans, Forney, and Guito-DiBrito (1998) provide a framework for utilizing theory in everyday work. The philosophy of human development has been at the heart of the primary functions within the unit. Hiring, training, and rewards all focus on the ability to tie the technology of what one does in their job to the impact it has on student growth.

Practices have been derived from basic tenets of theorist Nevitt Sanford's (1966) challenge and support concepts in Knefelkamp, Widick, & Parker (1978) to more complex theories of Belenky (1986) that posits ways in which women develop. Kohlberg's (1971) concepts

around moral and ethical development are used to guide student volunteer activities, and Chickering (1972) presents a numbered set of "stages" (vectors) that are relatively simplistic for a broad range of employees to understand. Two somewhat complementary theories that drive everyday interaction with students are Perry (1970) for male students and Gilligan (1982) for female students. Student development theory was discussed among staff and embraced as a central tenet of the organisational culture.

The ethos of the university has been focused on recruitment, retention, and graduation of students, and the Memorial Union embraces a number of theories that undergird these concepts. Foremost among them is Tinto's (1987) conceptualisation of student retention and attrition. By paying attention to students' background characteristics and educational aspirations (Lunsford, 2009) and concentrating on integration in both social and academic spheres of students' experiences, practitioners can support students in staying at the university and ultimately persisting to graduation.

Through an understanding of research reported by Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), clarity can be derived around students' engagement with various programs and services offered by the Memorial Union. Specific events and/or programs that have potential impact on student learning in terms of cognitive development and other measurable aspects of growth and performance (e.g., academic achievement) drive the essential functions of the organisation. Each activity, such as student employment, community service, and student organisation involvement can be tied to learning outcomes that support that particular function.

Training around these concepts has taken place at organisational retreats, management meetings, and other formal and official development programs. Sessions have been taught for the full staff on a simplified version of Tinto's (1987) model, as well as Astin's (1993) concepts around student engagement. Student development concepts were woven throughout student retreats, employment training programs, supervisory enhancement workshops, and included in all hiring processes for new professional employees.

Some business related literature has also been used in the development of employees and the philosophy underlying organisational development. The philosophy is informed by Peters and Waterman (1982) particularly in regard to internal competition and doing what the organisation knows best. Peters' (1994) subsequent work provides reference for taking organisational chances and being entrepreneurial, which is critical for universities in times of declining

state support. Finally, the work of Collins (2001) provided a contemporary framework for leadership philosophy, human resource management, and organisational vision and clarity of purpose.

Australian University - Campus Life

The work of Campus Life has been strongly influenced by management theory as opposed to student development theory. Key influences include the field of organisational learning as influenced by Argyris (2000) and Senge (1990), systems thinking by Kim (1999), Sterman (2000) and dialogue and conversation by Bohm (1996), Isaacs (1999), and Brown and Isaccs (2005).

Related to the emphasis on organisational learning is the concept of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977; Kim, 2002), which has generated a strong underpinning in team with particular attention given to the work of Katzenbach (1998) and Belbin (1993). Working in groups has been influenced by Schein (1988) and Dick (1991), while Collins and Porras (1994) and others have guided shared vision. Zeithaml et al. (1990) have strongly influenced the customer service perspective. Emerging from the commitment to organisational learning and desire to focus on customer service has been an increasing awareness of student development theory, and a number of works (Bliming, et al., 1999; Komives & Woodard, 1996, 2003; Woodard, 2006) have influenced the organisation as a way of improving service to students, especially in the area of learning and development.

The contrast between the two institutions with regard to student development theory is stark. Student affairs staff at the US institution have high significant levels of education and professional development in the use of student development theory including graduate education. In the Australian institution the use of student development theory is limited with recent in-house short courses providing training for staff. Also of note is the Australian use of management theory to foster organisational development which was less notable in the US institution.

Role and Development of Student Affairs Staff

When discussing the criteria for comparison and the location of student affairs programs within each institution, a common theme emerged relating to the education and background of student affairs staff. In the US institution a student development bias was evident compared with the management bias in the Australian institution.

The contrasts in the role and development of the student affairs staff at the two institutions is illustrated in Table 6. The focus on student learning and development within the US institution is evident in all areas including the education, professional development, role focus, performance focus, and background of the vice president responsible for the student affairs portfolio. These areas can be contrasted with the Australian institution where service and management are dominant and student affairs backgrounds are minimal. Also of note was the decreased focus on educational level and area of specialty in the Australian institution. For example, while the Director of Campus Life held a relevant doctorate, the vice president with student affairs as part of the portfolio had a background in the public service bureaucracy and education at the undergraduate degree level.

Table 6 - Comparison of Role and Professional Development

Role and development	US institution	Australia institution
Education	Student Affairs	Nothing specific
Professional development	Student learning as dominant	Management education as dominant
Education as selection criteria	Student Affairs very important	Work experience major criteria
Role focus	Education and learning	Service
Relationship with students	Mentoring, educating	Providing services
Performance focus	Student learning	Customer service / finance
Student Affairs management background	Education	Management
Professional Associations	Education	Industry / Education
VP background	Education	Public service

Academic Collaboration

The degree of academic collaboration between institutions is another posit of comparison and contrast. At the United States university in the Division of University Student Initiatives, the focus on supporting academic colleges, schools, and departments is preeminent. Rather than the focus being on an integrated approach to student success, student affairs staff were directed to collaborate and support academic units. A similar perspective operates at the Australian institution where the

relationships between academic activities and student affairs can be described as service and learning support; however, this relationship is described in university documents as administrative support. The DEEP study (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2005), which indicates institutional practices that contribute to student success, points to a seamlessness between student affairs and academic affairs as a desirable characteristic for achieving student learning.

Detached from this ideology is the perspective that faculty and student affairs staff are seeking the same end results by fulfilling the academic mission of the institution. The academic mission cuts across both curricular and co-curricular aspects of students' lives allowing for common ground among academic and student affairs in helping students attain institutional learning outcomes. Learning outcomes level the playing field for academics and student affairs staff if fulfilment of the university mission involves helping students become excellent problem solvers, critical thinkers, and to be engaged in their community among other such outcomes. While the guiding philosophy is to support academic endeavours, the dominant practice is to engage academic colleagues and units to work together toward student engagement in the collegiate experience and to increase cognitive and affective student gains.

Despite the broad similarity in academic collaboration between the US and Australian institutions the reality of implementation is somewhat different with the US institution collaborating in a number of ways that do not occur at the Australian institution. Examples include the involvement of US student affairs staff teaching on a part-time basis in the student affairs graduate education program, providing graduate assistantship opportunities, mentoring graduate and undergraduate students, serving on theses and dissertation committees, and being encouraged to conduct research, write, and present with graduate and undergraduate students. With no graduate or undergraduate student affairs programs being offered in Australia, teaching opportunities in these programs did not exist for Australian staff and the practice of conducting student affairs research was not encouraged by the university leadership. There were, however, a number of examples in the Australian institution where student affairs staff were teaching parttime and conducting research in the management field.

Challenges and Response to Local Issues

A number of common issues were identified as providing challenges at the local level. Conflicting messages and priorities from government and university administration were amongst the major local challenges.

Examples included:

- Pressure to increase services at the same time as reducing funding;
- Increasing community participation while reprioritizing physical campus access in view of environmental and physical space priorities; and,
- Improving the student experience while at the same time increasing funding to university teaching and research priorities rather than student affairs activities.

Another shared challenge was the relationship between student representatives, university administration, and student affairs staff. Many examples of student leaders having access to high level university officials without input from student affairs staff resulted in one sided decisions with significant budget, operational, and morale consequences. Funding pressure in the Australian context was also a result of government legislation to remove student fees, which was compounded by the low priority afforded to student affairs by Australian university administrators.

The approaches being taken to address local challenges were remarkably similar in each institution and can be classified in two distinct areas. One area involves increasing income by improving dining/food services and other rent paying activities. The other major focus area is seeking to enhance the student experience through learning and development activities.

Conclusion

The prevailing ideologies on the structure, type, and support for student affairs had a significant impact at each university. Student development and learning are central to the thinking at the US institution, which is demonstrated in the approach taken to student affairs functions; whereas, the Australian context has seen a management and service approach become the dominant perspective.

This study has identified many similar challenges as well as different emphases placed on student development and customer service within the two student affairs organisations. A noticeable aspect was that despite each student affairs organisation approaching their role from a different perspective, student learning and development versus management and customer service, both discovered the other perspective as supportive of their goals and intentions. This is of note specifically in the US institution where student development and learning was of prime importance and customer service was seen as supporting quality learning and

development. Alternatively, in the Australian context the customer service and management lens recognised the importance of student learning in meeting student expectations of the university experience.

An opportunity arising from this study is for increased collaboration on the integration of student development and service for the student affairs profession with a view to broadening the application of both approaches amongst student affairs practitioners around the world. A key conclusion from this study is that it is not a question of student learning or managing customer service but a combination of student learning and management of the service experience. By seeking to integrate the domains of student learning and development with management and service, increased opportunities may be developed to connect with practitioners who see their focus solely on student development rather than service and vice-versa.

The findings of this study provide encouragement for the further development of a model addressing the nexus between learning and service as there are a number of common practices that apply to both domains. For example, student learning requires an understanding of the student body so as to select learning approaches and programs while the service management approach also requires an understanding of participants whether they are labelled students, clients, patients, passengers, or customers. The student learning approach requires the delivery of programs to meet certain outcomes, which is also an aspect of the service delivery approach. A third common practice between student learning and student service is the assessment of outcomes. Further research will explore similarities and differences with a view to developing an integrated operational model for delivering quality learning and service results.

The differences and similarities among these two cases help to strengthen international understanding of multiple issues including organisation, location, context, and guiding philosophy in student affairs. It is hoped that this and subsequent studies can serve as a springboard for greater international cooperation and research collaboration among student affairs scholars and practitioners. Academic and professional connections must be forged and intentional forums created for student affairs colleagues around the world to meet and work together. The globalisation of higher education continues to gain momentum with much to be learned from all regions. The increasing competition for students on the global stage can serve as a platform for student affairs personnel to come together around common topics for the benefit of students worldwide.

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The Ironic Triangle

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Abstract

This article is a summary of an Honours Dissertation which examined Australian research literature on Australian tertiary student poverty to determine if poverty has an impact on the biopsychosocial well being of Australian tertiary undergraduate students. The Dissertation used a literature review based on the principles of Symbolic Interactionism in revealing and identifying multiple meanings and contexts, frameworks and perspectives through ideological influences, language choices and implicit meanings in a complex and contested area.

The irony for Australian students is that despite higher education being an activity leading to an improved life and an increase in options and wellbeing, engagement in tertiary education has become an activity of poverty creation resulting in a reduction of wellbeing for many students during the period of time that they are studying (Ross et al.,1997 and Jones, 2004).

Introduction

"Poverty grinds. It rubs away at confidence and capacity. It must be measured but can never be understood through snapshots and indexes.... What counts after all, is the extent to which the poor have suffered and proven their endurance... nowhere are you invited to describe the complexity of poverty, or of the problems that only makes sense if you know something about hardship." (Peel, 2003)

Australian poverty research focuses primarily on relative poverty in terms of meaning, definition, measurement and the social impact or importance that poverty presents for Australian society and social policy development (Harding, Lloyd, & Greenwell, 2001; P. Saunders, 1996; Serr, 2006). Increasing living costs such as housing, petrol and basic foods have been highlighted by Disney, (2004b) and Hollingworth, (1985) as impacting negatively on the lives of low income earners. Biopsychosocial factors affecting those in poverty include food security, social capital, opportunities for life choice and community participation (ACMHN, 1984; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1998; Booth & Smith, 2001; Carson & Martin, 2001; Jordan, 1996; Mejer & Linden, 2000; Peel, 2003; Serr, 2006; S. Turale, 1998; Vitetta & Sali, 2007).

Australian Tertiary Student Poverty

Recognition and research into the issues and experience associated with

student poverty in Australia has focused mainly on primary and secondary education students (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008; Crossin, 2005). The acknowledgement of tertiary undergraduate students in Australia as having experiences of poverty worthy of research and recognition has been sporadic over the past 30 years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1998, 2001; Australian Council of Social Services, 2004; Wooden & Headey, 2004). Historically student poverty has been studied using large-scale quantitative surveys examining income or expenditure based measurements with minimal acknowledgement of the experiences of tertiary student poverty (Australian Union of Students, 1975; Beswick et al., 1981; Long & Hayden, 2001). However, over the past decade there has been an increasing focus on qualitative research into the student experience of poverty.

Research into tertiary student poverty in Australia has been limited by political and social ambivalence about student poverty as a social issue of importance. As a result student poverty received scant political or research attention until a decade post introduction of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme, or HECS (Ahmed, 2000; Bentick, 1998; Chapman & Salvage, 1997; National Tertiary Education Union, 2007; Turale, 1998). This lack of attention perhaps results from an absence of empathy from government, in turn influenced by generational differences in educational experience at tertiary level. The advent of education becoming a business, HECS and increased cost of living, has influenced research into issues surrounding tertiary student poverty (Australia. Dept of Education & Youth, 2000; Chapman & Salvage, 1997; Chipman, 2000; Miller & Pincus, 1998; National Tertiary Education Union, 2007; Universities, 2008; Wright, 2008; Yu, Kippen, & Chapman, 2007).

Historical and Political Context

There were three national surveys throughout the 1970s and 1980s looking at the financial circumstances of tertiary students. The 1974 income and expenditure patterns of Australian tertiary students plus the 1979 and 1984 full time tertiary student finance surveys, examined the costs of engaging in tertiary study and the income of students (Australian Dept. of Employment Education and Training, 1987; Australian Department of Education and Youth Affairs & Australian Union of Students, 1975; Beswick et al., 1981). The methodologies for the 1974, 1979 and 1981 surveys were based on quantitative analysis of data sourced from large population samples on a national basis. Given their methodology, the studies contributed knowledge based primarily

on monetary aspects of a large number of tertiary students at state and national levels. Although comprehensive and large in scale, there is little information about the student experience of living with limited income. In these studies there is also no acknowledgement of student-devised strategies for attenuating financially restricted circumstances.

Further broad scale, quantitative survey studies aimed at expanding and updating knowledge of student finances have been undertaken since 2000. Long and Hayden (2001), James, Bexley, Devlin, & Marginson (2007) are large sample quantitative studies commissioned by the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC) and were designed to be comparable over time to examine patterns of need, income types and expenditure habits of tertiary students. James et al. (2007) added postgraduate students and refined the Long (2001) criteria.

Explanation of Key Terms

Poverty

Serr (2006) acknowledges that poverty is not just about income or finances.

"The very structures and mechanisms for generating affluence also maintain poverty. As the structures appear distant and abstract, they often attract little interest. For the poor, however, such structures have a very immediate reality, imposing themselves in the daily difficulties and frustrations of life, and reproducing broader social inequalities on the micro scale. Poverty is more than simply a shortage of financial resources; it affects every facet of life, intruding on areas only remotely linked to financial issues." (Serr, 2006)

This definition is congruent with the broad and inclusive definition and description of poverty used throughout this dissertation.

Biopsychosocial and Wellbeing

The biopsychosocial model differentiates between the processes of disease and the perception of illness. Based on systems theory, it has developed what Gray (2006) refers to as a complementary approach acknowledging all the factors, not 'just' medical or biological, impacting on a person.

The political complexities surrounding health are recognised through the biopsychosocial paradigm. These include aspects of funding health service provision, responsibility for cost and personal health on individual, family, societal and political levels. Wellbeing in the context of the biopsychosocial model is strongly influenced by structural elements inclusive of biology but also socio economic status and social bonds which create or enhance supportive relationships. These include those bonds responsible for ontological security through relationships such as marriage and families.

Research into Student Experiences of Poverty

The focus on Australian tertiary student poverty and the use of a broader definition of poverty is supported by a number of contemporary researchers such as Bessant, 2007, Grant, Maccarone, Sagorski, & Siiankoski, 2004, Lewis, Dickson-Swift, Talbot, & Snow, 2007 and D. Lloyd & Turale, 2001. Economic hardship according to Grant et al., (2004) had an adverse impact on the living standards and quality of life of students participating in the study of the lived experiences of undergraduate students at the University of Queensland. Jones (2004) and Grant et al., (2004) described education as a means of escaping poverty. Both explore the irony that the Australian tertiary system is currently effective at poverty creation.

Lewis et al., (2007) used cited works to argue for the existence of links between housing and poverty; also perception of education cost influencing students' decisions to defer, withdraw or not engage in tertiary education. This point was made primarily in relation to students from regional and remote areas. Relevance of tertiary studies to rural life was perceived as low and the relocation away from psychosocial supports is a relatively unrecognised cost of study for these students (Lewis, Dickson-Swift, Talbot, & Snow, 2007). Studies by Long and Hayden (2001) together with James et al., (2007) were also cited by Lewis et al., (2007) supporting hypotheses surrounding student income, income support and an increasing need for students to engage in paid employment whilst undertaking full-time study.

Lewis et al., (2007) found that half of respondents articulated the view that financial hardship impacted upon their health in negative ways. More than half indicated that they were sometimes prevented from eating adequately because of financial circumstances. Grant et al., (2004) notes that malnutrition is a problem which is generally associated with developing countries but there was a risk of participants developing malnutrition through unbalanced diets due to financial hardship. Participants reported going without some of the essentials such as meat, fresh vegetables and fruit on a daily basis and having a diet primarily reliant on carbohydrates. Grant et al., (2004) also identify economic hardship as having a significant impact on the diet and health of participants and acknowledge the potential for unspecified long-term health implications.

Using the Newton and Turale (2000) cultural criteria for poverty

Lewis et al. (2007) identified twenty-two respondents as living in poverty. Of this population two thirds, fourteen were female, more than fifty per cent, were using private rental accommodation and four respondents were classified as being homeless. Sixteen had relocated from rural or regional areas to attend a regional university campus.

Lewis et al. (2007) makes a connection between accommodation typology and experience of financial hardship. Fewer than 20 per cent of respondents in private rental accommodation could afford medical care. Comparatively, more than eighty-three per cent of those in familial homes were able to afford medical care. Health care was identified by Grant et al. (2004) as a major concern. Deferment of health care was a prominent theme with seven of the twelve participants stating that they had deferred medical treatment because of cost. The negative impact of treatment deferral on the biological and psychological wellbeing is supported by Latrobe (2000) where almost half of participants stated health was negatively affected by financial hardship.

The type of residence students live in is a key indicator for poverty as demonstrated by Lewis et al. (2007). Grant et al. (2004) identified that obtaining secure affordable accommodation was a major concern with participants using overcrowded accommodation, with poor living arrangements and regular friction with housemates. Participants in the private rental market had difficulty in paying rent with weekly income predominantly allocated to accommodation. Grant et al. (2004) indicated that the amount of money received from Centrelink is insufficient to survive on and consequently participants engaged in paid employment. This finding has been confirmed by the senate inquiry into student income, with a specific recommendation for an increase in student income support to the level of the age pension (Crossin, 2005).

Participants in Grant et al. (2004) were reliant upon credit cards or paid large bills with money already allocated to meet basic needs such as food. Research participants identified high transport costs as a problem in relation to living expenses. The implications for the biopsychosocial well-being of the student in relation to the experience of poverty or financial hardship are clearly demonstrated through Lewis et al., (2007) and Grant (2004). Residence type, psychosocial support availability, paid employment and access to medical services are linked to the severity of poverty experience. Lewis et al. (2007) and Grant (2004) include experiences of loneliness, frustration in relation to developing new psychosocial support structures, low income resulting in social exclusion and increasing stress.

The extrapolation that students in general are adversely affected by a

range of government and university policies is made by Grant et al. (2004) in response to statements that 'some critics' say that participant poverty is simply right of passage. Grant et al. (2004) do not identify who these critics are and this weakens the argument. Analysed data from Grant et al. (2004) revealed participants struggled to cope with the dual commitments of study and employment and this frequently resulted in sacrifice of study for work. Grant et al. (2004) concluded that economic hardship experienced by the participants had an adverse affect on the standard of living as participants struggled to afford living expenses and study costs. As previously stated, some of the participants experienced an inadequate diet (unable to afford meat, fruit and vegetables) which had an impact on physical and psychological health according to participants.

Students as Parents: A Single Parent Perspective

Missing from Grant et al., (2004) is the experience of participants as partners or parents. There is no acknowledgment that participant age (<25) may have narrowed perceptions in relation to student poverty impact on family or carer responsibilities, especially in the context of single parents. Single mothers are generally presented in the literature as being less educated, more likely to be poor and dependent on government benefits, have fewer resources increased feelings of isolation and the socially stigmatised (Cass & O'Loughlin, 1984; Eardley, 1998; Lambert, 1994). They are also frequently represented as experiencing more health problems than couple families.

Wilkes and Ogunsiji (2004) investigate the experience of single mothers enrolled in a nursing program and their findings correlate to the Lewis et al., (2007) and Grant et al. (2004) studies with additional findings revealing participant expressions of hope surrounding the student experience. There is an acknowledgement of individual experiences through phenomenological studies by Wilkes and Ogunsiji (2004) which allowed researchers to share participant perspectives. They aimed to gain insight into and to describe the lived experiences of single mothers undertaking tertiary education.

Participants in the Wilkes and Ogunsiji study (2004) reported that they considered the social environment of university to be enhancing of their self esteem, which improved through the education experience. Current educational attainment was described as giving hope for the future and participants indicated a sense of hope for their future lives (Wilkes & Ogunsiji, 2004). All participants in Wilkes and Ogunsiji (2004) acknowledged experiences of chronic tiredness and physical exhaustion. Household activities combined with university work and

parental duties plus a lack of adequate support created the continuous experience of tiredness. Participants perceived poor diet as significantly contributing to tiredness. Exhaustion and financial hardship were prominent themes. All participants stated a lack of adequate finances resulting in difficulties in meeting daily needs of children. Wilkes and Ogunsiji (2004) conclude that the lived experience of single mothers has received little attention in the literature in spite of increasing numbers and vulnerability.

A population sample of five means it is difficult to extrapolate results to the overall student population, however Wilkes and Ogunsiji (2004) open a window into the experiences and hopes of a particular student group, often stigmatised by a society with little appreciation of their unique journey and struggles towards self improvement and a future of hope for their families.

Some Patterns in Citations

Emerging from the literature a number of works are cited. Newton and Turale (2000) were dominant in citation in the context of expanding understandings surrounding poverty and the student experience. Turale (2001), Lloyd and Turale (2001), Grant et al. (2004), Bessant (2007) and Lewis et al. (2007) used this reference in a non critical fashion. No citing party noted that Newton and Turale (2000) stipulated a definition of poverty beyond income measurement and inclusive of participant perspective yet used income level measurements as a population sample filter, to acquire 'low income' participants. This lack of critical appraisal of material is concerning when the quantity is small and there is a risk of findings being dismissed as "unscientific" by policy parties, without replication of method and critical review of material.

Grant el al (2004) cite Harding et al. (2001) but do not discuss the controversy surrounding the Harding et al. (2001) report which did not use the standard median measure of the poverty line. There is no acknowledgement of different methods for measuring poverty lines used by Grant et al., (2004) nor is there any discussion about the implications of the different measurement methods in relation to results, statistical analysis and acceptance by social science fields.

Turale (1998), Newton and Turale (2000) and Lloyd and Turale (2001) were cited repeatedly by Lewis et al. (2007) in relation to student perceptions of academic limitation in relation to living away from home. These citations were also used in support of the hypothesis of Lewis et al. (2007) that a significant proportion of tertiary students, particularly those from regional areas, experienced poverty.

Tertiary students are relatively unrecognised as a group of the poor, this is despite increasing evidence of student poverty (Crossin, 2005). McShane (1990) is cited by Grant et al. (2004) to support description and argument that tertiary students ought to be free from financial constraint to enable studies. Newton & Turale (2001) was cited to highlight the importance of tertiary student poverty being studied within the Australian context in a comprehensive manner.

Newton and Turale's (2000) cultural criteria for poverty was used by Lewis et al. (2007) in determination of criteria identifying participants living in poverty. Determination of poverty by Lewis et al. (2007) was based on responses to questions about the impact of their financial situation upon their ability to eat adequately and afford dental or medical care, as well as self report of not coping financially. No definition of adequate eating, in terms of nutritional quality, quantity or frequency was provided. The ways in which participants ranked perceptions of coping was also not outlined. This would have added to the contextual meaning of the results thus better informing the reader of the perspectives held by participants about poverty.

Research Opportunities

A prominent omission in research literature is the absence of Western Australian (WA) material. Given the unique demography, larger land mass, diverse location of campuses, spiralling food, housing and petrol costs since 2006, there are unique aspects impacting upon tertiary students in WA which are worthy of investigation. The study by Lewis et al. (2007) is potentially replicable in Western Australia's regional campuses of the North West, South and Goldfields. Replication may provide confirmation of Lewis et al. (2007) themes or reveal perspectives unique to WA.

A longitudinal study of health issues associated with poor nutrition during tertiary studies is also needed to answer health questions associated with inexpensive, high fat, high sugar and carbohydrate food readily available at campus cafes.

Bessant (2007) advocates the replication of qualitative research to enhance reputation in social sciences, meaning and enrich social policy. The primary focus of the studies by Grant et al., (2004), and Lewis et al. (2007) is undergraduate students, with an emphasis on the 17-25 age range, while Wilkes and Ogunsiji (2004) interviewed participants mostly in their 30s. Replication or similar investigations inclusive of post graduate and mature aged undergraduate students examining poverty and its impact upon biopsychosocial frameworks may reveal

similar or unique themes to the original studies.

Conclusion

Turale (1998) explored the lived experiences of student poverty, adding a stream of richer, thicker descriptions and more contextualised meaning to the results of statistical survey based research. Contributions to understandings of student poverty experiences by Lewis et al., (2007) and Grant et al., (2004), demonstrate the negative impact upon medical care, nutrition, psychosocial supports, stress and academic achievement. Wilkes and Ogunsiji (2004) provide insight into the experience of single mothers, the factors of fatigue, work hours, family stress and the promise of future hope. Exhaustion, poor nutrition, housing costs, work impact on learning or achievement and overall financial hardship were prominent themes of Grant et al. (2004), Wilkes and Ogunsiji (2004) and Lewis et al. (2007).

Answering the Question

The impact of poverty upon the biopsychosocial wellbeing of Australian undergraduate students has been revealed through research by Grant et al. (2004), Wilkes and Ogunsiji (2004) and Lewis et al. (2007). Each of these studies find that work, exhaustion, tiredness and stress impact upon student achievement, study time and learning capacity. These studies find a detrimental impact on student perception of learning capacity and overall academic achievement when paid work exceeds 20 hours per week.

The biopsychosocial wellbeing of a person is impacted upon by complex factors including physical health, nutrition, housing and psychosocial supports such as family, friends and the ability to form and maintain relationships. Poverty affects biopsychosocial wellbeing through interference with these factors. Grant et al. (2004), Wilkes and Ogunsiji (2004) and Lewis et al. (2007) demonstrate that poverty does have an impact upon the biopsychosocial wellbeing of Australian undergraduate students. This is evidenced through findings of difficulties associated with obtaining, safe housing, affordability of nutritious food and regular meals and medical care. Regional students who experience relocation away from friends and family to attend campus, according to Lewis et al. (2007) experience higher levels of isolation as psychosocial supports are not readily available. Insufficient government student income support leads to a need to engage in paid employment to fund cost of living. Combined together these have a demonstrated detrimental impact on the wellbeing of Australian undergraduate students.

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Home Base: Defining the family's role in launching first-year commuter students¹

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Abstract

It is often thought that college students, both in the United States and Australia, who live at home with their family and commute to campus have non-academic priorities that cause them to be less invested or involved with their education than are residential students. However, research indicates that both have high academic aspirations, a strong commitment to learning, and an understanding of the value of participating in on- and off-campus activities. Engagement with the university community, however, is seen as one of the most powerful influences on students' academic and personal success, and commuter students are perceived to be at greater risk for not receiving these benefits. Without an understanding of the uniqueness of the relationship between commuting students, the university, and their families, it is not possible to determine how specific information and services might be modified to support commuter students as they face the developmental stages and practical issues that occur in the transition to higher education. This study, which collected qualitative data on the experiences of commuter students, is a first step in providing this critical information on university-parent-student relationships among families whose students are living at home. Results provide critical information on the experiences of commuter students throughout their freshman year, including providing specific strategies for better supporting commuter students and their families.

Literature Review

Commuter students make up the majority of the undergraduate student population in the United States, ranging anywhere from 73 to 86% of

¹While the authors recognise the growing number of mature age students on university campuses, this paper is limited to examining the experiences of students who have come to university immediately after high school, therefore the term 'student' throughout this paper refers to those in the 18-22 age group.

students (Dugan, Garland, Jacoby, & Gasiorski, 2008; NCES, 2006), and also in Australia, where students are most likely to attend local universities (McInnis & James, 2004). Most often, commuters are defined as any student who has not signed a contract to live in university owned housing (Buote, Pancer, Pratt, Adams, Bernie-Lefcovitch, Polivy, & Wintre, 2007; Dugan, Garland, Jacoby & Gasiorski, 2008; Jacoby, 2000; Jacoby & Garland, 2005).

While it is often thought that commuters are less invested or involved than residential students, research has found that both commuters and residential students have high academic aspirations, a strong commitment to learning, and participate in a great deal of on-campus and off-campus activities (Kuh, Gonyea & Palmer, 2001). Regardless of where a student lives or studies, traditional-age (23 or younger) students go through a tremendous amount of personality and identity development during their university experience, especially during the first year of classes (Arnett, 2000; Sessa, 2005).

Students who commute from home however, are considered more at risk for challenges with this transition than students who reside on campus (e.g., Jacoby & Garland, 2005). First, developmental changes can be difficult to negotiate and have been found to be a key factor in attrition rates (Arnett, 2000; Buote et al., 2007; Sessa, 2005). Second, engagement with the university community is seen as a critical factor for success for all undergraduates, this includes the amount of time spent preparing for classes, interacting with peers and faculty, and being involved in the general campus community. These appear to be some of the most powerful influences on students' academic and personal success, both in the United States and Australia (Arnett, 2000; Buote et al., 2007; Dugan et al., 2008; Jacoby, 2000; Jacoby & Garland, 2005; Krause, Hartley, James, & McInnis, 2005; Kuh et al., 2001; Pascarella, 2006; Sessa, 2005), and commuter students are perceived to be at risk for not participating in these activities and therefore not receiving these benefits (Jacoby & Garland, 2005; McInnis, James, & Hartley, 2000). For instance, as Jacoby and Garland (2005) state "by necessity, [commuters] select their campus involvements carefully" (p.64), as they may have other commitments. Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that their involvement is different from residential students, more strategic, and potentially provides fewer benefits.

Because many universities, particularly in the United States, tend to focus on residential students (NCES, 2006), offering little support for commuter students, commuters often develop off-campus networks. While parents, partners, children, siblings, employers, coworkers, and

even friends from high school can be supportive, "students must negotiate with [them]...to establish priorities for responsibilities and time commitments" (Jacoby & Garland, 2005, p.64). These negotiations are considerably more difficult if family and friends do not understand the challenges and opportunities of attending a university. This is especially true for students who are the first in their family to go to college.

Student Services

Over the past 20 years, higher education institutions in the United States have expanded their student support services to include families. Specifically, student services have developed programming to help parents and family members better understand and support their student's university experience, with the expectation that supporting families improves outcomes for students (Wartman & Savage, 2008). Looking at the range of parent and family services established in the United States in recent years throughout higher education, however, nearly all formal programmes focus on parents of residential students. For families whose students are living at home during the transition to university, there is little evidence of services to support these students or their families; more importantly, there is little information on the effect of the commuting experience on students and their families that would inform the development of these services.

The relationship between college students and their families is increasingly a topic of discussion and concern in higher education around the world. The growing perception is that parents are highly involved in their students' lives, often by invitation from their student son or daughter. As a result, institutions have struggled to decide whether to develop programming and services targeted specifically for family members or to establish stronger barriers to prevent parents from intervening in their students' education. The arguments against parental involvement can be based on students' legal status as an adult, or on traditional student development theory, which advocates separation from family as a critical step in maturation and autonomy (Chickering & Reiser, 1993). The case for continuing parental involvement, on the other hand, appears to be much stronger. For young adults, a strong relationship with parents leads to better adjustment to university life and higher academic achievement (Wintre & Sugar, 2000; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000). In addition, remaining connected to family is a critical part of the development of autonomy - young people need to separate from family but not sever their relationships, just redefine them.

In 2007, participants attending a U.S. national conference in Boston,

Administrators Promoting Parent Involvement (student affairs professionals who are taking a more comprehensive approach to supporting students by including parents and families), identified a set of common "best practices" in parent/family services in higher education. The practices include services and events such as:

- Orientation programmes designed for parents and delivered when their student is attending a student orientation programme
- Parents or Family Weekend, providing an opportunity for family members to visit campus, attend athletic events, and attend workshops that offer information on supporting student success
- Print and email newsletters with timely information on student issues and campus events
- Websites, portals, and online discussions for parents
- Recruitment and commitment events to address parents' questions related to admissions and retention
- A Parent Handbook with information on campus resources, university policies and procedures, normative student development stages, and critical dates
- Other events and involvement opportunities based on the culture of the institution

Without an understanding of the uniqueness of the relationship between commuting students and their families, however, it is not possible to determine how specific information and services might be modified to assist parents in supporting their commuter student as they navigate the academic experience and face the developmental stages and practical issues that occur in the transition to higher education. This study is a first step in providing this critical information on university-parent-student relationships from the perspective of students who are living at home.

Method

This study consisted of a series of focus group interviews with students at one large, urban, public university in the geographic Midwest of the United States.

Using a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix A for focus group questions from the first group, questions were modified slightly for subsequent focus groups), a series of three 60 to 90 minute focus groups were conducted with students at three points in time during the first semester of their freshman year. Focus groups were asked about the benefits and challenges of being a commuter student, and the role of

parents and families in students' transition to university and their university experience, from the perspective of students. Focus groups were transcribed verbatim, and then coded to identify recurrent themes (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

Participants

The qualitative data was obtained during three focus groups with eight first-year students (four female/four male) over the course of their first semester. Focus group participants were recruited through the Commuter Connection, an on-campus student organisation for commuter students. An email message was sent to the list serve of commuter students, identified as those first-year students who did not contract with the university for housing. Student participants received a gift card to the University bookstore for each focus group they participated in. All participants were living at home with family.

Results

Anecdotally, we often hear student services staff in the U.S. express the assumption that commuter students live at home not because they want to but, because of financial reasons, they need to. Students in this study confirmed that cost was the most important reason for living at home with their family. However, they identified other critical factors for staying home as well: commuter students said they like their family, and their home is comfortable. Some said they did not want to live in close quarters with other students, and still others said they were "not ready" to move away from home. In fact, only two students said they would move into a residence hall if they could.

Students also identified specific challenges of being a commuter student. All students reported they needed to adjust their lifestyle to meet their needs as a student. The major challenges they identified were having to take night classes, the extra hours that commuting added to their day, the early wake-up time required to ensure they were on time to class, and the uncertainties of commuting caused by weather conditions or heavy traffic. They also identified personal and family challenges related to being a commuter student. The demands of family expectations and household chores meant renegotiating the family relationship; travel to and from the university meant learning new routes and schedules, which often had to be reconsidered each semester; there were challenges with finding a social network on campus with little support from faculty, staff, or typical student networks; and it was important to seek out a "home base" on campus where students could feel comfortable studying or relaxing between classes.

Most students also noted that they had challenges their parents simply did not understand. These included the stress of being a student, the extra time required not just for commuting but also for building in time for traffic and weather delays, the challenges in making friends, and the demands of out-of-class study groups. Parents often expected their students to be home after classes ended, but study groups and extracurricular activities frequently scheduled meetings in the evenings or on weekends.

Transition to Campus

An event that was critical to getting students connected to campus was a five-day transition program, called Welcome Week, just before the start of school for incoming freshman. During this time, there were events that specifically targeted commuter students with information about topics of concern including transportation; where to dine on campus; how to find study space; and the importance of socializing and participating in campus organisations. Commuters talked about this programme as an essential opportunity to develop friendships with other commuters and begin to develop an on-campus peer network and a sense of belonging, both critical to their success in college (Buote et al., 2007; Jacoby, 2000; Jacoby & Garland, 2005; Krause, 2007; Krause et al., 2005).

Transportation

Transportation issues emerged as most salient to commuters. The majority of participants utilised public transportation because they could not justify the expense of driving, either because they lived so close to campus or because they lived so far from campus. Several were also receiving rides from parents or carpooling to campus with other commuters (including siblings). In fact, many students discussed how their entire family rearranged their schedules daily to drive them to and from campus. Those employing public transportation often cited the university-contracted transportation pass providing bus and light rail service throughout the metropolitan area as being "awesome," while nearly all students cited the intra-campus bus service as beneficial. Those driving to campus were critical of parking fees and the availability of commuter parking lots, as well as the proximity of these lots to campus (for the least expensive parking options, students must walk a longer distance to central campus). However, in the final focus group, at the end of students' first semester, transportation was framed less as an immediate challenge, with students reporting spending less time commuting because they had become more familiar with bus routes and/or improved campus navigation. The result of this time-savings was

being able to spend more time on campus socializing and participating in university events, groups, and activities.

Reported one-way commute times ranged from five to sixty minutes, with those using public transportation sometimes having to change buses up to three times each way. As a result, students had to factor in commute times when scheduling classes, participating in activities, or seeking employment. Considering that most commuters could not easily go back home for forgotten items, the term commuting is a bit of a misnomer - it is not simply about time spent traveling, commuter students also must factor in time for pre-travel preparing and planning, including planning bus routes to/from campus; preparing lunch; and packing materials needed throughout the day (e.g., books, laptop, assignments, items for sports/group participation).

Food

A large number of participants described food as a challenge to commuting. Students cited the expense of campus meal plans and/or meals available at on-campus restaurants as problematic. Initially, students appeared confused about their food options, with one student expressing that he felt "really awkward trying to figure out where [he could] eat..." Others said they did not like the food on campus because of cultural preferences, or that restaurants lacked variety for those with special dietary requirements (e.g., vegetarians). As a result, these individuals reported spending up to an extra hour in the morning preparing lunch for the day. Others would forget to bring a lunch or would not eat because they simply could not justify the expense of a meal on campus. These students reported either relying on snacks such as a candy bar to sustain them or waiting until they could get back home (often not until late in the evening).

Academic Issues

Overwhelmingly, students reported that academically, college was a lot harder than high school. Focus group data provide specific details about what that actually meant for students. In the first focus group, most spoke about their study habits as something they wished to improve, but at the same time, they appeared less focused on actualizing this and more confident in their ability to manage classes. However, during the follow-up focus groups the perceived level of intensity around their academic work became more pronounced as participants reported a need to decrease the time spent socializing and increase time spent studying. In the final focus group, students expressed regret for not having "taken seriously" their studies earlier in the term. They explained that "high school was like a jail compared to college..."; "there is no detention for

not going to classes" and students had to learn to adjust to this independence.

While many students noted that commuting allowed them to compartmentalize their lives by focusing on studying at school and relaxing at home, in the final focus group students discussed the challenges to attempting to study at home more often, in particular family responsibilities and expectations (e.g., a younger sibling wanting help with homework, mother wanting help preparing dinner, help caring for a grandmother).

Involvement in On-Campus Activities

Most students reported participating in activities on and off campus, including volunteering, athletics, social/environmental activism, and involvement in general student organisations. And while the majority of students were involved in at least one on-campus activity, most reported a desire to be more involved, citing obstacles such as having to take night classes (many for the first time) and safety concerns with having to take public transportation in the evening; being too busy with academics; concerns about getting home too late; not being able to get home because buses stop running after a certain hour; or having to rely on family for transportation. Additionally, commuters expressed some dissatisfaction with the University's current student activity programming:

"...student groups...all have meetings that are in the night...
...events...sort of play on the times for students who live here.
...sometimes it does feel like [the university is] not really considering commuters...when planning events."

In later groups, students reported being more involved in on-campus activities and events as a result of developing greater on-campus peer networks, including family who are University staff/ residents or developing friendships with other commuters (particularly those met during Welcome Week). Also, as stated earlier, increased familiarity with transportation options seemed to improve students' ability to participate in on-campus events.

Socializing

Participants all agreed on the importance of having a social life and not isolating oneself, claiming benefits to one's emotional health. The majority of participants also mentioned Welcome Week commuter events as wonderful events, during which they were able to enjoy the camaraderie of meeting other commuters and bonding with them over

the course of the program. Of those who forged friendships during this time, most reported still being in contact with those persons, and described a sense of community that resulted from those relationships:

"...you know somebody rather than [being] just one person in 40,000."

This is an important point, particularly since many commuters described sometimes strained relationships with residential students. Students explained that they needed to limit their social interactions in order to accommodate traveling to and from home. For instance, students described few connections with high school friends who were now living in the dorms. Several students also noted that their residential counterparts would question their choice to commute, making comments such as "don't you want to get out [of your parents' home]?!" One student reported her frustration with this response from others and explained, "...you're not going to be socially retarded if you're a commuter student."

Factors in Choosing to Commute / Benefits of Commuting

Participants were asked to discuss factors in their decision to commute as well as their thoughts on the main benefits of commuting. Most cited financial savings as the biggest factor in their decision to commute, as well as the greatest benefit of commuting. For many students, their parents would only continue to support them if they remained at home. For students responsible for paying for school themselves, commuting was the only way to graduate while accruing as little debt as possible. The second largest factor and benefit of commuting was the retention of home comforts, such as their bed, personal space, private bathroom, and having chores done for them (e.g., meals, laundry, and rides to/from campus). Students also described home as an "escape" from campus; that they "just kind of feel trapped [on campus]" and could more effectively focus on studying at school and relaxing at home. Other factors in the decision to commute included students not feeling ready to live independently (either self-perception or parents' perception), cultural expectations/norms (ethnicity, not acceptable for girls to leave home before marriage, follow path of older siblings who commuted, blaze trail for younger siblings) and family commitments/obligations (help take care of an elderly family member or younger siblings, household responsibilities).

Commuter Connection

Initially, most students reported having heard of the on-campus commuter student group, called the Commuter Connection, and having visited the physical space at least once since starting college; most also expressed a desire to visit again. However, over the course of the semester, students said they were not planning on revisiting unless it was for free food or to utilize printing resources. One of the barriers to utilizing the space was how crowded it tends to be. Students said it was not a good place to study (even though that is one of the goals of the space); a few even expressed feeling intimidated by the number of upperclassman and therefore uncomfortable visiting without a friend. The one student who reported using the space did so because she had a locker there.

When asked if having a bigger space would help, the majority said it would not. As one student noted "I tend to find that normally when space is there, it tends to get filled up. So, I think if it was just more space it would just mean that it was just equally, percentage-wise, filled up."

However, the majority of students expressed appreciation for this space, as it validates commuters as a unique population with unique needs. As one commuter reported, her mother said, "Wow! When I was a commuter back in the day, they didn't have anything like that at the University!" Another student noted how the Commuter Connection "really stepped up to give commuters a better experience." In addition, when students did use this space, the majority of them perceived it to be a fun place, whose main functions including providing commuters a place to socialize, watch television, get free food, and print papers.

Having space or events solely for commuters, even if not used by all or often, sends a clear message to commuters about their value as members of the University community. However, while a facility just for commuters is critical, in order to effectively meet their needs, an institution-wide commitment to doing so is essential.

Programming for Parents

When first asked about the relationship with their parents, commuters painted a very pleasant picture of affable parents who were flexible and created very few, if any, obstacles during the transition to college. However, as participants became more comfortable with each other (and presumably, with the facilitators) they began to offer a more balanced view of these relationships.

First and most notably, was how accommodating commuters' parents were: offering rides to/from campus; making breakfast or lunch; doing laundry; waiting until students came home late from classes to have dinner as a family or simply to ensure their safe arrival. Some

participants reported no longer having to do household chores; instead being told to "just focus on your studies, do homework; do whatever you want. We'll take care of the rest." One commuter even reported her mother riding the bus with her prior to the start of the semester, thus easing her into a routine. As a result, some reported feeling closer to one or both parents.

However, not all students reported such flexibility at home, nor were all aspects of the relationships congenial. Some students actually reported feeling as though "there's a gap in the relationship sometimes, 'cause you used to be so close and now you don't have time for anything else [but school]." Other students reported numerous family obligations, including continuing to have household responsibilities (e.g., taking out the garbage, cooking meals, mowing the lawn); assisting with the care of younger siblings or elderly family members; or being expected to participate in family activities to the same extent as they did during high school (e.g., birthdays, shopping trips, family dinners). One student who initially reported appreciating her parents' willingness to accommodate her schedule, later expressed a desire for them to stop as it was causing her to experience guilt. As the semester progressed, students reported experiencing an ongoing sense of guilt and obligation toward their families, as families continued to oblige the student, but at the same time subtly expressed a desire for the student to be less involved at school and more involved at home, saying things such as, "Wow! You're never home at all!" Students then had to manage this push and pull of the relationship with their families.

When asked what they would like their parents to know about their college experience, several students confidently said that they are having fun and enjoying themselves. However, the majority spoke more strongly of the desire to ask their parents to support them in their development as young adults, by being flexible, giving physical and psychological space and allowing them the chance to be independent and make their own choices.

Overall, students explained that parents were adjusting as best they could to their students' hectic and often unpredictable commuting lifestyles. Students, however, were having a more difficult time managing their burgeoning adulthood, the responsibilities of commuting, the process of adjusting to the realities of a University curriculum, while still living at home with their parents.

Discussion

Consistent with our findings, nearly all the literature on commuters cites reliable transportation or getting to and from campus as the number one

commuter challenge (Jacoby, 2000; Jacoby & Garland, 2005). Related to transportation are issues of parking, inclement weather, vehicle maintenance, and alternative transportation options, all of which impact the way commuters' schedule their classes and the amount of time they spend on campus (Jacoby, 2000; Jacoby & Garland, 2005). By identifying the major issues, beyond transportation, for students living at home while attending university, the university can provide resources to better support student success. For instance, parents who did not themselves attend a university may not have an understanding of the demands their student is encountering. Even those who attended a university 20 or more years ago are likely to be unaware of the contemporary experience in higher education. Messages on those critical topics from the university, then, can reinforce the information students are trying to relay about the financial, academic, and technological expectations of an education today.

Implications

These findings have critical implications for supporting commuter students and their families. Specifically, they have led to the following changes on the campus that was involved in this research:

- 1. a change to dining services and making more food options available for commuter students:
- 2. a commuter parent dinner in the fall in conjunction with Parents Weekend a reason for parents to come to campus for Parents Weekend;
- 3. the development of a website addressing issues unique to families of commuters (http://www.parent.umn.edu/commuter.html); and
- 4. a slide presentation prepared by commuter students talking about the things they most wanted parents to know (http://www.parent.umn.edu/CCPresentation.pdf).

In the focus groups, students provided specific suggestions to better support their success:

- Make contracts for student parking more accessible;
- Increase the number of convenient commuter parking lots;
- Make public transportation more affordable;
- Offer campus dining information specifically for commuters;
- Develop an online forum in which commuters can exchange ideas

- and discuss commuter issues (e.g., where to eat, post events);
- Create subject-specific study/learning opportunities for commuters who have long breaks between morning and evening classes;
- Create a class schedule that would allow commuters to spend more time participating in on-campus activities (e.g., some majors give students very little ability to schedule their classes in blocks);
- Create a cohort model for commuters, the result of which would be a sense of belonging and camaraderie similar to that experienced in the residence halls; as one participant framed it "where is the resident bond, but for commuters?";
- Refine definition of commuter student to reflect their diversity and better pinpoint their needs;
- Explore resident students' perceptions of commuters and any potential negative effects of this perception on commuters themselves;
- Create a system for preventing residential students from using commuter resources;
- Vary event times so that they do not repeatedly conflict with other student obligations;
- Market and promote commuter resources;
- Create an upperclassman/underclassman buddy system to help commuter students transition to university.

Students also had advice for other commuter students:

- Start planning your schedule early (i.e., bus routes/parking, classes, where to eat, etc.)
- Plan your bus route at least one day in advance, then actually ride your route and physically locate your classes prior to the start of the term
- Have a backup plan should your primary ride fall through (e.g., know different bus routes; have a friend/family member you can call)
- Be prepared to be on campus a lot, even if you think you will be able to get home in between classes
- Always have something to do between classes; utilize your time wisely
- Socializing is good, but it is more important to dedicate more of your time to studying/doing homework

- Do not carry all of your books to school; plan ahead and plan wisely for what you will need; use a locker if one is available
- Keep your parents posted on your workload and activities
- Get involved on campus as much as possible
- Get involved in off-campus organisations (volunteer)
- Be proactive and seek opportunities; do not expect opportunities to find you
- Do not jam-pack your schedule; leave yourself some down-time

Finally, commuter students had suggestions on how universities can better support their parents and families. They reported that the best way to communicate with parents is via email (including a monthly newsletter), parent informational meetings, and through a website. The emphasised the importance of a Parents Weekend. Students also suggested universities create a way to connect commuter parents, for example, creating a mentor style program that connects experienced commuter parents with new commuter parents, or by creating a virtual cohort of parents - an online forum or community specifically for parents of commuter students.

Limitations and Future Directions

While this study provides important information on expectations and experiences of commuter students and how they view the implications of these experiences for their families, it has limitations. This study was conducted entirely at a single, urban, Midwestern university in the United States, with a small sample of students. Circumstances and experiences at other higher education institutions are important in considering differences inherent to families of other cultures and nationalities, and differences that may be caused by transportation and distance issues in other communities. Information from parents and families is needed to provide a better understanding of the transition as the academic year begins, how families manage during the first semester, and what issues arise as students continue through their academic career, including consideration of the impact if students subsequently choose to leave home and live with other students. It is hard to assess the family impact without data from families. Future research should consider students' and parents' perspectives. In addition, these findings raise important questions about the role of peer relationships in the lives of commuter students. Knowing how important peers are in a student's identity development, and the impact poor selfassessment can have on school performance (Arnett, 2001), additional research is needed on this relationship.

Additional research on commuter students around the world is clearly needed. This study was unable to address the diverse contexts that are unique to country, state, and geographic region more broadly, that commuter students exist within. We were also unable to explore the impact of individual differences such as culture or whether a student is a first generation college student on the commuter experience. Large datasets would allow us to consider the diversity within the commuter student population, including mature-age commuter students, thereby identifying the different barriers that different cohorts of students are working to overcome and consequently the supports necessary for commuter student success.

Conclusion

Commuter students face many of the same challenges as resident students as they adjust to a more rigorous university curriculum, balancing the freedom to socialize with the need to study and with other first year college student plights. They also contend with issues identified as unique to the commuter student, including meeting transportation and nutritional needs; managing family dynamics; trying to develop on-campus support networks; having to negotiate off-campus relationships and multiple life-roles; and overall figuring out who they are as people. These results are consistent with the research of others (Buote et al., 2007; Dugan et al., 2008; Jacoby, 2000; Jacoby & Garland, 2005; Kuh et al., 2001; Pascarella, 2006; Sessa, 2005). The qualitative data generated from this study, provides a more nuanced glimpse into the lives of commuter students. Students we spoke with were highly motivated and excelling academically, with most having participated in at least one post-secondary program. These are students whom universities want to attract and retain.

Parents, siblings, and other family members are essential contributors to students' adjustment and success at university, but only if they understand the challenges and opportunities the student faces. By helping families understand the unique dynamics of commuting and living at home during the university years, at least during the first year, families may be better able to support their student's success and avoid potential ill effects on the student-parent relationship. The case for continuing parental involvement into university is strong. For young adults, a strong relationship with parents leads to better adjustment to university life and higher academic achievement (Wintre & Sugar, 2000; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000). In addition, remaining connected to family is a critical part of the development of autonomy - young people need to separate from family while maintaining those connections.

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Appendix A

Focus Group Questions

- 1. What are the greatest benefits of commuting?
- 2. What has been most different about being in college compared with high school so far? What challenges do you think are common for commuter students (do you see your commuting friends having)? Have you experienced any of those things?

Topics to raise if not brought up by participants:

- Commuting
- Financial Issues
- Housing
- Activities
- Advising
- Study groups
- Social life
- Lack of attention from University (feeling unaccepted)
- Orientation programs
- 4. (If indicated challenges above) We are interested in ways the University could make the challenges you've just described easier. What has or has not been helpful so far? What would you like to be different?

- 5. In what ways would you like to be involved at the University? (or not involved)
 - a. How does the University make you feel like you're a part of or not a part of the University community?

Now I want to talk about the role your parents and families play in your transition to college and your college experience.

- 6. How do your parents/families make your college transition and experience better, or more manageable?
- 7. What are some ways your parents make your college experience more difficult?

Topics to raise if not brought up by participants:

- Commuting
- Financial issues
- Responsibilities at home
- Career choices
- Choosing a major
- Studying and study groups
- Work
- Lack of parental understanding of what college is really like
- Privacy related to grades, finances, etc.
- 8. What would you like your parents to know about your experiences at the U?
- 9. What is the best way to get information to your parents? Internet? Handouts to students?

Closing - We are getting close to the end. I just have a couple of more questions for you.

- 10. Are you already involved or do you plan to get involved in the Commuter Connection student group? Why or why not?
- 11. What advice would you give to an incoming commuter student?
- 12. What advice would you give to parents of commuter students?

- 13. Is there anything else you would like to share about how the University can support commuter students?
- 14. Is there anything else you would like to share about how your parents/family can support you as a commuter student?

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Mindfulness: What is all the fuss about?

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Abstract

Mindfulness-based therapies constitute a fast growing area within psychology. Mindfulness involves, in essence, paying attention to current experiences in an accepting manner. The four main types of mindfulness-based therapy are described here to give a flavour of what the therapy looks like. The origins of these therapies are explored; specifically the connections with Buddhist consciousness technologies and with Cognitive Behavioural Therapies. The mechanisms which are posited to explain the efficacy of mindfulness are also described. The last section of this paper addresses the controversial question of whether it is necessary for mindfulness instructors/therapists to undertake their own mindfulness practice, and if so, how much.

Mindfulness: What is all the Fuss About?

Mindfulness is the name given to an emerging group of practices being used in psychological counselling and health services to increase physical and emotional health. Mindfulness appears to be one of the fastest growing areas of practice and research in the field (Khong and Mruk, 2009; Shapiro, 2009). A search of the PsychINFO database shows a rapid increase in numbers of publications on the topic. Prior to 1998 there were around five to ten publications a year on the topic. By 2002 that number had risen to over 30, and between 2002 and 2007 it grew to 145 per year (Khong & Mruk, 2009). Shapiro (2009) cites a number of other indices of research interest and publication which show mindfulness to be a fast expanding field and suggests that: "The rate at which mindfulness is exploding into the psychological literature, both in research and in practice, is staggering" (p.556). The year 2009 saw the publication of two large clinically oriented manuals on mindfulness (F. Didonna, 2009; Shapiro, & Carlson, 2009). So far in 2010, Ruth Baer has released a new book on assessing mindfulness and acceptance processes, and Springer launched a new journal entitled Mindfulness.

This growing interest has resulted in the publication of a raft of studies on the efficacy of various mindfulness-based therapies in addressing a wide variety of presenting problems, from anxiety and depression to psychosis, addiction, chronic pain, stress and other health

problems. While the studies are often small and sometimes without control groups, there is a consensus that the results are positive and encouraging and that there is sufficient empirical support to justify the use of these therapies (Baer, 2003; Germer, 2005b; Kostanski, Hassed, Gullone, Ciechomski, Chambers, & Allen, 2006). It is also generally agreed that there is a need for a larger number of randomised controlled trials and for studies to be replicated, (necessary to achieve the 'gold standard' of evidence based practice), to further validate the results that have emerged to date.

Mindfulness involves paying attention to current internal and external experiences in an accepting manner. The classic and oft-quoted definition of mindfulness coined by the founder of mindfulness-based stress reduction, Jon Kabat-Zinn, is: "paying attention in a particular and purpose, in the present moment. judgementally" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p.4). While the task of describing and operationalising mindfulness is ongoing and many definitions have been generated (Baer, 2009) there seem to be three aspects that are core to the construct. These are (1) paying attention or intentionally observing, (2) to present or current experience, (3) with a certain quality or attitude variously described as "acceptance, openness, allowing, nonjudging, willingness, kindness and curiosity" (Baer, 2009, p.155). A very condensed version of the construct is suggested by Germer (2005b), who defines mindfulness as "awareness of present experience, with acceptance" (p.7).

This paper will firstly introduce the most widespread and well researched mindfulness programs, namely Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR); Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT); Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT); and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). It will then outline some of the background to mindfulness practices including the connection of modern mindfulness to Buddhism and to cognitive behavioural therapies. Next is a description of the mechanisms which are posited as the active ingredients of mindfulness interventions. The last section discusses the controversial issue of whether extensive personal mindfulness practice is necessary for mindfulness instructors and therapists.

1. Mindfulness-based therapies

There are four main treatment programs incorporating mindfulness, which are empirically supported by research (Baer, 2009). MBSR and MBCT are exclusively group-based programs. DBT is a therapy program incorporating individual and group modalities and ACT is

primarily an individual therapy model although more group programs are being developed each year.

1.a) Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR)

MBSR was developed by Kabat-Zinn for treating chronically ill patients at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. The program is typically run over 8 to 10 weeks in a weekly meeting of 2.5 hours with a full day meeting included around week 6. Skills practiced include yoga, mindfulness meditations, mindful eating and walking, and a body scan process, as well as discussions of stress management. Daily home practice of these skills is expected (Baer, 2003; Germer 2005a). By 2005 over 15,000 patients had completed the program at the Stress Reduction clinic and there were an estimated further 250 MBSR programs operating worldwide (Germer, 2005b).

1.b) Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT)

MBCT was developed by Segal, Teasdale & Williams (2002), in an attempt to prevent relapse among chronically depressed people in a manner that was more cost effective than individual CBT or interpersonal therapy (Segal, Teasdale, & Williams, 2004). The program is very similar to the MBSR program, with eight weekly sessions of 2.5 hours. The main differences are that MBCT introduces a 3 minute breathing space exercise as a core skill, and incorporates more cognitive therapy, tailored to depressive thought patterns.

1.c) Dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT)

DBT was developed by Marsha Linehan (1993) to treat people with borderline personality disorder and self harming behaviours. The model is well validated, well known and widely used with this group of clients (Lazar, 2005). The DBT program typically runs for a year and incorporates group skills training sessions and individual therapy sessions. Topics include mindfulness skills (which are seen as core), as well as interpersonal effectiveness, emotion regulation and distress tolerance. The program does not include formal sitting meditation as people with borderline personality disorder are believed to have insufficient attention regulation to achieve such a task (Germer, 2005a). Instead mindfulness is taught in the context of daily life activities.

1.d) Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT)

ACT was developed by Hayes, Strosahl and Wilson (1999), as a therapy model to address universal human vulnerabilities, which when extreme, create pathology. There are six key components or core processes. These involve developing (Hayes, 2004):

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'cognitive defusion' (detachment from thoughts)
'acceptance' (of experience, sensations, events)
being 'in the present moment'
'self as context' (observing self)
and 'committed action' towards
'cherished values'.
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There are over a hundred possible training exercises offered within the model, and the timing and presentation of these elements is dictated by practitioner discretion (Hayes et. al., 1999). ACT is also delivered in group programs, and a number of protocols exist for specific presenting problems.

1.e) Other Programs

Beyond these four programs there is a wide range of other mindfulness-based group programs. This is evidenced by the large number of chapters and articles describing mindfulness-based programs (eg. Didonna, 2009; Goodman, 2005; Zylowska, Smalley, & Schwartz, 2009), and the number of training courses that emphasise mindfulness-based work. In developing these interventions, practitioners and researchers are drawing on elements of the major programs mentioned above and elements from a variety of Eastern based meditation and yoga practices, which are then sometimes applied in combination with other therapies. One well known Australian example is the Mindfulness-integrated Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (MiCBT, not to be confused with MBCT), developed by Bruno Calhoun in Hobart (http://www.mindfulness.net.au/).

1.f) Mindfulness in Individual Psychotherapy

There is also evidence of a significant body of practitioners incorporating mindfulness into individual psychotherapy (Didonna, 2009; Germer, Siegel, & Fulton, 2005). Germer suggests there are three types of mindfulness oriented psychotherapy:

the "practicing therapist" which simply involves the therapist practising mindfulness themselves, which is believed to impact on their therapeutic presence and skill;

"mindfulness-informed psychotherapy", where the therapist practises mindfulness and also uses a mindfulness-based framework to guide and inform therapy;

"mindfulness-based psychotherapy" where the therapist practises mindfulness, uses a mindfulness-based framework in therapy, and actively teaches mindfulness skills to clients (Germer, 2005a). Fulton (2009) suggests the varying of styles of mindfulness in psychotherapy be conceptualised more as a continuum ranging from the implicit use of mindfulness (as in Germer's "practicing therapist") through increasingly explicit uses of mindfulness involving the sharing of mindfulness based concepts and skills (as in Germer's mindfulness based psychotherapy).

2. Background to Mindfulness Practices

2.a) Connections with Buddhism and Meditation

Mindfulness techniques are related to meditation and have historical roots in Buddhist practices. Practitioners such as Kabat Zinn who have studied Buddhism and then introduced Buddhist technologies of consciousness into psychology, characterise Buddhism as: "a coherent phenomenological description of the nature of mind, emotion, and suffering and its potential release" (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p.145).

Buddhist texts divide meditation into concentration meditation and mindfulness meditation (Olendzki, 2005; Palmo, 2002) and this distinction appears to be maintained by mindfulness-based psychologists as a useful one (Germer, 2005b). Concentration meditation involves focusing on a set object such as a sound, image or sensation, to which the attention is redirected again and again. Concentration meditation is said to increase skills in mental focus and to increase calmness (Germer, 2005a; Palmo, 2002).

In contrast, mindfulness meditation (also known as insight meditation) involves giving attention, in a particular way, to whatever arises in awareness. The objects of meditation can be sensory experiences such as images, sounds, smells, sensations, or internal experiences such as thoughts and emotions, and the object will vary over the course of the sitting. Mindfulness meditation is particularly effective at easing distress due to physical or emotional pain or difficult thoughts, by changing ones relationship to the distress. It also develops insight into the mind and emotions themselves (Germer, 2005b; Palmo, 2002). The relationship between concentration meditation and mindfulness meditation is seen as complementary (Germer, 2005b; Palmo 2002).

Concentration meditation techniques were introduced to the west on a wide scale in the late 1960s and psychologists took a particular interest in them (Germer 2005b). Numerous studies followed, demonstrating the benefits of concentration meditation techniques and some occasional adverse side effects (Kostanski et al., 2006; Segal et al., 2002). In 1979 Jon Kabat-Zinn established the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University

of Massachusetts, and began teaching MBSR which is based on the techniques of mindfulness meditation. Following this development research interest appears to have shifted from concentration meditation techniques to mindfulness based techniques over the last 20 years (Germer, 2005b; Segal et al., 2002).

2.b) Connections with Cognitive Behavioural Approaches

Segal, Teasdale and Williams (2004) along with Hayes, (2004) and Pull (2008) define some mindfulness interventions as a 'third phase' or 'third wave' of behaviourally informed therapies (with the second wave being the incorporation of cognitive therapy). This third phase is described as one which features: "treatments that retain the structure associated with ... earlier phases but [it also] incorporates elements such as dialectical philosophy, mindfulness, acceptance, relationship, and spirituality, that are outside the ken of what most would consider behaviour therapy" (Segal et al., 2004, p.45).

The creators of DBT, ACT and MBCT were all trained in cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) and were all, in different ways, wanting to improve on it. All three therapies retain aspects of CBT within their structures. CBT and mindfulness-based therapies share an understanding that avoidance of distressing stimuli is problematic and leads to pathology (Orsillo, Roemer, Lerner, & Tull, 2004). Both approaches utilise interoceptive exposure, though in CBT the goal is to extinguish the distress response whereas in mindfulness the goal is to be able to mindfully observe and tolerate the distress (Orsillo et al., 2004). Another similarity involves the use of behavioural activation type strategies. In CBT this would be approached through behavioural scheduling with the aim of improving mood, whereas in ACT for example, it would be framed as the taking of committed action toward valued directions for life, with the aim of living life to the full (Kanter, Baruch, & Gaynor, 2006).

The major area of difference between mindfulness therapies and CBT occurs in the treatment of cognitions and emotions. Where CBT employs methods of disputation and restructuring beliefs, seeking to alter or eliminate negative or unrealistic thinking, mindfulness-based therapies aim to accept the existence of the negative thoughts and to soften the impact of the experience via mindfulness practices. In mindfulness-based therapies acceptance of the thoughts is sufficient treatment (Segal et al., 2004). In terms of tackling difficult emotions, CBT attempts to reduce them by changing their antecedents (the thoughts) whereas mindfulness tackles them by changing the person's relationship and response to the emotions, to a more accepting, less

distressed one.

This difference in approach is reflected in research outcomes. For example, while the efficacy of ACT and CBT in many studies is comparable, it seems to be achieved (at least in part), through different mechanisms. A number of studies comparing ACT and CBT show that ACT does not reduce the frequency of distress related thoughts (e.g., depressogenic beliefs) in the way that CBT does, rather it alters the believability of distress related thoughts and so achieves a reduction of suffering by changing the person's relationship to the thoughts (eg, Forman, Herbert, Moitra, Yeomans, & Geller, 2007; Zettle and Hayes, 1989). These different mechanisms are clearly connected to the mindfulness theory and practice embedded within ACT.

3. Mechanisms which may explain the efficacy of mindfulness

That mindfulness increases well-being is generally supported by research. However what is not yet clear, from a Western psychology perspective, is what psychological mechanisms are involved (Carmody, Baer, Lykins, & Olendzki, 2009). There are several mechanisms suggested which may account for the beneficial effects of mindfulness, which are currently under investigation (Kocovski, Segal & Batista, 2009). They include:

3.a) Increased metacognitive awareness

Also known as decentring, and called defusion in ACT. It involves the ability to see thoughts as passing mental events rather than being "true" facts. There is some evidence for this being an active mechanism via which mindfulness contributes to well-being (Kocovski et al. 2009).

3.b) Decreased rumination

There is evidence that mindfulness training leads to decreased rumination and that this is related to experiencing lower levels of distress (Kocovski et al., 2009).

3.c) Increased acceptance

A key element of mindfulness is the attitude with which one observes phenomena - that attitude being variously named non-judging, friendly, curious or accepting. The acceptance of unpleasant physical sensations, difficult thoughts and feelings, as opposed to avoiding them or suppressing them, is believed to be beneficial. Indeed the construct of acceptance plays a prominent role in psychotherapy (Baer, 2003) and there appears to be quite a body of literature on how acceptance may facilitate healing and health. In terms of mindfulness research, there is evidence that increases in acceptance leads to greater pain tolerance and

lower anxiety (Kocovski et al., 2009).

3.d) Desensitisation via Exposure

Exposure has been posited as a possible mechanism of action for mindfulness, (Baer, 2003) though there is not clear research evidence of this to date (Kocovski et al., 2009). An accepting reaction to feared stimuli (internally or externally generated) may function in a similar way to exposure where surviving the experience in fact reduces conditioned fear responses.

4. Is personal practice of mindfulness necessary for mindfulness based therapists and instructors?

The Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts insisted from its inception that MBSR instructors must practice mindfulness meditation themselves at a fairly intensive level. The required personal practice involves having an ongoing meditation practice including attendance at a minimum of one 5 to 10 day silent, teacher-led insight meditation retreat ("Practicum in MBSR", 2009). As Kabat-Zinn describes it:

"A working principle for MBSR teachers is that we never ask more of our patients in terms of practice than we ask of ourselves on a daily basis. Another is that we are all students and the learning and growing are a lifelong engagement" (2003, p.150).

Segal, Williams and Teasdale (2002) tell an interesting tale in this regard. Coming from a cognitive behavioural background with an interest in preventing depression relapse, they decided to try incorporating mindfulness into their approach, and went to the Stress Reduction Clinic to get trained. After observing the staff at the clinic they came to the conclusion that the ability of staff to "embody" a gentle mindful attitude to the deep physical pain and distress of their patients, was founded on their extensive personal practice of mindfulness. They describe the MBSR instructors as relating to clients in a way that is "invitational" of a kinder relationship to life and distress, and comment that the assumption of "continuity" between the mental lives of instructors and participants (no separate pathology is posited for patients) is encouraging to patients (Segal et al., 2002, p56). It is interesting that they avoid use of the concept of "modelling" when explaining the beneficial role that instructor/practitioner mindfulness practice plays in teaching mindfulness skills. They are probably following Kabat-Zinn in this, who avoids the term "modelling" as it: "carries the unfortunate connotation of intentionally acting in a particular way for the sake of appearances" (Kabat-Zinn. 2003, p.150).

Instructors in MBCT do need to have a personal mindfulness practice but the parameters of that are less strictly defined than for MBSR (Crane, 2009). DBT and ACT on the other hand do not seem to require any specific mindfulness or meditation experience of practitioners (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999, Linehan, 1993).

The notion that extensive practice is a necessary prerequisite for teaching mindfulness seems to be a controversial idea in the wider field of psychotherapy (Germer, 2005b). More and more practitioners are choosing to engage with mindfulness-based techniques within psychotherapy, and many believe extensive practice is not necessary. The general rule appears to be that, if practitioners teach a meditation or technique, they need to have experienced it at least once. This may amount to no more than the commonsense notion that experiencing a psychological technique aids practitioners in learning to apply it.

Germer suggests that the level of personal practice necessary for therapists may depend on how much mindfulness they intend bringing into therapy. The more deeply therapy is based on mindfulness, the more practice will be needed to make this authentic (Germer, 2005a).

However while some commentators and practitioners have a relaxed attitude to the need for personal mindfulness practice, others caution that mindfulness should not be understood in a purely intellectual way. Khong and Mruk (2009) in the introduction to a special mindfulness edition of the Humanistic Psychologist journal note that: "several authors [within the journal] cautioned against the use of mindfulness practice as just a technique" (p.114). Kabat Zinn (2009) raises similar concerns:

As interest in mindfulness proliferates in both clinical and research environments, it is critical to keep in mind and communicate to others that mindfulness; however it is construed cognitively and conceptually, is a practice, not merely a good idea. To my mind, one of the greatest risks we face in this growing field is that mindfulness will be grasped and understood in a limited way, simply as a concept. Unless we stress the element of embodied **practice** ... it may be that many people yet to come into the field might imagine that they already understand what mindfulness is, and insist, naively but sincerely, perhaps, that they already live in the present moment and know how to be non-judgemental - and wonder what all the fuss is about. What is the big deal? (Foreword, p.xxx. Emphasis in original).

My own experience, as a practitioner of mindfulness training in a tertiary counselling setting, is that my personal practice of mindfulness meditation contributes significantly to the quality of my life. I believe that it enhances my ability to tailor mindfulness exercises to fit individual clients, to interpret their responses, and to effectively teach them mindfulness skills. Undoubtedly, it is the experience of mindfulness in my own life that motivates me to keep sharing mindfulness with clients.

In summary, within the field of psychology, mindfulness appears to be a growing area of practice and research, which is yielding promising outcomes in terms of relieving human distress. It incorporates Eastern technologies of consciousness, often in conjunction with elements of CBT. The mechanisms which account for its efficacy are the subject of current research. Lastly, a number of experienced mindfulness practitioners tend to the view that an extensive personal experience with mindfulness makes an important contribution to effective delivery of mindfulness based therapies.

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Introducing a routine outcome and feedback measure in an Australian university counselling service

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Abstract

This paper describes the introduction of the Outcome Questionnaire-45 (OQ-45) as a routine outcome measure within an Australian University Counselling Service, and outlines the rationale, implementation and practical considerations involved in its administration. The use of accompanying software (OQ-Analyst) to collect and analyse data electronically, and to generate instant feedback reports to counsellors is also explained. Preliminary outcomes in terms of feasibility and acceptability, clinical status of presenting clients, effectiveness of counselling and feedback to counsellors will be discussed.

Keywords: outcome measures, university counselling service, Outcome Questionnaire-45, feedback, benchmarking, student mental health

Background

Most, if not all, Australian universities provide counselling services for students and about half that number also provide counselling to university staff, according to a survey of 28 out of a total of 37 publicly funded Australian universities (Situational Analysis - Counsellors on University Campuses, 2007). Yet there is very little data available concerning the levels of distress or extent of mental health problems of students presenting to university counselling services in Australia, beyond anecdotal reports by counsellors. In part, this is due to the absence of standardised screening measures being used routinely as part of the intake process. Similarly, little is known about the effectiveness of counselling in university settings in Australia, whether to improve retention, which has been of particular concern in recent years, or the overall well being and mental health of students. Once again, this is in part due to the absence of outcome measures to monitor clients' progress in response to counselling and the impact of counselling on

academic performance. While some Australian university counselling services report using outcome measures or measures of therapeutic alliance (personal communication; ANZSSA Bulletin Board¹), it is not known how many do so routinely or in a systematic way. This is not the case elsewhere, where standardised measures are used extensively, if not nationally, enabling cross institutional comparisons, national benchmarking and collaborative research between university counselling services, mental health and primary care services.

In the United Kingdom (UK), the CORE System (Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation - see www.coreims.co.uk) was developed between 1995 - 1998 as a standardised set of measures to be used as an outcome, quality, evaluation and clinical audit tool for psychological and counselling services throughout the UK (Barkham, Mellor-Clark, Connell, & Cahill, 2006). CORE consists of two main measures - an outcome measure CORE-OM, which is a 34 item self-report questionnaire completed by a client pre- and post-counselling and includes items covering subjective well-being (four items), symptoms/ problems (12 items) and life/social functioning (12 items); and an assessment measure CORE-A, which consists of two forms completed by a practitioner: the Therapist Assessment Form (TAF) and the End of Therapy Form (EOT) and collects demographic information about the client and descriptive information about the presenting problem and/or diagnosis (Evans, Connell, Barkham, Margison, McGrath et al., 2002; Evans, Mellor-Clark, Margison, Barkham, et al., 2000).

In the UK, CORE is used extensively within the National Health Service (NHS) and other public and private sector services, including university counselling services (Barkham, Gilbert, Connell, Marshall, & Twigg, 2005). CORE-PC is a computer software program that enables electronic data collation, management and reporting. The establishment of a National Research Database, with data pooled from participating services, has enabled the development of national benchmarks and facilitated research in a wide range of areas (Mellor-Clark, Curtis Jenkins, Evans, Mothersole, & McInnes, 2006). These have included comparison of effectiveness of different forms of therapy (Stiles, Barkham, Mellor-Clark, & Connell, 2008; Stiles, Barkham, Twigg, Mellor-Clark, & Cooper, 2006), dose response i.e. how much treatment a client needs to reach recovery (Barkham et al., 2006a) and benchmarking against practitioners and services in terms of effectiveness and outcomes (Mullin, Barkham, Mothersole, Bewick, & Kinder, 2006).

¹An email list server for members of the Australian and New Zealand Student Services Association Inc.

Recent research within the university sector in the UK using CORE found only marginally lower levels of severity of mental health problems in students presenting to university counselling services compared to an aged matched sample presenting in NHS primary care services, and similar levels of risk to self (Connell, Barkham & Mellor-Clark, 2007). The authors' conclusion that university counselling services should be afforded the same level of resources as primary care for the provision of mental health services would be difficult to sustain in Australia where comparisons of this kind are not easily substantiated.

In the United States (USA), the OQ-45 (Outcome Questionnaire) and the OQ Family of Instruments (see www.oqmeasures.com), were developed in the early 1990s as standardised measures to track client progress and outcomes in counselling and psychotherapy. It is used extensively throughout the United States across a wide range of clinical settings and in university counselling services, as well as on several continents in 17 different languages. Like CORE-OM, the OQ-45 is a global self-report measure of client distress and functioning, rather than a diagnostic tool, that includes subscales for symptom distress, interpersonal relationships, functioning at work or school and an overall score. Unlike CORE-OM, it is designed to be used on a session by session basis to track change in response to treatment, and more specifically, to identify clients who are not progressing and are at risk of dropping out.

Research over ten years involving five randomised clinical trials (RCT) (Harmon et al., 2007; Hawkins, Lambert, Vermeesch, Slade, & Tuttle, 2004; Lambert et al., 2001; Lambert et al., 2002; Whipple et al., 2003) has shown that providing feedback to Counsellors on their clients' progress on a session by session basis, significantly improves outcomes for clients who are deteriorating (Harmon et al., 2007; Hawkins et al., 2004; Lambert et al., 2001; Lambert et al., 2002), and successfully predicts clients who are not on track for recovery and are at risk of drop out in 85-100% of failing cases (Hannan et al., 2005). Interestingly, this pioneering research was conducted within a university counselling service - Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. Research using the OO-45 has focused on improving the rapeutic outcomes through the use of feedback to therapists (Lambert et al., 2001; Lambert et al., 2002) and feedback to clients and therapists on clients' progress (Harmon et al., 2007; Hawkins et al., 2004); the use of Clinical Support Tools (Harmon et al., 2007; Slade, Lambert, Harmon, Smart, & Bailey, 2008; Whipple et al., 2003); identifying clients at risk of treatment failure (Hannan et al., 2005); and measuring variance in therapist effectiveness (Anderson, Ogles, Patterson, Lambert, & Vermeersch, 2009; Okiishi et al., 2006).

OQ-Analyst, like CORE-PC, is a computer software program that was developed to be used in conjunction with the OO-45 to enable electronic data collation, management and reporting. administered electronically to clients, the OO-45 can be scored and analysed by OQ-Analyst, and an electronic feedback report generated within seconds for both counsellor and client. The client's score is plotted against a clinical cut off and known norms for a range of clinical populations (e.g. community mental health, employee assistance program, inpatient and outpatient mental health) based on national American data. For example, scores above 63 are deemed to be in the clinical range with higher scores on the OQ-45 representing higher levels of distress and poorer functioning. It is not known how well norms given for specific clinical populations correspond to equivalent Australian populations, but they provide an indication of increasing severity of distress and poorer functioning that can be useful for clinicians. Empirical and rational algorithms, developed and tested in the five RCTs mentioned above, enable predictions to be made concerning whether or not the client's progress is 'on track' and generate feedback to the Counsellor in accordance with the predicted outcome.

Counsellors whose clients are 'on track' to recovery would be given feedback to this effect and a prediction would be given as to how many sessions this might take to achieve, based on algorithms derived from the dataset accumulated over the period of research using the OQ-45. Counsellors whose clients were not progressing as expected, or clearly deteriorating, would be given feedback encouraging them to review their work with their client, possibly engaging the client in this process and to consider increasing the frequency of contact or changing their approach to better suit the client's needs.

In Australia, routine outcome measures were selected and tested for use in the public mental health sector as part of the National Mental Health Strategy in 1992 (Pirkis, Burgess, Kirk, Dodson, & Coombs, 2005). The measures introduced were chosen because of their suitability for use in services for people with severe mental illness with a focus on the kind of impairment associated with conditions such as schizophrenia. The use of these measures is mandated and each State and territory is required to submit data to a national database under the National Outcomes and Casemix collection (NOCC) protocol. It is expected that these measures will be administered at a minimum of three monthly intervals as well as at intake into and discharge from services. These measures provide useful information about the impact and effectiveness of public mental health services in general (Eagar,

Trauer, & Mellsop, 2005) and have the potential for routine monitoring of client response to treatment (Andrews & Page, 2005). However they are not designed to provide high frequency or timely feedback to clinicians about individual client outcomes, in the way the OQ-45 and OQ-Analyst does.

Rather than a single measure, a suite of clinician and consumer rated measures were adopted for use with particular service settings and age groups e.g. child and adolescents, adults and aged persons (Fourth National Mental Health Plan, 2009). However, for adults and aged persons, different consumer rated measures are used across the States and territories, resulting in the lack of a uniform national measure (Outcome measurement in mental health services: Factsheet 2). Even if there was a national consumer rated outcome measure suitable for adults, it is unclear how useful it would be applied to other settings such as university counselling services, given the focus on severe or chronic mental health within the public mental health sector.

As stated previously, some Australian university counselling services report limited use of outcome measures, mainly the OQ-45 or the Outcomes Rating Scale (ORS; Miller, Duncan, Brown, Sparks, & Claud, 2003) which was developed as a brief alternative to the OQ-45. Similarly, some report use of measures of therapeutic alliance, mainly the Session Rating Scale (SRS; Duncan, et al., 2003). However how many services or counsellors use them routinely or in a systematic way is not known.

In this paper we describe the introduction of the OQ-45 as a routine outcome and feedback measure to monitor client progress on a session by session basis within an Australian university counselling service. We describe the rationale, implementation and practical considerations involved in its administration. The use of accompanying software (OQ-Analyst) to collect and analyse data electronically, and to generate instant feedback reports to Counsellors is also explained.

Rationale

Some of the reasons for introducing standardised outcome measures as part of routine practice within a university counselling service have already been alluded to. These include:

- to obtain objective baseline data concerning the level of distress of clients presenting
- to enable comparison with other known populations e.g. mental health populations
- to establish benchmarks or norms for a particular service or client

- population e.g. international students, indigenous students
- to enable cross institutional comparisons across the sector
- to measure the effectiveness of counselling based on client progress, irrespective of clinical approaches or interventions undertaken.

Further reasons might include:

- to determine the number of sessions needed for clients to recover i.e. to improve to within the non-clinical range, and
- to allocate resources in response to client need based on objective measurement and feedback on progress.

At this university counselling service there were additional reasons, some pragmatic, for choosing the OQ-45 over other established measures. As a 45 item self-report general screening tool, the OQ-45 is easy to administer and takes only a few minutes to complete. It has proven reliability and validity and has been shown to be sensitive to change over short periods of time (Lambert et al., 1996). Hence it suits the short-term framework of counselling within a university service. It has advantages over a diagnostic scale such as, for example, the Beck Depression Scale, because it is a global measure of client distress and functioning across a range of subscales - symptom distress, interpersonal relations, social role functioning and gives an overall score - rather than a measure of severity of a single symptom, such as anxiety or depression.

The OQ-45 has advantages over the Outcome Rating Scale (ORS; Miller, Duncan, Sorrell, & Brown, 2005) as it has the capacity to identify critical items such as suicidality, substance abuse or potential for violence, which the ORS does not. This can be illustrated by the fact that the ORS is a four-item visual analogue self-report scale, which involves the client marking a point on a 10cm linear scale to indicate how they have been feeling in four areas of their life (overall, individually, interpersonally, socially). Whereas the OQ-45 as a questionnaire asks clients to rate the frequency of specific critical items on a five point scale from 'Never' to 'Almost Always' e.g. "I have thoughts of ending my life'; "After heavy drinking, I need a drink the next morning to get going'. So while the ORS is quicker to complete than the OQ-45, it cannot provide specific information about risk factors as the OQ-45 can.

There was some attraction in the fact that the OQ-45 was developed and researched in successive randomised controlled trials within a university counselling service at Brigham Young University, which is a similar size to this University, and that it is a client self-report tool. The fact that the OO-45 was being used routinely by the Psychology Clinics in our own and two other metropolitan public universities, and likely to be used more widely in psychology clinics across Australia, made it an attractive choice from the point of view of possible cross institutional comparison and research collaboration. Lambert's consulting to the School of Psychology over a number of years, meant that he was available to consult with the Counselling Service to discuss relevant research findings, its use and possible implementation. Finally, used in conjunction with the accompanying software (OO-Analyst), benefits of the OQ-45 could be derived immediately in the form of instant analysis and feedback to counsellors on clients' progress in counselling. Compared to the frustrations of using pen and paper forms which then have to be scored and entered into a database and analysed at some future point, the electronic option was far preferable. An earlier pilot undertaken within the Counselling Service in 2002 using pen and paper versions of the OQ-45, ORS and SRS was a valuable introduction to the measures, their use and differences in their utility. It also highlighted the significant advantage of electronic data collection and analysis through OQ-Analyst, and the immediate value that could be derived from instant feedback on clients' initial distress and progress in response to counselling.

Implementation

Discussion took place within the Counselling Service for over a year before a decision was reached to introduce the OO-45 as a routine outcome measure, administered as part of the intake process and at each subsequent session with the counsellor. Considerable thought was given to how this could be facilitated across campuses, where there were differences in intake procedures, with some campuses having full or part -time administrative assistance, and other campuses where the counsellor operated as a sole practitioner with no administrative support. Counsellors were encouraged to adopt a method of administration that would work best on their campus. In this way counsellors were given some ownership and control over the process. Administrative staff were briefed on the introduction of the OQ-45 within the Counselling Service and the rationale for its implementation explained. Their input was sought into how it could be introduced to clients and administered on each campus and how they could assist counsellors in implementation, especially those working as sole practitioners.

Initially consideration was given to administering the OQ-45 only to counselling clients who presented with personal problems and to

exclude clients presenting with academic or other university related enquiries. However given that underlying personal or relationship difficulties often emerge with clients who present ostensibly with academic or other university related matters, we decided to administer the OQ-45 to all counselling clients. We were also interested in helping counsellors to identify clients at risk, given that it is not always possible to screen for risk in a single consultation. There was some concern that clients presenting in a distressed state may be reluctant to complete the questionnaire. Counsellors and administrative staff were encouraged to use their discretion in such cases, however it was noted that information about the client's level of functioning, distress and risk could be missed if it were not administered.

Ethics approval was sought and obtained and clients were required to provide written informed consent prior to completion of the OQ-45. Participation was voluntary and clients could elect not to complete the questionnaire at any time without affecting their access to counselling. Students aged 17 years or under were not required to complete the questionnaire.

Clients completed the questionnaire in electronic format either on a hand held palm pilot or computer in the waiting room or counsellor's office. On larger campuses this was facilitated by administrative staff. On smaller campuses where there was no or part time administrative assistance, counsellors administered the questionnaire. Presentation of the questionnaire to clients varied across campuses but in general it was offered as part of the Counselling Service's ongoing efforts to evaluate and improve its services to clients.

The financial outlay for implementation using OQ-Analyst involved an annual license fee to purchase the software license, based on the number of full time equivalent counsellors using the software and a modest fee to cover technical support during the installation process, and in house IT expenses to set up the OQ-Analyst on a secure part of the University server to enable access from multiple campuses. Several palm pilots were also purchased.

Concerns about using the OQ-45

Initial concerns about the use of the OQ-45/OQ-Analyst in the Counselling Service centred on access and 'fit' with the culture of a university counselling service. Counsellors had some reservations that completing the OQ-45 may complicate the intake process, or emphasise a mental health focus, rather than the wellbeing and development objectives of the service. There was some concern that the terminology used in the software (patient/therapist, treatment, clinic) reflected a

medical model rather than a service model which seemed more appropriate for an Australian university counselling setting. There was also concern about the limitations of using a single measure and generalisations that could be drawn from it.

The software has the capacity to compare outcomes of different counsellors which has been the subject of recent research interest (Anderson, Ogles, Patterson, Lambert, & Vermeersch, 2009; Miller, Hubble, & Duncan, 2008; Okiishi, Lambert, Eggett, Nielsen, & Dayton, 2006). However this was not an objective in introducing the OQ-45 within the Counselling Service. While it is recognised that there may be variance in clinical effectiveness amongst counsellors, multiple factors affect client outcomes, including most notably the client's level of initial distress or disturbance, as well as motivation or readiness to change, which are outside the counsellor's control. The main objective for introducing the OQ-45/OQ-Analyst into the Counselling Service was to improve counselling outcomes overall, through providing feedback to Counsellors, especially for clients who are deteriorating or at risk of dropping out.

In working through these concerns, counsellors supported the introduction of the OQ-45/OQ-Analyst with the focus being on improving the quality of counselling services while maintaining a client centred approach, that is, to enhance the counselling process by seeking feedback and information *from* clients, not merely to collect or analyse data *about* them. As the OQ-45 is a client self-report tool that offers information and insight into a client's current circumstance counsellors' concerns were ameliorated. Additionally, it has been made explicit in all written information and in the day to day practice of the service that participation is entirely voluntary, with no issue or consequence for those clients choosing not to answer the questionnaire.

Training

Counselling and administrative staff were trained on site, individually or in small groups, in the operation of OQ-Analyst - entering clients into the database; administration of questionnaires using palm pilots or computers via Kiosk, a shortcut on the desktop - and shown sample feedback reports to counsellors demonstrating the utility of OQ-Analyst. A local User's Manual was developed for staff to help troubleshoot any problems which could be encountered using the software, and which supplemented the online OQ-Analyst User's Guide. A protocols document was also developed for staff that outlined the rationale for introduction and administration of the OQ-45, information on security (access levels and user roles) and guidelines for implementation. The

OQ-Analyst software was installed on a development server for several months prior to going 'live' to enable staff to try out the software with 'dummy' clients. Once 'live', staff were invited to contact the first author concerning any difficulties encountered, which were usually of a technical nature (login, synchronisation of palm pilots, uploading questionnaires from palm pilots etc), and solutions to common problems were reported in an email to staff.

Security

For multi campus universities such as ours, the OQ-Analyst software is designed to run in a local area network to allow access from multiple computers. The application was installed on a secure part of the university server. Access to the database was via a username and password and was governed by a two-tiered security model comprised of access levels and roles. A user's access level determined the pages, subpages and action available to them and information displayed within OO Analyst. A user's role controlled the rules permitting them to see a customised group of clients and excluding them from viewing others. Staff were allocated access levels (standard, administrative, executive, system administrator, not assigned) and user roles (clerical, clinician, supervisor and corporate) according to their position i.e. counsellor, administrative officer, supervisor etc and need to access relevant information. In practice this meant that counsellors as clinicians could access their own clients' records but not those of other counsellors; supervisors could access their own clients' records and the records of clients seen by counsellors or interns whom they supervised; and administrative staff could add clients into the database but not access questionnaires or reports relating to clients.

Practical considerations

Having used the OQ-45 and OQ-Analyst for well over a year now, we have developed a preference for administering it electronically using Kiosk - a shortcut to the database which can be installed on a networked computer - rather than hand held palm pilots. In our experience it is more time consuming to administer the questionnaire on a palm pilot, as it relies on administrative or counselling staff to login and pull up a blank questionnaire for each client and then upload the completed questionnaire to the server so that it can be accessed by the counsellor. In addition, portable devices such as palm pilots lose charge if they are not plugged into a computer or charger, which presents problems on smaller campuses which may only be staffed part time. In contrast, Kiosk allows clients to pull up an electronic questionnaire when they login to OQ-Analyst directly onto the computer where it is installed and

it is uploaded to the secure server immediately when they press 'submit'. This means that regular clients can 'help themselves' by completing the OQ-45 while they are waiting for their appointment with the counsellor, if they have access to a computer in the waiting room.

Outcomes

In this paper we report preliminary findings based on the first year of implementation (September 2008 - August 2009) of the OQ-45/OQ-Analyst within the Counselling Service. So what have we learned?

Firstly, it is both feasible and acceptable to utilise a routine outcome measure within a university counselling service. There has been general acceptance and compliance with administering the OQ-45 on a session by session basis, from both staff and clients of the service. Over 73% of clients (1017 completions out of a possible 1388 clients) completed the questionnaire at the initial session. This is likely to be an underestimation as clients were entered into the OQ database at the time of making an appointment and some clients failed to attend the initial session. However 96% of repeat clients i.e. clients who attended more than one session, completed the questionnaire at each session. Reasons for non-completion included technical reasons (e.g. computer failure, failure of palm pilots, the server being down), administrative reasons (e.g. not being offered the OQ-45 because they arrived late or were too distressed to complete it on the first presentation) as well as clients' declining to complete it. Owing to the complexity of administering the OQ-45 across multiple campuses, involving many different staff and intake procedures, it is not possible to give a precise breakdown of the reasons for non-completion. The higher rate of completion for return clients suggests that clients did not object to being asked to complete the questionnaire on a session by session basis. The apparently lower rate of completion for clients at the initial session may be a reflection of differences between clients who present for only one session and repeat clients.

Secondly, using the OQ-45 has not changed the focus of the counselling service. It remains a short-term, solution focussed service, aimed at enhancing student persistence, decision-making and success with university studies or work. Approximately 95% of clients attended between one and six counselling sessions, with 561 clients (55%) attending only one session and 456 clients (45%) attending between 2 and 18 sessions.

Thirdly, baseline data for clients presenting to the Counselling Service suggest that over two thirds of clients (69%; *N*=697) are in the

clinical range i.e. had initial OQ scores above 63. Over one third of clients (40%; *N*=404) had initial OQ scores of 80 or over, which represents moderate to severe levels of symptoms. In order to interpret this finding it will be necessary to compare baseline scores with known benchmarks for similar populations in Australia and elsewhere using similar outcome measures. However it would appear to confirm counsellors' anecdotal experience of high levels of distress in clients presenting to the counselling service.

Fourthly, preliminary analysis of outcome data suggests that most clients benefit from counselling. A comparison of mean scores on the OQ-45 for repeat clients (N=456) at the first and last presentation of 79.96 (SD=23.2) and 72.78 (SD-23.92) respectively, showed improvement in well being over time, indicating a small effect size of .30 as measured using Cohen's d. This finding is similar to a North American sample of clients (N=164) presenting to a university counselling service where therapists received immediate OQ-45 feedback (Slade et al., 2008). As this is not a controlled study we cannot demonstrate improved outcomes compared to treatment as usual, but only compared to published outcomes from controlled studies. Further analysis is required however before meaningful interpretations can be made concerning our findings. These will be presented in a subsequent paper.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, there have been immediate benefits to both counsellors and clients in terms of enhancing the counselling process. Counsellors have integrated the use of the OQ-45 into counselling sessions in various ways so that clients see the use of the questionnaire in action and understand how it informs the counselling process. The OQ-45, used in conjunction with OQ-Analyst, has proven to be an invaluable clinical tool for counsellors. Through feedback to counsellors at the initial consultation and in subsequent sessions, it has alerted counsellors to clients who are at risk of suicide or self-harm, substance abuse or violence, and who are not progressing as expected and are at risk of dropping out of counselling prematurely. Other potential benefits are only beginning to be realised. These include the capacity to identify specific client populations that are presenting with greater distress than others.

Discussion and Conclusion

To demonstrate that it is both feasible and acceptable to introduce a routine outcome measure on a session by session basis within an Australian university counselling service is a significant outcome in itself. It has been a significant achievement to successfully implement a

routine outcome measure in a university counselling service delivered across six sites in a multi campus university, where there are varying levels of administrative support.

Several factors influenced the successful implementation of the OO-45 within the Counselling Service. The most important factor was the cooperation and commitment of counselling staff. All counselling staff were committed to the introduction of the OQ-45 within the counselling service. The support and assistance of administrative staff and the overall support of management were also critical to its successful introduction. The decision to implement the OO-45 using an electronic format, rather than pen and paper, ensured that data was collected and analysed immediately. Using the OQ-45 in conjunction with OQ-Analyst meant that there were immediate benefits to counsellors from the feedback generated about their clients' level of distress and functioning, critical items such as suicidality, and their progress on a session by session basis. This was in contrast to a previous attempt to pilot the use of outcome and other measures using pen and paper data collection, where it took several months for aggregate data to be analysed and reported back to counsellors, and information about the progress of individual clients was not available for use in the session.

Other factors that facilitated the implementation of the OQ-45 included the decision to administer the questionnaire as part of the routine intake process and to offer it to all clients of the counselling service at every session. Incorporating the OQ-45 into the intake process meant that it was seen as an integral part of the service, not an 'add on'. Offering the OQ-45 to all clients simplified administration and avoided 'second guessing' who should be given it e.g. clients who were presenting with personal difficulties rather than academic or other university related matters. Choosing an appropriate outcome measure for use within a university counselling service involves striking a balance between what is acceptable to clients and counsellors in terms of relevance and ease of administration, and what is being sought by its introduction. A brief, single measure that has general applicability to the client population is likely to be more acceptable than a suite of measures or a single diagnostic measure. The choice of measure might vary depending on whether the objective is monitoring client outcomes or simply benchmarking. Baseline scores are useful for benchmarking of initial distress and comparison with other populations, as the use of CORE in the UK has shown (Connell et al., 2007). Briefer measures such as the ORS and SRS might be perceived as more user friendly, but lack the features of longer measures such as the OQ-45 to specifically highlight critical risk items.

There are limits to the utility of a single outcome measure such as the OO-45. It is not a substitute for clinical judgement. Occasionally we have found that clients appear to be over- or under-reporting their distress on the OQ-45. The OQ-Analyst recognises this phenomenon and alerts counsellors to possible reasons this may occur. For example, clients who are attending at the behest of someone else, or who are "cut off' emotionally, may score unusually low on the OQ-45, whereas the counsellor may assess them as highly disturbed and in difficulty. Similarly, clients who score very high on the OQ-45 may be presenting a "cry for help" but be assessed by the counsellor as less distressed. Overall, our experience has been that used in conjunction with clinical experience, particularly in our short term service, the OQ-45 and feedback from the OQ-Analyst can enhance the counselling process and maximise the impact of a single counselling session. Feedback from clients about the process and content of the questionnaire has been positive, with the majority of clients of the service electing to complete

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Falling through the web: Implications for internet introverts.¹

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Abstract

Is the brain evolving and adapting to new technological environments such as that of Silicon Valley? This paper examines changes that are being observed and studied relating to a possible correlation between 'excessive' focus on technology and the emergence of diagnosable social, physical and mental health dysfunction.

The author explores the possible role of university staff and student services in the duty of care toward students. Would it not be more ethical to provide education on healthy technology use and to provide evidence based therapy for those students who fall through the web? Currently students end up being excluded from their courses. Many suffer from social anxiety and depression and lack confidence and social skills to find or hold down a job. Currently many "hibernate" in their rooms for months or years frequently in a state of despair.

This paper explores the issue of the thousands of young people, mainly male students who do not realise their career goals because of being trapped in their obsessive computer behaviour. These young men could be referred to as the 'Lost boys' as their prognosis for completing their course or being able to search for a job is usually poor. It will suggest that universities may need to accept a greater duty of care for such students many of whom are excluded. Staff may need to present to them early in their degree, strategies for retaining their physical, social and mental health. Ensuring mandatory attendance and offering workshops and treatment for those who fall foul of their goals because of what has been identified as a behavioural addiction is essential. Griffiths (2010) quoting Marlatt, Baer, Donovan and Kivlahan (1988) has defined addictive behaviour as "...a repetitive habit pattern that increases the risk of disease and/or associated personal and social problems.... Attempts to change an addictive behaviour are typically marked with high relapse rates" (p.224).

In 1999 and 2000 each semester the author presented the first lecture to beginning Information technology students upon arrival at University

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(Tindle, 1999; 2000). The purpose of this lecture was to attempt to prepare students for their inevitable heavy use of computer technology during their forthcoming studies. The nature of their course demanded that they work with technology for long hours and the lecture alerted them to sensible ways of retaining their physical and psychological health whilst being able to produce high quality work. The paper was to help students gain and maintain peak performance in academia and in their lives (Yerkes and Dodson, 1908) based on a sports psychology principle. After two years the pressure of an expanding syllabus and possibly its low perceived value meant that this preparatory lecture was dispensed with.

The initial lecture included research, case studies and some observations of student behaviour. The potential for erratic diurnal patterns was raised with the danger of body circadian rhythms (body clock) being out of synchrony. A lifestyle imbalance resulting in mood disturbances such as depression, anxiety, fear, anger irritability and poor concentration could ensue as a consequence. Ways of measuring this were presented from the work of Cockerill, Nevill and Lyons (1991). The correlation between excessive computer use and depression has since been found in studies done in the Psychology Department at Leeds University (Morrison & Gore, 2010) with over 1000 students. Similar finding were previously published by Sanders, Field, Diego and Kaplan (2000) whose data suggested a significant relationship between internet use, depression and social isolation amongst adolescents. The earlier study of Young and Rodgers (1998) suggested a relationship between depression and internet addiction which they termed pathological internet use. They described the behaviour as an impulse control failure not involving an intoxicant, akin to pathological gambling (p.25). This term was taken up by Davis (2001) and further developed by this author (Tindle, 2003).

The lecture also presented in some detail the potential for deterioration in physical health and personal hygiene. The reduction in physical involvement in sport and an excess of time spent in sedentary activities could result in blood clots, muscle atrophy and musculo-skeletal problems such as frozen shoulders, neck pain, back problems and carpal tunnel ache (repetitive strain injury). Studies also suggest that constant close focus on a screen and heavy computer use may also impact on vision, increase glaucoma and reduce the ability to use peripheral vision for some users (Tanimoto et al., 2004).

A third area identified was a potential for reduced interpersonal contact because of unsocial work hours and reduced face to face

interaction with friends, associates and family. Relationships, university attendance and work responsibilities often deteriorate. A study by Kraut (1998) found decreased family communication and reduced size of local social circle with increased internet use. The development of social skills could also be curtailed or delayed in those in an identity formation stage of development (Marcia, 1966). Subsequent to this basic presentation, studies have identified that time on the internet at home corresponds with a higher measure of loneliness and reduced life satisfaction. (Stepanikova, Nie & He, 2010). The author has written of the ennui and anomie or social disconnection that can descend on those who have lost their way and find that their computer is their lifeline (Tindle, 2010).

The nature of the courses offered in Information Technology Faculties, attracts those who have a strong interest and fascination with video games, the virtual world and programming and who may have used technology for many years. They are frequently adept at mathematics, engineering tasks and/or Science.

This paper suggests that a particularly vulnerable cohort of students, predominantly male, is more susceptible to developing behaviours or exaggerating present personality characteristics because of the nature of their condoned study environment. Some of these characteristics have been identified as running in families. Excessive shyness or "social ineptness" accompanied by repetitive behaviours may have been and perhaps still are observed. Some may avoid eye contact and be unaware of the unwritten rules of turn taking in face to face conversation. In their early years they may have found it difficult to form close friendships or to bond with a significant member of the family. In a person - computer interface such students feel totally comfortable as face to face contact can be kept to a minimum and most communication can be done via email, face book, twitter or a blog.

In 2002, Madeleine Nash wrote in Time magazine about the exponential increase in the number of young children of Information Technology experts such as software engineers or computer programmers, working in Silicon Valley California, being diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders including Asperger's Syndrome or Autism. Simon Baron-Cohen (2000; 2006) from Cambridge University has researched autism spectrum disorders for many years. He has taken an evolutionary approach to the cognitive neuroscience of autism and implicates genes inherited from both parents and argues for the "assortitive mating theory". It has been argued that assortitive mating where Information Technology experts mate with similar types, in a

restricted gene pool such as in Silicon Valley, can concentrate certain behavioural or personality traits. Baron-Cohen believes that autism is the extreme form of male communication. Silberman (2001) in Wired speaks of the "Geek syndrome" and he asks if maths and technology "genes" are responsible. Richtel (2010), reports in the New York Times of the observed changes in brains of people who multi-task with multiple digital gadgets. He quotes Volkow (2004) a world renowned neuroscientist working in the addiction field, who maintains that technology is rewiring our brains. She maintains that each time the "reward" of connecting to the web is experienced a small amount of dopamine is injected into the pleasure areas of the brain there-by slowly building up an addiction.

Carl Jung popularised the term introvert in the twentieth century and he linked an extreme form of introversion with the tendency to show poor social skills, anxiety and depressive symptoms (Gregory, 2004). If we go back 2000 years, Greek physicians Galen and Hippocrates described the four temperaments one of which was named melancholic. Those classed as melancholic were said to be introverted and anxious whereas phlegmatic types were introverted and stable. (Gregory, 2004, p.325). These ancient descriptors are still applicable today.

Ten years after the presentation of preparatory lectures to first year Information Technology students, some of the issues identified in that first lecture have become a reality amongst university students and studies are suggesting that intervention by staff might be needed as a duty of care.

Since the early days of technology use in universities a number of comparatively new behaviours have emerged some of which are challenging. Perhaps one of the major problems emerging is what has become known as computer addiction or pathological internet use (Tindle, 2003). Lei and Yang (2007) have reported the increasing prevalence of behavioural disorders in China as the number of Internet users has increased. They have developed an instrument for measuring problematic, excessive or maladaptive use of the net known as the Adolescent Pathological Internet Use Scale. Welsh (1999) found that 8% of the students in his Boston study fitted the criteria for computer dependence based on the DSM IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual) criteria for substance dependence, namely:-

- tolerance,
- withdrawal,
- using larger amounts over longer period than was intended,

- the desire or unsuccessful efforts to cut down or control use,
- a great deal of time spent in obtaining, using or recovering from it,
- social, occupational or recreational activities reduced
- continued use in spite of negative effects.

The dependent students were significantly more likely to indicate that their on-line use negatively affected their academic performance, meeting new people and their sleep patterns. Some reported having less than four hours of sleep in 24 hours. Many studies have since emerged (Anderson, 1998; Welsh, 1999) identifying approximately 10% of the population fitting the diagnosis.

Computer addiction can expand into many forms some of which are criminal and/or pathological. The addiction to on-line pornography, paedophilia or inappropriate pick-ups has become common in the wider community. Phishing for prospective "victims" to take the bait for a number of criminal enterprises has become a global problem. Even "hacking" can be an addiction for some. In the book 'Hacking' (Apro & Hammond, 2005) the authors state that hackers are so hooked they would forego sleep for days and barely eat as they tap away. They are described as being young and skinny and having bundles of nervous energy (p.104-105).

Many gaunt looking young men have attended a counselling service describing their anxiety, depression and chaotic lifestyle. They speak of their serious internet game addiction mainly the World of War Craft and/or pornography problems. Some of the very thin have developed an abdominal absorption problem or have a serious acidic reflux and become ill with a 'mysterious' disease that medical practitioners and nutritionists puzzle over and are unable to solve. They sometimes are unable to leave home because of a social anxiety or in the extreme, are hospitalised for observation, medication or tests.

One "addict" said that he "couldn't begin to describe ... the adrenaline rush you get when you hack into your first system" (Apro & Hammond, 2005, p.112). Another young man commented that "internet over use is the most socially acceptable form of addiction in today's society" (Personal communication, student, 6 June, 2010)

It could be argued that universities have a duty of care to students and that to neglect preparing them for the technological demands of their studies is negligent. Evidence suggests that many students become damaged by excessive internet use. An example of one form of help on campus is a physiotherapy service that advertises through a brochure called 'Is your study a pain in the neck?' and suggests what can be done

to prevent or alleviate physical aches such as carpal tunnel damage in the wrists and thumbs from overuse of a mouse or constant texting on a mobile phone. It goes on to discuss shoulder and spine damage and neck problems resulting from technology use. Another course held at the Education Centre at the Royal Brisbane Women's Hospital teaches young people and parents what they need to know about being "cyber safe". This is provided by the Youth Mental Health Forum, part of Queensland Schizophrenia Foundation, Mindcare Limited and the Mental Illness Fellowship of Queensland.

Excluding university students who have failed because of the fallout from their computer use and who have damaged their physical and/or psychological health, requires a policy review. Referral to appropriate services for rehabilitation would prevent them spending the subsequent months or years in isolation. Some have such an overwhelming social anxiety that they would be unable to search or hold down a job. Some are left as psychological cripples in their bedrooms shut off from the world except for what contact they have through their computer. They don't need to get out of bed if they own a laptop and their quality of life may be even more seriously eroded. These students need help. Sometimes a fellow student or a staff member will escort them to a university counselling service. For most this turns out to be a blessing which they recognise and they are slowly able to make the necessary changes to get back into life again.

Murphy (2005) has proposed a cognitive behavioural strategy for working with students who have a computer addiction. It addresses their behaviours, feelings and actions. The first residential centre in USA, for treating internet addiction, opened in Seattle this year. Others, such as the US Centre for Internet Addiction Recovery, were established some years ago. China has had "boot camps" or Internet addiction treatment facilities for youth since 2004 (Jiang, 2009) where the youths are removed from contact with all technology and undergo a strict physical routine.

This paper has raised the issue of the increasing problem in universities of students being placed on probation or being excluded because of their excessive internet use. The greater susceptibility of those with introverted personality was examined raising the life changing social, psychological and physical problems. It was suggested that some intervention might be needed in the early months of university to ensure that the more vulnerable to this behavioural addiction do not succumb.

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An American's perspective on Higher Education in Australia and the United States

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Abstract

Dr. Stuart Brown, Director of Student Services at the Waterbury Campus of the University of Connecticut in the United States, attended the 2009 ANZSSA Conference in Brisbane as one of two NASPA Exchange delegates. During his three-week stay in the country, Dr. Brown had the occasion to visit a number of universities. He toured facilities and had the opportunity to meet with administrators from different student service areas to discuss practices and policies within the two countries. This article will examine some of the similarities and differences between a number of student services in the United States and Australia as well as attitudes towards higher education.

This past December I attended the ANZSSA Conference in Brisbane. This was my second time as a delegate to the bi-annual event, having been a participant at the 2007 Conference in Auckland. During my three -week stay in Australia I had the occasion to visit universities in Brisbane, Robina, Toowomba, Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne. I toured facilities, dined on local cuisine and, most importantly, had the opportunity to meet with administrators from a number of different functional areas, including counseling, residence life, disability services, and career services, to discuss practices and policies within the two countries.

This article will examine some of the similarities and differences between a number of student services in the United States and Australia as well as attitudes towards higher education. Specifically, I will look at *The Admissions Process, Accommodations, The Student Activities Fee,* and *The Cost of Higher Education.*

The Admissions Process

A discussion of the admissions process into Australian universities is intrinsically linked to, what I will call, the "stay-at-home" culture in the

country, both in attitude and policy matters. Australian students, it seems, do not go away for a university education, but usually attend a local institution. Much of this is driven by the Overall Position (OP) exam scores students receive in December of their final year in high school as well as regional policy. Each state or territory has different requirements and scoring systems which give students better access to universities and programs of study within their local area. Entry into a discipline of choice is based on having the right OP score, the desired major, and school of choice. Conversely, it becomes harder to enroll outside a student's region, making the local universities a more attractive option. Students cannot enroll with an "Undecided" major classification. They must choose a course of study (which possibly can be changed later upon entering a university). Again, securing an academic major at a nearby institution is easier.

The federal government (which finances all institutions of higher education in the country, except the two private universities) has a very large role in the admissions process since it allocates funding to schools for only a set number of slots per academic program. If universities matriculate over the designated figure they will not receive extra funding in order to offset the cost of educating that student. The trick, as with admissions at American institutions, is to know how many students to admit in order to reach the preset, government target. Lastly, unlike American higher education where high school seniors send out admissions applications to a multitude of schools, in Australia a student sends out one application with their choice of school(s) and major(s). They will only be admitted to one school for one specific program of study.

In the United States, the admissions process is more broad-based and encompasses a number of factors. Also, while high school graduates may commute to a college or university near their home, many students will "live away" and reside on campus. Academics is still the central focus, but the campus environs, facilities, and overall milieu of the institution also play a significant role. Standardized tests - the American College Testing (ACT) or Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) - are required by most schools in the United States, but they are just one facet of the application process. High school grades, class rank, out-of-class activities, and an essay are also crucial components for admission committees. Entry into a specific academic program, primarily in the social sciences and humanities, is not difficult (although certain academic majors such as Engineering, Business, and some science-based programs may have more rigid entry requirements). Each institution of higher education sets their own parameters for each

academic program (entry conditions, number of slots, graduation requirements) as opposed to any governmental agency. At many colleges and universities, students come in as "Undecided" majors. Once matriculated, undergraduates have a lot more freedom to switch their plan of study as often as they desire.

Preferential admissions to an institution of higher education is not necessarily based on geography or academic program. In fact, colleges and universities in the United States actively recruit students across the country with the goal of developing a more diverse student body. At many elite schools being a hometown applicant can actually be a disadvantage.

Another contributing factor to the admissions process in Australia is the lack of institutionally-based housing at universities. A major reason is the math. There are simply very few beds at Australian institutions of higher education. Bond University, with approximately 4,200 students, has 650 residential spaces for undergraduates. The University of Queensland has 37,000 students, but only 3,000 live in the school's residential colleges. Outside providers, usually in conjunction with schools, have been filling the gap with new construction on or near a University, but most are simply leased rental units with little or no staff or services for undergraduates. Therefore, staying local, either at home or in familiar surroundings, becomes more attractive.

In the United States, residence hall space is plentiful. Freshman and sophomore students are almost always guaranteed housing, no matter what the size of the school or where the students are from. At many institutions, juniors and seniors can also secure rooms. Depending on the locale of the college or university, students may opt to find off-campus housing, but this is by choice as opposed to necessity. If there is a shortage of residence halls, students outside of commuting range (or from out-of-state) receive preference over local students.

Accommodations

The Office of Residence Life at American colleges and universities is a huge, layered, and tightly controlled enterprise. They will almost always have the most staff out of any area of student services. The general administrative structure is similar throughout most schools, whether it be a small institution of 1,500 students or a large university with 50,000 undergraduates. Undergraduate Resident Assistants (RAs) are on the front line, living within residence halls (usually one per floor) providing their residents with support, counseling, programming, advice, community building, and enforcement of institution rules and

regulations. The RAs, who are usually upper class students, go through a comprehensive selection process and receive hours of pre-employment training and participate in on-going staff development programs during the academic year. (In fact, all staff - from student RAs to graduate students to full-time professional administrators—receive a significant amount of training, usually encompassing a few weeks before the start of the fall semester). Schools with graduate students might employ them as residence hall directors (schools without graduate students would employ full-time staff in this position), supervising the student RAs as well as being responsible for the individual building. Larger schools would employ Area Coordinators - residence life professionals responsible for a number of residence halls - as well as a full complement of support staff in the central office. Besides a Director and Associate Director there could be administrators with specific roles for staff training and development, fiscal matters, assignments (in regard to roommates), and operations (the day-to-day maintenance of the buildings).

I found the University accommodation structure to be more streamlined in Australia, primarily because the number of student beds is so small compared to American colleges and universities. The extensive bureaucratic structure, so prevalent in the United States, is not as necessary. At Bond University, for example, besides a Director there are Senior Resident Fellows who are "University staff members and/or postgraduate students who live in Student Residences" (Support for Resident Students, 2010). They are not trained residence life professionals. In fact, most residence life staff have no graduate preparation - whether in student personnel or counseling programs-in their background. This is in sharp contrast to residence life staff in the U.S. who, except at the smallest institutions, almost always have a graduate degree in a related student services field.

Many Senior Resident Fellows have been in their position for a number of years. Turnover is low. Their role is comparable to a resident hall director in the U.S. They are charged with generating community spirit, enforcing rules and regulations and following a weekly duty schedule.

Resident Fellows are akin to undergraduate resident assistants who are "generally senior students who have experience living in Student Residences." While assisting Senior Resident Fellows in hall activities they are more charged to be "available to help with any issues relating to life on campus" (Bond University, 2010). Unlike a highly structured team environment prevalent in American colleges and universities, that

include weeks of training on a multitude of areas, the Resident Fellows are basically available for students. Training is minimal (as is with the Senior Resident Fellows).

Lastly, they are Tutor Fellows, students with high marks that provide an academic support system to residents. This is usually in one-to-one sessions

The Accommodation Offices I looked at, as with the University of Melbourne, seemed to have as their central focus the goal to "assist students to source and maintain affordable, safe and appropriate housing (Manger, Student Housing Services & Student Programs, 2007). The University of Queensland's Accommodation Services "provides information and services to assist [students] to find a home that's right for you" (Academic Registrar, 2009).

In the United States, each institution of higher education has an extensive array of housing stock for their students. They can include doubles (the main type of housing for freshman), suites (anywhere from 4-8 persons, possibly with a shared bathroom and common room), apartments, and, to a lesser extent, single rooms. Outside providers may operate some housing facilities on or near a campus, but the overwhelming majority of buildings are owned, operated, and maintained by each school. The ability to provide space for students is not usually a tremendous problem, especially for freshman and sophomores, who receive priority status in receiving accommodations. Some colleges and universities have the capability to house a large percentage of their undergraduates. The University of Connecticut, for example, provides rooms to over 90% of the 17,000 undergraduates at its main campus.

As discussed in "The Admissions Process" section, space in properties owned by Australian universities is minimal. This includes the accommodations operated by the institution as well as the Residential Colleges. The Residential College system is an interesting aspect of Australian universities. The University of Sydney, in their Accommodation Information booklet, describes them as "privately owned and managed independent institutions affiliated to the University" (On-campus accommodation, 2008). These history-steeped colleges are part of the institution - touted on school web pages and provided space in university publications - but at the same time are held at arm's length from the school. As the University of Adelaide states on their Accommodation Service website, "The University does not administer the colleges" (The University of Adelaide, 2010). They provide meals to students, offer a variety of social activities, athletic

teams, tutoring and chaplaincy services. Interested students must apply directly to the Residential College for living space as opposed to going through the Accommodations Office.

Student Activities Fee

Institutions of higher education in the United States have three main components to a student's bill-tuition, room and board (if in residence), and a mandatory set of fees. These fees are slotted for specific needs and can include off-setting campus infrastructure costs, technology upgrades, transportation (to help defray a shuttle bus system, for example), and student activities. The student activities portion is then redirected to, possibly, a campus programming board, student government, and student media outlets (campus newspaper, radio station, etc.). While the organisation and implementation of programs and policies are carried out by the students themselves, their programming efforts are augmented by a cadre of professional staff from such offices as Student Activities, Leadership, the Programming Board, Club Sports, Service Learning, Family Weekend and Community Involvement. Whatever the configuration on a college or university campus, student activities is always a mix of student and staff time and resources.

In Australia student activities revolve around the student union and the sports association (or union). These bodies, composed entirely of current students, receive most, if not all, of the student union and sports association fees collected each year. The funds are then allocated to the various groups, clubs, and services under their jurisdiction. In December 2005 the fee structure changed dramatically. The Australian government banned mandatory university fees to student unions. There were many reasons for this action, with the primary one being a university cannot require a student to be a member of a student association, union or guild. A Discussion Paper (2006) published by the Australian Government's Department of Education, Science and Training, entitled, *Voluntary Student Unionism Transition Fund for Sporting and Recreational Facilities*, states:

The Australian Government is opposed to compulsory union membership because it hinders freedom of association and forces students to pay for services they may not want. Students should not be forced to join a union, or be a member of an organisation that they do not wish to join, in order to further their education. They should have the right to choose the goods and services they want and the causes and organisations they are prepared to support. (p.3)

The post-December 2005 system did allow for students to voluntarily

join their student or sports unions, but the effect of the law has been a significant decrease in the actual number of students signing up. At every university I visited the impact of voluntary student unionism (VSU) has produced between a dismal 10% - 15% participation rate which means up to a 90% drop in their income. The policy has forced these groups to cutback on their support of activities and rely on more direct assistance from a university's central administration.

Students who pay their VSU would be able to participate in student union sponsored activities. Unlike in the United States, the unions are an entity unto themselves with almost no administrative oversight. Their governing body is elected in campus-wide elections. Members will serve on university policy-making boards and regularly consult with top administrators.

Contrast this to the U.S. where the ability to both offer a wide-range of activities and to be able to freely participate in the available co-curricular activities is seen as an essential part of the college or university experience. The mandatory student fee enables the institution to fund these activities through the student clubs and organisations at the school. Undergraduates then make a choice whether they want to become involved in the myriad of offerings at the institution. The distinction here is a student is not "joining" a union, as characterised in the Australian Department of Education report. They are, through the student fee system, contributing to the creation of an educational environment that values both the in-class and out-of-class learning milieu.

Most Australian student unions also take on more of an advocacy role and delve into the realm of student support services that would be almost unthinkable in the U.S. The University of Technology Sydney (UTS) Students' Association employs Advocacy Officers who, according to the UTS Students' Association brochure, "can help any UTS student out when they find themselves encountering difficulties in their course. If you...are confused about any aspect of your academic life or the University administration, the Students' Association can assist you with free and confidential advice" (Academic advocacy & advice, n.d.). The brochure for the University of Sydney's Students' Representative Council (SRC) states it can assist students with such issues as course problems, HECS and fees, academic issues, withdrawal, discontinuation, financial support, housing, employment childcare" (Need help? Ask the SRC, n.d.). In some respects, these student organisations are running a parallel administrative structure.

In the United States a school's student government would be comparable to the Australian Student Union or Representative Council. With the student government, the emphasis is usually representing undergraduate viewpoints to the central administration in order to promote a better quality of life on campus. Organisationally, this can be accomplished through a constitutionally set committee structure or by serving on select institutional boards. Some schools may have some advocacy programs, such as having a lawyer on retainer to assist students with tenant rights issues, but delving into advocacy areas, academic and administrative advising, for example, would not be their primary focus.

At some colleges and universities there may be a separate student-run programming group or an organisation set-up as an off-shoot of the student government. These groups emphasize a wide-range of programming for undergraduates. For example, at Rutgers University in New Jersey, the Rutgers University Programming Association (RUPA) is a "university-wide student programming council that...provides a educational, variety cultural, recreational, and programs" (Rutgers University, 2010). At the University of Connecticut, the Student Union Board of Governors (SUBOG) "is a student-run programming board on campus that puts on events that include, but are not limited to: major concerts, well-known comedians, respected speakers and campus community activities" (SUBOG Frequently Asked Questions, n.d.). Both groups receive their funding from the mandatory student fees which allows all student to participate in their activities.

Cost of Higher Education

In the United States the cost of obtaining a college or university degree has become a major hardship for students and their families. At private institutions yearly costs over \$40,000 are the norm, but they can be much higher. For example, Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut; and New York University in New York City are \$50,000 for tuition and room and board; while George Washington University in Washington, D.C. is just over \$53,000. State institutions, which receive their budget from the individual state governments, are less costly, but over the past ten years the increases have been steep. At the University of Oregon students will pay about \$15,000 during the Fall 2010 - Spring 2011 academic year; while at the University of Michigan and the University of Connecticut the total yearly expense is approximately \$22,000. Financial aid is available, but primarily need based. For most undergraduates, therefore, student loans are the central way to finance one's education. Stories of students graduating with over \$100,000 in debt are not uncommon.

In Australia, the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) has had a significant impact on making higher education more attainable and affordable for tertiary students. In Australia the federal government developed the HECS so a student can defer their entire yearly tuition via a loan from the government. The program is only open to Australian students and New Zealanders, if they will spend the duration of their educational studies in Australia. There are no other criteria such as the level of family income, assets, student savings, etc. Any student can simply complete the Commonwealth Assistance Form to participate. International students (who make up approximately 30% of the student body studying in the country) are not eligible. In the U.S. a family's finances, assets, and household situation (for example, other students at a university) define the type of financial aid and the amount a student may receive. After factoring in any financial aid the balance of a semester bill is made up of what is termed the family contribution. This amount is required in order for the student to stay in good standing with the institution.

In the United States, the repayment cycle of non-grant financial aid begins after a six or nine month break in registration (such as withdrawing from school or being academically dismissed) or upon graduation, regardless of earnings or employment. The HECS debt, conversely, would not need to be repaid until the student graduates and reaches a designated income threshold. At that point the federal government steps in and an automatic deduction, through the tax is withheld from a person's take home For 2009-2010 individuals did not have to begin repaying their tuition obligation until their income reaches \$43,151. The complete repayment schedule for 2009-2010 is:

Below \$43,151	Nil
\$43,151-\$48,066	4% of Income
\$48,067-\$52,980	4.5% of Income
\$52,981-\$55,764	5% of Income
\$\$55,765-\$59,943	5.5% of Income
\$59,944-\$64,919	6% of Income
\$64,920-\$68,336	6.5% of Income
\$68,337-\$75,203	7% of Income
\$75,204-\$80,136	7.5% of Income
\$80,137 and above	8% of Income

HELP repayment thresholds and rates, 2010

The HECS has allowed qualified Australian students access to higher education. The total cost is still a factor, but the most significant portion—tuition—is delayed until, financially, students can begin to repay their obligation. The government allows students to be making a good wage before the automatic deduction kicks in. This could begin their first year out of school or ten years later, whenever they reach the prescribed threshold. In the United States, even recent graduates earning minimum wage would be required to begin repayment. While costs are still significant for Australian students the Higher Education Contribution Scheme has proved beneficial in providing access to Australian universities.

Conclusion

The observations in this article are taken from the author's cursory look at some of the differences and similarities of Australian and U.S. student services practices and structures. My Australian overview was based on conversations I had with dozens of student service administrators during my three-week stay in the country. While general in nature, these perspectives, hopefully, provide some insight into the way each country "does business." By continuing to learn more, through structured and unstructured opportunities (the ANZSSA and NASPA Exchange is a perfect example), all student service areas will be improved as we glean and then implement the best practices from each country.

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Articles may include comment and debate on current issues, reports of student services in practice, policy matters, research projects, and reviews of relevant books. The guiding editorial policy is that articles are of interest to student service staff, and are of a high standard. Layout should conform to the rules set out in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.

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The Australia New Zealand Student Services Association is the professional association for all people working to support students in post-secondary education in Australia and New Zealand.

As an umbrella organisation for a wide range of professional workers, AN-ZSSA is uniquely placed to provide professional development activities which will deepen understanding of the principles and philosophies of student support and provide a venue for training in best practice in the profession of student support.

This is done through meetings, seminars, workshops and conferences where experienced practitioners present in their areas of expertise.

These meetings provide the basis for peer support amongst staff across institutions. This occurs informally and more formally through professional interest groups.

More information on ANZSSA can be found on the web site: www.anzssa.org

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The basic aims of ANZSSA are:

- to foster and promote support amongst students and staff.
- to facilitate the general well-being of the institutional community in universities and other post-secondary institutions
- to sponsor the professional development of members through regular conferences and organise close professional contact between members.
- to promote research
- to support and promote the interests of all those engaged in these activities.

Professional Development Activities

A **Biennial Conference** is the major ANZSSA meeting. It is a significant and substantial conference which attracts numerous international participants as well as delegates from the Australian States and New Zealand.

Regional and State meetings are the main ANZSSA events between biennial conferences. Regional activities range from informal workshops to visiting speakers and, in some cases, regular three day conferences.

Bulletin Board located at *www.anzssa.org* provides opportunities for members to share information and seek assistance with programs and issues. Recent issues include use of case notes, critical incident policy and procedures, financial advising of students and peer counselling programs.

Publications

JANZSSA, the Journal of ANZSSA, is published and distributed to members twice per year. Members are encouraged to contribute a variety of material: scholarly articles, information communications, comments, book reviews, and items of interest to the general membership can all be accommodated.

ANZSSA is on the web at: **http://www.anzssa.org** The ANZZSA web site is a comprehensive resource offering a broad range of support information to professionals working in student support roles.

Membership

The majority of individual members work directly with post-secondary students in various aspects of student development and welfare. This includes:

- Campus Nurses and Medical Officers
- Careers Advisers
- Chaplains
- Child Care Workers
- Counsellors
- Equity Officers
- Financial Advisers
- Housing Officers
- Indigenous Student Support Staff
- International Student Advisors
- Residential College Staff
- Social Workers
- Sport and Recreation Staff, and
- Welfare Workers

Another equally important group includes those with related interests, such as:

- College staff
- Student Officers, and
- Teachers and Administrators such as Sub-Deans

Students with an interest in student welfare and development make up a third important section of the membership.

Membership Information

Full details of current membership categories and registration costs are available by downloading the membership form available via the JANZSSA website members' page http://www.anzssa.org or

http://www.adcet.edu.au/Anzssa/view.aspx?id=5336