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UNDERSTANDING STUDENT STRESS:

A Qualitative Study of the Stress Experienced by Third Level Students.

VOLUME 1

BY

DECLAN AHERNE, B.A., M.A., M. PSYCH. SC.

SUPERVISOR: DR. RONNY SWAIN
Head of Department: Professor Max Taylor,
Department of Applied Psychology..
University College Cork.

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DEDICATION

To my wife and best friend, Jo,

For what it's worth and thank you.

ABSTRACT

Stress can be understood in terms of the meaning of stressful experiences for individuals. The meaning of stressful experiences involves threats to self-adequacy, where self-adequacy is considered a basic human need. Appropriate research methods are required to explore this aspect of stress. The present study is a qualitative exploration of the stress experienced by a group of 27 students at the National Institute of Higher Education, Limerick (since renamed the University of Limerick) The study was carried out by the resident student counsellor at the college. A model of student stress was explored, based on student developmental needs. The data consist of a series of interviews recorded with each of the 27 students over a 3 month period. These interviews were transcribed and the resulting transcripts are the subject of detailed analysis.

The analysis of the data is an account of the sense-making process by the student counsellor of the students' reported experiences. The aim of the analysis was to reduce the large amounts of data to their most salient aspects in an ordered fashion, so as to examine the application of a developmental model of stress with this group of students. There were two key elements to the analysis. First, the raw data were edited to identify the key statements contained in the interviews. Second, the statements were categorised, as a means of summarising the data. The results of the qualitative data analysis were then applied to the developmental model.

The analysis of data revealed a number of patterns of stress amongst the sample of students. Patterns of academic over-identification, parental conflict and social inadequacy were particularly noteworthy. These patterns consisted of an integration of academic, family and social stresses within a developmental framework. Gender differences with regard to the need for separateness and belonging are highlighted. Appropriate student stress intervention strategies are discussed. Based on the present results, the relationship between stress and development has been highlighted and is recommended as a firm basis for future studies of stress in general and student stress in particular.

FOREWORD

Reflections on self as researcher: my sense - making process

Central to any piece of research is the researcher, who brings to the work a unique view of the world. This view inevitably influences the direction the research takes. In many instances, in the search for objectivity, researchers will not acknowledge the personal aspect of their studies. This omission is regrettable, since it is often the subjective element of the study that marks its unique contribution and therefore should not be overlooked.

I have worked as a student counsellor at the University of Limerick for the past twelve years. My work has brought me into daily contact with students under stress. It was within this context that the present enquiry was carried out. I began by exploring the literature on the concept of stress. I had to decide how best to study such a vast topic (Selye, 1974). I soon discovered that the method I chose had a personal bias and that this also would very much influence the outcome of my enquiry. I felt that it was best to begin with students' own experience, as they reported it. I would then analyse their reports, with as little manipulation of the data as possible, in order to preserve the essence of what students had to say.

In order to make sense, my thesis is presented in a logical rather than a chronological sequence. Such linearity does not reflect adequately the research process as I experienced it. My experience has been of a cyclical process, with movement from beginnings to endings and back to new beginnings again. The

closest analogy I can give to this process would be a combination of making a jigsaw and creating a painting, tasks which require both logic and creativity. In the ten years that I have been involved in the project I have felt as much an artist as I have a scientist. The end product has emerged from a painstaking and often despairing process during which both the thesis and myself have undergone fundamental changes. Its submission is perhaps the closest I can ever get to the relief that must be felt at giving birth. The completion of this thesis once again marks a new beginning. What follows are some brief comments regarding my distinctive approach to the research which perhaps cannot be identified within the text proper.

To begin with, I want to comment on how the writing-up process has taken place, since this has been what engaged me throughout most of the time spent on this project. While the initial design stage took about two years and the data collection took almost 3 months, the analysis of the data and the write up have taken me almost 7 years. This division of time indicates how the study has been mainly concerned with my sense-making of the raw data that had been collected.

My pattern of writing has been to make too many assumptions of the reader. I generally assumed that the reader would know what I was thinking, even if I didn't write it down. Here, my research supervision was essential, challenging me to provide detailed, logical and unambiguous argument. My supervisor helped me to see the obvious. I was being driven by the general worthwhile idea that had been with me from the outset, namely that the qualitative dimension of

stressful experiences was worth exploring. Time and again I failed to translate this idea into concrete and operational terms. At times up to twenty drafts of the material were required before my supervisor was satisfied. It took me quite a long time to realise that a PhD consists of more than having good ideas in my head. I learnt that attention to detail and scientific rigour were equally important. Throughout the process I did not compromise on my belief that there was something of significance to be developed and that certain quantitative methods of examining this rich data would have destroyed its essential nature. I struggled to maintain what was contained in the original data I had collected.

At various points during the analysis and reflection process I would think that I had completed the work and that nothing more could be extrapolated. Through supervision, I would discover that there were still significant flaws and inconsistencies in my logic needing to be addressed. Perhaps my need to finish meant that I rushed the ending without developing the ideas I had worked so hard to identify in the first place. It's hard to believe that anything was rushed in a thesis that has taken 10 years to complete. The paradox was that if I had been in less of a rush things might have been completed a lot sooner.

During this enquiry I have learnt as much about myself as I have about students. I have learnt about my own needs and priorities as well as my limitations and stubbornness, all of which needed to be addressed. Furthermore, being a third level student myself for the past 20 years, I recognise myself in the experiences of the students who participated in the present study. When I ask myself why I

have done this project, I am struck by my own need for approval through my academic successes. I have become more aware of how this driving force has been a stress to me in my own life. I have found the experience of being in my own personal therapy during this enquiry a very helpful one in dealing with these personal issues and thus achieving a more balanced way of gathering and analysing data. Most importantly I have learnt about my own sense-making process as demonstrated by the methodology I have adopted.

Ongoing personal and research supervision enabled me to recognise my blocks: stubbornness, in-attention to detail and rushing to get finished. These issues were repeatedly pointed out to me in my research supervision until such times as I was able to own them and work with them, resulting in a less partisan view - which could be understood and accepted by the general reader.

On many occasions over the years I have felt like abandoning this project. I encountered many difficult hurdles along the way. I struggled with developing and using a methodology that would honour the data in a manner consistent with the theoretical position I had adopted. At times what kept me going was the belief that I had come too far to turn back. I felt as if I had invested too much of my own time and energy and the time and energy of others to stop. At all times what has kept me at the work with enthusiasm has been my conviction that what I was doing was of benefit to me in developing an understanding of student stress, and therefore ultimately of benefit to the students who are my clients. I found that I needed validation of what I was doing and some encouragement

that what I was doing was of value. I needed this encouragement to give me the confidence to go on with the work. In carrying out this research, I was aware that my own self-adequacy, like that of many of the students I interviewed, was often at stake due to my over-identification with academic success.

I have learnt much about qualitative research methodology in carrying out this project. At the outset, I suppose I had naively hoped to be presented with a nice, neatly packaged research methodology. Instead what I found was a set of principles and a number of examples of how others have put these principles into operation. Apart from these principles and examples, I found that I was on my own. Initially, this was a very daunting task. Eventually however I found it tremendously liberating, enabling me to express my creativity and intuition as best I could.

As well as supporting a creative approach to research, I discovered that qualitative research requires a degree of rigorous logic not governed by quantitative calculations but subject instead to a process of critical inquiry. Qualitative research covers a vast array of methodologies and can be hard to pinpoint as any one thing. Initially, I had considered, rather crudely, that qualitative research could be anything that was not quantitative. I admit to a definite bias in my wish to pursue this course of action. There was a definite excitement for me in anticipating that my thesis was not going to rely on the statistical analysis of data. I had become disillusioned with a statistical approach to the study of stress as it did not seem to get to the heart of issues with which I

had been dealing regarding the stresses of students. As a humanistically oriented counsellor, I could not identify with quantitative methodologies: they seemed to have little relevance to my day-to-day practice. For example, rarely if ever would I use psychometric tests when treating students under stress.

Due to my bias against measurement of stress I had to produce an alternative research method requiring greater creativity. I can remember originally setting out on a quantitative study to explore the interaction between as many of the variables as possible that contribute to stress. This would have been in line with much of the traditional stress research. I abandoned this approach after about a year as it did not satisfy my wish to get at what I felt was the real subject matter i.e. what the students themselves had to say about what they were experiencing.

The purpose of this study has been three-fold: (1) to contribute to stress research, (2) to be of practical benefit to students and the campus community, and (3) for my own personal and professional development (see Reason and Marshall, 1987). While this study does not fit into the standard type of action research (Freire, 1970), it is of practical importance to those for whom and by whom it was carried out, namely the faculty, staff and students of the University of Limerick. These are the people Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to as "the stakeholders". The benefits of doing this study can only be determined by the willingness of the stakeholders to listen to and adopt what is entailed in the findings (Sloboda, 1990). As Head of Counselling at the University of Limerick, I can say that my research has certainly brought about change in

myself, particularly in relation to my work at the University. Through it, I have gained tremendous insight into and understanding of third level students. I am confident that what I have learnt will benefit the service I provide to these students in the years ahead. It was for this reason that I undertook the study in the first place.

INTRODUCTION

Stress is commonly referred to, yet often misrepresented and misunderstood, in modern society. Science is relied upon to define and clarify what is meant by stress. Indeed stress research abounds. There have been exhaustive studies of many aspects of this phenomenon and yet there are still questions left unanswered regarding its nature. Stress-research headlines in the past have included "Confusion and Controversy in the Stress Field" (Selye, 1975), "Whither Stress Research?" (Payne, Todd and Burke, 1982) and "Stress Research at a Crossroads" (Breznitz and Goldberger, 1982). Researchers have been trying to determine a definite causal link between stress related illness and a range of independent variables (Payne, Todd and Burke, 1982). Independent variables examined include external stressors, such as the life events people experience, and the internal coping mechanisms used to adapt to stress.

Within the above linear (i.e. cause-effect) positivist approach to stress research, certain methodological limitations can be identified. These limitations centre on the failure by researchers to adequately address the importance of the subjective meaning of stress. While many researchers have acknowledged the significance of the meaning of stress experiences, few studies have examined these meanings closely. The major reason for lack of progress in the study of this aspect of stress has been the application of quantitative methodologies to a phenomenon that, I will argue, is intrinsically qualitative in nature.

The present study acknowledges the immense contribution of causal inquiry in the study of stress. However, fundamental concerns about the manner in which stress has traditionally been researched are identified. In the present study, qualitative research methods are used to examine and analyse stressful experiences. I argue that these methods can be used, alongside the more traditional methods, to further our understanding of stress.

My continued emphasis on and justification for the benefit of using qualitative research methods throughout the present thesis is not without reason. Mainstream stress research over the past twenty years has made continual reference to the need for improving traditional research approaches, yet there has been a clear lack of recommendations for and application of qualitative studies. Fisher and Reason (1988) in their major review of stress research present 38 studies covering a wide range of stress issues, none of which incorporate a qualitative dimension. In Kasl and Cooper's (1987) review of stress research methodology no reference is made by any of the contributors to a qualitative approach, despite the frequent reference to limitations with traditional approaches. It would appear that the argument for different methodologies is influenced not only by what seems logical but also by different philosophical positions and "world views". Stress research has been the domain of traditional empirical researchers. The present study argues that there is now a greater need for more qualitative studies of stress.

I have stated that traditional research methods have not catered adequately for the meaning of peoples experiences as a core element of stress. Qualitative research, on the other hand, provides a well established method of handling the intricacies of meaning (Jones, 1985). The qualitative aspects of stress are most relevant for our investigation yet the least accessible through traditional research approaches. Qualitative research methods, as well as complementing traditional quantitative research methods, provide us with some radical alternatives, which may even seem unscientific to many traditional researchers (Walker, 1985). With qualitative research, it is intended to determine more what things exist than to determine how many such things there are (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975). Qualitative techniques are not concerned with measurement and therefore they tend to be less structured and more responsive to the needs of respondents and to the nature of the subject matter (Walker, 1985).

Qualitative research will typically produce large amounts of rich data obtained from a limited number of individuals. Furthermore, instead of using standardised data collection procedures, qualitative research exploits the context within which data is gathered in order to enhance the value of the data. The analysis of qualitative material is more explicitly interpretative, creative and personal than in quantitative analysis, whilst being equally systematic and careful (Walker, 1985).

The present study, through the use of semi-structured interviewing, adopts a qualitative research methodology to examine student stress. No attempt is made to measure the amount of stress being experienced by students. Nor do I attempt to examine stress-coping mechanisms - which have been the preoccupation of many researchers in this area. Instead, the demands which students experience as stressful are explored in some detail. My aim was to get a comprehensive account of the kinds of issues which were of concern to students. By basing the study on current experiences, I wanted to obtain an here-and-now report rather than a retrospective account of student stress experiences.

The present study examines a Self-Adequacy Model of Stress (see section 1.3.4) as it applies to students. The Self-Adequacy Model of stress is presented as a framework within which the interview data can be understood. Fineman (1986) maintained that there is a thin line between facilitating understanding and inhibiting it through the use of an a priori framework of this type. He goes on to state that where the researcher is trying to understand the researched person's position, as is the case in qualitative studies, the framework used must be sufficiently 'elastic' and even imprecise so as to provide enough degrees of freedom to accommodate the participant's position. Fineman recognised that this approach marks a dramatic shift from traditional, experimental, psychological research which insists on strict hypothesising and tight uniform questioning. In the present study, my aim, like that of Fineman, was to examine the application of this stress framework with a variety of

students, in order to establish its usefulness to professionals dealing with troubled students.

My choice of a qualitative methodology is influenced by two related factors. First, I have chosen a methodology because of its suitability to the subject under investigation. Both topic and method are inextricably linked together, to represent the broader philosophical position of qualitative research. The interdependence of approach, method and content has been referred to previously by Giorgi (1970). Barrell et al (1985), in commenting further on this issue, suggest that one's methodological choices should not be made in isolation from the content one is studying or the approach one is taking towards that content. In this instance, both the meanings invoked to understand the situation and the psychological character of the situation are encapsulated within the research project (see Gillet, 1995). Barrell et al (1987) have argued, that the failure of traditional psychology to recognise the overlap between topic and method, has led to the use of inappropriate research methods. This has certainly been true in the case of stress research.

I have argued that qualitative research methods are necessary because of the importance of the qualitative nature of stress. For example, the interactionist definition of stress (see section 1.3.2) is consistent with a qualitative research philosophy. The interactionist approach states that stress is determined by the individual's appraisal of the environment (Lazarus, 1976). Subjective appraisal suggests a constructivist (Kelly, 1955) view of the world i.e.

relational rather than absolute (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). There is an integration, in this instance, between the definition of the concept to be studied and the research method used to carry out the study. [Presumably, this principle holds true for all researchers: how we study the world is determined by and is consistent with how we "define" that world. This principle is more relevant now than heretofore. In the past, a singular "scientific" view of the world was held and propagated by social science researchers in general and psychologists in particular]. Because of this overlap, care must be taken in distinguishing what is topic and what is method. For example, in the present study, a distinction can be made between 'meaning as topic' and 'meaning as method'. 'Meaning as topic' refers to the significance or importance of an event for a person, which determines its stressfulness. 'Meaning as method' refers to the sense making by the researcher of the person's stress. The present study attempts to make sense of ('meaning as method') the significance of students' stress experiences within the self-adequacy framework of human development ('meaning as topic').

My choice of qualitative methodology was influenced by a second factor which is my own 'position' as researcher and practitioner. The dual role of researcher/practitioner is a difficult role yet an important one to acknowledge. My interest in the study of stress is primarily as a practitioner and I am guided in my research by what seems relevant in practice. I am certain it is no coincidence that as a humanistic psychotherapist, I have chosen a qualitative

research approach. Qualitative methodology fits comfortably within the humanistic tradition (see Rowan, 1983).

I am sure that in advocating a qualitative perspective on stress, I am as much influenced by my own position as by the literature I choose to review. Many other researchers, such as Fisher (1988), Cooper (1988), Paykel and Dowlatsahi (1988), Brown and Harris (1978) and Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend, 1974), presumably influenced by their own 'world view' as much as by the literature, have adopted a quantitative research approach to stress. Meanwhile Mechanic's (1962) qualitative study of stress reflects the social psychology perspective from which he was coming. Variations of this nature highlight the need for one's research position to be identified rather than ignored, so as to assist in evaluating any one particular perspective.

Patton (1991) has said that the goals of qualitative research are more concerned with understanding than with causes. I am encouraging this approach to the study of stress since it aims to deepen our understanding of stress, enabling counsellors and therapists better facilitate those who experience stress.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the three main approaches to the study of stress. I begin by clarifying the nature of the **Stress Response**. An overview of the theory and history related to the **Stimulus model** of stress is presented in the next section. Life Events research dominates this model. A detailed exploration is presented of the methodological difficulties in Life Events

research. The principles of Interactionism and the **Interaction Model** of stress are outlined in the final section of the chapter.

Chapter 2 explores research into the nature of student stress in the context of Response, Stimulus and Interaction models. Through discussion of the interaction between student and environment, I propose an understanding of student stress based on student developmental needs. This model provides the theoretical framework for the present study.

Chapter 3 contains details of the present study. This study consists of in-depth interviews with students based on the stresses which they experience. Qualitative analysis of the data yielded a meaningful categorisation of the students' stressful experiences. A developmental model of student stress is explored, based on the interrelationships established between these stress categories. Finally, the implications of the findings for the understanding and treatment of student stress are discussed.

CHAPTER ONE

THE NATURE OF STRESS:

AN

OVERVIEW OF

STRESS RESEARCH APPROACHES

1. THE NATURE OF STRESS: AN OVERVIEW OF STRESS RESEARCH APPROACHES.

This opening chapter contains a literature review of stress research in general. Many of the theoretical and methodological considerations dealt with in the present thesis originate from this more general base. I have borrowed from Cox (1976) who usefully addresses stress under the three headings of response, stimulus and interaction models of stress. There is a certain historical sequence in dealing with stress under these respective headings. The movement from response to stimulus and to interaction models of stress reflect the increasing complexity and sophistication with which this topical issue has been examined by researchers over the past five decades.

1.1 STRESS AS A RESPONSE

1.1.1 Introduction

In the Response Model, stress is treated as the dependent variable i.e. it is considered as a response to circumstances. It is of little benefit to discuss the concept of stress without first describing the stress response. It is as a result of damage caused by the response to stress that stress has become a topic of considerable research interest. It is important to identify the complex nature of the stress response and its broad parameters in order to establish how best to research this area.

In this section the stress response is briefly described and an overview of the history of research into the response is provided. The specificity of the stress

response is highlighted. The psychological components of the stress response are given special consideration at the end of the section.

Studies of the stress response have been concerned with identifying responses which indicate that the organism is under pressure from the environment. In these studies, stress is defined as the response to some stressful or demanding agent. In the early stages of stress response research, more attention was paid to the physiological, as opposed to the psychological response, since physiology already had an established scientific tradition with its appropriate instrumentation. Much of the stress research of today, with its focus on the quantification of stress, has emerged out of this physiological tradition. Briefly stated, the physiological stress response involves the two major neuro-endocrine systems, the sympathetic-adrenomedullary system and the pituitary-adrenocortical system. The former system gives rise to responses which are of short duration, involved in the so-called 'alarm stage' (Selye, 1974) of the stress response and activated when the organism is exposed to stresses. The latter acts more slowly, providing a back-up resource, operative only in situations of extreme and/or prolonged demand (Cox, 1978).

The history of stress response research is reviewed briefly below as a background to the more comprehensive account of stress provided in later sections of the thesis.

1.1.2 The History of Stress Response Research

The work of Walter Cannon at the beginning of the century was an important landmark in stress research. Cannon (1927) put forward the principle of homeostasis, according to which, body systems possess a self-regulating mechanism (through the autonomic nervous system and controlled by the hypothalamus) which allows them to fluctuate within biologically safe margins. Cannon was exploring the adaptive mechanisms of the body which enable it to survive. The survival aspect of the stress response has been emphasised by many researchers since then (Cannon, 1931; Frankenhauser, 1971; Selye, 1974; Dunne, 1985). Cannon identified the sympathetic-adreno-medullary system as facilitating this life preserving process (Cannon 1927, 1929). The aim of the sympathetic-adreno-medullary system is to achieve a balance between the 'emergency reaction' (Gray, 1971) of the body to an environmental stimulus and the subsequent energy conserving process once this demand has been met. Cannon suggested that the adrenaline released through the arousal of this system would aid adaptation by helping the organism to respond more rapidly to danger, i.e. engage in 'a fight-or-flight reaction' to a message of danger. Cox (1978) points out that the innate 'fight or flight' survival response tends to be suppressed in modern society. The lack of overt expression of these emotions increases the rate of wear and tear on the body, resulting in stress-induced pathology.

Hans Selye's (1956, 1974) pioneering research on stress can be seen as a further extension of Cannon's work. Selye, who was a physician and endocrinologist,

maintained that stress was the non-specific, physiological response of the body to any demand put on it (Selye, 1974). The issue of non-specificity was to prove controversial, implying as it does that the stress response is a universal pattern of survival, i.e. that all stress-producing situations will produce similar patterns of physiological response. The source of the stress did not matter, according to Selye. The non-specific defence reaction was considered the same for all animals. Seyle (1974) argued that different stressors only differ in their specific effects and not in their non-specific (stress) effects. For example, cold and heat produce increased adrenocortical activity, one by sweating, the other by shivering.

Contrary to the position of Selye, there is considerable evidence for specificity in the stress response. For example, catecholamine (adrenaline and nor-adrenaline) excretion has been shown to be situation-specific. Adrenaline is released in anxiety situations and nor-adrenaline in aggressive situations, both situations being considered stressful (Frankenhauser and Gardell, 1976). There is further evidence to suggest that the two catecholamines are differentially sensitive to behavioural and situational factors, e.g., passive and active coping (Elimadjian, Hope and Lawson, 1958), fear and anger (Funkenstein, 1956), and psychological and physical effort (Dimsdale and Moss, 1980; Cox et al., 1982) respectively. Frankenhauser and colleagues identified a number of different factors, both physical and psychological, which can alter catecholamine excretion. These factors include situational control (Frankenhauser and Risler, 1970), over and under stimulation (Frankenhauser, 1971), anticipation and uncertainty

(Frankenhauser and Risler 1970), and physical activity (Frankenhauser et al 1969). In all cases variation of the independent variables produced change in catecholoamine excretion, some producing change in both adrenaline and noradrenaline output. In these studies, large differences in cathecholamine excretion occurred between individuals, adding further to the evidence for specificity in the stress response. Further evidence of specificity is that certain differences exist in stress responses between males and females. Women may be more hypoactive in terms of their sympathetic-adrenomedullary response to stress (Cox, 1978). Johannson and colleagues demonstrated little increase in the adrenaline of females in test situations versus routine situations whereas there was a marked increase for males (Johannson, 1972; Johannson and Post, 1972). Results such as these demonstrate that the stress response is not a universal response by all people, to all stresses.

Further criticism of the notion of non-specificity had to do with what Selye called the General Adaptation Syndrome (G.A.S.). The stress response, Selye suggested, went through three stages referred to collectively as the G.A.S. Stage One, which he called the alarm stage, is similar to Cannon's 'fight or flight' reaction. In this stage the body shows changes characteristic of initial exposure to a stressor and at the same time there is a reduction in its level of resistance. If the stressor is sufficiently severe, resistance may collapse and death results, e.g. a fatal heart attack. Stage Two is the resistance stage, which occurs when the body adapts to continued exposure to the stressor. The physical characteristics of the initial alarm reaction disappear and are replaced by the changes marking

the organism's adaptation to the situation. Here, resistance rises above normal. The Final stage is one of exhaustion. Following long-term exposure to the same stressor, the necessary energy for adaptation may be exhausted, and the organism finally collapses.

Criticism regarding the G.A.S. came from researchers such as Mason (1971), who argued that some stressors, such as exercise and fasting, do not produce the G.A.S. and thus it could not be considered a universal stress response. The logic of Selye's position was to state that any agent producing the stress response must be called a stressor (McGrath, 1970). This assertion may not be valid, since in many cases these agents could be considered responses, e.g. heat and fatigue. Cox (1978) concludes that while many stressful situations produce similar patterns of physiological response, such a pattern is not true of every situation. Henry (1982) has drawn similar conclusions. Once again the specific nature of the stress response was supported.

The non-specific hypothesis implied a uniform and universal response, which, if it were true, would have greatly simplified stress research. Instead we are presented with a highly complex phenomenon, influenced by many factors. The specific nature of the stress response indicates that different responses will occur under different circumstances. Variations in the stress response will occur across people, situations and time. It is not possible, therefore, to establish any single measure of stress. This lack of a unitary measurement of stress has continued to be a major problem for researchers.

A final aspect of Selye's model to be referred to is where the defence responses, if severe and prolonged, are said to result in disease states, which he called 'diseases of adaptation'. Thus, illness could be the cost of defence against exposure to stressor agents. Illness occurs when the defence mechanism over-extends the resources available within the physiological system. Cox (1978) identifies a huge variety of stress related responses and complaints ranging from minor ailments to life threatening illnesses and psychological disorders. Anxiety, depression, eating disorders, psychosis, alcoholism, coronary heart disease, diabetes, asthma, cancer, ulcers and sleeplessness are just some of the multitude of symptoms which have been associated with stress (see Fisher and Reason, 1988). This assumed link between stress and illness has generated a sustained interest on the part of stress researchers.

Baum, Singer and Baum (1981) concluded that the physiological response to stress has both specific and non-specific aspects, which can be both acute and chronic. This conclusion accepts the work of Cannon and Selye as significant but limited contributions to our overall understanding of the nature of the stress response. Selye's General Adaptation Syndrome might be considered as the non-specific element of the overall response. The argument here is that there is an underlying universal aspect to the stress response but that, depending on the circumstances, this response manifests itself in different ways. On the contary, the evidence indicates that there is no uniform stress response, nor is there any single measure of stress.

While the response model may have its limitations, Baum, Singer and Baum (1981) correctly point out that stress cannot be defined without some reference to the response as part of the stress process. This response, however, must be recognised as consisting of both physical and psychological components

1.1.3 Stress as a Psychological Response

The research has established definite linkages between the physical response outlined above and psychological mechanisms in the brain to explain, from a neurological point of view, how psychological responses to stress come about. A brief explanation of these linkages follows.

While originally studied as a physiological response, the stress response has since been considered a whole-organism response, incorporating both physical and psychological processes. Evidence is available which links the physiological response discussed above with psychological factors such as cognition, feelings, sensations and control, all of which are important aspects of the stress experience (Cox, 1978). There is now further evidence to show that structures exist linking the cognitive-affective representations in the higher centres of the cortex and those lower nuclei in the diencephalic region of the brain which regulate basic hormonal and autonomic activities. It is known that the cerebro-cortical-limbic-hypothalmic-pituitary axis translates symbolic messages (i.e. meaningful material) into neurochemical impulses which can alter any system in the body. Brodal (1981) provides specific evidence for this link-

up, and points out that the prefrontal cortex has two-way connections with structures involved in emotional and behavioural change and in the regulation of the internal systems of the organism.

In summary, although stress affects neurochemical activity, psychological factors are also involved (Anisman, 1978). It is through the exploration of the psychological aspects of the stress response that we have gained a greater understanding of the experience of stress.

The reported experience of stress, forms the basis of the present study. According to Cox (1978) the experience of stress represents the central and personal element of the stress response. After all it is the experience of stress that 'troubles' the individual (Cox, 1978). The experience of being under stress is the most obvious manifestation that stress has occurred - but it is not easy to observe or to communicate. The experience is reflected by what the person feels - as the experience of stress is an emotional one - yet this experience can only be shared indirectly by, for example, stating ones feelings to another. It is only by asking about feelings we can ascertain whether or not a person is under stress.

The subjective experience of stress, due to its qualitative nature, has often been omitted from any consideration in stress research. The existence of stress in others has to be inferred from their verbal or written report or from their appearance or behaviour (Cox, 1978). Because of the personal nature of the experience of stress, a standard objective labelling system cannot be used to

describe it. Instead, Cox (1978) suggests, there will be variation in the personal meanings of the names used to label experiences. This variation in meanings will be such that only a rough consensus can be reached between people regarding the experience. It will also cause difficulties in generalising individual verbal or written reports of the experience of stress. Cox identifies two such difficulties. First, personal experience may be richer than language can accommodate. Second, the kernel of understanding experience lies within common sense, which lies 'beneath' the language. The reported experience of stress is limited further by the individual's lack of awareness of the experience due to defence mechanisms. The existence of these constraints means that any such data must be treated with caution, according to Cox (1978).

1.1.4 Summary and Conclusion

In this section I have given a very brief overview of the stress response. There have been two major outcomes of stress response research over the past 50 years. First, both specific and non-specific stress responses have been observed. Second, both psychological and physical factors have been established in the stress response. The contributions of both Cannon and Selye to stress research have been noteworthy in this regard.

A variety of stressful agents can cause a range of physical and psychological responses and these responses can differ from person to person. These variations indicate that there cannot be any single measure of stress. A lack of any uniform measure of stress makes quantitative studies in this area problemmatic.

Stress is a general term, applied to a wide variety of responses associated with threats to the organism. The generic nature of stress make it a difficult topic to research. However, for as long as it is to be researched, models of stress must take this generality into account. More research based on individuals reported experiences of threats and demands is recommended in order to accommodate the specific stress experience within a more general stress framework.

The next section examines the types of stimuli which are likely to bring about the stress response, as well as the methodological issues involved in the study of such stimuli.

1.2 LIFE EVENTS RESEARCH: THE STIMULUS MODEL OF STRESS

1.2.1 Introduction

The stimulus model of stress is concerned with situations in the environment that trigger the stress response. In contrast to the response model, the stimulus model treats stress as the independent, and not dependent, variable. Life events studies have dominated the stimulus model approach and have helped to establish the view that 'illness' is not solely due to organic causes. The view that now prevails is that both health and 'illness' are a product of our life experiences (see Fisher and Reason, 1988). Life events represent the first level at which some understanding of stress has taken place, but is not without its limitations. The history, theory and measurement of life events are outlined briefly below. The

limitations of life events research methodology are given special consideration with a strong argument made for the development of alternative methods.

1.2.2 An Historical Overview of Life Events Research

The experimental work of Cannon (1929) on the effects of stress provided a necessary link in the argument that stressful life events can prove harmful. Cannon showed that stimuli associated with emotional arousal cause change in basic physiological processes. As Cox (1978) points out, Cannon outlined specific conditions (i.e. life events), under which these physiological changes develop into pathological conditions. In so doing, Cannon highlighted the significance of life events. However, he left it to others to examine the complexity of these events and their effects.

Many of the life events later considered stressful (i.e. stressors) by researchers were originally identified by Meyer (1958). In his studies, Meyer referred to the importance of the impact of events such as: changes of habitat, school entrance, graduation or failures, various jobs and the dates of possibly important births and deaths in the family. Holmes, Goodsell and Wolff (1950) demonstrated that stressful life events, by evoking psycho-physiological reactions, played an important causative role in the natural history of many diseases. The life events research which followed attempted to confirm the relationship between life events and illness. Hinkle (1961) and his co-workers, for example, were the first to attempt a large scale study of the relationship between life events and illness.

Hinkle established a relationship between the events experienced by telephone company employees and their absence from work due to sickness.

1.2.3 Theoretical Base of Life Events Research

Studies of life events have as their theoretical basis the view that 'change' is the key component in a stressful situation, i.e. change, per se, produces the stress response. According to life events theory, the more readjustment required to cope with an event, the more stress is inherent in that event. A stressful event, therefore, can be judged in terms of the amount of 'social readjustment' (Holmes and Rahe, 1967) required of an individual experiencing it. Social readjustment measures the intensity and length of time necessary to accommodate to a life event, regardless of the desirability of the event (Dunne, 1985). The emphasis on the amount of change caused by an event brought with it the need to quantify and measure life events. As a result, quantitative research methods have dominated life events studies. There is a need to study stress beyond a purely quantitative level, as outlined below. First, the quantification approach itself will be discussed.

1.2.4 The Measurement of Life Events

The Social Readjustment Rating Scale, or S.R.R.S., (Holmes and Rahe, 1967) has become the most widely used instrument for the measurement of stressful life events (Dunne 1985). Cohen and Willis (1985) concluded that 90% of life events studies were using life events measures similar to the S.R.R.S. The S.R.R.S. is a 21 item scale of life events, with each item (e.g. moving

house/divorce/ bereavement) given a stress loading score. The sum of these scores, as rated by the individual, is considered a measure of that person's stress. During the development of this instrument, interviewing was used to assess the meaning of events for the individual. As expected, the psychological significance of events varied widely between individuals. It was noted that only some of the events were negative or stressful in the conventional sense, whilst many were actually socially desirable. For these authors it was change per se, and not its direction (+ or -), which was considered to be the stressful factor.

There is one theme common to all the life events identified by Holmes and Rahe (1967). The occurrence of each event was usually associated with some adaptive or coping behaviour on the part of the individual involved. Each item was constructed to contain life events whose advent is either indicative of, or requires a significant change in, the ongoing life-pattern of the individual. The emphasis was on measuring change from an existing steady state, rather than on the psychological meaning or social desirability of an event (Holmes and Masuda, 1967). The influence of Cannon's theory of homeostasis (see section 1.1.2), with its emphasis on a return to equilibrium, is evident here.

The quantitative methodology used in life events studies presents certain difficulties to stress researchers. These difficulties will now be addressed.

1.2.5 Difficulties with Life Events Research Methods

The life events approach has been centre stage in stress research for the last thirty years and continues to influence current research. However, certain methodological difficulties can be identified with life events research. The underlying problem has centred on the quantification of the meaning (i.e. the significance or importance) of an event for an individual. Three issues can be mentioned in this regard: (1) the method of data collection, (2) the quantification of stress and, (3) the life events-illness link. Each of these methodological issues will now be discussed in order to identify guidelines for methodological improvement. It is through the examination of the methodological limitations regarding the study of stress that we gain insight into the complexity of this phenomenon.

1.2.5.1 The Method of Data Collection

Certain difficulties have been associated with self-reporting, which has been the established method of data collection in life events research. Whilst self-report is appealing as a method, it is suspect due to the problem of defining a life event (Paykel, 1983). Complete definitions of life events are too cumbersome to be incorporated into a short questionnaire. The alternative, a checklist of life events (e.g. the S.R.R.S.) has been shown to be ineffective, with low reliability and poor consistency (Brown and Harris, 1978). A major difficulty with the quantification of life events is the variable meaning of each event. For example, does "moving to a new house" entail losing friends, or financial problems, or was it an enforced move, or is there some other meaning? Dohrenwend et al

(1987) highlighted the variability of meaning in an exercise where they asked respondents for an account of what actually happened in each event checked on a checklist. The investigators rated each response in terms of the amount of change involved. Surprisingly, going by the theory of life events, responses varied widely. For example, the item 'being laid off' involved no change for 10%, little change for 13% and moderate change for 77% of respondents. 'Being laid off', considered a significant life event, caused little or no change for nearly one quarter of the sample. This was contrary to what life events theory would have predicted. Dohrenwend and colleagues looked again at the specific replies, and discovered that they should have been looking at more than 'plant shutdowns'. Some of those laid off were seasonal workers, and so for them it was a 'non-event', since they weren't being laid off, as such. These researchers concluded that differences in amounts of change may be as large within event categories as between them (Dohrenwend, 1987). It is hardly surprising, therefore, that life events and adverse health changes are not found to be strongly associated.

In their study, Brown and Harris (1978) stated that they wanted to obtain enough information about the person's life situation to estimate objectively the impact of each life event on the person at that time. This was the first major attempt to deal with the meaning of life events for people, and therefore, is of particular significance for the study of stress. According to Brown and Harris (1978), measures based on what people say life events meant for them inevitably create serious difficulties in a causal inquiry. Brown and Harris contend that it is

unnecessary for the measurement of meaning to be dependent on persons' own accounts of their feelings and actions. A personal account is desirable, they say, but

> *if it is suspect for methodological reasons, a full account of past behaviours and circumstances surrounding an event will instead enable us to make, in the majority of instances, a reasonable estimate of the meaning of an event* (Brown and Harris, 1978).

Two points need to be made regarding the above position. First, Brown and Harris infer that a causal connection can be established between life events and a variety of independent variables. While this assumption has not been validated, it still guides quantitative research approaches. A qualitative analysis does not set out to establish such causal links. Qualitative research seeks to obtain a deeper understanding of phenomena which is not based on cause-effect analysis (Patton, 1991; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).

Second, Brown and Harris acknowledge the essential desirability of research which includes what a person has to say. This information is omitted by them, not because it is not relevant, but because it cannot be catered for within a strictly quantitative methodology.

The solution adopted by Brown and Harris to the methodological problem of meaning has two main components. First, it excluded any consideration of what subjects say they felt in the interview. Second, contextual scales were developed as an alternative to self-report. These scales were based on the collection of background information and of judgements on the likely meaning of the event

for the average person. Both of these attempts at solution appear to create further difficulties. For example, to ignore what people say they felt, is to ignore the central element by which stress can be communicated. Furthermore, conclusions that are based on 'the average' person should always be treated with caution - since there is no definition of the 'average' person.

Brown and Harris (1978) state that, in regard to establishing the meaning of an event, persons' responses may not always be able to reflect adequately the sum total of the meaning events have for them. The basic postulates on which peoples emotional responses are based, are not fully open to awareness, according to Brown and Harris. They suggest that the use of investigator-based judgements of a person's likely response helps to overcome this problem. Such a position assumes, however, that the investigator is not subject to limitations in awareness. An alternative position would be to listen to what respondents have to say, and infer from this the nature of the threats experienced by them. Combs, Richards and Richards (1976) recommend the use of inference in this way. Barrell et al (1985) have used this type of inference to good effect in their studies of anxiety.

A major concern expressed by Brown and Harris (1978) was not inaccuracy in measurement but a bias in the selection of what is being studied. They suggested that it may still be possible to arrive at conclusions about causal processes using inaccurate measures. According to Brown and Harris, the inaccuracy merely reduces the size of the link. For them, bias is more serious

because it can produce a link where none in fact exists. Choosing to quantify life events and seeking to establish causal links between events and illness, however, are also bias' in method which Brown and Harris fail to acknowledge.

Brown and Harris (1978) contend that a life event exists independently of any translation made of it by the person. Brown and Harris' (1978) study focuses on this objective element of an event. There is a fundamental flaw inherent in this approach. While there is no denying the existence of an objective event, it is only its subjective translation that influences the person (see section 1.3). For this reason it is the subjective aspect of an event that needs to be given priority. This rationale marks an important departure from the original life events theory based on the notion of change as the key defining characteristic of an event.

Interviewing as an alternative method of data collection

In order to understand why persons act as they do we need to understand the meaning and significance they give to their actions. Depth interviewing is one way of doing so. To understand other persons' constructions of reality

> *we would do well to ask them and in such a way that they can tell us in their terms (rather than those imposed rigidly and a priori by ourselves) and in a depth which addresses the rich context that is the substance of their meanings. (*Jones, 1985*).*

Patton (1990) stated that the purpose of the interview is to find out "what is in and on someone else's mind". In other words, we interview others to learn about their perspective, by inviting the interviewees to help the interviewer understand their world.

Depth interviewing is used as a means of conversation in which the researcher encourages informants to relate, in their own terms, experiences and attitudes that are relevant to the research problem (Walker, 1985). It provides the opportunity for the researcher to probe deeply and to secure vivid, accurate, inclusive accounts that are based on personal experience (Burgess, 1982). This approach to data collection is recommended where the research topic is sensitive, complex and concerned with process (Walker, 1985). Interviewing is considered most suitable for exploring the meaning of experiences (Jones, 1985) such as the study of stress.

The quality of the information obtained during an interview is largely dependent on the interviewer (Patton, 1984). The fundamental principle of qualitative interviewing is to provide the framework within which respondents can express their own understandings in their own terms. Interviewing, therefore, is a skill requiring considerable expertise.

Interviewing is one preferred alternative to self-report questionnaires, as a means of collecting data (see Paykel and Dowlashahi, 1988; Brown and Harris, 1978). The key issue in the collection of life events data is how the data can encapsulate the meaning of the events. By trusting the participants' own report of their experience of stress through a semi-structured interview approach the personal meaning attributed by individuals to events can be understood and used in order to develop a more general framework of stress. Interviewing is detailed and may

take up to half a day to complete, using tape recordings and subsequent analyses of transcripts. Interview methods have been used with some success by many researchers (e.g. Paykel et al, 1969; Paykel et al, 1980; Tennant and Andrews, 1976; Dohrenwend et al, 1987).

Various degrees of structure are possible in an interview. A completely standardised interview, with items asked in specified wording with no additional probing, has little advantage over a self-report questionnaire. Paykel (1983) recommends a semi-structured interview with some probing and flexibility as necessary.

1.2.5.2. The Quantification of Life Events

Life events, such as unemployment, bereavement and exams, are not experienced with equal impact by everyone. As a result traditional research has devoted much attention to the differential measurement of life events. The underlying assumption is that differences in impact can be objectively measured. However, if people's different experiences of events are due more to the personal meanings they attach to an event than to some objective criterion, then it is these personal meanings which need to be evaluated. The personal meanings of events are qualitative phenomena, which cannot be accounted for solely by quantitative measurement, and any attempt to do so is bound to run into problems. Various methods have been used to try to measure life events, including consensus scaling, categorisation of events into groups, and contextual

judgements of threat. Certain difficulties have been encountered by each of these approaches :

(a) Consensus Scaling - This technique has been developed by Holmes and Rahe (1967), and consists of asking a sample of people to rate the life change involved for a range of life events, in comparison with marriage. They found remarkable consensus in ratings both within and across different social and ethnic sample groups. However, assigning a standard weight by agreement is a crude tool which clearly misses the particular circumstances of many individual events.

(b) Categorisation of events into groups - Events can be categorised on some logical or agreed basis (e.g. desirable and undesirable), for the general event rather than for the particular occurrence. This is a group rather than an individual judgement method, so as to avoid bias, and has been used in a number of studies on depression and suicide (Paykel et al., 1969, 1980, 1975; Paykel and Tanner, 1976). However, by using this approach, there is no possibility of incorporating the personal or subjective meaning of events.

(c) The previously mentioned Brown and Harris study used a technique which they developed themselves, called 'judgement of contextual threat', where the rater makes a judgement of the stressfulness of the event. Judgement of contextual threat has been used reliably in a number of studies (Brown et al, 1973; Tennent et al., 1979; Harris, 1987). The judgement, however, does not include the reported experience of the individual, and for this reason cannot adequately account for the personal meaning of an experience.

A further difficulty in relation to the choice of events in any scale construction is whether or not the event has been experienced by the rater. Where the event has not been experienced by the rater, what is being obtained is simply an average report of the hypothetical meaning of an event. In constructing the Social Readjustment Rating Scale (S.R.R.S.) Holmes and Rahe (1967) asked raters to rate for the amount of readjustment which they believed the average person would have to make in response to each event. Rahe and Arthur (1967) concluded that in the construction of life event scales, subjects should be asked to rate only items of which they have had experience, and that the rating should be done from their own perspective i.e. how much upset or readjustment they experienced.

There have been some attempts to incorporate the meaning of events into the kind of questionnaire-based instrument developed by Holmes and Rahe (1967) and at the same time to tackle the issue of event variability, as discussed in the previous section. A most significant development has been to ask individual respondents to rate the importance of particular events for themselves, as opposed to assigning standard values to specific events (e.g. Zitzow, 1984). It is reasonable to expect that something closer to the true complexity of the life event will be reflected in such an approach.

In conclusion, the meaning of an event can often be dismissed in order to satisfy the urge for objectivity. Consequently, only the quantitative aspect of life events has been studied. An alternative means of examining life events is that of

personal judgements i.e. asking subjects themselves whether an event was stressful. This seems an obvious method and probably the most sensitive way of finding out about events. However, the closer we move towards taking into account the subject's own experience of an event, the more we will have to let go of the notion that the personal meaning of a life event can be explained and understood solely in quantitative terms.

A major reason that there has been a strong 'urge' by researchers to quantify stress has been to try to establish a causal link between life events and illness. The only way of doing this within traditional methodology has been through the use of statistical analysis. In the next section the link between life events and illness is investigated to see if indeed this is a valid line of inquiry.

1.2.5.3 Life Events and Illness

The quantification of life events is inextricably linked to attempts at establishing a relationship between life events and illness. Baltis et al (1972), Bielauskes and Webb (1974) Greenberg (1980), and Marx, Garrity and Bowers (1975) are a sample of the many studies using correlational-type analysis, which have established some degree of relationship between life change events and the occurrence of illness.

The use of retrospective designs in the above studies presents a range of difficulties for researchers, including: (a) a present illness may influence any reporting of a past event (Brown, 1973); (b) it is not possible to specify the

exact time of onset of an illness; (c) the longer the time between an illness and an event, the more likely it is that some correlation will be obtained if that illness occurs regularly; (d) self-reporting is not reliable in that, for example, the 'sick-role' tendency (i.e. where the patient has an investment in being sick) can lower one's threshold for pain, thereby influencing the reporting of the severity of the illness; and (d) some of the life events listed on scales can be a consequence rather than cause of illness, e.g., symptoms such as anxiety (see Zitzow, 1984). For these reasons the validity of any link established between life events and illness must be questioned. According to Dunne (1985), despite the general acceptance that life events have a role in the onset of physical pathology and psychological adaptation, there is little firm support for these factors as major causes of illness (see Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend, 1974). Paykel and Dowlashahi (1988) in commenting on the future of life events research concluded that:

> *We know that life events precede and contribute to a variety of disorders. However correlation studies show that the type of event is only weakly related to the type of disorder.*

Furthermore, concrete information on the nature of the causal link between subjects' recent life changes and subsequent illness (Rahe, 1974) is noticeably lacking. While some relationship does exist between life events and illness, this is a weak relationship, and certainly no causal link has been established. Even where a very high correlation between variables has been established this does not necessarily indicate a causal relationship. In fact correlations between the presumed impact of life events and illness/disorder are quite variable and tend to be low. High observed correlations (e.g. .37, by Vinoker and Selzer, 1975; .30

by Thoits, 1983) have only explained 13% of the variance in the data. Correlations do not exceed 0.3 in a majority of studies, the average correlation being around 0.10 (Rabkin and Streuning, 1976). While the correlations found between life events indices and scores on the criterion variable, i.e. illness, have been statistically significant (Rahe 1972, 1974), Dunne (1985) points out that this significance is due more to the very large sample size than to a significant degree of association between the measures. Rahe et al (1970) suggest that most studies reporting statistically significant differences between groups in S.R.R.S. scores provide poor prediction of individual results.

Wershow and Reinhart (1974), having failed to find a significant correlation between different illnesses and life events, suggested a moratorium on such research. There has been a preoccupation with life events and illness relationships despite the lack of supporting empirical evidence (Kanner et al, 1981). Horrowitz et al (1979) suggest that this preoccupation is precisely because of the difficulty in considering the subjective significance of events. Rather than avoid these challenges, researchers must be encouraged to confront them.

1.2.6 Summary and Conclusion

The life events approach to the study of stress has been examined as the prime example of an approach which treats stress as a stimulus. The history and theory of life events research have indicated how the quantification of life events

has emerged as the dominant research method. The difficulties presented by this approach have been highlighted.

Three conclusions can be made with regard to life events research. First, the subjective meanings of life events are not quantifiable, yet remain a most important element of such events. Second, the difficulties encountered with collecting data on life events suggests interviewing as a preferred method of data collection. Finally, a definite causal link between life events and illness has not been established and does not warrant further research.

In 1967, Rahe and Arthur, commenting on the development of life events research, pointed out that there was no longer a need to examine the relationship between the number of life events and illness but that issues such as social supports, psychological responses and defence mechanisms needed to be explored further. A similar emphasis is still needed in the 1990's if we are to further our understanding of stress. Existing approaches to the study of stress need to be expanded. The direction new approaches will take will be determined by the types of questions asked by researchers. Researchers may continue to seek to refine the causal link between life events and illness. Alternatively, we may begin to complement causal inquiry by exploring stress in a qualitative manner. Curtis (1995) sensibly concluded in her review of stress research that a renewed focus on qualitative analyses of the sources of stress in naturalistic settings would increase our understanding of both its meaning and impact for

individuals. To date, however, qualitative investigations of stress have been limited.

In an effort to deal with the difficulties identified with life events studies and to move away from a strictly linear stimulus-response model, many researchers have applied an interactionist perspective to stress research. This approach provides a useful context for the qualitative study of stress. Developments in this regard will be discussed in the following section.

1.3 INTERACTIONISM AND STRESS RESEARCH

1.3.1 Introduction

So far I have reviewed research dealing with stress from a stimulus and a response point of view have been reviewed. A more recent approach to the study of stress has been the interactionist perspective. By interaction is meant the combined effects of both the person and the situation. The interaction approach to stress is reviewed now with particular reference to Lazarus' (1976) Appraisal theory. A needs-based model of stress is proposed, in the context of this interactionist position.

1.3.2 Interaction Model of Stress

Recent models of stress have been based on an interactionist approach (e.g. Cooper and Baglioni, 1988) and interaction models have been widely recommended and applied to the study of stress (Endler and Edwards, 1978). Endler and Edwards (1978) state that at various points in the study of stress, emphasis has been placed on either the person or the situation. However, they maintain that investigators have gradually shifted from viewing stress as a global construct, inherent in either the person or the situation, towards viewing it as a multidimensional construct, that is part of an ongoing process of person-environment interaction. The perception of the situation, and the individual's active participation in the interaction, are central to any discussion of the interactional process (Endler, 1975, 1980).

Magnusson (1982) suggests that a stressful situation can be viewed in two ways: (a) the actual situation, as it is before it has been interpreted by an individual, and (b) the perceived situation, as it is perceived, interpreted and cognitively represented in the mind of the individual. In the first view, the environment is described in terms of its physical and sociocultural properties, whilst in the second approach it is described and analysed in terms of the individual's perceptions, cognitions, emotions, reactions and actions.

The actual-situation approach has a long history in social science, and has been particularly dominant in the stimulus-response tradition of experimental psychology, being strongly influenced by psycho-physics and classical

behaviourism. We have seen how early stress research concentrated on the actual-environment approach. The approach of life events research (see section 1.2) for example, relates stress symptoms to objective life events. The importance of an approach that examines perceived meanings has also been emphasised for decades by psychologists (Angyal, 1941; Endler, 1975; Kelly, 1955; Magnusson, 1971; Rogers, 1958; Rotter, 1954) and by sociologists and anthropologists (e.g. Berger and Luckman, 1967; Goffman, 1961; Mead, 1934).

The focus in stress research has shifted from the study of the actual to the perceived environment, due to a growing awareness that the perceived qualities of stressful environmental conditions are important determinants of stress (Magnusson, 1982). It is on the basis of individual differences in the perceptions of a situation that we can establish how some people experience an event as stressful, while others experience the same situation as non-stressful.

According to Magnusson, the 'real world' in which we experience, feel, think and act is the world as we perceive it and to which we give meaning. That is not to say that we must ignore the actual situation. Magnusson (1982) states that any aspect of the actual situation can serve as a stressor. According to Magnusson, what becomes a stressor is not determined solely by the nature of the situation, or by the individual - stress is due to the joint effect of one's psychic and somatic dispositions, and the stress-provoking quality of situations.

The precise nature of the interactive mechanism, as a cumulative/combination of factors or otherwise has not been agreed. We must be careful not to offer an over-simplistic understanding of the nature of this interaction. At the very least, a clear distinction must be made between how we study the relative contributions of the person and the environment. Two points are worth making here. First, stress is experienced by the person, not by the environment. In other words, regardless of the relative contributions to the cause of stress, the stress response (see section 1.1) is a human person and not an environmental response. Second, any environmental change aimed at relieving stress can only be brought about by persons' actions. The person is central, therefore, to our treatment of stress. It may be useful in this regard to treat the environment as the context in which stress is experienced by an individual (see Perls, Hefferline and Goodman, 1951). The environment, on its own, has no 'powers'. Ultimately, it is the product of the person or groups of persons. This approach to stress clearly places the emphasis on the person rather than the environment (see section 2.4.3 for further discussion of this issue). Appraisal theory (Lazarus, 1976), has made a significant person-focused contribution to the Interactionist perspective on stress and will therefore be examined in some detail below.

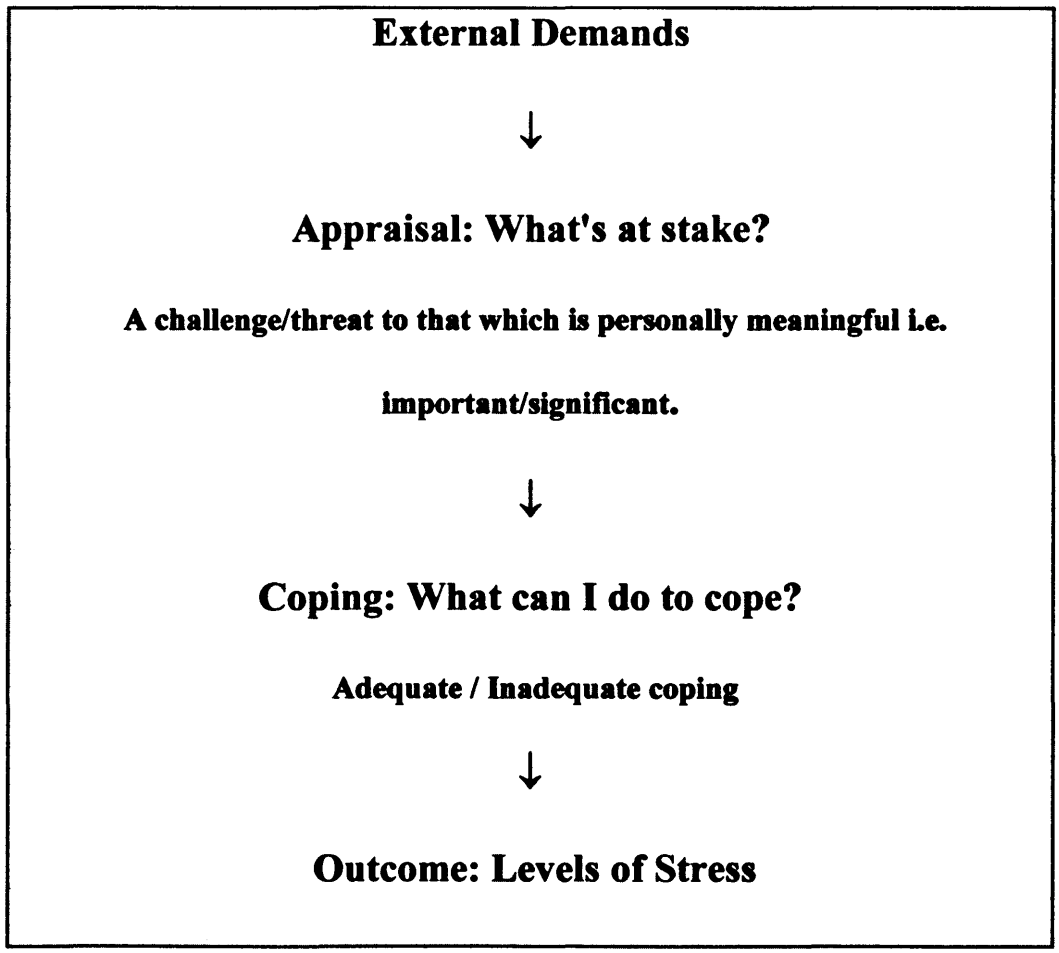
1.3.3 Appraisal theory

Appraisal theory has become a most popular psychological model of interaction (Cox, 1987). Holroyd and Lazarus (1982) define cognitive appraisal as:

> *the evaluative process that imbues a situational encounter with meaning.*

According to Lazarus and Cohen (1977), the most neglected area in stress research, the appraisal of stressors, has also been the most important. Lazarus (1976) stated that stress is simply not "out there" in the environment, but rather it depends in the final analysis upon the perception of the individual and upon the appropriateness of that person's behavioural and cognitive coping skills. The intensity of the stress experience is determined by the degree of perceived threat and how well one can deal with the identified danger (Lazarus, 1976). According to Appraisal Theory, the absolute level of demand is not the important factor in determining the experience of stress. The notion of a fixed weighting on specific stressors, as used by many life events studies, is also ruled out. Lazarus (1976) incorporates the principles of appraisal into what he refers to as a Transactional Model of stress. What is important in the Transactional Model is the discrepancy that exists between perceived demands (i.e. appraisal) and the perceived ability to cope with them (i.e. coping). For Lazarus, perception is considered the primary determinant of how one will cope. Lazarus converts these two factors, appraisal and coping, into two key questions, namely: What is at stake? and What can I do about it? Establishing what is at stake for those experiencing stress is central to the present thesis and is, therefore, referred to repeatedly in what follows. According to one of Lazarus' main collaborators, Folkman (1982), psychological stress is experienced when that which is at stake is personally meaningful and coping resources are judged less than adequate by that person for managing the demands of the situation (See Fig. 1.1).

Fig. 1.1 Lazarus' (1976) Model of Stress



Lazarus (1976) states that the meaning of what is at stake will be determined by one's beliefs, values, goals, commitments and personal safety as well as the availability of adequate coping resources. Lazarus does not expand upon the precise nature of these contributing factors and how they are determined.

A series of studies by Lazarus and colleagues provides support for the role of appraisal in influencing the stress response. In an early study by Lazarus and colleagues (1965) subjects were shown a stressful film depicting woodshop accidents, such as a worker cutting off a finger or being killed by a wooden

plank being driven through his body. Some subjects were told that the events had been staged and no one was really being hurt, while others believed that the events were real but that the film would help improve safety in such settings. A third group were given no explanation. Both sets of instructions were effective in reducing physiological arousal during the film in comparison to the 'no explanation' group, presumably because they allowed appraisal of the film in a less threatening way.

The results of the study by Lazarus et al. were similar to those of another study by Speisman et al (1964) which presented subjects with a stress inducing film depicting primitive initiation rites that included unpleasant genital surgery. Subjects saw the film accompanied by one of three soundtracks. One group heard narration emphasising pain and possible disease consequences (trauma condition). Another group heard a script in which the pain and consequences were described and the participants in the rite were depicted as willing and happy (denial condition). Finally a third group heard a detailed description of the rites from an anthropological perspective (intellectualisation condition). The instructions in the second and third groups allowed subjects to appraise the situation as less threatening while the instructions provided to trauma subjects emphasised those aspects of the film that were most likely to be seen as threatening. Results showed that stress responses were reduced for subjects in the denial and intellectualisation groups, relative to subjects in the trauma group. These studies support the position that the stress response is determined by the perceived meaning of an event and not the event per se.

Appraisal theory holds that it is the perceived meaning of an event that determines to a large extent its stressfulness for the individual. However, the nature of the threat experienced has not been explored in this approach. Lazarus focuses on the mechanics of appraisal, (i.e. how we come to appraise), and not on identifying the meaning of what is being appraised. Studies which have adopted an interactional/transactional position have tended to concern themselves with building models of assessment of stress as well as with measuring appraisal and coping mechanisms. Meanwhile, an understanding of the meaning of the stress experienced, in terms of 'what is at stake', has been neglected by many interactionist researchers.

What is at stake for someone experiencing stress?

According to Lazarus, 'What is at stake?' can be appraised either as a challenge (positive) or as a threat (including harm/loss). More recently, the centrality model of stress (Bernstein, 1987) has attempted to be more specific on the nature of ' what is at stake' for people under stress. Centrality is defined as the degree of importance given to certain core issues that are triggered by a situation or event. Centrality is proposed as a factor associated with the individual that contributes to the type of appraisal made.

Somewhat similar to Bernstein's conceptualisation of central issues is what Novacek and Lazarus (1990) have more recently referred to as 'personal commitments' i.e. what is important to different people. These core issues

represent certain themes, including factors such as: affiliation, achievement, adventure, approval, autonomy, change, control, intimacy, isolation and structure. Each core issue has its own set of values, emotions and meanings. According to Novacek and Lazarus (1990), core issues are formed via developmental and dynamic processes encompassing an individual's unique and cumulative life experiences. The theory proposes that an individual's appraisal of an event is influenced by the degree to which core issues seem to be affected. Different core issues can have varying degrees of importance depending on the developmental stage and life experiences of the individual (Bernstein, 1987).

Initial research has supported a central or core issues approach to stress. For example, Santiago-Rivera and Bernstein (1994) found that when the core issues of affiliation and achievement were paired with relevant life events, appraisals of harm/loss and threat were predicted. In other words, the interaction between central issues and life events influences the appraisal process.

Based on the centrality model of stress we can conclude that what is at stake in a stressful situation are certain core and personally meaningful issues related to developmental and dynamic processes. Presumably people will differ in their central issues depending on these processes.

Fineman (1986) is another researcher to have contributed to our understanding of what is at stake for those experiencing stress. Fineman's qualitative study of stress examines the core meaningful issues at stake for unemployed white collar

workers. Fineman's primary focus was on the meaning and consequences of unemployment for those who were laid off work. He carried out a content analysis of data based on tape recordings of interviews with a group of people who had recently been laid off from their employment. Patterns and clusters which were apparent to the author in this data formed the major part of his initial results. The categorisation established by Fineman followed the conceptual categories which had already been outlined by him beforehand in a stress framework. For Fineman, the framework offered a range of possible links and hypotheses about the meaning, impact and coping strategies during unemployment.

Fineman studied the meaning of unemployment for the unemployed by talking in-depth to 100 managers who lost their jobs. Three main impacts of unemployment were identified: feeling of failure, of loss and/or of acceptance. With stress defined as a threat, Fineman highlighted the four main threats, i.e. what was at stake (Lazarus, 1976), for the managers due to unemployment. These threats were: (a) a threat to pride and confidence; (b) a threat to competence and self worth; (c) a threat to security; and (d) a threat to purpose and identity.

In relation to unemployment, Fineman concludes that it is the meaning attached to the perceived demands of unemployment (e.g. *how am I going to pay the bills?*) which constitutes the impact of unemployment for the person. Stress will only emerge, however, if the impact is experienced as a threat to something that

the person holds dear and if that threat is not effectively removed or managed. This view of stress provides further confirmation of the Centrality model of Santiago-Rivera, Bernstein and Gard (1995) by identifying the significance of what, may be regarded as, unmet needs such as approval, self-worth and achievement.

1.3.4 A Human Needs Model of Stress

In this section a further step is taken towards specifying what is at stake for someone under stress. The role of perception in relation to stress is examined since the prevailing view amongst stress researchers is that stress is determined by the perception of life events as threatening (Lazarus, 1976). Perception in turn is determined by need (Adler, 1927; Snygg and Combs, 1949; Levine, Chein and Murphy, 1942). It follows that the perception of threat can be due to a threat to need satisfaction. Models of stress, therefore, must incorporate an acknowledgement of human needs. To date models of stress have failed to make specific reference to human needs.

Human needs have long been the subject of theoretical and experimental exploration by psychologists, most notably Murray (1938) and Maslow (1954, 1970). According to Eriksen and Lazarus (1952) 'we see what we need to see'. For example, when we are hungry we perceive food differently than when we are satiated. The drive towards need satisfaction is what enables human growth and development to occur e.g. the hunger drive generates the need for food which in turn causes physical growth. This process is the dynamic, adaptive,

survival process of all organisms, enabling them to develop fully. Human development must therefore be accounted for within any approach to understanding stress.

According to Drum (1977) development is:

> *a process in which an individual undergoes a number of changes toward more complex behaviour that result from mastering the increasingly demanding challenges of life. These changes toward more complex behaviour often culminate in the individual transforming to a higher position which results in his/her viewing people, events and things in fundamentally different ways.*

This definition of development highlights the notion of levels of growth, which are the basis of Abraham Maslow's proposed hierarchy of human needs. Maslow (1954) presented a global, cross-cultural model of human needs which has been at the core of humanistic psychology since its inception (see Table 1.1).

Central to Maslow's model is a hierarchical system of what he referred to as deficiency (or basic) needs and growth needs. Within Maslow's hierarchy, basic needs must first be addressed before any higher order or growth needs can be fulfilled. Warr (1976) refers to hierarchical theories, such as this, as being the most comprehensive theories of human needs, incorporating broad characteristics as well as elements of imprecision.

Table 1.1 Maslow's (1954) Hierarchy of Needs

	Self Actualisation Need Self-fulfilment, to actualise one's potential, "to become more and more what one idiosyncratically is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming"
Growth Needs	**Esteem Needs** Achievement, Adequacy, Mastery (e.g. needs for reputation recognition, importance) **Belongingness and Love Needs** Affectionate relationships with people and the feeling that one belongs in some social context
	Safety Needs
Basic Needs	Security, stability, freedom from fear (e.g. needs for structure, limits) **Physiological Needs** Food, water, oxygen etc

Maslow wished to emphasise the developmental nature of motivation. He also wished to highlight that need deprivation can result in pathology. According to Maslow, a characteristic may be considered a basic need if: (a) its absence breeds illness, (b) its presence prevents illness, (c) its restoration cures illness,

(d) under certain very complex free choice situations it is preferred by the deprived person over other satisfactions, and (e) it is found to be inactive, at a low ebb or functionally absent in the healthy person (Maslow, 1970). For Maslow (1970), mental illness / neurosis/ stress involves unsatisfied needs for security, relationships with others, respect, acceptance and a feeling of belonging.

Maslow's model of needs has not been easy to research. For example, there is no clear evidence to demonstrate that lower level needs must be satisfied before higher order needs can be addressed. There has been a lack of longitudinal studies necessary to assess hierarchical theories of this nature (Warr, 1976). Herzberg (1966) has looked at applying a two-factor theory of job satisfaction based on Maslow's hierarchy. There is also some evidence to support the theory that need deprivation is stressful and results in illness. Specific needs such as the need for self-esteem have been examined in some detail. Coopersmith (1967), a close colleague of Maslow, carried out an extensive six year study of the esteem need as outlined in Maslow's hierarchy. Coopersmith found that people with high self-esteem tended to be more developed and less stressed i.e. more independent, creative, confident, courageous, socially independent, psychologically stable, relaxed and success oriented. Such individuals saw themselves as competent and had high expectations for the future which generally resulted in greater maturation. Coopersmith noted, on the other hand, that people with low self-esteem were less developed and more stressed i.e. they feared that intimacy with others would reveal their inadequacies and cause them

to be rejected. Such people avoided closeness in their relationships and felt more isolated and stressed as a consequence. Further studies have confirmed Coopersmith's findings regarding self-esteem. People with low self-esteem have been shown to suffer symptoms of unhealthy emotional development, including nervousness, psychosomatic illnesses and insomnia (Howard and Kubis, 1964; Nixon, 1964; McCandless 1970; Walster, 1965).

Maslow's model refers to a broad range of needs. Some researchers have sought to simplify this broad range of needs. Combs et al. (1976), for example, suggested the need for:

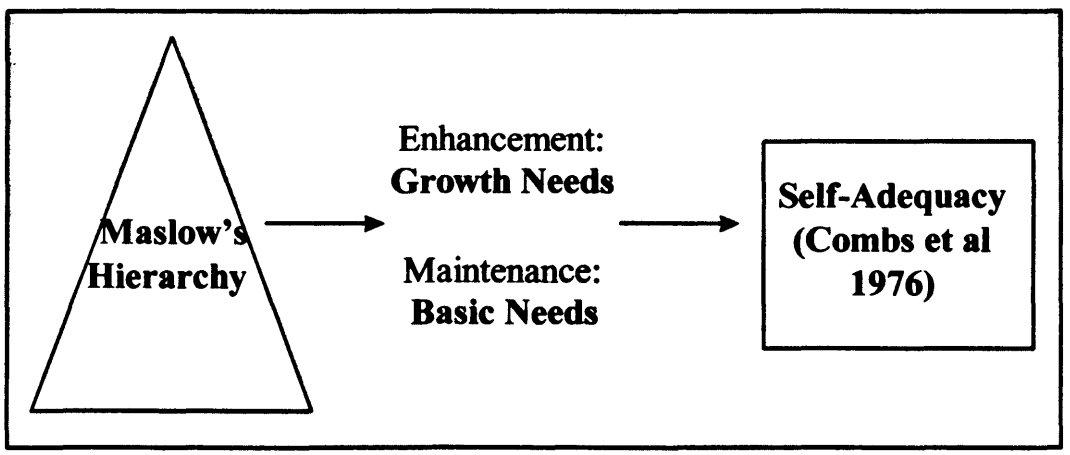
> *a simpler, non-conflictual understanding of needs and a more fundamental view of what people seek which avoids the confusion of inadequate or conflicting conceptions of need which is broad enough to include all human functioning and all cultures, at all times and at any age.*

Whilst this may seem too broad a definition to be of much practical use, it is well suited to being applied to stress, which is also a generic construct. Combs et al, stated that human needs could be represented by two main factors, the maintenance factor and the enhancement factor (similar to Herzberg, 1966, two-factor theory, previously mentioned). The maintenance factor is that ability of any organisation or system (individual or group) to maintain its stability or equilibrium (Laszlo, 1972). Cannon (1931) referred to this as the homeostatic function (see section 1.1.2). However, if natural systems were merely to maintain the status quo throughout the range of the circumstances they encounter, there would be no evolution and no patterns of development. The evidence indicates that:

things not only manage to offset the pernicious influence of forces in their environment but are capable of development (Laszlo, 1972)

Combs et al go one step further than the two factor model and simplify Maslow's model to one single need. They suggest that maintenance and enhancement relate to the same function - the production of a more adequate self. Each person is seeking all the time to maintain and enhance his/her perceived self (Eriksen, 1954; Fitts,1954; Snygg & Combs,1949; Axline,1947). According to Combs et al, our basic human need is to make ourselves ever more adequate to cope with life (See Fig. 1.2).

Fig. 1.2 Human Needs:

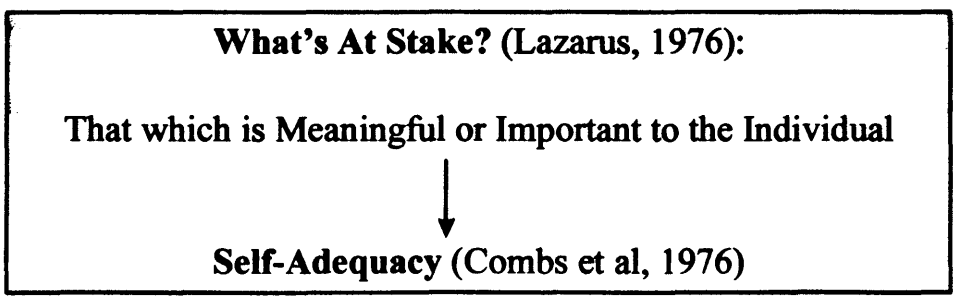


Combs et al (1976) state that the degree of threat to self-adequacy or level of stress experienced will be determined by the following factors: the importance of the particular aspect of the self that is threatened, the immediacy of the threat, the clarity with which the threat is perceived and most importantly the degree of self-adequacy and self-worth the person brings to the situation. These are the factors, according to Combs et al, which determine the extent of the stress

response. Furthermore, the level of stress will be influenced by the frequency of threat only in so far as there is an accompanying increase in the level of threat to the self.

By applying Maslow's theory of illness (i.e. illness is due to need deprivation), to the single need for adequacy, we can consider stress to be brought about by threats to one's self-adequacy (See Fig.1.3). At its extreme this threat will be experienced as 'self-annihilation' (Rowe, 1987), which is ultimately what is at stake when one is under stress.

Fig. 1.3 What's At Stake?



A search of the literature shows little or no reference to the concept of self-adequacy, outside of Combs et al's original work. It has not been the subject of any great degree of research. Presumably this has been due to the fact that it is too broad a concept which does not lend itself to precision, detail and measurement. Although it might very often be represented by terms such as self-worth, self-esteem and self-confidence, it includes the broader dimension of needs referred to in Maslow's hierarchy. It is precisely due to its broadness that the concept of self-adequacy is useful within a model of stress. For as long as

we study the concept of stress, which itself is a generic term, we will need to incorporate concepts such as self-adequacy. These general concepts are essential for underpinning studies of a more specific nature.

1.3.5 Summary and conclusion

Appraisal Theory (Lazarus, 1976) has been examined as a prominent interactionist approach to the study of stress. Appraisal Theory asks "What is at stake" for someone under stress. A model of stress based on human needs has been put forward to address this question. Maslow's hierarchy of needs underpins a needs-based model of stress. Using the work of Combs et al (1976) the hierarchy of needs has conceptually and for purposes of theoretical convenience, been reduced to one single need which governs human behaviour, i.e. the need to be adequate. Based on this model, what is at stake for someone under stress is the threat to their self-adequacy (see Fig. 1.2 and Fig. 1.3). In the next chapter, the nature of this threat to self-adequacy will be examined within the specific context of student stress and student development.

1.4 CHAPTER 1 - KEY POINTS

A general overview of stress research has highlighted a number of important factors :

- The stress response has both specific and non-specific elements and can be both physical and psychological.
- Stress is a generic concept which is prone to very wide applications and interpretations.
- Effort to quantify a generic, concept such as stress, has been fraught with difficulties and should be avoided in the future.
- What is most important about stressful life events is what they mean to the person who experiences them.
- The meaning of personal stressful events cannot be adequately represented by quantification.
- The subjective meaning of stressful events is worth exploring and qualitative methodologies provide a valid means of doing so.
- Lazarus' (1976) Transactional Model of Stress states that the appraisal of stress is determined by two key questions, namely, "What is at stake?" and "What can I do to cope?"
- The meaning of stressful events for people is contained in their answers to the question "what is at stake?" when experiencing stress.
- What is at stake is the threat to need satisfaction.
- Needs are 'central issues' (Bernstein, 1987) determined by the developmental process.
- The need to be adequate represents what is at stake at its most general level.

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CHAPTER TWO

STUDENT STRESS

2. STUDENT STRESS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Much publicity has been given to current pressures on third level students (e.g. Foley, 1991; Sweeney, 1993). It is necessary for us to study the unique nature of student stress in order to guide professionals on campus concerned with stress management and to inform institutional policy on matters pertaining to student stress.

College students experience stress due to a range of factors, including having to leave home for the first time (Fisher, 1988), having to manage their own finance, make new friends, and generally assume greater responsibility for themselves (Greenberg, 1981). Students are presented with important decisions about issues such as sexual behaviour and their use of drugs and alcohol. Many students experience distress due to the educational process itself which can elicit helplessness, a sense of loss, and resultant negative self-image (Whitman, Spendlove and Clark, 1984). It is not surprising therefore, according to Greenberg (1981), that suicide has been the second leading cause of death amongst college students in the U.S. Stone and Archer (1990) concluded that the increase in stress amongst students noted during the 1980's (see Koplik and de Vito, 1986) is set to continue into the 1990's. The reported high rates of drop-out from Universities (Malleson, 1972; Rickinson and Rutherford, 1995) are, also, not too surprising.

In the present chapter, it is convenient to discuss student stress using the same structure as used in Chapter 1, namely, stress as response, stimulus and interaction respectively. First, the effects of stress on students are highlighted. This review is followed by an

examination of the kinds of life events that have been shown to be associated with student stress. Finally, there is a critique of the Interactionist perspective as applied to students, with specific reference to student development and self-adequacy.

The majority of studies cited in this section are of American origin - there is a lack of relevant research elsewhere. In the U.S., student affairs personnel are a well established professional group with responsibility for student support services including counselling, medical, chaplaincy, accomodation, welfare etc. There are numerous U.S. journals devoted to student issues, for example, the Journal of College Student Development and the Journal of College Psychotherapy. Many textbooks have also been produced, providing a comprehensive database for American professionals working in this area. European countries are not as advanced as the U.S. in their provision of student affairs services, and in particular student counselling. Britain has the only well established national body of student counsellors in Europe. Ireland has established such a body in 1995 (The Irish Association of University and College Counsellors, I.A.U.C.C.). A European organisation, known as Fedora Psyche, which was established in 1990, represents student counselling amongst member countries. This organisation has produced the first volume of research papers on student counselling in Europe (see Kalantzi-Azizi, Rott and Aherne, 1997) - based on a symposium held at the 4th. European congress of Psychology in Athens in 1995. The present study is a further contribution to a much needed European database on student affairs.

2.2 THE EFFECTS OF STRESS ON STUDENTS: APPLICATION OF THE RESPONSE MODEL

2.2.1 Introduction

Stress responses, in general, can be many and varied (see Section 1.1.) and student stress is no different in this respect. Student stress can result in a range of problems including: (a) student morbidity, (b) cognitive skills deficits, (c) examination anxiety and (d) attrition rates. Each of these student stress responses will now be discussed in turn.

2.2.2 Student Morbidity

There is considerable evidence available to suggest that students experience a significant level of stress-related complaints, both physical and psychological. For example, an early study of student psychiatric problems in the U.S. reported on the class that entered the University of Berkeley in the autumn of 1961 (Ellis, 1969). Of the 3,474 entering students, 493 (14%) used the psychiatric clinic at the student health service at some time over the following four years. Their reasons for seeking psychiatric help at Berkeley included stress-related complaints such as depression, inability to do work, nervousness and anxiety.

Nagelberg and Shemberg (1980) conducted an epidemiological study of 1,214 students at Bowling Green State University and found that 10.1% of these students were psychologically impaired. Those most at risk were students who

were female, non-white, who had children, whose parents were separated, who reported low academic grades and who denied any religious affiliation.

Several other studies have found psychological disorders to be commonplace amongst students (Selzer, 1960; Smith, Hansell and English, 1963; Whittington, 1963). Jones (1960) found that 65% of students report high levels of anxiety and depression. More recently Offer and Spiro (1987) have estimated that as many as 25% of entering U.S. college students are disturbed and in need of mental health care. In the British context, Ryle (1969) discovered that over a 4 year undergraduate course, between 1% and 2% of students experienced severe psychiatric illness requiring hospitalisation. He went on to indicate that 10% to 20% were likely to present at some stage with some degree of emotional or psychological problems sufficient to need treatment. Of this group one-third had serious neurotic/personality disorders, typically related to late adolescent identity crises, and needed prolonged psychotherapy, the remainder needing some crisis support or brief counselling. Ryle (1969) remarked that a further 20% of students would report transient psychological/psychosomatic symptoms representing reactions to the normal stresses of their age and environment, including pre-exam stress reactions requiring reassurance and perhaps brief medication. More recent reports of levels of stress amongst British and other European students are lacking.

Tyrell (1992a) administered the General Health Questionnaire to 102 occupational therapy students attending Trinity College Dublin, Ireland. In this

study 42% of the sample scored above the threshold point for 'significant clinical disturbance'. While not constituting a clinical diagnosis, these figures do suggest a considerable degree of stress amongst the student population.

Tyrell (1992b) noted in her sample of students that female students reported greater levels of stress than males, a finding again similar to that in the U.S. and reflecting a common trend for females to score higher on self-report measures of anxiety and depression. Tyrell reminds us that high scores on self-report measures of distress do not imply mental illness. Estes (1973), in a study of student stress, pointed out that male students were at greater risk of developing handicapping disorders because of their reluctance to seek help with chronic problems before they reach crisis proportions.

Although not always an accurate indication of student stress, attendance at student health and counselling services does give some indication of the extent of student difficulties. The 1996 annual statistics for the Student Counselling Service at the University of Limerick (see Appendix 2), show an attendance rate of approximately 7% - 8% of the student population. Sixty-five percent of those who attended were female and 35% were male. These students attended for a variety of reasons including stress-related matters. It is quite likely that there are many more students who are experiencing stress in some form or other but do not come forward to an on-campus service for assistance. Some may attend at other public or private services while many may never seek help for their difficulties.

There is some evidence to support the view that students experience greater stress than non-students of the same age (e.g. Malleson, 1964; Ryle, 1969; Newsome, 1973; Firth, 1986). Beck and Young (1978) reported that suicides (one indicator of extreme stress) in the U.S. were 50% more common among students than for non-students of the same age (see also Ross, 1969). In contrast, studies by Schwartz and Reifler (1984, 1988) have indicated that suicide rates amongst college students may be lower than among non-college youths of the same age. In Ireland there has been a dramatic increase in reported suicides amongst young adult males (Kelleher, 1994), which is not reflected in available suicide figures for students at third level in Ireland. For example, the average annual suicide rate at the University of Limerick over the past 10 years has been 1:10,000 which is half the national average for this age group (National Task Force on Suicide, 1996). There are no national statistics available for suicide rates amongst Irish college students.

It is not clear from the research whether students or non-students are more stressed. The argument that students are under more stress is based on the notion that students are under tremendous pressure to succeed academically. According to Ryle (1969) minor impairments of functioning due to stress may be tolerated in routine jobs without too much difficulty, but any such impairments becomes critical for a student with major intellectual tasks to complete. Conversely, it can be argued that non-students are under more stress

because of their lack of opportunity and poor job prospects. In fact it is likely that there are significantly stressed sub-groups within both populations.

The kinds of diagnostic symptoms students present with are typical of the late adolescent age group. Depression is the most common psychiatric diagnosis among college students. Beck and Young (1978) have noted that 78% of college students will show depressive symptoms in any given year and of these, 46% will seek some form of professional help. Whilst this may be considered an overstatement, Walters (1979) says that it does highlight a pressing issue for students in higher education. Reifman and Dunkel-Schelter (1990) have since established a positive relationship between academic stress and depression. Other symptoms which students will typically present include anxiety, eating disorders, substance abuse and sexual problems (see Grayson, 1989).

Variations in levels of stress have been established between students of different years of study and different courses. The points of entry to and exit from college have been considered the most stressful periods for students (Schwartz and Reifler, 1984). The former is considered stressful due to the transition to college from home and school. The latter may be stressful due to the impending career prospects. Fisher (1994) reports that 60% to 70% of students report the experience of homesickness during their first term at university. For some students the experience is mild and self-limiting but for others it is a profound state of grief, anxiety and depression. Fisher (1988) identified increased levels of absentmindedness, depression and obsessionality within six weeks of the start

of the first term at university. Meanwhile, Tyrell (1992a) found a significantly higher level of stress amongst final year occupational therapy students than in any of the previous three years. By contrast, Tyrell (1992b) found second year psychology students to show higher levels of disturbance than students in other years.

Differences in courses of study seem to have been influencing factors in Tyrell's studies. Tyrell (1992b) established that psychology students at Trinity College, Dublin showed more symptoms of stress than computer science or occupational therapy students, whilst medical students were even more stressed than the psychology students. Ryle (1969) reported higher levels of neuroticism amongst arts students than science students at Sussex University. Heins, Fahey and Leiden (1984) found that law students reported higher levels of stress than medical and psychology students.

In conclusion, students experience a considerable amount of stress, resulting in physical and psychological problems of varying degrees of severity. Female students appear to experience more stress than males. We cannot say with any degree of certainty that students of particular courses or years of study are, in general, more stressed than students of other courses and years - although there does appear to be some local variations. Nor can we conclude that students are any more stressed than their non-college going peers.

2.2.3 *Cognitive Skills Deficits*

Stress amongst students is reflected not only in morbidity figures, but also in deficiencies in performance and learning (Weber, 1949). Most research concerning the effects of stress on cognitive abilities has been carried out in a laboratory setting with a tightly controlled design (Hockey, 1979). The major exception to this laboratory focus is the research that has validated the Yerkes-Dodson (1908) law, which demonstrates that high or low levels of arousal lead to deficits in performance compared to medium arousal. One such study (Silver, 1968) has shown that law students described as low or high in relation to levels of anxiety performed more poorly than those whose levels of anxiety were described as mid-level.

Research relating stress to performance among students has been lacking (see Whitmann, Spendlove and Clark, 1984). Whitman et al suggest one way of understanding how stress might relate to students' performance would be to look at the literature that focuses on cognitive problems which affect academic performance. Factors which have been shown to be related to stress and decision making include: (a) hyper-vigilance i.e excessive alertness to all signs of potential threat resulting in diffusion of attention (Janis, 1982), (b) premature closure i.e. quickly choosing to end a stressful event such as an exam, resulting in limited problem solving options being availed of (Janis, 1982), and (c) cognitive fatigue i.e. an insufficient reserve of attention to perform demanding tasks (Cohen, 1980). Each of these stress responses can have a deleterious effect on students academic performance.

Cognitive deficits as a result of stress will affect the quality of student learning and performance and may lead students to underachieve at college. Student morbidity figures may also be due to stresses of a cognitive nature impacting on students learning. This form of stress becomes most intense for students around the time of examinations, resulting in examination panic, 'blanking' at examinations and academic underachievement.

2.2.4 Examination Stress and Test Anxiety

In an environment where competitive tasks are a priority, such as at University, there are very real and immediate consequences for students experiencing stress. One such consequence has to do with students' performance at examinations.

Davies (1986) reported that 69% of third level students experienced stress related problems in the months preceding and during examinations. According to Fisher (1994) the approach of an examination has an effect in terms of psycho-neurotic scores. In particular, she says, anxiety and obsessionality scores rise in the four months prior to examinations. This may be due to raised anticipatory anxiety and increased work-loads. Fisher's results indicate a rise in depression and somatic symptoms following examinations. The depression scores she accounts for, as being due to the ending of an important event of unknown outcome. Fisher argues that poor confidence or the perception of poor performance with no further possibility of improvement could also explain the depression after the examination.

Spielberger (1966) noted that since World War II, psychologists and counsellors have become increasingly concerned with understanding the nature of test anxiety and how to reduce it. It has been repeatedly demonstrated that people who are high in test-anxiety experience decrements in performance in evaluative situations (Alpert and Haber, 1960; Spielberger, 1966; Culler and Holahan, 1980; Hollandsworth et al, 1979). Test-anxious individuals perceive such situations as personally threatening, and respond to them with intense emotional reactions. Evaluative situations evoke task-irrelevant, self-centreed worry responses from such individuals, thus interfering with their effective performance on cognitive tasks (Mandler and Sarason, 1952) as outlined above.

Spielberger (1972) has conceptualised test anxiety as a situation-specific anxiety characteristic (A-Trait). Spielberger states that although examination situations are stressful, and evoke state-anxiety (A-state) reactions in most students, the magnitude of the A-state response will depend on the student's perception of a particular test as personally threatening. Individuals with high test anxiety (A-trait) generally perceive exams as more threatening and respond with greater elevations in states of anxiety, than do low test anxious individuals. The level of skill is an important mediating factor between the anxiety state and performance (Fenz and Epstein, 1969). For example, high trait anxious students may not be as anxious when sitting examinations in their strong subjects as when sitting examinations in their weaker subjects.

Having identified the significance of tests as personally threatening, Spielberger goes on to measure the amount of threat present but he does not inquire any further into the quality and nature of this threat. Research has neglected to explore the meaning or significance of the threat posed to students by examinations. Yet it is the underlying personal significance of examinations that forms the basis of intervention strategies with students who are experiencing examination stress (see Acres, 1984).

Sloboda carried out an action research project aimed at combating examination stress amongst University students. Although the means of reducing test anxiety have been established and agreed upon, Sloboda argues that there is little indication of a reduction in the levels of test anxiety on campus. He maintains that the reason for this is a lack of political commitment. With this in mind he set out to raise awareness of students and staff about the existence and effects of anxiety about final examinations and to initiate an institution-wide debate on the issues raised. 169 students (i.e. 26.8% of the sampled population) participated in this study. Thirty percent of Sloboda's sample, reported experiencing stress that was probably severe enough to depress their performance. Results indicated that female students experienced higher levels of anxiety than male students (a general feature of test anxiety, see Hembree, 1988).

Sarason, Johnson and Siegel (1978) state that we live in a test-conscious, test-giving culture in which the lives of people are in part determined by their test performance. Taken to its extreme, being test-oriented means that students may

equate their identity and self-image with their examination performance. Under these conditions, learning for its own sake is no longer a priority. Fear of failure becomes the primary motivating factor in students learning. It is therefore not surprising that examination anxiety is a problem on campus. Indeed many students are so disturbed by examination anxiety that they must seek professional assistance to help them cope (Sloboda, 1990).

Despite its importance, examination anxiety is a specific stress response that has commanded relatively little research interest (Fisher, 1994). What research is available indicates that examination competence and success depend on a range of complex factors including; social relationships, personal problems, gender, sense of challenge and even superstitious behaviour such as wearing mascots. It seems that examination outcome is determined by more than just personal knowledge.

In conclusion, examination stress is a significant student response of interest to student affairs professionals, not least because of the impact it has on student academic performance. For some students, examinations can trigger key or central issues (Santiago-Rivera, 1995) resulting in a threat to self-adequacy and stress (Combs et al, 1976). Stress of this nature is perhaps due to too high a value being placed on academic achievement.

2.2.5 *Student Attrition*

A student's decision to leave college is sometimes due to stress. Attrition rates can provide a partial indicator of stress levels for students. Reported attrition rates at third level colleges have varied considerably from a low of 3% to a high of 81% (Astin, 1977). In a study of Berkeley students in California, 9% of an entering class left and returned to secondary school, and 50% left and did not return (Katz et al, 1969). In a review of the literature, less than 50% of entering first year students in the U.S. finished college four years later (Hirsch and Keniston, 1970). Traditionally, attrition in the U.K. and Ireland has been lower than in the U.S. due to stricter admission policies (see Rickinson and Rutherford, 1995). This trend is now likely to change as a much wider access policy is being pursued in both of these countries. In Britain, the attrition rate in 1952 for the whole country was 10% and in 1970 was estimated to be 15% (Malleson, 1972). A more recent study found that the non-completion rate for the 1980 cohort varied across Universities from 3.4% at Cambridge to 23.6% at Aberdeen (Johnes and Taylor, 1989). While there are no definite Irish figures available - Irish Universities have been reluctant to publicise their attrition rates- anecdotal evidence in the Irish context suggests a drop-out rate of approximately 15% for full-time undergraduate students.

There can be many reasons for students dropping out of college, only one of which may be stress. Contributing factors to student attrition include lack of intellectual ability, motivation, aspiration, expectations, as well as family background, socio-economic status, availability, funding, experience at and

adjustment to college, college size, location, admission policy and staff/student relations (Cope and Hannah, 1975). According to Cope and Hannah (1975), leaving college can very often be a positive step in order for students to 'constructively re-evaluate important decisions' as part of their life-long learning process.

2.2.6 Summary and Conclusion

There is no doubting the fact that students, like so many others, experience their share of stress. Considerable evidence has been provided to support such a conviction. That students are under stress is reflected in their levels of physical and psychological illness, cognitive skills deficits, examination anxiety and attrition. Potential factors that may contribute to creating this stress amongst students will be examined more closely in the next section. In particular, I will be examining the contribution of stressful life events research.

2.3 STRESSFUL LIFE EVENTS EXPERIENCED BY STUDENTS:

Application of the stimulus model

2.3.1 Life Events Research and Student Stress

In this section, an overview of the kinds of situations which students find stressful (i.e. stressors), will be provided. Stressors such as life events might be considered as 'first order' or 'surface level' indicators of stress. These first order indicators of stress are a useful means of gaining an initial understanding of student stress. The underlying meaning of these life events will be considered later as 'second order' indicators of stress (see section 2.3).

Student stress research has followed a similar pattern to mainstream life events research (see section 1.2). Some studies have identified the stressful events in students' lives (e.g. Zitzow, 1984) while others have explored the cumulative impact of stressful events on student health (e.g. Cole, 1985; Bieliauskas and Webb, 1974). In this section, I will be examining the types of events which students have identified as stressful but I will not be referring to the literature on student life events and illness, previously identified as an unsatisfactory line of inquiry (see section 1.2.5) and not relevant to the present study.

The method used to identify student stressors has varied. Some studies have used open ended questionnaires, whereby students themselves report on stressful events. Other studies have used a pre-selected list of stressors for students to choose from and rate themselves on. A wide range of stressful life events have been identified for students based on these studies. Events can be broadly categorised into four aspects of student life, namely, Academic, Family, Social and Personal (see Zitzow, 1984). A number of the studies are outlined below.

Archer and Lamnin (1985), for example, attempted to identify both personal and academic stressors reported by segments of the University community. They used an open-ended questionnaire in order to obtain comprehensive data on campus stressors. Students were asked to separate academic from personal stressors. This separation was used to obtain a broader range of responses and to overcome the tendency of students to see everything as related solely to their academic environment. As well as quantitative data, the study provided

qualitative data in the form of specific comments of students. A representative sample of almost 1,000 students in a large U.S. university were asked to describe briefly two situations or conditions they found to be highly stressful in both personal and academic areas of their lives. Fifteen personal and thirteen academic categories were identified and the frequency and percentage of responses for each category were calculated. The major academic stressors identified in Archer and Lamnin's study were (percentage of responses in brackets): examinations (52%); grades and competition (28%); time demands (21%); professors and class environment (18%) and future success (15%). Major personal stressors included a number of family and social issues such as intimate relationships (37%); parental conflicts (29%); finance (27%) and interpersonal conflict with friends (13%). Archer and Lamnin, in discussing their results, state that the high proportion of students indicating tests, time-scheduling, grades and competition as stressors suggests a very competitive, grade-conscious student body. When the specific comments of students were analysed it became apparent that in addition to general competitiveness, the way examinations were scheduled and weighted was also a major source of anxiety. The relationship between academic and non-academic factors was not explored in this study. In 1996, Murphy and Archer replicated the study and found that, a decade later, little had changed in the stressful life events experienced by students.

Beard, Elmore and Coyne (1982) surveyed 300 students in a U.S. university to assess the extent of student needs in 20 areas of potential stress, both academic

and non-academic, with each area represented by a questionnaire item and rated on a 5-point scale. The five most stressful items identified in this study were (mean scores in brackets): note taking (4.48); relationships (4.27); completion of assignments (4.25); sexual concerns (4.21); personal problems (4.16). The authors attribute the emphasis on sexuality and interpersonal relationships in this study to a lack of heterosexual contact: 70% of the population were female. A very common presenting problem they found for female clients was anxiety about sexual development, intimacy and relationships. According to the authors, the relative absence of males on campus may have prevented the successful completion by the females of certain developmental stages. Whilst speculative, this conclusion does make an important connection between student stress and student development as well as highlighting certain gender- related stressful events. [Note: A more extensive discussion of student development and gender differences is provided in the next section (2.4.2)].

Greenberg (1981) presented data related to the particular life events experienced by college students. In this study 308 students completed a number of paper and pencil tests which included the College Scale of Recent Events (C.S.R.E). The C.S.R.E. distinguishes high and low stress students by asking students to rate each of 46 items on a scale of 0-4. The students' ratings are in terms of frequency of occurrence in the past year, and not intensity of occurrence (as had been used in the Beard et al study). The life events experienced by more than 80% of the subjects included: entering college, working while in college, change in sleeping habits, revision of personal habits, outstanding personal achievement, a change of

residence, a change in recreational habits, social activities, independence and responsibility, taking a trip or vacation and changing colleges. These items are the typical life events experienced by students and include both positive and negative events. The stress induced by these events is said by the authors to be due to their frequency of occurrence. However, it has already been established that it is the perceived meaning of life events rather than their frequency of occurrence that determines the stressfulness of such events (see section 1.3.3). Greenberg's items are therefore of limited use to stress research.

Chamberlain and Zika (1990) reported time pressures, social obligations, responsibilities, standards and getting ahead as the most significant sources of stress for students and concluded that such daily hassles were better predictors of a lack of psychological well being than were major life events. Blanketstein, Flett and Koledin (1991) also looked at student hassles and identified issues such as time organisation, academic deadlines, money, financial security, family expectations, future job prospects and college requirements as particularly stressful for students. The distinction between daily hassles and life events is unclear in studies of this nature, since many of the items listed by Chamberlain and Zika have already been included as life events in previous studies e.g. 'family expectations' have also been referred to by Zitzow (1984).

A useful measure of the stressful life events of students is the College Adjustment Rating Scale (C.A.R.S.) developed by Zitzow (1984) to measure perception of stress. The C.A.R.S. is an instrument that students can use to

comprehensively assess life events and the intensity of the stress they perceived in those events. Zitzow looked at the adjustment demands in four key areas of student's lives, i.e., academic, personal, social and family. Items selected to indicate stressful events were obtained both from the Social Readjustment Rating Scale (S.R.R.S., Holmes and Rahe, 1967) and a review of the literature.

Zitzow, in his study to develop the C.A.R.S., identified the following most frequently experienced stressful events for students (n=1,146; the percentage of respondents in brackets): personal pressure to get good grades (96%); studying for a test (95%); taking a test in class (93%); pressure to get an A or B grade (88%); giving a class presentation (86%) and completing a research paper (86%). Zitzow noted how all of the above stressful events occur within the academic environment, and suggested that this is an indication of the powerful impact of the academic environment on the students perception of stress.

Individual events experienced most often are not necessarily those events which are most intensely stressful and which may require professional intervention. The events reported as being most intensely stressful in Zitzow's (1984), study when rated on a scale from 0 to 9, were (with percentage frequency in brackets): brother/sister death (8.4%); parent's death (11%); pregnancy (20%); depression (25%), friend's death (43%) and giving a class presentation (86%). Only one of these intensely stressful events relates to academic matters (i.e. giving a class presentation) while the remaining items are major traumatic life events, for which counselling may be sought.

In an initial approach to assessing stress among Irish students, in 1991, I carried out a survey of 574 University of Limerick students, using the C.A.R.S (see Appendix I). The results of this study, once again, show academic related factors as being the most frequently stressful for students (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1

College Adjustment Rating Scale (C.A.R.S.), Aherne, 1991.
10 most stressful items (n = 574)

Rank	Item No.	Item Title	Mean Score on Item (Scale 0-9)	No. Students indicating some degree of stress on item	% Respondents
1.	P14*	Feeling of anxiousness or general tension	8.3	263	45.80
2.	A11	Giving a class presentation	5.4	445	77.50
3.	A4	Receiving a D or F on a test	5.3	396	68.98
4.	A14	Being suspended or placed on probation	5.3	161	28.00
5.	P1	Personal pressure to get good grades	5.0	323	56.20
6.	A6	Studying for a test	4.7	539	93.90
7.	P17	Fear of failure	4.4	391	68.10
8.	A3	Failing to complete assignments	4.3	369	64.28
9.	A5	Taking a test in class	4.1	503	87.63
10.	A21	Difficulty motivating myself for classwork	4.1	471	82.00

(*A = Academic, P = Personal)

Tyrell (1992a) in a further study of stress amongst Irish students, examined sources of stress amongst 94 psychology undergraduates attending Trinity College, Dublin. Tyrell used a specially designed 60 item questionnaire in her study. She reports the following items as the most frequent sources of student stress: fear of falling behind in coursework, finding the motivation to study, time pressures, financial worries, and concern about academic abilities. As in the American studies, Tyrell found academic issues to be the most frequently cited sources of moderate to severe stress. Managing money was reported as the most important source of stress amongst first year students. According to Tyrell, this may reflect the increased personal freedom experienced by college students having moved on from school.

Perhaps the single most stressful event in the life of the majority of students, as indicated by the above studies, is that of examinations and related issues. In Sloboda's (1990) study of examination stress the related factors students reported as a pressure (in order of importance) were: work overload, lack of sufficient revision time, uncertainty of exam content, environmental disturbances such as noise, personal pressures such as high parental expectations, being unclear about certain things e.g. not having a definite job, and finally, feeling isolated.

Financial pressures have been referred to in a number of studies (Archer and Lamnin, 1985; Murphy and Archer, 1996; Blanketstein et al, 1991; Tyrell,

1992,a) as a significant stress for students. At a recent Higher Education Authority (H.E.A.) conference on student stress in Ireland (1996), the Student representatives strongly argued that lack of finance was the major cause of stress amongst students.

Two further life events which can be stressful for students are (a) childhood sexual abuse and (b) having alcoholic parents. Difficulties such as these, relating to early life experiences, can have a significant stressful impact on college students (Cummings, 1989). Studies by Berkowitz and Perkins (1988) and Woodson (1976) indicate that 15% to 20% of all college students in the U.S. are adult children of alcoholics, while a more recent study by Duane, Stewart and Bridgeland (1997) shows a 4% incidence of U.S. students who had been sexually abused as children.

Due to differences between the U.S. and Irish educational systems as well as general cultural differences, it is likely that specific stressful life events are likely to vary between countries e.g. abortion is not available in Ireland and therefore may not be reported as much by Irish as by U.S. students.

2.3.2 Summary and Conclusion

Stressful life events of students follow a predictable pattern and include the obvious academic concerns that form a central part of every students life. These stressful events typically include college adjustment, examinations, workload deadlines, presentations and career uncertainty. Family, social and other

personal stressors are also experienced by students many of which may be related to the developmental stage at which most students find themselves e.g. relationship difficulties and break-ups, peer pressure, making friends, family conflict, family bereavement. Frequently experienced stressors (e.g. examinations) must be differentiated from major stressful events (e.g. bereavement) which will occur for a far smaller proportion of students. Both types of stressors are important elements in overall levels of stress on campus requiring intervention.

Studies of student life events, similar to life events studies in general, do not explore any pattern of events, nor do they examine, in any great detail, the meaning or significance of patterns of events for students. Many of these items, rather than being mutually exclusive, may be related and may contribute to a common underlying stress or demand, such as ' fear of failure'. Life events studies do not explore the potential underlying meanings of and relationships between these events. For example, fear of failure was reported as one of a number of intensely stressful items. It is likely that this item has an influence on a number of the remaining items, such as 'personal pressure to get good grades'. Family and social issues are also likely to be related to students fear of failure. Relationships of this nature have not been adequately explored within student life events studies.

Are there meaningful underlying patterns throughout these exhaustive lists of events that explain what is at stake for the student under stress? Researchers

have not tried to establish what is threatening about these events and what is at stake (Lazarus, 1976) for students experiencing these events as stressful. For example, what is it about intimate relations that students find stressful? How might intimacy needs be related to grades and competition? Are there differences in the levels of stress and types of stressful events for male and female students? How might family stressors influence academic stress? Failure to examine such deeper patterns means researchers are left surmising about the underlying significance of particular stressful events. Research has been focusing on events rather than on individual people. Events, per se, are not stressful. Certain life events are experienced as more stressful by some than others. Not until a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of the significance of stressful life events for students is obtained can appropriate forms of intervention and stress management be ensured.

The interactional model of stress has gone some way towards addressing this personal aspect of stress. The next section examines how an interactional view of stress can be applied to students. In particular, the interactional approach provides a more comprehensive account of the context within which specific life events might be experienced as stressful by students.

2.4 STUDENT STRESS FROM AN INTERACTIONAL VIEWPOINT

2.4.1 Introduction

The interactional approach to stress is most appropriate for the understanding of student stress (Whitman, Spendlove and Clark, 1984). While it is important to

be able to recognize the signs of stress as well as the life events which are likely to contribute to stress, examination of the interaction between students and their environment yields a more complete understanding of the nature of student stress.

According to the interaction approach (see section 1.3.3) it is the perception of the environment as threatening that produces a person's stress response. Where this model has been applied to student stress, two distinct features can be identified. First, within interaction models of student stress, the environment has specifically been defined as the campus environment. The campus environment has been the subject of extensive analysis and measurement and models of stress reduction based on environmental change have been developed (e.g. Moos, 1979, Aulepp and Delworth, 1976). A broader conception of students' environment, to include family and social aspects, has been lacking.

A second distinct feature of the interactional approach as applied to students is that the personal component in the interaction process has focused more on student development than on any other personal variable. The interaction approach to student stress, therefore, explores the characteristics and conceptualisations of the campus environment, and how they impact on and interact with the development of students.

In the initial review of the Interaction Model of Stress (see section 1.3.3) a Self-Adequacy Model has been proposed whereby stress is said to occur as a result of

threats to self-adequacy. Central to the Self-Adequacy Model is the establishment of what is at stake for a person experiencing stress. This question can now be examined with specific reference to student development.

There are three components to interaction models of student stress. These three components are (a) characteristics of the student, (b) characteristics of the campus environment and (c) the interaction between students and their environment. Interaction models of student stress have varied in the emphasis placed on these three components. Each of these various aspects of an interaction model of student stress will now be discussed with specific reference to the Self-Adequacy Model. The present thesis argues that it is the characteristics of the student that forms the cornerstone of an interactional approach. Any environmental contribution will be considered in terms of how it hinders student development and is threatening to students' self-adequacy. This approach to the interaction process is consistent with what has already been presented regarding the interactionist model of stress in general (see section 1.3.).

2.4.2 *Characteristics of the Student relevant to an Interaction Model of Student Stress*

2.4.2.1 Introduction

There are various sets of individual characteristics which help to explain students' responses to their environmental context. Background and personal characteristics include age, sex, ability, interests, values, ego strength and preference for coping styles. These factors, according to Moos (1979),

determine what an environment means to an individual and what adaptive resources are available. Other personal factors include attitudes, expectations and roles. Mediating factors include appraisal and activation, coping and adaptation (Lazarus and Cohen, 1976). Student development theory provides a useful unifying framework within which many of these variables can be accommodated in an effort to understand what is at stake for students under stress. Threats to students self-adequacy can be examined within the context of their developmental process.

2.4.2.2 Student Development

There are a unique set of characteristics which place late adolescent development in general, and student development in particular, apart from other stages of development. The development of students is different from development of non-students of the same age in so far as it occurs in the context of an academic environment. Student development, however, in many ways is typical of the development of late adolescence and early adulthood - which are the age periods when the majority of students attend college. It is necessary to be familiar with the unique developmental characteristics of this age group if we wish to understand the nature of student experiences and student stress.

Chickering and Reisser (1993) maintain that student development should be the organising purpose of education. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) state that a single paradigm - student development - has dominated research on college students. Student development theory forms the mainstay of U.S. student

affairs policies and programs. In Europe, on the other hand, there has been little or no reference to student development within student affairs, where psychodynamic theories have dominated (Ryle, 1969; Bell, 1996).

A number of theorists have provided specific insights into the various aspects of student development. They include Chickering (1969), Erikson (1959, 1963), Havighurst (1952), Heath (1968, 1977), Kohlberg (1969), Perry (1970), Gould (1972) and Levinson et al (1978). Rodgers (1989) cited at least 16 theories in all. More recently, Strange (1994) has provided a comprehensive integration of student development theories, involving a range of propositions which he suggests might act as an agenda for scholars in this area. In his article, Strange states that student development will occur as individuals (a) reach points of readiness and respond to timely and appropriate learning experiences and (b) respond to novel situations and tasks that challenge their current level or capacity. Development, therefore, is very much determined and defined by students' interaction with their environment.

Stage (1991) examined the established theories of student development and identified three factors that seemed to be common to most. These factors were: (a) theories tended to focus on the individual i.e. they were psychological rather than sociological theories; (b) all theories emphasised the dependence - interdependence - autonomy continuum of development i.e. students' attempts to achieve a balance between dependence and autonomy through interdependence;

and (c) all theories stress the importance of the balance between environmental challenge and environmental support, for development to occur.

Drum (1980) points out that student development occurs in three major areas, namely cognitive, intrapsychic (i.e. self) and social. While students' psychosocial development is our main concern with regard to student stress, cognitive development is necessary if psychosocial development is to take place. The increased thinking capabilities that emerge in the formal operational stage of thinking (Piaget, 1959) allow the adolescent to ask and respond to the appropriate developmental challenges (Dusek, 1974). According to this view, cognitive development will parallel psychosocial development, providing the necessary 'tools' for psychosocial development to occur. Cognitive developmental changes are described in the work of Perry (1970), Belenky et al (1986), Drum (1980) and others. Slimak (1992), in his metamodel of student development, summarises these changes as involving a movement from dualistic (absolutistic, black and white) thinking to relativism (experimenting with new possibilities) to what he calls 'commitment in relativism' (or enlightened dualism i.e. not proselytising).

2.4.2.3 Developmental Tasks

Development is often described in terms of developmental tasks (e.g. Erikson, 1968). Winston and Miller (1987) define a developmental task as:

> *an interrelated set of behaviours and attitudes which the culture specifies should be exhibited at approximately the same time by a given age cohort in a designed context.*

A developmental task has to be accomplished in order to satisfy or fulfill a need so as to enable further development to take place. A number of psychosocial developmental tasks of college students have been identified by developmental theorists. Farnsworth (1966), for example, refers to the fact that students must learn the tasks of dealing with authority and coping with uncertainty and ambiguity as well as finding security, feelings of adequacy, and self-esteem. Arnstein (1984) surveying the literature, adds to these: the tasks of sexual identity, stability of character structure, development of a time perspective, and commitment to a set of life goals. Grayson has reduced student development to three main developmental tasks of establishing identity, separation and intimacy (Grayson, 1989; The Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, 1983). A further developmental task of particular relevance, it would seem, to college students, is the need to achieve (Arnstein, 1984).

Chickering (1969, revised by Chickering and Reisser, 1993) specified seven developmental tasks facing the late adolescent/young adult university student. These tasks, which he calls vectors, represent new challenges and demands for students, thus motivating their behaviour. The revised vectors are : developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward independence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose and developing integrity. Chickering's vectors, which by now have become almost synonymous with student development and student affairs policy in the U.S., provide a useful holistic framework within

which to understand students and on which institutional policy and programmes can be based.

Though Chickering's vectors are useful there has been a difficulty measuring them due to their vagueness (Hansen, 1982). A number of attempts have been made. The two most widely known measurement instruments are the Student Developmental Task Inventory or S.D.T.I. (Prince, Miller and Winston, 1974; Winston, Miller and Prince, 1979) and a group of instruments collectively known as the Iowa Student Development Inventories or I.S.D.I. (Hood, 1986).

Winston (1990), when using the S.D.T.I., failed in his study to confirm the autonomy vector as a separate construct. In another study by White and Hood (1989) only three of Chickering's vectors were confirmed as valid, namely purpose, identity and integrity. The vectors regarding autonomy, relationships and competence were not established as independent vectors. Furthermore, studies by Greely and Tinsley (1988) and Straub (1987), using the above measures, suggest that Chickering's original model may not describe women's development accurately, in particular, in relation to the development of autonomy and intimacy. As a result, Chickering's revised vectors of development (Chickering and Reisser, 1993) were established to accommodate a number of the shortcomings identified in the original vectors. The revised vectors were intended to accommodate gender differences which had not been accounted for originally. (Note : these gender differences are examined below

in some detail in relation to the specific tasks of developing autonomy and intimacy.

College life is not just one distinct developmental stage. Development for students consists of a progression, with some evidence to suggest that the different years at college represent different developmental issues. Developmental strains, especially those regarding separation and identity formation, may present in a particular sequence. Some researchers have argued that students tend to pass through four yearly developmental stages, each with its own demands and potential pitfalls (see Arnstein, 1984; Grayson, 1985; Margolis, 1976, 1980; Medalie, 1981). According to 'stage' theorists, using this information it may be possible to track the course of normal development and predict those periods when certain types of stresses are most likely to occur.

For example, stage theory would maintain that the first year at college can be a time for separation from family, involving *divestment of the past and investment in a new life* (Medalie, 1981). Likely difficulties to appear during this year include homesickness, social isolation and academic underachievement. In their second year students are faced with identity formation, which involves asking questions of themselves and making decisions. Difficulties during this time are reflected in what Arnstein (1984) referred to as "the sophomore slump", i.e. apathy and lack of interest or a sense of meaninglessness, with no apparent cause. By third year, the questions have become 'Who am I and what will I do after college?' Commitment is expected of the student. Students are measured

not by what they plan but by what they have achieved. They have a sense of urgency to do better and may have internalised a sense of failure. Concerns about graduation also begin to come up. Finally, fourth year is said to be marked by separation, once again, although this time from friends, lovers and lifestyle. Separation from family may resurface (see Arnstein, 1984). During the final year at college, identity formation may be furthered. Ambivalence about leaving college can be expressed through academic decline, last minute changes in majors and anxiety (Margolis, 1976; Medalie, 1981; Roulet, 1976).

According to Grayson (1989) the stage theory can be useful in identifying the source of students' problems. For example, a first year student may cling to an unsatisfactory romantic relationship to stave off homesickness while for a third year student this clinging may be a case of 'now or never'. Furthermore, Grayson points out that problems which surface later than expected in the developmental cycle should sound warning signals regarding psychopathology. While stage theory has some usefulness, it is limited by its assumption of a homogeneous student population. The modern student population, on the contrary, is a rather heterogeneous group of people of different ages, cultures and developmental needs. Gender differences in particular are not accounted for in the stage approach. Student development, therefore, cannot be said to progress in any single, step-by-step and clear-cut manner as might be suggested by stage theory. Individual developmental tasks need to be evaluated, bearing this in mind. The four key developmental tasks of college students - Identity, Autonomy, Intimacy and Achievement (Grayson,1989) - will now be examined

in some detail, with specific reference to the way in which these tasks represent what is at stake for students under stress.

2.4.2.4 Identity and Student Stress

One of the most important theories of human development is that of Erik Erikson (1968). Erikson maintains that each stage in development is marked by a crisis or tension between opposites. The crisis of late adolescence he refers to as the Identity Crisis, with its accompanying tension between the poles of identity diffusion and identity formation. The Identity Crisis is where the individual struggles with the question "Who am I?" The identity crisis may be considered the central crisis of human development (Grayson, 1989) and in many respects is active throughout all of life. By identity, Erikson means that organised set of images and the sense of self that expresses who and what we really are i.e. our ego or self-image. Gardner (1978) describes identity as follows:

> *One's identity amounts to more than just a simple sum of previous identifications. It is an active construction, an integration of physical, sexual leanings, favoured capacities, significant identifications, useful defences and sublimations', consistent and preferred roles, all stamped with the individual's characteristic style and experiences (Gardner, 1978).*

The Identity Crisis can be a period of extreme turmoil resulting in significant stress (Rutter et al, 1976). For example, when parental views and values differ markedly from those of peers and other important figures, conflict can be experienced. Adolescents may experience what Erikson called role-confusion, when they try one role after another and have difficulty synthesising the

different roles into one single identity (Gardner, 1978) which is acceptable. Although children acquire a sense of who they are, it is more likely that the late adolescent (e.g. the college student) will have to make critical identity-related choices and commitments e.g. to decide on a college, an academic major, a career direction, political and religious values, sexual standards, and a preferred type of social network.

Gardner (1978) states that college students reveal identity concerns when they are unable to make or stand by critical decisions, when they are continually dissatisfied with their choices, or when they defend against uncertainty and self-doubt through over-identification with (i.e. losing themselves in) another person, a group, or a cause.

The search for and establishment of identity is not problematic for all students. Furthermore, the root causes of identity problems vary. According to Gardner (1978) students may lack the core of self-esteem necessary to overcome the obstacles to identity formation, or they may resist choosing a certain direction because it means eliminating all the others, thus having to give up earlier dreams of omnipotence.

Goethals and Klos (1970) challenge the assumption that the identity crisis is part of the college experience. According to Goethals and Klos, college students typically do not have a firm sense of identity and have not yet undergone an identity crisis. They suggest that college students seem to be in the process of

identity seeking and to experience identity crisis toward the end of their final year or during their early post college experience e.g. disillusionment with their first job experience or graduate study. What students often interpret as an identity crisis in college, according to Goethals and Klos (1970) may be more a crisis of instrumental competence or interpersonal competence i.e. self-adequacy (Combs et al, 1976). Similarly, they argue that a person who is unable to choose a career or who is unable to get along with significant peers may be experiencing a problem of autonomy or of intimacy, in its adolescent sense. Goethals and Klos seem to be suggesting that the identity crisis is a specific event which occurs at a specific point in time. However, it is likely that the crisis is ongoing in various dimensions over a prolonged period of time. For example, identity seeking carries on into adulthood for many people. Late adolescence simply marks that period in development when, for the first time, identity-based decisions have to be made. Ideally we should have obtained a sense of who we are by adulthood i.e. early twenties. However, many 'adults' may have to continue to deal with adolescent developmental issues. While adolescence marks the beginning of this process, adulthood is very much concerned with maintaining, consolidating and revising identity. The Identity Crisis is best conceptualised, therefore, as an ongoing process rather than a once-off event.

The college experience may delay students' development of identity. College life provides students with a temporary opportunity for experimenting with identity, which can serve as a useful stepping stone towards the formation of an adequate and satisfactory sense of identity in adulthood. It is only when students

graduate that they are compelled to make a more definite commitment to a career direction and can no longer attach themselves to the temporary identity of being a student.

A number of measures of identity have been constructed, based on Erikson's ideas. For example, the Erwin Identity Scale or E.I.S. (Erwin and Delworth, 1980) measures three dimensions of self-image, namely: confidence, sexual identity and conceptions of body and appearance. Based on the E.I.S., identity has been related to a number of factors, including moral development (Poppen, 1974). Hayes (1977) using measures of moral attitudes developed by Hogan (1973), found that individuals with high levels of identity tended to be more ethical, more empathic and more socialised than individuals with low levels of identity. Cognitive development shows a varied relationship with identity depending on factors such as year of study (Berzonsky, 1985; Buczynski, 1991). In general, using measures such as the E.I.S., the college environment has been shown to foster the development of identity (Chang, 1982), though more for males than females, and more during the upper-class years. Pascarella and Tarenzini (1991), in their review of student development research over the past 20 years, concluded that the evidence suggests a shift toward the resolution of the Identity Crisis during the college going period.

Erikson's (1968) model of development has been widely accepted and expanded by other theorists, and models of student development have emerged based on Erikson's notion of identity formation. Chickering's (1969) theory of student

development, which has been previously referred to, is one of the most widely known and applied (Upcraft, Gardner et al 1989). Chickering was one of the first to interpret the identity formation concepts of Erikson specifically within the college context and, as we have seen, includes identity formation as one of his seven vectors of student development.

The development of identity acts as a central and unifying factor in late adolescent development. Identity issues influence and are influenced by all other developmental tasks. In conclusion, identity formation, and in particular the Identity Crisis, represents a significant stress for students and within this process students' sense of self-adequacy can be under considerable threat.

2.4.2.5 Separation from Parents and Student Stress

Separation from parents and establishing independence is a crucial developmental task for students (Chickering and Reisser, 1993) and as such is potentially very stressful. However, it is only recently that research has begun to place an emphasis on the impact of family on college students. One reason for this, suggested by Openlander and Searight (1983), was due to an attitude that because of their independence, students were somehow free of family influence. However, it is now generally accepted, according to May and Logan (1993), that appropriate separation from the family and the establishment of autonomy remains a primary developmental task for students (see Rice, Cole and Lapsley, 1990). May and Logan go on to warn that the profound influence of the family

on students must not be underestimated (see also Hoffman, 1984; Lopez, Cambell and Watkins, 1988; Hoffman and Weiss, 1987).

The task facing college students, according to Grayson (1989), is to separate from parents and home - or rather to further the process of separation that has been going on since childhood (Arnstein, 1984; Offer and Offer, 1975). This task is ordinarily achieved by living away from home for the first prolonged period, and relying less on parents in the management of day-to-day affairs. College students who do not separate enough from parents, says Grayson (1989), cannot fully invest in undergraduate life or, more importantly, acquire the skills needed later to live as independent adults in society.

Although the student is separating from the family, the family ideally remains the secure base. Family members may complicate students' struggles with separation by binding students to the home, pushing them away prematurely, or sending contradictory signals. How the task of separation is dealt with will be very much determined by the family's communication system and dynamics (Bowlby, 1969; Satir, 1972).

The attachment process will have a significant influence on how well separation will take place. According to Bowlby's attachment theory (1969), attachment is a relationship of long duration formed for the purpose of ensuring survival. Attachment figures (such as parents) provide a secure base for the active exploration and mastery of the environment, foster social and intellectual

competence (Ainsworth et al, 1978; Brack, Gay & Maheny, 1993) and help develop identity (Ainsworth 1969). The secure base provides the means of satisfying the basic needs identified by Maslow (see Table 1.1). The attachment figure, in fostering feelings of security, is called upon in anxiety arousing situations, which present conditions of threat (Weiss, 1986) e.g. moving to college or sitting examinations. In addition, secure attachment fosters feelings of confidence in expressing one's needs and feelings in the expectation that one can influence and be accepted by others (Ainsworth and Bell, 1974). Within the self-adequacy model of stress (see Figs. 1.2 and 1.3) stress is prevented by the provision of a secure base, enabling the satisfaction of needs without threat to self.

Armsden and Greenberg (1987), and Ryan and Lynch (1989), support Ainsworth's contention that strong parental bonding facilitates the separation process within adolescence. Anderson and Fleming (1986) found a positive relationship between parental attachment and ego identity, college adjustment and economic independence of college students. Kenny and Donaldson (1991), Armsden and Greenberg (1987) and Lapsley et al (1990), all show a positive relation between identity, self esteem, life satisfaction and attachment amongst college students. Where attachment and bonding is poor, identity, self-worth, independence and life adaptation are at risk, resulting in stress for the student (Bradford and Lyddon, 1993).

In dysfunctional families, attachment and bonding with parents is poor. Lopez et al (1986), when exploring links between family characteristics and depression in students, identified four characteristic dysfunctions in such families. These dysfunctions were (a) parent-child over-involvement, (b) parent-child role reversals, (c) marital instability and (d) parent-child coalitions. These symptoms of dysfunction, which can overlap with one another, were viewed by Lopez as potential inhibitors of the separation process. The results of a more recent study by Lopez (1991) of family and students suggests that students' personal adjustment may be negatively affected by any conflictual relationship with parents (mother, father or both). Academic adjustment, on the other hand, according to Lopez, may be most at risk where students are caught in a triangle of conflict between parents and themselves.

Medalie and Rockwell (1989) have identified several different types of attachment problems which are likely to hinder separation and result in student stress. These problems include (a) autonomy struggles in conflicted family systems, (b) problems stemming from loss, (c) problems in separating from enmeshed (i.e. over-involved) family systems, and finally, (d) attachment problems associated with disengaged (i.e. under-involved) families.

Self worth or self-esteem is developed primarily within the home (Satir, 1972) through its secure base of attachment (Bowlby, 1969). Attachment difficulties experienced in the home can have effects on matters outside home, such as academic and social concerns. Self-worth determines how confident students

will be socially and how balanced their academic expectations will be. Students coming from a home where confidence has been developed tend not to have as much difficulty in handling academic and social demands as other students (Andersen and Fleming, 1986, Humphreys, 1993). Conversely, students coming from a home where confidence has not been developed will tend to have difficulty in handling academic and social demands.

One assumption that has been questioned is the notion that attachments weaken for students as they progress from 1st to 4th year at college. Kenny and Donaldson's (1991) research findings support those of others (Hoffman, 1984) which have demonstrated very favorable descriptions of parental relationships for final year students. Kenny and Donaldson argue that affective closeness to parents should not be synonymous with dependency. In fact such parents encourage independence. This is true of both male and female students, with autonomy fostered equally. Basically a good relationship with parents is healthy and supportive for students. Where relationships are poor between students and their parents, this can prove to be considerably stressful. However, it is necessary to identify which aspects of family closeness are adaptive and which are not. Kenny and Donaldson (1991) suggest that the distinction between closeness and overprotection/enmeshment is useful in this regard.

There are conflicting findings regarding the relationship between well-being and attachment for males and females. For example, in some studies the quality of attachment has been found to be more important for womens' psychological

well-being (Kenny and Donaldson, 1991) and achievement of identity (Benson, Harris and Rogers, 1992) than for men. Overly close parental attachment can be psychologically harmful for men but not for women according to Berman and Sperling (1991). The importance of attachment for men may occur only when the attachment system is activated by situational stress such as exams (Rice and Whaley, 1990). In contrast, a positive relation has been found between paternal attachment, security and college adjustment of men but not of women (Schultheiss and Blustein, 1994). As a result of these conflicting findings, Kenny and Rice (1995) state that definitive conclusions cannot be drawn regarding sex differences in the level and importance of parental attachments. Gender differences in attachment/separation can, perhaps, be better understood when we examine the development of intimacy and its relation to the development of autonomy amongst male and female students.

2.4.2.6 Development of Intimacy, Interpersonal Relationships and student stress

An important developmental theme, connected with separation and identity of students, is that of achieving intimacy with peers. Erikson (1968) and Chickering (1969) have proposed that it is possible to have developed a strong ability to be intimate only after having established a sense of autonomy or identity. Erikson (1963) assigns the achievement of intimacy to early adulthood, after identity formation has been accomplished. Chickering (1969) includes intimacy as part of the development of mature interpersonal relationships. The Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry (1983) places intimacy alongside separation and identity formation as a critical task of the college years, while

Maslow (1954) includes intimacy as part of the need for loving and belonging within his hierarchy of needs

College students have had close peer relationship before college, but as they move away from family, they satisfy their intimacy needs more and more in friendships and romances. The university campus is an ideal environment for the exploration of intimate relationships (Arnstein, 1984). Intimacy, as an aspect of identity formation, involves making commitments, as students single out others for a special bond. The importance of intimacy in the lives of students is demonstrated in a study by Newton, Angle, Schuette and Ender (1984). They explored the needs of 65 students at a U.S. University, and found that the need for relationships, support and contact that is warm and accepting was the most important need expressed by participants. The effects of the need for intimacy not being met is shown in a study by Kennedy, Kiecolt-Glaser and Glaser (1988), who report how lonely students had poorer immune function than less lonely students. These researchers concluded that interpersonal relationships have a mediating role on the immune response to acute and chronic stressors.

The development of mature and intimate relationships requires a certain degree of self-confidence and social skills. Difficulties with the task of developing intimacy can result in stress, due to feelings of rejection, isolation, non-commitment and over-dependency. The break-up of intimate relationships can be among the most stressful experiences for students causing academic underachievement for some and suicidal risk for others (Grayson, 1989). Little

is known as to why certain people are able to proceed with this developmental challenge while others struggle. An examination of gender-based differences in the development of intimacy and autonomy provides some clarification on such struggles.

Many of the major development theories, including those of Erikson (1950, 1968) and Chickering (1969), were developed from in-depth interviews with 18 to 24 year old middle class white American male students. The theories of Erikson and Chickering, therefore, have not adequately described the development of women (Greeley and Tinsley, 1988; Stonewater,1987; Straub, 1987; Straub and Rogers, 1986; Rossi, 1980). The vectors of developing autonomy and freeing interpersonal relationships have been of particular interest to researchers investigating sex differences. In a further study by Greeley and Tinsley (1988) it was found that women scored higher than men on the mature interpersonal relationships task. Obviously this discrepancy has raised important questions about the content and process of womens' development in comparison to mens'.

A study by Taub and McEwan (1991) supports previous findings which indicated a delay in the development of autonomy for women, with a huge increase in autonomy scores for final year female students. Gilligan (1982) supports this view, according to which women's development is more concerned with connections and relationships than with issues of autonomy as indicated by Chickering. Gilligan (1982) suggested that because women develop in the

context of relationships - whereas men develop in the context of separation - they will develop intimacy prior to or at the same time as autonomy. According to Gilligan, separateness occurs at a later stage in women's lives.

Taub and McEwen (1991) found that women develop more gradually in the area of interpersonal relationships than in autonomy. Female development of intimacy occurs throughout the four years of college and not just the final two years. Chickering (1969) had suggested that autonomy developed in the first two years, and intimate relationships in the later years. This proposition now needs to be reviewed for women. A broader definition of autonomy may be needed, according Taub and McEwen (1991), and may include tasks normally associated with the development of interpersonal relationships. Chickering and Reisser (1993), in their revision of Chickering's (1969) original vectors have taken, these views somewhat into account. For instance the fifth vector, 'freeing interpersonal relationships', was renamed 'developing mature interpersonal relationships' and was moved to an earlier point in the sequence, prior to 'establishing identity'. This change was in order to give recognition to the importance of students' experiences with relationships for the formation of their core sense of self. Likewise the vector 'developing autonomy' was renamed 'moving through autonomy toward interdependence'.

Kegan (1982) maintains that men have more difficulty moving from autonomy and women have more difficulty moving from inclusion i.e. there is an intrinsic bias in men toward separation and in women toward inclusion. Regardless of

gender, however, Kegan maintains that human beings need to find the balance between too much dependence and too much independence. According to Kegan (1982) development for both sexes is a spiralling process between the poles of inclusion and separation. In "The Evolving Self", Kegan proposes a dynamic between:

> *the yearning to be included, to be a part of, close to, joined with, to be held, admitted, accompanied* and *the yearning to be independent or autonomous, to experience ones distinctness, the self-choseness of one's direction, one's individual integrity.*

According to Josselson (1987) these *paradoxical needs for self-assertion and union, with their accompanying dangers of isolation and annihilation* are a set pattern which continue throughout human development and are not gender specific. On a similar note, Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs (see Table 1.3) recognises both the need for belonging and the need for competence as necessary for growth to occur.

In the context of student stress, the key issue here is whether or not a particular developmental pattern is healthier for either gender e.g. would men be better off, health-wise, to be less focused on the development of autonomy, since autonomy may lead to a neglect of emotional and interpersonal needs. Holmbeck and Wandrei (1993) and Kenny and Rice (1995), for example, suggest that complete disconnection is maladaptive for men whilst excessive levels of connection is maladaptive for women. The research has not established whether students in general have more difficulties regarding connection or separation. The

relationship between health and the development of connection and separation has, also, not been researched adequately. Studies of eating disorders amongst college women by SteinarAdare (1989) and Wurman (1989) are specific examples of the limited research that provides some insight into connection/separation difficulties for women.

The developmental risk for women (i.e. what is at stake), given greater orientation to the perception of others in their identity development, is said to be 'an underdeveloped inner voice or core self'. Psychodynamic conflicts arising from 'an overidentification' with approval from others are said to be exacerbated in the contemporary cultural context which increasingly values individual initiatives, control and autonomy for women (Hoffman, 1992). For women, socialisation experiences and cultural expectations are said to be in conflict, particularly where early family relations jeopardised the development of an individuated self with which to negotiate the new expectations for female adulthood. For SteinerAdare (1989) and Wurman (1989), the contemporary prevalence of bulimia among young women is attributable to this cultural double bind. The bulimia is considered to represent a dramatic effort to present the new public persona of a self-made, in-control, needing- nobody, autonomy which masks an absence of self. There is an inability to define an identity without the approval of an external audience. For some women, the resolution of the autonomy-relatedeness dichotomy is a drastic splitting of public and private selves conforming on the surface to cultural ideals but privately battling selves experienced as both needy and greedy. Self destructive eating patterns became

the battle ground for this conflict between externally imposed standards of achievement and beauty and internally felt needs for care and connectedness. This theoretical understanding of bulimia concurs with the present model of stress. It focuses on the needs of the developing self, with particular reference to the autonomy-inclusion dichotomy.

Put simply, the development of autonomy and intimacy may be different for men and women (Stonewater, 1987; Straub, 1987). It is not clear whether these differences have any implications for the health or stress of both sexes. Holmbeck and Wandrei (1993) have suggested that men and women may value different levels of independence and connectedness, but maladjustment will result when optimal levels of either characteristic are surpassed.

Gender differences in the development of autonomy and intimacy present a number of issues for student stress. First, differences between male and female needs may be a source of conflict and strain in relationships and may lead to misunderstandings between the sexes. Second, gender-based behaviours prove stressful where they become stereotyped i.e. where certain behaviours are expected of males and females which are contrary to their individual needs.

In conclusion, a developmental model of student stress will need to take account of gender differences in attachment and separation. It is likely that because of these differences the types of stresses experienced by male students will differ significantly from those experienced by females. Differences can be expected in

terms of how male and female students struggle to form an adequate identity. We might discover stress for women to be centred more on interpersonal difficulties, whereas for men it may be due more to autonomy issues. Alternatively, stress for women may be due to a lack of autonomy whereas for men it may be due to a lack of intimacy in their interpersonal relationships.

2.4.2.7 Achievement Motivation and Student Stress

Chickering (1969) refers to achievement needs when he discusses the importance of students' development of competence. Students' sense of competence (intellectual, physical and interpersonal) stems from the confidence that they can cope with what happens to them in their lives and that they can achieve their goals successfully (Chickering and Reisser, 1993).

Concern with achievement has been recognised as important for college students in their search for identity (Arnstein, 1984; Grayson, 1989, Santiago-Rivera, Bernstein and Gard, 1995). Students who attend third level colleges may be considered high achievers, in that they have progressed to the highest level within the educational system. While achievement can be a very rewarding experience, it brings with it certain demands which may prove stressful. How this occurs will be highlighted by examining how students' sense of self-adequacy is threatened through their need to achieve.

Achievement motivation can be defined as the students predisposition to approach or avoid a competitive situation such as an examination. At a broader

level it will include the desire to excel. An achievement situation is where one's performance is expected to be evaluated (Atkinson, 1964). University life presents many such evaluation situations for students.

The McClelland-Atkinson theory of achievement motivation (McClelland, 1953) has generated a lot of research. This theory is based on two psychological constructs, namely (a) the motive to achieve success and (b) the fear of failure. The motive to achieve success represents the person's intrinsic motivation to engage in an interesting and exciting activity. Fear of failure on the other hand is a psychological construct associated with state anxiety (A-state). Fear of failure can be understood as the stressful aspect of the need to achieve. According to McClelland (1953), one's desire to enter into an interesting and exciting activity is a function of the relative strengths of these two constructs, as represented by the following equation:

Achievement motivation = intrinsic motivation - cognitive state anxiety.

Deci (1975) considers that intrinsically motivated behaviour is essentially a need for a person to feel competent and self-determining in dealing with the environment. Davies (1986) states that intrinsically motivated students are likely to be relatively well adjusted emotionally. The difficulty with achievement motivation is that the intrinsic motivation factor and the anxiety factor become inextricably linked. It is difficult to examine these two factors independently of one another. Intrinsic motivation is difficult to isolate and therefore it is not easy to establish when a student wants to achieve for its own sake rather than because of the fear of failure.

Some individuals who are low in intrinsic motivation and high in fear of failure will still enter into achievement situations e.g. entering college. The McClelland-Atkinson model has been expanded to improve its predictability by including the concept of extrinsic motivation which Atkinson (1964) conceded may account for this anomaly. Extrinsic motivation comes in many forms including - praise, recognition, money, rewards or trophies. These are the very things which may entice an anxious student to approach an anxiety provoking situation such as an examination.

Self-confidence is similar to the notion of intrinsic motivation or the motive to achieve success according to Cox (1985). A number of cognitive-based theories of self- confidence have been developed (Vealey, 1986) including those by Harter (1982), Bandura (1977, 1982) and Nicholls (1984). These theories provide further insight into the stressful aspect of achievement motivation and the need to be competent. According to Harter (1982), individuals are inherently motivated to be competent in all areas of human achievement. Self-efficacy, as developed by Bandura (1977), is the belief that one is competent and successful at a particular task e.g. examinations or developing relationships. Self- efficacy is fundamental to competent performance, according to Bandura (1977). Nicholl's (1984) model of perceived ability places achievement motivation within a developmental context. This is of particular significance for a developmental approach to student stress, and is a logical extension of Bandura's and Harter's positions. According to Nicholls (1984) and Duda (1987) the

defining feature of achievement motivation is the way children come to perceive their own ability. This perception differs from one age to the next. At a young age (2 to 6 years) ability is viewed as being relative to past performance (task oriented). At a later age (7 years +) ability is viewed relative to the performance of others (social comparison, ego oriented). After 11 years task orientation will be determined by environmental influence. The evidence suggests that task oriented disposition is ultimately the most beneficial for the development of a positive self image. Based on Nicholl's (1984) developmental theory of achievement we can therefore predict that an age-appropriate (i.e. task-oriented) attitude to competition (e.g. examinations) will facilitate students' ability to manage stress.

Traditionally, theories of motivation have been applied equally to both males and females. At the most general level, it is true to say that neither sex has a greater need for self-esteem, achievement, acceptance and competence. However it is becoming more evident that the sexes may differ in the manner in which they address these needs. In particular, women's need to achieve has been examined on the basis that the McClelland-Atkinson model of achievement motivation does not cater adequately for gender differences (see Sarason and Smith, 1971). This deficit prompted Horner (1968) to propose the psychological construct 'Fear of Success' (F.O.S.). This expansion of the original model aimed to account for an apparent lack of motivation to succeed in women competing with men. F.O.S. explains to some extent why a woman who enjoys a strong sense of intrinsic motivation and low anxiety would still refuse to enter

into an achievement situation with men. The woman fears that if she succeeds in a male dominated environment she will suffer a perceived loss of femininity and be socially rejected by members of both sexes.

Researchers have failed to demonstrate that F.O.S. is a personality disposition in women independent of fear of failure (Arkes and Garske, 1982). While women do not seem to have a personality disposition to avoid success, they do appear to fear activities inappropriate to their gender roles (Peplau, 1976). Women tend to suffer reduced levels of self confidence (and therefore greater stress) in situations that they perceive to be gender-role inappropriate (Corbin and Nix, 1979). It is unlikely, therefore, that women suffer from fear of success, per se, to a greater degree than men. Whether college women differ in this context from women in general is unclear. It is likely that due to gender differences in career and course choice that stress for women (and men) at college may be due to their choice of gender inappropriate courses. Dealing with the ensuing role conflict when they choose a career or course not considered ' appropriate' to their sex (e.g. female engineering students or male nurses) may prove stressful.

In conclusion, students' development of competence and achievement contributes to their identity and self-confidence. Many students will go to university in order to achieve success. While at university, however, many students encounter a fear of failure. Fear of failure arises when students perceive that they may not achieve what they set out to achieve. This situation can be the cause of considerable stress as it is experienced as a threat to self-

adequacy (Combs et al, 1976). Students who approach academic achievement as a challenging task are less threatened and therefore less stressed than students who approach such situations driven by extrinsic factors such as social comparisons and parental expectations (Davies, 1986).

While all students have an inherent urge to be competent, some have this urge to a greater extent than others. This over-ambition to achieve may be due a lack of self-confidence or deeper feelings of insecurity. Achievement and success can be an attempt to compensate for these deficiencies. The intrinsic need to achieve, therefore, can become distorted by the struggle for approval and recognition.

2.4.2.8 Summary and Conclusions

Each of four key developmental tasks - identity, separation, intimacy and achievement - has been shown to contain a potential threat to self-adequacy. Grayson makes the important point that the boundary between normal developmental issues and psycho-pathological tendencies is not clear. In section 1.3.4 the relationship between stress and development was discussed. It was pointed out that these two processes are inextricably linked. Stress is understood as being due to the absence or prevention of development. Stress will occur as a result of threats to self-adequacy when normal developmental needs are unmet. Conversely, maturation is a healthy process, whereby as we develop we learn to meet our needs as they arise.

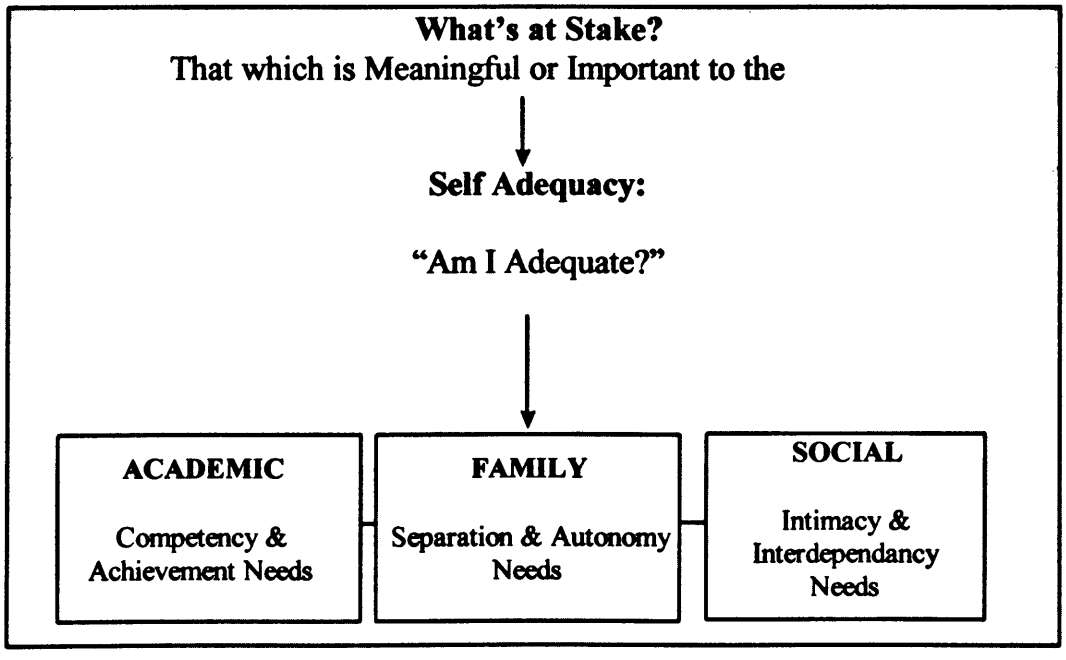
The relationship between stress and development for college students is readily apparent. Students who fall within the traditional age range (18-22) are in a transition between adolescence and adulthood. The formation of an adequate self is at a critical stage during late adolescence (Erikson, 1968). It is at this stage that we stand apart from our families for the first time and begin to live a life of our own. There are a number of potential crisis points during this process of attaining independence and identity formation. Such crises can be understood as threats to self-adequacy and self-worth. What is at stake - using Lazarus' (1976) terminology - for students under stress, is their sense of self-adequacy (Combs et al, 1976), which comes under threat when handling the core developmental tasks of identity formation.

The relationship between student development and student stress can perhaps be best expressed in the form of two key questions regarding identity formation, namely: "Who am I?" (Erikson, 1968) - which is the developmental task, and "Am I adequate?" - which is the stressful component (Aherne, 1996a; Aherne, 1996b; Aherne, 1997).

Based on the evidence regarding student development and stress, it is not difficult to understand why student stressors can be identified within the family, academic and social spheres (see section 2.2). Each of the primary developmental tasks facing college students, as well as their associated threats to self, can have a particular relevance to specific areas of student stress. For example, the family presents the challenge of separation and independence

which brings with it the need for a secure family base (see Bowlby, 1988; Satir, 1972). Academic demands centre on the inherent need to achieve, as a major aspect of one's identity formation. The need to achieve is accompanied by the potential fear of failure (McClelland, 1953). Within the social arena the need for intimacy and friendship is highlighted, with the accompanying risk of rejection and loneliness (Chickering, 1969) (see Fig. 2.1).

Fig. 2.1 What's at Stake for Students Under Stress?



Not all student stress can be attributed to this particular group of developmental issues. Some students may experience stress to the self as a result of need deficiencies other than identity, intimacy and autonomy and competence. For example, students may experience stress whenever their more basic survival needs are under threat e.g. lack of money to buy food or life threatening circumstances.

To summarise, student development has been presented as the unifying framework within which to understand student characteristics in an interaction model of student stress. Stress is inextricably linked to development. For students, this means that stress is due to difficulties in their development in such areas as identity, autonomy, intimacy and competence. The struggle between developing autonomy and intimacy, complicated by gender, adds further to the stress experience of students. The importance of the family, relationships and the need to achieve in relation to student stress has also been highlighted. There is a need to examine in greater detail how difficulties in student development come about and to establish how environmental factors are involved in an interaction perspective on student stress. This latter issue will be addressed in the following section.

2.4.3 Aspects of the Environment in an Interaction model of Student Stress

2.4.3.1 The Contribution of the Campus Environment to Student Stress

This section aims to demonstrate that environmental factors are influential in an interaction model of student stress in so far as they might interfere with the developmental needs of students. Studies of the environment within the interaction approach to student stress provide support for the developmental model of stress already outlined (see Section 2.4.2.8). Studies which have integrated student development within an interaction framework of student stress have focused primarily on the campus environment and its role in student development (Moos, 1979).

Third level education in Ireland has undergone rapid expansion in the past decade and it looks as if this trend is set to continue. Successive governments are recognising the importance of a well educated workforce. Places in third level colleges are also used as a means of reducing the live register of unemployed. Making third level education available to a wider population has inevitable effects on the environment in which students of the 1990's arrive when they come to college. The ethos and demands at a University today are very different from what students of the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's experienced. The resultant campus climate of the 1990's is one of competitiveness and depersonalisation.

A range of environmental factors have been reported as having an influence on students e.g. libraries, registration procedure, academic advisor accessibility and accommodation have all been shown to have an impact (Paul, 1980). Different testing and teaching methods and curricula have also been shown to have different effects on different types of students (Huebner, 1979). Ecological issues have been shown to affect students (Berke and Wilson, 1951; Banning and McKinley, 1980). The architectural and physical design features of the environment have also been shown to have an influence on students (Heilweil, 1973). Another feature of U.S. college campuses is that of over-populated settings (see Feldman and Newcomb, 1969). This results in a lack of opportunity for certain students to develop certain skills.

It would seem that the environment does have an impact on students. However, the process by which this occurs and the degree of impact of the environment on students' development has not been determined. In relation to the study of stress, the question is: what demands does the environment create for students? Based on the student development model (see section 2.4.2.8), stress will occur when the environment does not facilitate the developmental needs of students and as a result students' self-adequacy is threatened. Studies of college environment characteristics are often viewed in this respect. Moos (1979) in examining an interactional model of student stress, presents a framework for evaluating environments and their relationship to personal variables. The environmental system he sees as consisting of four factors: (a) the physical setting, (b) organisational factors, (c) the human aggregate and (d) social climate. In Moos' model, social climate is considered the major mediator of the influences of the previous three factors and climate is considered to have the deciding environmental influence on student development and student stress.

Moos (1979) asks what reinforcement contingencies are operating in our colleges, and whether institutions reward behaviour which contributes to student development in order to facilitate student growth. If not, then there is indeed an increase in the demand on students and in student stress. Pace (1962) states that it is crucial for college personnel to know about the colleges overall atmosphere, the kinds of things that are rewarded, encouraged, emphasised, the style of life which is valued in the community and is most visibly expressed and felt. He identifies three domains of climate. These are: (a) Relationships - how involved,

supportive, and expressive are people, campus morale, family and student relationships; (b) Personal Growth or goals of the setting - where does growth tend to occur; and (c) Maintenance/ change - how orderly and clear is the college in its expectations and how does the college maintain control and respond to change.

Chickering and Reisser (1993), also, refer to the importance of organisational climate. They hypothesise that the impact of the environment increases as institutional objectives are formulated clearly and taken seriously, and as the diverse elements of the campus and its programs are consistent with the overall institution objectives. Chickering and Reisser (1993) go on to suggest that if the organisational climate as it relates to staff/student interaction is healthy, then the development of intellectual competence, autonomy and purpose are fostered. Stress occurs when such development is prevented. The importance of climate, then, is that it influences (to a greater or lesser extent) how students feel at college, based on how they perceive the environment. In particular a climate may be threatening to a student's sense of self-worth, necessary for development to occur, resulting in an increased fear of failure.

There has been a tendency amongst some researchers to identify the environment, rather than the individual as the most significant influence on student stress. An important study in this regard was that by Mechanic (1962) of the adaptation of doctoral students to examinations. Whitman et al (1984) refer to Mechanic's study of examination stress in 1960 as the best qualitative study

of how students come to feel stress and how they deal with it. The purpose of this study was to develop a better understanding of the social context of stress and the ways students under threat came to understand their situation and apply themselves to mastering it. This study in social psychology was said to be in reaction to psychoanalytic dominated stress research in the late 1960s which emphasized personal defense mechanisms as determinants of stress (Whitman et al, 1984).

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. In this study, 22 doctoral students agreed to participate in a series of up to 10 interviews on a weekly and bimonthly basis, including before and after their examinations. Mechanic administered questionnaires to participants four weeks before and after their examinations. He occasionally interviewed faculty and spouses of students. He observed interactions in the department and attended a faculty meeting concerned with examinations.

Mechanic found that communication was the major factor in how students coped with examinations. Through social comparison, students' anticipated their own capability to prepare for the examinations and evaluated their progress. A favourable comparison was found to increase students confidence whilst an unfavourable one provoked feelings of discomfort and stress.

Mechanic concluded that the manner in which students are viewed by other students and family will affect their definition of the situation and their ability to deal adequately with it. This study contends that the social environment is an

important influence on adaptation, in that it is the community, that sets the limits, provides the alternatives and defines the meaning to be attached to various situations. Mechanic wished to develop a better understanding of the social context of stress and the necessary skills of adaptation. The ability to cope with environmental demands, according to Mechanic, depends on the efficacy of the solutions one's culture provides. Mechanic maintains that the coping skills one develops are dependent on the adequacy of the preparatory institutions to which one has been exposed. Mechanic states that where schools and informal types of preparation are inadequate to the tasks people face, social disruption and personal failure will be inevitable no matter how effective the individuals psychological capacities. Mechanic views psychological comfort as depending on social supports, since people depend on others for justification and admiration. The suggestion seems to be that it is only through social change that stress reduction can ultimately be brought about. This lack of emphasis on the personal is mistaken, since social change can only happen through personal change.

Mechanic considers it a myth that adaptation is dependent only on one's ability to develop personal mastery over one's environment since many major stresses are not amenable to individual solutions, but depend on highly organized co-operative efforts. This study emphasizes the role of the environment in determining stress. Mechanic's model has had a significant role in influencing the direction of studies of interaction models of student stress, which have continued to emphasise the contribution of the environment within the

interaction. In this approach, the contribution of the individual is underestimated and the power of the individual to determine his/her own stress conditions is not emphasized. Under these circumstances individuals are more likely to place the blame for their misfortunes on external sources, rendering them less effective in coping with their internal stress response mechanisms.

2.4.3.2 The Interaction between Student and Environment

Various models of student environment interaction lend further support to a student development and self-adequacy approach to student stress. Paul (1980), in his overview of student-environment interaction models, identifies two basic types of models. The descriptive/research type, he says, has been chiefly developed to describe the relationship between the student and the environment or, to test theoretical assumptions about variables thought to influence their interaction. Examples of this approach include the models of Holland (1973), Stern (1970) and Pervin (1968). The second set of models he refers to as the prescriptive/intervention type. These have been developed primarily to identify those elements of the person- environment interaction that can be modified to improve the nature of the interaction. Examples of this approach include the Ecosystem model of Aulepp and Delworth (1976), the Ecomapping Model of Huebner and Corazinni (1976), the Multiple Perspective Model of Paul and Huebner (1978) and Blocher's (1978) Ecological Model.

Sterns (1970), Huebner and Corazzini's (1976) Models' are both based on a needs theory and, as such, are supportive of the Self-Adequacy Model of Student Stress (see section 2.3.2.8). Sterns (1970) needs/press model of interaction is an extension of Murray's (1938) earlier theory, which assumed behaviour to be a function of the relationship between a person's needs and environmental press (i.e. the environment's role in the frustration or satisfaction of needs). Stern collected self-report responses in thirty need areas from students and he inferred the environmental press from the characteristic features or demands in the setting. The needs-press model emphasizes the value of congruence between persons' needs and environmental press. Unfortunately, according to Paul (1980), research which has attempted to assess the effects of congruence on student satisfaction and achievement tends not to support the theory. This may be because of the methodological complications involved in attempting to separate out the salient variables. Limited definitions of the environment and the lack of a longitudinal/lifespan approach to studies may have added to the poor reported results. There is some support for the notion that students who share a common need pattern tend to be found at colleges that have a similar press pattern (Paul, 1980). This might indicate that needs and environmental press go some way towards explaining behaviour without providing the full explanation.

In Huebner and Corrazzini's (1976) Ecomapping Model of Interaction the student is seen as the possessor of needs that must be met largely through external sources. The environment is conceived of as the potential source of those need resources and the student - environment interaction is discussed in

terms of the congruence between needs and resources. In order to meet needs, the student identifies the various parts of the environment and attempts to act on the environmental parts (e.g. academic advisers) in order to fulfill the identified needs. The degree to which there are matches or mismatches between the students needs and the students successful location and utilization of resources to meet those needs determines congruence. This model places the responsibility for meeting needs firmly with the student and can be readily integrated within the Self-adequacy model of student stress. Paul (1980) refers to this model as comprehensive and theoretically rich, yet time consuming to apply. As a result, there apparently, has been little use made of it. Nonetheless it can act us a useful framework to guide more specific intervention strategies.

Blocher's (1978) conceptualisation of the campus environment contributes significantly to our understanding of the interactional relationship between campus environment and student development. Blocher combines the concept of development tasks with that of psychological needs, to propose an ecological model of student development. The underlying assumption is that an 'ecological balance' between developmental tasks, demands and psychological nutrients facilitates growth. Conversely, an imbalance results in stress and illness.

Blocher identifies three subsystems for the purpose of analysing a given ecological system. These are opportunity, support, and reward. Opportunity structure refers to the problems or situations available in the environment that stimulate the individual to address a particular developmental task. The support

structure is the configuration of resources available to the individual for coping with stress. These resources are both affective (supportive relationships) and cognitive (tasks for understanding stress). Finally, the 'reward structure' defines the reinforcers for effort expended. Banning (1980) has translated Blocker's model into a 'management template of campus ecology'. Banning's template provides a tool for mapping a campus environment along the dimensions of opportunity, support and reward structures, relative to a goal of the educational institution. Banning incorporates Chickering's developmental vectors onto his template. Whilst providing a useful theoretical framework, Chickering's (1969) vectors do not translate very easily into operational units for evaluation. Banning's template, therefore, needs considerable interpretation when applied to any individual campus.

The goodness-of-fit approach (Pervin, 1968) is a particular form of the interaction model of student stress that has been used as a means of explaining the nature of the interaction between students and their environment. This model does not look at the person and environment characteristics separately, but is concerned with the fit between the person and environment as the source of stress. The goodness-of-fit approach provides significant support for a developmental model of student stress and provides some very practical applications of a student development based approach to dealing with stress on campus.

The goodness-of-fit model accepts that campus environments can be defined by the psycho-social characteristics attributed to them through the perceptions of their inhabitants (Pervin, 1968). According to the degree to which these perceptions of the environment match or fit the perceptions students have of themselves, the students will tend to have higher performance, more satisfaction and less stress. As the discrepancy between student perceived needs and the campus environment increases, the Goodness-of-Fit model predicts lower student performance, less satisfaction and more stress (Huebner, 1979).

Moos (1979), in his study of student-environment fit, collected data on student perceptions of the environment as it is, and as it ideally should be. In his studies, Moos used the ideal scores as measures of the person's own wants and needs (Moos, 1979). The discrepancy between how students describe their environment and how they believe it should be (both using the U.R.E.S.) provided a measure of person - environment fit. Moos (1979) assumed that stress would be the outcome of a poor 'fit'. Both perceived and actual measures of discrepancy were obtained by Moos (1979). The perceived discrepancy was the difference between students' ideal and group real scores.

In Moos's study student stress was measured by (a) the frequency of physical symptoms, (b) the frequency of help seeking, and (c) the relative anxiety present. Each of these was correlated with ideal, real (perceived), and actual discrepancy scores. The research question asked which set of variables is most predictive of students stress. 152 students responded to a mail questionnaire.

All correlations were significant, with actual discrepancy scores having the highest correlations. These results indicate that person - environment fit variables are better predictors of stress than either person (ideal) or environment (real) variables alone.

A number of limitations can be identified with Moos' study including its small sample size and the construct validity of the perceived discrepancy scores. A further difficulty is the limited definition of stress used with the a priori assumption by Moos that poor fit leads to stress. Perhaps the most significant problem presented by studies of this nature is their use of the students' perceived ideal environment score. What students consider the ideal may not necessarily be what is best from a health and development point of view i.e. there is a difference between what students' say they want and what they may need. An alternative definition of the ideal environment would be that environment which best addresses the developmental needs of students. For example, in examining the financial stress for students (see section 2.2) it would be of benefit to identify not only the actual finances and the ideal finances as perceived by students but also an objective assessment of what is realistically required to sustain students. All three elements of student finance need to be taken into account in any intervention strategy aimed at alleviating student financial stress. The goodness-of-fit approach to student stress, therefore, must be guided by our knowledge of student developmental needs. In this way, the campus environment should be expected to present the necessary challenges and supports to enable student development to take place.

Students' experience of homesickness and of dropping out of college (i.e. attrition) are just two examples of specific student circumstances where the goodness-of-fit model has been applied within a developmental context.

According to Fisher (1988) disparity between what is desired and what is obtained in reality creates the preconditions for homesick experience. The goodness-of-fit model has been adopted by Fisher (1988) to explain the stress of transition to university and homesickness. Fisher proposes a model of homesickness which involves weighing up the benefits and threats created by the new environment against the benefits, securities and threats of home life. Students increasingly miss home when they find out how difficult life can be away from it. Alternatively, where life at home has been difficult , home may not be missed too much (Fisher, 1988).

Another variation of the goodness-of-fit model has to do with the poorness-of-fit which can lead to many students dropping out of college. Students who drop out of college can help to identify difficulties in relation to fitting in at college. These students reinforce the idea that failure to meet developmental needs of students at college is a source of stress. However, for some students the coping mechanism is to leave the college. Dropping out must not necessarily be considered a poor coping device.

Hirsch and Kensiton (1970) proposed a developmental -transactional model of attrition whereby the act of dropping out is basically related to the incongruence between the student's own developmental timetable and the normative timetable of demands and opportunities that feature in the college setting at each point in the students college career. Drop-outs in Hirsch and Kensiton's study seem to have few shared personal characteristics or complaints about the college. What drop-outs do share is a sense that, whatever their own developmental needs and goals, these cannot be fulfilled within the college context, i.e., poorness-of-fit. Hirsch and Keniston (1970) hypothesised that students who are developmentally behind or ahead of schedule compared to the timetable of college life are subjected to great stress and are more likely to drop out of college.

Studies of student drop-out support the goodness-of-fit model in so far as they demonstrate that students may leave college when the college does not meet their needs. However, this model of interaction does not necessarily represent a model of stress in that dropping out from college may be considered an adaptive and even healthy measure (Cope and Hannah, 1975), and there is no evidence to suggest that college drop-outs are any more stressed than students who remain at college.

2.4.4 Summary and Conclusion

Interaction models of student stress, highlight the importance of students' developmental needs as determinants of what is meaningful for students and of what is potentially stressful. However, interaction models of student stress apply

a limited definition of the environment. This is perhaps due to two factors. First, studies of student stress are often carried out by student affairs personnel, whose primary focus is the development of the campus environment. Second, as a limited environment with definite parameters the campus can be easily measured for research purposes. If we are to improve our understanding of student stress we will need to broaden our view of the student experience beyond that of the campus environment as well as describing more clearly the nature of the interaction between student and environment. For example, the environment might be usefully considered "as that with which the student comes into contact" (Perls, Hefferline and Goodman, 1951). This definition explains that the environment is simply the screen or target onto which students project their own needs. Research needs to explore what is happening for the student at the contact boundary with the environment, when under threat e.g. the use of defense mechanisms such as denial, avoidance, introjection or projection (Perls, Hefferline and Goodman, 1951). This approach to interaction with the environment is a more inclusive one than heretofore. Psychological explanations of this nature naturally place a heavy emphasis on the role of individuals' in both the cause and treatment of their stress.

According to the interaction model of stress, neither the environment nor the individual's needs alone determine behaviour. The interaction approach suggests that both environment factors and individual needs determine behaviour. However, some interactional approaches place more of the burden on the individual, whilst other approaches focus more on the environment. The latter

approach has been advocated strongly by Mechanic (1962) in his study of student stress. In reaction to what they perceived to be a one sided emphasis on the person, Banning and Kaiser (1974) have become advocates of an environmental orientation, by developing conceptual models to guide the assessment and redesign of campus environments to better match student needs. In theory and practice they take the burden of educational outcome off the student and place it on the environment. This may not always be in the students' best interests.

The emphasis by student affairs personnel on the role of the environment has led to significant developments in campus design research (see Moos, 1979). However, the danger in this approach is to externalise stress and take the focus away from the student. Environmentally based definitions of stress, such as these, can result in individuals attributing cause to environmental factors which often, very little can be done about, leading to further feelings of helplessness and frustration. Where environmental change does occur it can often be purely structural, (e.g. changing a trimester to a semester system) without any accompanying attitudinal change (e.g. rewarding academic success without taking into account a more holistic view of the student).

Paul (1980) advises that the focus of research should be maintained on the individual, ensuring that control and responsibility is retained by the person and there is no likelihood of feelings of helplessness. Arguments regarding the relative contributions of environment and person factors may not be very helpful

to those seeking relief from stress. The present study adopts a very broad view of the individual student's reported experience. This approach aims to contribute to the empowerment of the individual student as an agent of change. Presumably, psychological approaches, such as the present one, can complement the more sociological orientations of Mechanic (1962) and others, in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of student stress, which can be of use to all concerned.

Central to the debate regarding the relative influence of the environment on student stress is to what extent should the campus environment aim to influence student development? What specific aspects of student development should the campus environment be trying to address? These are the questions student affairs personnel are faced with each year as they plan and organise their programmes to deal effectively with student needs. At one extreme there is the view that college should only be concerned with students' intellectual development and can never hope to nor should it attempt to address the broader needs of students. At the other extreme there is the view that third level education must recognise the broader developmental needs of students and must adopt a more 'whole person' approach to its curriculum. The balance perhaps is somewhere in between, reflected in the Student Learning Imperative (1995) as laid down by U.S. Student Affairs Personnel. Within this approach, the primary goal of the college is recognised as being that of learning. However, it is also recognised that specific learning will be optimal in an environment where the balance is right and all aspects of the individual are valued.

2.4 Chapter 2 - KEY POINTS

A number of important factors have been identified in the review of student stress research.

- Students present with severe enough levels of stress to warrant our attention.
- Students experience stress across a range of areas including academic, family, social and personal, with academic stress figuring most prominently.
- Attempts by researchers to identify any underlying patterns in the stressful life events of students have been lacking.
- Student stress is experienced in the context of the difficulties they have in completing the key developmental tasks such as establishing autonomy, intimacy, identity and competence.
- The interaction model of student stress suggests a very definite link between stressful events and student development. In particular, interaction models of student stress have focused primarily on the role of the environment in facilitating student development.
- An alternative would be to focus on the students themselves. This would provide an understanding of student stress based on threats to self-adequacy experienced by students as they encounter developmental tasks.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PRESENT STUDY:

A QUALITATIVE APPROACH TO

STUDENT STRESS

3. THE PRESENT STUDY: A QUALITATIVE APPROACH TO STUDENT STRESS

3.1 INTRODUCTION - RATIONALE

> *Qualitative methods of scientific inquiry can help us raise questions and devise strategies to answer questions we have about college students. Their advantage is that they preserve the significance of the context of the situations in which persons behave and accomplish their purposes. This important aspect helps us, as researchers, understand how students and other persons we study use and count on a background of meanings for their own interpretation and action. (Patton, 1991).*

The present study is a qualitative investigation of student stress, based on detailed interviews with a sample of 27 students attending the University of Limerick. The aims of the study are to examine the relevance of a developmental approach to understanding the nature of student stress. The self-adequacy framework of development and stress underpins this exploration (see sections 1.3.4 and 2.4.2.8). The transcripts of student interviews are analysed in order to extrapolate those aspects of the interviews relevant to a student development perspective on student stress. Further analyses of the data aim to extend my knowledge and understanding of student stress using this developmental approach.

In the present study, my examination of student stress is complicated by the overlap between my research topic and my research method. This overlapping is highlighted when dealing with the issue of meaning. I have referred to meaning in the context of the sense making/interpretive research method and analysis (see Introduction). I have also

referred to the importance of the personal meaning of stressful events for students (see Chapter 2). In this way, sense-making applies to both my method and topic of research. In the present study students, in their interviews, share with me a sense of what it feels like for them to be experiencing stress. Following the interviews, as researcher, I apply my own sense-making to the material collected. My aim, then, is to interpret students' reported experiences within an appropriate theoretical framework. My interpretation does not make the students experiences of stress any less personal, less subjective or less qualitative in nature.

Through my interviewing, I encounter students as close as possible to their actual felt experience. I accomplish this closeness by engaging with the students at the level of their reported experience, using whatever language they consider appropriate. I do not impose any theoretical framework at this stage of data collection. When I move to analysis of the data my task is to make whatever sense I can of the material, as presented by the participants. I have chosen a developmental framework of student stress as the means by which I can interpret and make sense of what they share with me regarding their experience of stress. I recognise that it is the personal meaning of events that makes the events stressful for students. I propose a framework to give theoretical grounding to these personal meanings in the context of the developmental issues facing students. This proposal is part of my sense making-process as a researcher (see Kegan, 1982).

I carried out the present study in order to further my work with students. As student counsellor, I am a stakeholder (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) in the project, having a vested interest in seeing it through. This approach to research differs from traditional research

with students where they have often been used by professional researchers simply as a convenient and captive research sample.

3.2 METHOD

3.2.1 The Setting

Limerick is Ireland's third largest city, with a population of 77,000 people. The University of Limerick is a single campus college based on the outskirts of the city. The campus consists of new buildings set on a 300 acre site on the shores of the river Shannon. The University of Limerick or U.L. (previously known as the National Institute of Higher Education or N.I.H.E.), was established in Limerick in 1972 and at the time of the study consisted of three colleges, namely the College of Engineering and Science, the College of Business and the College of Humanities. The total student population at the time was approximately 4,200 students.

U.L. was developed on the basis of the U.S. modular credit, trimester system. Examinations are held every term, with each examination result from every term having a cumulative effect on the overall degree awarded. The mission statement of the University centres on the principles of 'Excellence and Relevance'. When applied to a modern competitive society, this statement creates an atmosphere at U.L. that is considered deliberately stressful, with high standards expected of students. There are no data to support the notion that U.L. is any more stressful than other colleges. The present study does not attempt to address such a contentious and complex issue. (note: since the completion of this study U.L. has changed to a semester system).

3.2.2 Participants

The sample of students was selected purposefully rather than randomly (Patton, 1990) and therefore is not statistically representative of the U.L. student population. Instead, the participants consist of a small group of what were considered to be information-rich cases (Patton, 1990). Students attending the counselling service were chosen because they are likely to be under stress. However, students who attend for counselling are not the only stressed students on campus (Ryle, 1969, Grayson, 1989). Furthermore, I did not wish to include only those who might be severely stressed. I felt that less stressed students would also provide useful information. A selection of students from the general University population was included for this reason. Participants were selected from two different sources, therefore, to ensure that a broad database of student stress experiences was obtained.

First, 40 students (28 male, 12 female) from the three constituent colleges were selected randomly by I.D. number from the college database. These students were invited to attend a meeting to be briefed on the proposed research and asked if they were willing to participate (see letter to participants, Appendix 3). Twelve students attended for briefing. All twelve agreed to participate. The 28 students who did not attend did not give reasons for their non-attendance. No further information was obtained on these students.

Students who were in contact with the counselling service at the time were also invited to participate. A total of 15 students were invited and indicated a

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willingness to participate. Summary details of the total sample are presented in Table 3.1. A more detailed description of each of the 27 students is provided in Table C, Appendix 5.

TABLE 3.1 Summary Description of Participants

N = 27	
Year:	
1st	6
2nd	6
3rd	9
4th	6
College:	
Engineering	16
Business	6
Humanities	5
Sex:	
Male	18
Female	9
Age:	
Mean	20 yrs
Range	17-22 yrs

It is likely that clients of the counselling service were willing to participate in the study because they were familiar with the service and would have previously

discussed their stress with one of the counsellors. Non-clients had no prior contact with the service and, therefore, may have been somewhat more inhibited. This inhibition might explain the relatively poor response rate from non-clients. It is possible that those non-clients who chose to participate did so because they wished to avail of the opportunity to discuss their stress.

Students from the various colleges and course years, both male and female, are included in the sample. Minority students such as overseas, mature and disabled students are not represented.

3.2.3 Interviewing: Introduction

Interviewing presents certain methodological problems. A most appropriate means of overcoming these difficulties was through the use of student counsellors as interviewers. Typical issues needing to be dealt with when interviewing students include: gaining access to the campus, understanding the language and culture of students, deciding on how to present as interviewers, locating informants, gaining their trust and establishing rapport (see Fontana and Frey, 1994).

Counsellors are trained to explore the meaning of clients' experiences in a variety of ways. They are experts in establishing rapport. Counsellors know how to ask questions which enable clients to express their feelings, making counsellors the ideal people to carry out interviews of this nature. The student counsellor interviewing students has the added advantage of having a very good

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understanding of students. As the resident student counsellors, we also understood the workings of the college system. Furthermore, any concerns as to why we might be doing the research were easily explained and understood.

As student counsellors, one danger was that we would be seen to be part of the authorities at the college - a factor which may have inhibited some students from participating in the study.

Two major assumptions were made in carrying out the interviews. First, we interviewed on the assumption that students would be aware of their stresses and that they would be willing and able to communicate these accurately. Barrell et al (1985) suggest that the accuracy of participants' reports will be dependent upon the success of the interviewer in allowing for the limits of the subjects' awareness, their capacity for self-expression and their unwillingness to disclose particular aspects of self. Interviewing under these conditions places a great deal of responsibility on the researcher. My second assumption was that we would be able to detect what were significant issues for students, which could then be explored in some detail. Both assumptions arise out of the counselling context in which I am used to working.

The data collected in these interviews would be limited in so far as the information gathered in any counselling situation is limited. In the normal counselling situation clients are prone to both conscious and unconscious (i.e. out of awareness) resistances to self-disclosure. It takes all the skill and

expertise of the counsellor to identify such resistances and to work with them towards attaining greater awareness by the client. A high degree of accuracy can be obtained when both parties in the interview are committed to an honest sharing and disclosure.

Students will experience different stressors at different times of the year. All interviews were carried out during the second term of a three term academic cycle. By collecting information about the students' stressful experiences at three different times during the term I was more likely to get a broader range of stresses than if I just collected it at a single point in time. This schedule incorporates the academic cycle from the beginning to the end of term, incorporating the more and less stressed times. The term selected was the second term in the year and so the data do not refer to the initial college adjustment - a time considered to be most stressful for first year students in particular (Fisher, 1988).

3.2.4 Interviewing: Materials

- A tape recorder was used to record the series of interviews.
- The College Adjustment Rating Scale (C.A.R.S.) was used as a prompt by the interviewers (see section 2.3.1 for details).

3.2.5 Interviewing: Procedure

Each student was invited to attend for interview on three separate occasions during the Hilary term of the 1990 academic year. This method of gathering

data provided a more comprehensive account of students' experiences of stress than a once-off interview. Interview data across the term were used in a cumulative fashion. Interviews were held at the beginning, middle and end of a ten week term. There were approximately four weeks between each set of interviews although not all students were available for the follow-up interviews (the complete schedule of interviews is provided in Appendix 4).

All students were asked to complete the College Adjustment Rating Scale (C.A.R.S., Zitzow, 1984) prior to interview. This could be used by the interviewer to facilitate discussion.

It was not necessary that all interviews be carried out by the same person. In order to assist with the workload, therefore, a second interviewer, namely my fellow student counsellor, was invited to assist. This collaboration proved a useful support in discussing the interviewing process. We agreed a set of guidelines for interviewing and the overall aims and objectives of the interviews were established prior to commencing the interviews. I explained the rationale of the study to my co-interviewer, outlining the type of information required as well as the appropriate questions to be asked. A pilot interview was set up, to begin with, whereby both of us carried out one interview together. Following some discussion and clarification we then carried out the remaining interviews separately. No comparison was made between the interviews carried out by the different interviewers.

The second interviewer was the sole interviewer for 3 students. He carried out only some of the interviews for 11 other students. This means that where the second interviewer was used this was primarily in conjunction with the first interviewer, eliciting useful additional information from some of the students. Using a second interviewer meant that perhaps more varied data could be collected to include in the overall database. The second interviewer might be able to explore additional aspects of the students experiences not identified by myself.

Participants were given an appointment to attend at the Student Counsellor's office. At the office the students were briefed once more on the nature and purpose of the interview. Permission was obtained to record the interview for research purposes (see Appendix 3).

The students were informed that the interview would consist of a conversation with the interviewer in order to gain a better understanding of their current experience of stress. The interviewer began by asking the students how they were feeling and what they were finding stressful or demanding at that time. As the interview proceeded the interviewer stated his understanding of what the student had said and checked with the student as to whether this was correct or not.

Further details were elicited from the student by probing. Students were asked to be as specific as possible about the nature of particular stresses. This probing

technique consisted of a lot of repetitious questioning until a particular issue was exhausted. Students were repeatedly asked how they felt in relation to the issue under discussion. The aim of this interviewing style was to allow students to express their sense of what it meant to be stressed.

Basic to the interview, as in regular counselling sessions, was active listening by the interviewer and the establishment of rapport. The students reported on their present experiences, but in general the interview was not used to explore these experiences therapeutically. In some situations therapeutic interventions did become necessary due to the personal nature of the material being explored. Students were free to commence talking about whatever they wished.

The informal conversational interview approach was used, whereby questions emerged from the immediate context of the interview. There was no predetermination of question topic or wording. Interviewing in this manner ensured that questions were relevant to the experience of each individual student, leading to the collection of different information from different students. This is a less systematic approach than with structured interviewing, and ran the risk of being less comprehensive. Students were asked to complete the C.A.R.S. (Zitzow, 1984) before their interview and this data could be used as a prompt by the interviewer to ensure that all issues were covered adequately.

Questions were mainly aimed at eliciting how students felt. Further questions regarding opinions, attitudes and background information were asked for

clarification. Questions were open ended in as much as was possible and appropriate.

3.3 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS

3.3.1 Introduction

I had set out in this study to hear from students about their experiences of stress, as a genuine and authentic attempt to understand what was happening for them. However, I was not sure beforehand how I would handle this information once it had been gathered.

A total of approximately 24 hours of interviews were recorded. The transcripts of interviews with the 27 students provided the raw data for qualitative analysis. Each transcript contains up to three interviews with the respective student.

I experimented unsuccessfully with a number of means of analysing the data before eventually settling on an approach which proved satisfactory. Lacking a definite a priori plan of analysis has both its strengths and weaknesses. Its strength lies in the fact that the analysis is grounded in the unique substance of the research material. In other words, I allowed the material itself dictate how best to analyse. While I did have some general idea of what needed to be done, it was not until different aspects of the study were revealed that I could say with any degree of certainty what would and must come next. The lack of an a priori

plan of analysis, means less certainty and control of the direction of the study and requires more creativity by the researcher at the analysis stage. In hindsight I am left with the "if only I knew then what I know now" syndrome - which is a frustration inherent in most forms of research.

The analysis consisted of reducing the vast amount of data into meaningful units for further interpretation. The aim of the analysis was to put order and sense on the raw data collected, using the developmental/ self-adequacy account of student stress (see Section 2.4.2.8) as a framework.

3.3.2 Stages in analysis of data:

The stages of analysis were:

Stage 1 - Transcribing interview tapes.

Stage 2 - Editing transcripts.

Stage 3 - Categorising key statements

Each of these stages is described in detail below.

3.3.2.1 Stage 1: Transcribing Interview Tapes - Procedure and Results

The first stage of analysis consisted of transcribing verbatim all material recorded during each interview. This activity proved to be a very time consuming exercise (not carried out by the author). Verbatim transcription was hampered in places by the low quality of sound in the recordings, particularly when students spoke softly. Recordings had to be played and replayed in order to distinguish what was being said at times. The transcripts of interviews (and

thus the interviews themselves) varied in length from a minimum of 1,633 words to a maximum of 11,799 words. This variation was due to differences in the nature of the material shared by the student. Some students simply did not have a lot to say, even when encouraged to do so. Students who reported little stress did not have much to say either. Other students were quite uninhibited and went to great lengths to explain themselves. The interview transcripts are provided in full in Appendix 13.

3.3.2.2 Stage 2: Editing Transcripts

Introduction

The next stage in the analysis of data was to reduce the data to a more manageable size for later categorisation. The aim here was to identify what were considered to be the most important aspects of the interview. Marshall (1981) points out that chunks of meaning are fairly obvious and will stand out clearly from their context. The method of reduction chosen was to identify those key words which were considered most loaded with meaning and which summed up what was being said by the student.

My initial feeling following the interviews was that a lot of rich material had been collected. What students had been sharing with us seemed typical of the material I had been listening to over many years as student counsellor. The problem, of course, was what to do with this information. How could I make sense of all the data, and then communicate it in a structured and meaningful way? Once the interviews were transcribed, I began to read the transcripts over

and over to get a feel for what they contained and how they might best be analysed. During the reading I found myself underlining different statements which, for me, summarised what was being said or contained what I considered to be important information in the context of the study. I recognised that this was how I normally study any piece of text in order to understand it. Basically, some statements were considered more important than others and highlighting these statements would be one way of reducing the data to a more manageable size for categorisation. None of the original data were being lost, since the statements underlined still remained in the context within which they were spoken. Certain statements were simply being prioritised. Data not underlined could be referred to at any time and indeed would form the context within which key statements would later be categorised.

One risk in editing in this manner, was that I might be biased in the information I was selecting. Therefore, with each transcript, I adopted the strategy of asking two other raters to also underline what they considered important. In this way as broad a range of key statements as possible was included. At the same time I was ensuring that at least those statements I considered important would be included in further analysis. As primary researcher I felt that I was in a most appropriate position to select what was useful and relevant to the aims of the study. Not only did I want to categorise what I considered important, but also I wished to be able to do likewise with what other raters considered meaningful and important. At its extreme this could have meant inclusion of all statements. However, only a limited number of statements were considered relevant by each

group of three raters i.e. in many instances different raters selected the same key statements.

Editing transcripts in the above fashion is not only a novel means of reducing data, but it also allows the focus of the analysis to be on the inferred meaning of what is being said. This editing process is limited by the ability of the editors to select appropriate data with the resultant risk of the loss of key data.

METHOD OF EDITING:

Raters

There were 13 raters altogether, including graduates and students (see Appendix 6 for details). All raters would therefore have had the experience, at some stage, of being a student in third level education. This experience would have assisted them in understanding the students' reported experiences in the transcripts.

Materials

(1) Transcripts of recorded interviews with 27 students.

(2) A set of instructions for raters including a sample page from a transcript (see Appendix 7).

Procedure

Three raters rated each transcript. Each of the 13 raters received four transcripts selected at random (see Appendix 8 for details of allocation). Each rater was provided with a set of instructions and a sample page for demonstration

purposes. Any clarification which they required was provided. Raters assessed their transcripts independently and underlined those statements which for them, best reflected the meaning of what the student was saying. No single unit of analysis was prescribed (see Marshall, 1981; Jones, 1985; Patton, 1990) i.e. the key statements to be chosen by raters could vary from being words to phrases to sentences.

Results

The statements selected by both raters are those in bold print in the full transcripts (see Appendix 13). Statements selected by one rater only are underlined in the text.

3.3.2.3 Stage 3: Categorising of Data

Introduction

Categorisation was needed to order the data which emerged from the editing process, since without categories there is chaos (Jones, 1985). The type of order put on data is determined by the aims of the study, with the focus being on the demands perceived by the students.

Demands can be made explicit or they can be inferred from concerns and worries expressed by an individual. In order to generate stress categories, therefore, demands (either implicit or explicit) must be inferred from the key statements already identified in the editing process. Combs, Richards and Richards (1976) refer to this type of inference as 'reading behaviour backwards'.

This is a process used by most people in daily living, according to Barrell et al. (1985), but perhaps not with the same care and precision as is necessary for the researcher.

The aim of the present study was to examine the stress experienced by students, rather than the extent to which students cope with this stress. Category headings were, therefore, generated on the basis of demands inferred from the data regardless of how well or badly the student seemed to be coping with those demands.

The categorisation provides a detailed means of sifting through the transcripts and summarising what is in them. Some of the selected key statements did not indicate any perceived demand but were purely descriptive statements while others related to third parties. In addition, some statements were about past, rather than present demands. Such information was not considered irrelevant, since in many cases it would have contributed to the overall context within which the identified key statements were categorised.

To summarise, the first task in the categorisation process was to decide on what type of category system to adopt. This would be influenced largely by the theoretical framework from which I was working. I wanted the categories to represent the range of demands experienced by the students. These demands could be of any type and of differing degrees. For each statement, therefore, the

objective was to identify what underlying demand could be inferred from or was made explicit in what the person was saying.

METHOD OF CATEGORISATION

Materials

27 transcripts containing key statements (See Appendix 13).

Procedure

The approach to categorisation was based on the constant comparative method of analysis developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). The categorisation procedure was carried out as follows: A topic was assigned to the first key statement. Each new statement was compared to the previous one. Where the new statement indicated the same topic as the previous statement, no new category heading emerged. Where the new statement did not indicate the same topic as the previous statement, a new category title was introduced.

Beginning with the key statements on transcript 1 and continuing through all 27 transcripts, an extensive list of 360 potential categories was generated (see Appendix 9). The 360 topics were grouped according to similarity of demands as considered appropriate. Some of these topics were immediately identified as being unique and unrelated to one another. Many other topics referred to common issues. Some topics were purely descriptive, not referring to any demand in themselves. Such descriptions were often contributing to the clarification or understanding of an issue later to be incorporated within a demand category heading. It was not necessary to include these descriptions as

categories in their own right. A number of topics were based on descriptions by the student of him/herself. These descriptions were concerned with how the student felt about themselves and were considered more symptomatic of their stress than stress issues in their own right.

During this stage of the analysis, I conferred with a collaborator regarding the appropriateness or otherwise of category headings. I chose a final year social research student at the University to collaborate with me on the task of categorisation. I felt that this student would be in a position to understand the language and culture of her fellow students and as such would be a useful co-researcher in enriching my understanding of the material gathered. We spent many hours going over the transcripts and discussing possible category headings. During these discussions, I was aware of the unavoidable and dominant influence that I was bringing to bear on the eventual outcome of our deliberations. This influence was due to my position of power as a staff member in relation to the student, as well as my knowledge of and vested interest in the research project. Further validation was required because of this imbalance. Once this collaborative process was completed, therefore, I checked the validity of our categorisation by asking another judge to independently rate the same statements using the categories that had been generated. Where disagreements occurred in choice of category, both options were included (for details see coded transcripts, Appendix 13). It was possible that more than one category could be allocated to any given statement.

The validation procedure used in the present study was different to the more traditional approaches to validation in that it resulted in a greater inclusion, rather than exclusion, of category headings. Eventually, a limited number of categories were agreed upon which we felt best represented the data.

Results

The key statements were coded into a total of 49 categories of demands generated from the categorisation procedure outlined. Table 3.2 provides a list of these category titles (a more detailed outline of each of the categories is presented in Appendix 10).

TABLE 3.2

Categories of Demand Generated from Key Statements

1.	To achieve academic standards.
2.	To get academic work done (time and workload constraints).
3.	To get academic work done (difficult work constraints).
4.	To be satisfied with being at the College.
5.	To be able to pursue a chosen career.
6.	To get a job.
7.	To be able to study (study skills constraints).
8.	To be accepted by/fit in with others.
9.	To be as good as others.
10.	To be with others, not to be alone.
11.	To have friends/someone to turn to.
12.	To get on with housemates.
13.	To get on with others (incl. girlfriend, boyfriend, friend)
14.	To be able to relate to the opposite sex (incl. being able to ask out).
15.	To be able to get to know and relate to others.
16.	To be thought well of by others.
17.	To be supported by/relate to lecturer.
18.	To have time to socialise.

19.	To be close to someone.	(Cont'd)
20.	To be sexually active.	
21.	To have a relationship (i.e. boyfriend, girlfriend).	
22.	To maintain friendships.	
23.	To look well (appearances).	
24.	To have enough money.	
25.	To cope with the death of a family member.	
26.	To cope with the threat of physical violence.	
27.	To cope with peer pressure to drink.	
28.	To get adequate sleep.	
29.	To have something to do (being bored).	
30.	To cope with doing the interview.	
31.	To be moral/right.	
32.	To have meaning in life.	
33.	To be healthy and fit.	
34.	To cope with being caught cheating in an exam.	
35.	To express emotion.	
36.	To play sports.	
37.	To be assertive.	
38.	To be in control.	
39.	To be able to make decisions.	
40.	To cope with having something stolen.	
41.	To please parents/be approved of by parents.	
42.	Parents to be well.	
43.	To get on well with parents.	
44.	To be supported by parents.	
45.	To get on with siblings.	
46.	Siblings to be well.	
47.	To be as good as siblings.	
48.	To fulfil a role at home.	
49.	To be independent.	

3.4 INTERPRETATION OF DATA :

ACROSS- SUBJECTS ANALYSIS OF PATTERNS AND LINKAGES AMONGST CATEGORIES.

3.4.1 Introduction

A group of 49 categories of demands experieced by students has been outlined above. Simply generating a list of student stresses or demands is no different from what was done in a lot of the life events studies of which I have been critical. It seems to me to be important to go a stage further in the analysis to generate some deeper understanding of the stress as it is experienced by students. The aim of this section is to examine the qualitative relationships between the categories listed in Table 3.2. Establishing interconnections among categories provides a more complete understanding of the students' experience than the discussion of individual category headings on their own. The interview data has, so far, been reduced into meaningful units i.e. categorisation. Following categorisation these units can now be reintegrated, but in a more meaningful and structured format than in the original, raw data form. Relationships have not previously been sought in this manner between student stressors. These linkages can be achieved through the use of individual case reports i.e. relationships can be established in the context of individual's overall experiences. The categories of demands are therefore used as 'building blocks' towards overall individual profiles rather than being treated as isolated events, as in the reductionist tradition of life events studies e.g. Holmes and Rahe (1967).

To begin with, categories ca be conveniently grouped under one of the three headings already identified as representative of the main areas of student stress, namely academic, family and social (see Fig 2.1). All categories referring specifically to academic matters were included in the academic grouping. All categories referring specifically to family matters were included in the family groupings. All categories referring to relationships other than family were included in the social grouping. All remaining categories, not allocated within these three main headings, were grouped separately. Category allocation, along with the numbers of students referring to each category, appears in Table 3.3.

TABLE 3.3 SUB-GROUPS OF CATEGORIES

Grouped into four areas: **(a) Academic, (b) Family, (c) Social and**

(d) Personal.

(n = number of students contributing statements to each category)

Table 3.3 (a) ACADEMIC:

		n
(1)	To achieve standards	23
(2)	To get work done (workload/deadlines)	23
(3)	To get work done (difficulty)	3
(4)	To fit in at college	19
(5)	To pursue a chosen career	7
(7)	To be able to study	24

Table 3.3 (b) FAMILY:

		n
(41)	To please parents	12
(42)	Parents to be well	9
(43)	To get on well with parents	18
(44)	To be supported by parents	12
(45)	To get on with siblings	4
(46)	Siblings to be well	6
(47)	To be as good as siblings	3
(48)	To fill a role at home	5
(49)	To be independent	9

Table 3.3 (c) SOCIAL

		n
(8)	To be accepted / to fit in	9
(9)	To be as good as others	12
(10)	To be with others	12
(11)	To have friends / someone to turn to	19
(12)	To get on with housemates	1
(13)	To get on with friends	11
(14)	To be able to relate to the opposite sex	10
(15)	To be able to get to know others	6
(16)	To be thought well of by others	12
(17)	To relate to lecturer	7
(18)	To have time to socialise	12
(22)	To maintain friendships	9
(27)	to cope with peer pressure to drink	5

Table 3.3 (d) PERSONAL:

		n
(6)	To get a job	11
(20)	To be sexually active	5
(24)	To have money	4
(23)	To look well	4
(25)	To cope with the death of a family member	2
(26)	Fear of being attacked	2
(28)	To sleep adequately	9
(29)	To be occupied	4
(30)	To cope with doing the interview	3
(31)	To be moral and right	5
(32)	To have some meaning in life	3
(33)	To be healthy	7
(34)	To cope with being caught cheating	1
(35)	To express emotion	3
(36)	To play sports	4
(38)	To be in control	10
(39)	To be able to make decisions	9
(40)	To cope with having something stolen	2

In discussing these category groupings, reference is made to what is considered to be at stake for students under stress. This approach is based on the developmental model of student stress as presented in section 2.4.2. Academic, family and social groupings in particular can be associated with each of the primary developmental tasks of student identity formation, namely: achievement, separation and intimacy.

While each of the three main category groupings refers to a different aspect of students' lives, there is also a considerable overlap between categories across these groupings. For example, academic concerns are noticeably different from social and family issues but at the same time academic issues can be influenced by or can influence both social and family issues.

Sufficient similarities and overlappings in key areas can be identified across individual cases to suggest a number of general patterns of student stress. It is not my intention to provide a typology of student stress, since there are no clear-cut boundaries between one student profile and another. I have, therefore, grouped students according to the emphasis placed on specific key issues which have previously been highlighted in academic, family, social and other areas of their lives. Each of the patterns is presented under the academic, family or social headings to reflect the dominance of that particular domain. However, all three major domains are referred to within each pattern and are therefore not mutually exclusive of one another. A selection of individual cases is provided to demonstrate each pattern of stress.

Six patterns of student stress have been identified from the present sample of 27 students (see Table 3.4). More comprehensive summaries of all cases are presented in Appendix 11. For comparison, a pattern of low-stressed students has also been included.

Table 3.4 Patterns of Student Stress

Academic Stress:

(1) Over-identification with academic success (e.g. Students S4, S7, S14, S21, S23).

(2) Career dissatisfaction (e.g. S10, S11, S27).

Family Stress:

(3) Conflict with Parents (e.g. S1, S16, S19, S25).

(4) Family role responsibilities (e.g. S18).

Social Stress

(5) Social Inadequacy (e.g. S2, S5, S8, S9, S15, S17).

Personal Stress:

(6) Major life trauma (e.g. S24).

(7) Low Stressed Students: (e.g. S3, S6, S12, S13, S20, S26).

Table 3.4 is not intended to be an exhaustive list and it may be possible to identify further sub-patterns within the present sample. The patterns have emerged from an integration of :

(a) my understanding of the developmental model of self-adequacy and student stress,

(b) my familiarity with the content of each case

(c) my desire to identify patterns of stress based on the overall reported experience of students.

Once again, I went back to reading the individual transcripts and summarised them in terms of their academic, family, social and other issues. I then looked at combinations across these main headings. Details of the different themes are

provided in the context of academic: family, social and personal stresses respectively.

Reference will be made in the following analysis to the frequency of occurrence of particular categories of student demands. These quantitative data highlight the more dominant categories for the present sample. The more a particular category appears in the data, the more confidence there is about its contribution to any emerging patterns. The more frequently a category appears, the better the understanding of it will be, since it will have recurred in various different contexts. Where a category appears only once or twice there is less confidence in proposing its relationship to other categories. Nonetheless, in the search for understanding, it is useful to interpret each category in the context of the student developmental framework, regardless of how often it is referred to. Some of the patterns appear more distinctive than others and contirbute more significantly to the later theoretical discussion.

3.4.2 Academic Stress.

Results from the present study support previous findings (e.g. Tyrell, 1992,a; Archer and Lamnin, 1985; Zitzow, 1984) which report academic-related issues as a common stress for students. All students make some reference to academic demands. The general pervasiveness of academic stress amongst this sample suggests that stress of this nature reflects the very real external demands that all students are likely to encounter.

Academic stress is not a singular phenomenon but rather is multifaceted. Students' appraisal of what is at stake (Lazarus, 1976) when they experience academic stress is determined by the three most dominant academic categories (where **C + No.** denotes category as listed in Table 3.2): **to achieve academic standards (C1), to get academic work done (C2)** and **to be able to study (C7).**

Most students (n=23) in the present study make reference to the pressure to achieve academic standards (C1). The demand **to be able to pursue a chosen career (C5)**, referred to by seven students, is further indication of the need to achieve, in that students must achieve certain academic standards to be able to pursue their career of choice. Twenty-four students report poor study skills, including a lack of motivation to study (C7). Twenty-three students also report finding the academic workload very demanding (C2) . Three of these students report a **difficulty with the work to be done (C3).**

These categories suggest that academic demands can be of three types respectively: the threat inherent in the need to achieve academically, i.e. fear of failure; the external threat posed by an excessive workload; and the difficulty posed by the lack of study skills necessary to accomplish the required workload. Relationships between these three demands will be examined below.

For many students, regardless of gender or year of study, the various academic demands overlap and are therefore likely to be related. For example, some students may be unable to study because they are under so much pressure to achieve. Consequently, these students are unable to cope with the demanding workload (see S4, S5, S7, S14, S15, S16, S25). Alternatively, students may be unable to complete the required study because of the demanding workload, resulting in a heightened fear of failure.

Neither excessive workload nor poor study skills alone adequately account for the stress experienced by this group of students. Twenty-one students report workload and study demands in combination with the pressure to achieve. In every instance of academic stress, it is always the prospect of failure which is at stake and it is this appraisal (Lazarus, 1976) that primarily influences students' coping responses to workload and study. Academic workload needs to be regulated by course leaders and students need to learn appropriate study skills. However, coping with workload and study skills will only be adequately addressed when put in the context of students' need to achieve and their fear of failure.

The academic demand, **to be satisfied with being at college (C4),** is referred to by 19 students, quite a number of whom express extreme dissatisfaction. Each of these students make reference, sometimes briefly, to how they are feeling about the College and their course. Those students who are dissatisfied with the College are less motivated to study and may very well leave their course. Many

third level students are doing courses in which they have little interest, accounting for the high level of attrition at many colleges (Rickinson and Rutherford, 1995).

The above analysis suggests that academic stress can be due to students' fear of failure to achieve academic standards or else their lack of motivation to work due to course dissatisfaction. The students for whom academic stress appears most prominent are presented below. Two patterns can be identified: (1) Students who over-identify with academic success and (2) Students who are dissatisfied with college and experience a lack of motivation for study. In both instances reference is also made to the influence of non-academic matters.

PATTERN No. 1:

OVER-IDENTIFICATION WITH ACADEMIC SUCCESS.

For many students experiencing stress, there would seem to be an over-concentration on one aspect of their identity, which is their academic achievement. The question "Who am I"? (Erikson, 1968) is dealt with solely in terms of academic grades. Over-identification with academic success is a stress particular to students and is what sets student stress apart from the stress of non-students.

Academic achievement can become the sole source of esteem and can be accompanied by a lack of self-confidence in social circumstances (e.g. S4, S7,

S21). This narrow focus of identity becomes stressful whenever academic success is threatened e.g. at examination time.

Examples:

Student No. 4

4th Yr., Male, Business Studies Student (non-client)

This young man is a first class honours student with the ambition to obtain a postgraduate place at Oxford University. Everyone expects that he will do well, he says. Because his study progress doesn't always run smoothly, his high ambitions are sometimes in jeopardy. As a result, he gets depressed at times.

This student seems to have a very unbalanced lifestyle with all of his energies invested in his academic goals. His dependence on academic success for self-confidence doesn't seem to have been effective. However, he shows no eagerness to seek other sources of confidence, such as in friendships. He is shy and does not socialise very much.

Student No. 7

1st Yr., Female, Humanities Student (non-client)

This student does not feel okay about herself. Her poor self image is reflected in her social life, where she seems to lack confidence. She does not feel good about herself in comparison to and in the company of others. Rather than aim to develop her social skills, she seems to be more interested in achieving confidence through competing successfully with others, particularly in her academic work.

(Cont'd)

Here again we see the inter-play between social and academic issues whereby the student attempts to offset deficiencies in social skills through academic success. This situation results in different needs - namely the need to achieve and the need for belongingness - being in competition with each other.

Student No. 14

3rd Yr., Male, Engineering Student (non-client)

This student seems quite unhappy with his over-investment in academic matters but at the same time he seems to have resigned himself to it and doesn't appear to be overly anxious. He wants to prove that he is as intelligent as his sister.

His ambition to succeed seems to be hindered by a college system that doesn't suit him. He is experiencing an identity struggle between what is acceptable to family and others and the way he himself wants to be.

Student No. 21

3rd Yr., Female, Engineering Student (Client)

This girl experienced considerable panic related to intense rivalry with her sister regarding her academic success. The anxiety resulted in her not sitting two examinations. This student does not socialise very much and uses her study as an excuse not to go out. She reports that she gets on well at home and that her family are supportive.

(Cont'd)

This girl attended the counselling service at the end of the term prior to the interview due to acute panic regarding her fear of failure. She has moved from a position of over-identification with academic success to a new and more self-accepting position of feeling okay about herself no matter what the outcome of her academic work.

Student No. 23

1st Yr., Male, Business student (non-client)

This student worries a lot about members of his family. He invests a lot of energy in keeping his family happy by doing well at college. He sets high academic standards for himself but doesn't appear unduly stressed by them, having a fairly positive outlook. He finds it difficult to make new friends. This student's identity struggle seems to be based on establishing an identity that is not solely dependent on family role and/or academic success.

Conclusion

Academic success is highly valued in modern society. Academic qualifications can provide a major boost to self-confidence. However, this kind of worth is conditional and is not based on the inherent worth of a person regardless of their success. Placing too high a value on academic achievement, whilst placing little value on other aspects of development, is one type of imbalance that can lead to

stress amongst students. Tinto (1975) refers to this risk of 'over-integration' into a single aspect of student life, which can lead to many students leaving college.

The tendency to over-identify with academic success might be considered more of a social dilemma than the fault of any one individual or group of people. Student stress is embedded in a social system, due to the fact that academic qualifications have been given a high social significance. Under these circumstances students have perhaps unwittingly become the recipients of peoples' projections of such relevant ideals as 'perfection', 'all-knowing' and 'expert'. Researchers adopting this more systemic approach to stress (e.g. Marshall, 1986), might consider students as 'the carriers' of society's unresolved anxieties surrounding academic qualifications

Students who over-identify with academic success tend to lack social skills and self-confidence. For these students the question "Who am I ?" is typically answered by: "I am my Q.C.A. (*i.e. Grades*)". In other words, here are students for whom their identity struggle is centred on the need to achieve and be competent. Self-adequacy for these students has been sought solely through academic achievement and intellectual competence. Over-identification can also result in either a heightened fear of failure in examinations or a lack of motivation when the student realises that academic success is not sufficient for personal satisfaction and happiness.

"Over-identifiers" do not appear to exercise their need to achieve or to be competent merely for its own sake, but also for extrinsic motivating factors such as the approval of parents and acceptance by others. These students lack adequate social skills and seek compensation for the lack of social connection through academic achievement. At the same time they will use the excuse of overwork for not socialising. This imbalance in lifestyle is not healthy and leads to a psychological state where investment in intellectual advancement is found to be poor compensation for the neglect of emotional and intimacy needs.

PATTERN NO. 2:

CAREER DISATISFACTION with accompanying lack of motivation for study.

These cases involve a fear of taking the risk to pursue a desired career. The fear can be due to a combination of two factors (a) a lack of self-confidence and (b) a difficulty with independent decision making. The influence parents have on the academic progress of students is in evidence here, as was the case with pattern No. 1. A more detailed discussion on the importance of the relationship between parents and students is provided in the next section.

Examples:

Student No. 10

4th Yr., Female, Engineering Student (client)

This student is unhappy with her career choice. She is balancing what she would like to do as a career with what is a safer bet for her, not having the confidence to do what she wishes. In the past such decisions were made for her by her parents.

Her developmental task is to make an independent decision regarding her future career. She has settled, for now, with staying put, which gives the sense that no great development has taken place. Her ambivalence may prove problematic again in the future. She may settle for being in an environment in which she does not have to take responsibility. Meanwhile, she lacks motivation for a course in which she has no interest.

Student No. 11

2nd Yr., Male, Computers Student (non-client)

This student describes his stresses as a number of minor hassles coming together. The major on-going stress for him is not being motivated in his work due to poor career choice. He feels that his parents would not accept him leaving his course to do Art instead. This has resulted in him feeling considerably depressed.

Student No. 27

1st Yr., Male, Accountancy Student (non-client)

This student is not very happy in himself. He is full of self-doubt and uncertainty centring on his career choice. Because he does not like what he is doing, he lacks the motivation to study. His mother, whom he describes as 'pushy', encouraged him to do this course. Upon discussion it transpires that this student does not feel self-confident in general and particularly in the company of others and in situations where he feels he may be judged. He says that he would like to be able to handle people better than he does i.e. be more assertive.

In contrast to the above cases, there are certain students who simply experience considerable difficulty in managing their workload at college. Poor study skills contribute to this problem. These cases consist of academic stress without a dominant fear of failure or loss of motivation (see reports 1, 22) and do not appear to constitute a specific developmental pattern.

Summary

Two separate patterns of academic stress have emerged from the present sample. Common to both patterns is students' lack of confidence in themselves and their lack of internal motivation to learn. Furthermore, for both patterns there is frequent reference to family influences, including sibling rivalry and a desire to please parents. In the first case, this deficit results in an over-reliance on

external motivating factors. In the second case, there is a lack of any motivation to be at college.

In conclusion, the bulk of the academic stress experiences reported by the present sample of students can be accounted for within a developmental model of student stress. Within the developmental model of student stress, the need to achieve can be viewed as a central internal demand on students, which has an important impact on their being able to study as well as being able to be independent. What is at stake (Lazarus, 1976) for students, when fulfilment of the need to achieve and be competent is threatened, is the students' sense of self-worth and self-adequacy. Maslow (1970) includes the need to achieve as an ego or esteem need, that has to do with one's reputation and how one is seen by others. Similarly Chickering (1969) refers to the need for students to develop competence as part of their overall identity formation. Combs, Richards and Richards (1976) argue that the need to achieve, as with all human needs, can be subsumed under the fundamental need for self-adequacy, as the basic driving force of human nature. Threats to self-adequacy come in the form of external demands, such as academic workload, and internal demands including expectations.

3.4.3 Family Stress

The present results highlight the importance of the role of the family in the stress experiences of students. Family matters can either be directly causing student

stress e.g. conflict in the home, or else can be an underlying contributing factor to academic or social stress e.g. failing to meet family expectations.

The predominant theme to emerge in relation to family demands in the present study has to do with students' relationships with their parents. The single largest family category is to **get on well with parents (C43)**, referred to by 19 students. All students make some reference to their relationship with their parents. For many students, there is a poor relationship with one parent. Some students state how they wish things could be better between themselves and their parents. For other students the lack of **parental support (44)** is a stress.

The link between stress and the need for parental approval is highlighted in relation to students' achievement motivation. Parents have a big influence on motivation and academic expectations (Davies, 1986) which is reflected here in students' desire to do well academically, so as to **please parents** (C41). The category **to be as good as siblings** (C47) can also be interpreted as an attempt to gain parental approval.

Difficulties that students have with parents tend to be in relation to one parent in particular either because of conflict with that parent, concern for that **parents' well-being** (C42) or wanting **to please** that **parent** (C41; see S2, S5, S8, S9, S14, S16, S17 ,S18, S19, S25). These difficulties with parents occur for students regardless of gender or year of study.

The demand **to be independent** (C49) is referred to by 9 students. Achieving independence through separation from home and the family is considered to be a primary developmental task of college students (Grayson, 1989). Students' relationships with their parents have been shown to have an important bearing on separating and achieving independence (Armsden and Greenberg, 1987; Ryan and Lynch, 1989). The present results confirm that indeed, students seek to be independent, but that for many, this task is impeded due to an insecure home base caused by conflict, rejection or role commitments (See S5, S8, 10, 11, S16, S17, S18, S25, 27).

In the present study there are reports of students experiencing family demands as well as demands in their academic or social lives (see S9, S16, S17, S19 and S25), from which it may be postulated that the family has not provided the necessary secure base needed in order to function with confidence outside of the home.

The remaining two family categories refer to siblings. **To get on with sibling** (C45), referred to by four students, and **sibling to be well** (C46), referred to by six students, are not directly related to the other family categories. These categories represent the normal hassles and genuine concerns for family members without indicating any particular threat to self-adequacy.

The students for whom family-related stress was most prominent are presented below. Two patterns emerged, (a) students who are involved in a conflict with

their parents and (b) students struggling between family role responsibilities and their need to be independent.

PATTERN NO. 3:

CONFLICT WITH PARENTS.

The student who comes from a family situation which is dysfunctional and where there is low self-worth (Satir, 1972), may be involved in a conflict with parents (Lopez, 1991) e.g. aligned with or overinvolved with one parent to the exclusion of the other parent. Triangulation within the family structure was originally referred to by Minuchin (1974) and Bowen (1976) as one of the possible alignments which govern transactions in a family. Triangulation occurs where parents use a child to fight each other. A further alignment, not totally independent of triangulation, is that of a stable coalition, whereby a parent and child count on each other for support against the other parent.

While for all students a secure home base is a necessary prerequisite for confidence in dealing with life outside of the home, in some cases struggles within the family have become the main focus of concern (e.g. S16, S19, S25). In each of these cases, the student has over-invested in examination success as a means of pleasing a parent. This over-investment has resulted in a heightened fear of failure for the student, confirming Lopez' (1991) predictions(see section 2.3) that triangulation results in greater academic related stress for the student.

The crisis of identity formation for this group of students appears to centre on their separation difficulties due to insecure attachments with their parents. A poor relationship with one or other of their parents is noticeable in each case, with the student aligned with the parent of the opposite sex.

Examples:

Student No. 16

2nd Yr., Female, Engineering student (Client)

This student's home situation is highly stressful for her due to poor role boundaries and parental conflict. Her family circumstances influence the pressure she puts on herself at college, in her attempt to please her father and be approved by him.

This student's task is impossible since she can never do enough to compensate for what is lacking within her family, and in particular, in her parents' relationship. This case demonstrates the very direct link that can often exist between presenting academic stress regarding examinations and the underlying family dynamics.

Student No. 19

2nd Yr., Female, Engineering Student (Client)

This student experiences stress in her life due to difficulties with separation and attachment within her family. Her intense emotional involvement with her father has a direct bearing on her academic need to achieve and results in extreme fear of failure around exam time.

Student No. 25

3rd Yr., Male, Humanities Student (Client)

This student hasn't been living a life of his own, as he has been very much involved in and affected by conflict between his parents. He aligns himself with his mother and seems over involved with her. He experienced 'burnout' last term as a result of his efforts to do well academically. He did not want to add to his mum's concern by doing badly.

In struggling to establish his identity, he has, with the help of counselling, come to see himself as a person outside of and separate to his parental conflict. He has learnt that it is alright to be himself outside of the family dynamic. He is a very outgoing and affable type of person who seems well able to cope socially. This is a tremendous asset to him and he should be well able to cope with getting on with a life of his own. Acceptance of the reality of his situation has been an important step forward for him.

Conclusion

A secure family base is considered fundamental to the development of self-adequacy. Where this base is vulnerable, severe stress can be expected. Each of the cases listed above involve students who have been in counselling due to these extremes. In each case, the parental conflict situation has had a detrimental influence on academic performance with a heightened fear of failure, demonstrating the link between family and academic matters.

PATTERN No. 4:

FAMILY ROLE RESPONSIBILITIES .

The following student profile is characterised by the tension between two competing tasks, namely, separation from home and role responsibilities at home. Students' independence inevitably brings with it upheaval and change for a family. A student's identity may have been established in the context of certain role responsibilities, making separation and independence difficult (e.g. S5, S15, S18)

Example:

Student No. 18

1st Yr., Female, Humanities Student (non-client)

This girl seems to be coping well despite the strain of her home situation. Her coping seems to be based on self-acceptance and a willingness to let go of family obligations enough to enable her to get on with a life of her own. She seems to have the confidence to do this. The family role of being the coper and the one to turn to may prove a hindrance to her in that it doesn't allow her to be vulnerable and to turn to others for help.

There is some similarity and overlap profile no. 25, except that in this case there is no overt family conflict. Instead the emphasis is on the tension between fulfilling role obligations at home and trying to be independent, both of which are relatively normal and healthy tasks. It is only where role boundaries have become unclear that this situation is likely to lead to excessive stress for a student.

Conclusion

Two distinct patterns of family stress have been identified within the present sample of students. These patterns, regarding parental conflict and role responsibilities, highlight the continuing importance of family in the felt experieces of students. Within a developmental model of student stress, family-based stress can be understood as a threat to one's sense of safety and security which underlie the development of the self-esteem necessary for achieving a healthy separation and independence (Maslow, 1970; Bowlby, 1988). In the past

this aspect of student stress has been overlooked by researchers (Openlander and Searight, 1983). Thankfully, there now seems to be a growing acceptance among researchers and practitioners that indeed a central element of student stress is due to experiences within the family. Whereas a strong positive relationship between a student and both parents is likely to lead to the development of self-confidence, a negative relationship with one or other parent is likely to hinder the development of a positive identity.

Family demands highlight the importance of parents in providing a secure base for the healthy development of identity and self-worth in the student (Ainsworth, 1969; Bowlby, 1969; Minuchin, 1974; Satir, 1972). Home is where students first learnt to feel adequate about themselves (Coopersmith, 1967; Satir, 1972). As the students move out and separate from home their need to feel adequate still exists and is heavily influenced by what they have learnt about themselves at home. Lopez et al (1986), Anderson and Fleming (1986), and Bradford and Lyddon (1993) have all highlighted the significance of family difficulties for college students (see section 2.4.2.5). It would seem that for a positive identity to develop, the student must get on well with parents and feel supported, approved and loved by them. This secure family base generates the self-confidence necessary to be independent of home (Humphreys, 1993).

3.4.4 Social Stress

Social categories of demand include all those categories referring to interaction with people other than family members. The categories of social demand

represent three distinct issues, (a) the need for intimacy and the importance of relationships, (b) the lack of social skills and (c) the need for social approval and acceptance.

The need for intimacy and relationships is referred to in some manner by all students. The single largest social category is **to have friends (C11),** which is referred to by 19 students. The demand **to be with others (C10)** is referred to by 12 students. Other categories which refer to the theme of relationships and intimacy are those referring to getting on with others **(C12, C13, C17),** and **maintaining friendships (C22).** These social categories all testify to the importance of relationships in the lives of students.

The demand **to have time to socialise (C18)** is a category linking academic and social issues, and refers to the fact that, due to study, there is not enough time to socialise. This category is mentioned by 12 students.

A second major social issue is that of developing the social skills necessary to pursue relationships. Two categories are specifically related to this demand, namely **to be able to relate to the opposite sex (C14)** referred to by 10 students and **to be able to get to know and relate to others (C15),** referred to by 6 students, 4 of whom also report difficulties relating to opposite sex. Thus, twelve students in all refer to social skills difficulties (e.g. S2, S4, S5, S21).

The final social issue to be discussed is that of social approval. Three categories can be included here and they are **to be thought well of by others (C16),** referred to by 12 students, and **to be accepted and fit in (C8),** referred to by 9 students, 7 of whom also referred to the need to have others think well of them (i.e. 14 students altogether make some reference to social approval). When **C9, to be as good as others,** is included, 19 students refer to the need for social approval. Five students appear in all three categories referring to social approval (S2, S9, S5, S7, S18). A related category concerning social approval is **to cope with peer pressure to drink (C27),** referred to by one student.

One common pattern amongst students who lack the confidence to socialise is that they use study as an excuse not to go out and mix (see S4, S5, S14, S21). Perhaps related to this is the fact that social acceptance and fear of rejection seems much more of a priority for some students than for others.

Students who lack the intimacy of relationships also tend to lack a sense of self-adequacy and the social skills necessary to form relationships (see S2, S4, S5, S7, S8, S9, S14, S21). Other students report no problems in any of the social areas (see S26, S20, S25, S3, S12).

The development of intimacy as a task facing college students has been the subject of much debate, with opinions differing as to whether this task comes at an earlier or later stage of development (Gilligan, 1982). Gender differences in the importance of developing intimacy have also been highlighted by Taub and

McEwan (1991). The present study confirms the need for relationships that is felt by students (see section 2.4.2.6) with male students in particular experiencing great difficulty in meeting this need e.g. S2, S5, S8, S15, S17.

Relationships can be understood as meeting students' needs for intimacy, approval and identity. As has been pointed out, for some students the achievement of academic success is seen as a priority, while for other students social acceptance and fitting in socially is more dominant (e.g. S9). This dichotomy reflects Kegan's (1982) model of an evolving self which moves from the pole of needing to belong to the pole of needing to be separate (see section 2.4.2.6), with both poles eventually needing to be accommodated by the developed self.

In summary, students experiencing social stress often lack the confidence to form friendships and as a result are left feeling lonely and rejected. These results are consistent with a developmental model of student stress, which maintains that social stress consists of threats to the need for intimacy and acceptance by others. Such threats are experienced where social skills are poor and self-worth is low.

The profiles of students for whom social related stress was most prominent are presented below. This pattern of student stress centres on students' inability to fit in socially.

PATTERN No. 5:

SOCIAL INADEQUACY

There are a number of students in the present sample who feel that they do not fit in with their peers. These students very much want to belong and to be close to others. Academic success is not their priority. Typically, these students have poor social skills and report feeling isolated. Self-adequacy is sought through belonging, fitting in and being accepted by others. In each of these cases, identity issues are centred on the student's need for intimacy rather than on the need to achieve academic success.

The socially inadequate students differ from 'the academic over-identifiers', in that they talk about their loneliness and isolation whereas the first group talk more about their fear of academic failure. Both groups, however, lack self-confidence, have poor social skills and lack strong positive relationships with their parents.

All six of the students representing this pattern are male (note: two-thirds of the sample were male), while five of them have been in counselling. Fitting in, appears to be particularly stressful for the male students. This stress may be due to a difficulty for men in acknowledging their need for connection and relationships. Women are considered to develop more naturally in terms of connectedness (Gilligan, 1982).

Examples:

Student No. 2

1st Yr., Male, Engineering Student (Client)

This student seems unable to accept himself and seems deeply afraid of being 'different' and unacceptable to others because he perceives himself as lazy and fat.

A most noticeable pattern is evident in this student's experiences. The stress, as he experiences it, is between some ideal/expectation he has of how he should be and how he sees himself. He appears not to know how to handle this discrepancy, even though he is aware of how unrealistic the idea is. This student feels very inadequate and he has not developed a positive identity.

Student No. 5

4th Yr., Male, Business Student (non-client)

A common theme throughout this student's transcript is that of not fitting in. Related to his not fitting in is his concern over his small stature. He seems to have created an isolation for himself to cope with his feelings of inadequacy. This student lacks self-confidence and social skills and he tends to work instead of mixing with others. He also struggles with his sense of duty at home and yet wants to be independent.

(Cont'd)

This student presents with a strong sense of inadequacy, particularly with regard to his social life. His self-adequacy seems to be very much linked to the need for approval and acceptance by others.

Student No. 8

3rd Yr., Male, Engineering Student (Client)

This student has an ongoing issue with not being good enough and feeling left out of things and not fitting in either in his family, socially or academically. His insecurity seems centred on his social life. He compares himself a lot with others and feels he doesn't match up.

This case is a good example of how stress interacts across different experiences. Self-acceptance is lacking, as is the feeling of acceptance by others both at home and socially. He has not invested a lot of energy in academic achievement however, although he does use study as an escape. This student describes how his lack of self-confidence originated for him in his family. In his relationship with his parents, and with his father in particular, he felt unloved.

Student No. 9

4th Yr., Male Engineering Student (Client)

This student is afraid to express any emotions. He lacks confidence and self-esteem and considers himself inferior to others. His lack of self-confidence is

reflected mainly in social situations. Establishing social relationships is more important for this student than achieving academically. In his life, he does not appear to have developed any close/healthy attachments. His family and parents in particular have not provided the foundation he would need to feel confident and accepting of himself. As a result this student does not feel OK about who he is.

Student No. 15

3rd Yr., Male, Engineering Student (Client)

This student is struggling with trying to gain independence from home without upsetting his parents. He has been identified solely with his academic success in the past and as a result has not felt valued by others for just being himself. He lacks confidence socially and does not mix well with others. His main concern is that of forming relationships and fitting in with others.

He also feels a mixture of a lack of motivation - he is disillusioned with a purely academic identity - and fear of failure - since academic success is the only thing for which he has gained recognition in the past.

Student No. 17

1st Yr., Male, Engineering Student (Client)

This student presents as quite an anxious young man who has been attending for counselling throughout the year. This student is very much affected by his poor relationship with his father. Because of this, home has not provided the secure base from which he can move confidently into adult life, in particular with regard to developing intimate relations. He has low self esteem which influences his social life, dating women in particular. The stress for him would seem to be that his dad is not the way he would like him to be. Furthermore, he would like to have a girlfriend.

Conclusion

Maslow (1954) has identified the need to belong as one of the core growth needs. The feelings of not belonging and not fitting in will result in a threat to self-adequacy due to unmet needs for intimacy and relationships. Fitting in may be a particular difficulty for males for whom separation is more natural than belonging. The feeling of not being accepted is likely to have originated in the family context, and it leads to difficulties for the students in forming relationships because they fear rejection. The feeling of not being accepted by others is eventually internalised as a lack of self-acceptance

3.4.5 Personal

The remaining categories consist of all those categories not included in the academic, family or social groupings. Apart from highlighting the significance of a major life trauma as a particular stress, these categories do not indicate patterns of stress as previously outlined. The categories consist of a range of

demands including the demands of (a) specific life events, (b) basic survival demands, (c) security and independence, (d) moral development and integrity, and finally more general demands concerning (e) personal development. Some of these categories can be related to the major themes already discussed, whilst others occur in isolation. A developmetal component can be identified for each category.

(a) Specific life events:

Four categories refer to specific life events experienced by students. Events vary from the major life trauma of **coping with the death of a family member (C25,** see S24) to the daily hassles of **having something stolen (C40), being caught cheating at an exam (C34)** and **doing the** research **interview (C30).** While there is no denying that such events are stressful, the categories are unique to individual interviewees. Based on the present data, one might conclude that severely traumatic events, for example, are relatively rare and thus not central to a developmental model of student stress. Within a developmental context, specific life events, where they do occur, may be considered stressful only in so far as they threaten the self-adequacy of the student.

PATTERN NO. 6:

A MAJOR LIFE TRAUMA

Major traumas, such as a family bereavement, are events that occur in the life of a student outside of the normal developmental experiences. These events are stressful in themselves due to demands placed on coping resources. Furthermore,

they may unearth underlying threats which may need to be addressed by the student.

Example:

Student No. 24

3rd Yr., Male, Engineering Student (non-client)

This student presents as a friendly and genuine person who seems to enjoy sharing. He is presently going through a grief reaction to his brother's death, which has been traumatic for him. He is not overly anxious about his academic progress. However, he appears to lack confidence in himself and may be prone to depression when under stress.

This profile is indicative of the traditional life events stressors, except that in this case only an extra-ordinary event is involved. Such events put unexpected demands on the student over and above the normal developmental challenges.

(b) Survival Demands:

Five of the categories refer to basic survival demands. These categories are: **to get adequate sleep (C28), to be healthy (C33), to get a job (C6), to cope with the threat of physical violence (C26)** and **to have money (C24).** Within the

context of student development, survival needs such as these need to be satisfied before any higher order esteem needs can be addressed (see Maslow, 1954).

(c) Security and Independence:

The demand **to be in control (C38)** is referred to by 10 students, and **to be able to make decisions (C39)** is referred to by 9 students. Within a developmental framework, these issues reflect the basic need for security and the need to be independent, both of which contribute to the overall development of students' sense of identity and self-adequacy (see section 2.4.2). These two categories however, are more general than previous categories and refer to issues across academic, social and family areas.

(d) Moral development and Integrity:

Two further categories relate to moral development and the development of integrity respectively, namely **to be moral/right (C31)** and **to have meaning in life (C32)**. Seven students refer briefly to these categories.

(e) Personal development:

The remaining categories refer to a disparate range of items which contribute to the formation of a confident identity. These include **to look well (C23), to play sport (C36), to express emotions (C35), to have something to do (C29)**, and **to be sexually active (C27)** each of which occurs for only a small number of students. These categories can be accounted for within the general

developmental model of student stress, but do not relate directly to the more dominant categories.

3.4.6. Low Stressed Students

Not all students in the present sample reported experiencing stress. The pattern of those students for whom stress is low present some interesting characteristics in contrast to the patterns of stressed students.

PATTERN No. 7:

LOW- STRESSED STUDENTS

These profiles consist of students who come from a relatively secure home base, have adequate social skills and see academic success as something of a challenge rather than something to be feared.

The low stress students are characterised by the absence of the stressful factors noted in earlier patterns, namely (a) parental conflict, (b) tension between role obligations at home and independence from home, (c) concern about fitting in socially, (d) over-identification with academic success, (e) poor motivation to study and (f) a major life trauma. The inclusion of data from low stressed students is useful confirmation that these stressful factors are unique to stressed students.

The main difference between low stressed students and stressed students is in their levels of self-acceptance. The low stressed students have been able to

develop tolerance through self-acceptance and use this acceptance to successfully deal with their ongoing developmental needs. A detailed analysis of the experiences of these students is omitted from the present study since the interview method focussed more on students' stressful experiences than on the coping techniques of non-stressed students. As a result, the interviews with the low stressed students tended to be brief.

Examples:

Student No. 3

4th Yr., Male, Engineering Student (non-client)

The main stress experienced by this student throughout the term is in relation to his pursuit of an honours degree. He wants to do well but a number of factors make this unlikely e.g. having to do repeat examinations. He does not find family and social experiences over-demanding.

This student shows tremendous ability to negotiate the tension of the demand to do well, through realism, acceptance and self-confidence. This case provides an interesting example of a number of the key academic stress factors including workload, standards, motivation, study skills, college system, career plans and family expectations. He does not present with distress and he has attained a satisfactory level of self-adequacy.

Student No. 6.

4th Yr., Male, Engineering Student (non-client)

This student describes himself as quite content and he seems to be coping well with the academic pressures despite the fact that he is not all that keen on the college. His self-acceptance is a strength in this regard. He does not feel inadequate nor does he report any family, social or academic dysfunction.

Student No. 12

3rd Yr., Female, Humanities Student (Client)

This girl seems to be coping quite well this term following her panic last term. She seems more accepting of herself and is getting down to her work. Other aspects of her life do not seem to be a major concern right now. She presents as a most friendly and outgoing person. Difficulties experienced with her father do not have a major impact on her any longer.

This student feels adequate. She seems to have reached a balance between her three major developmental tasks, namely; her need to achieve, her need for relationships and her need to separate from her parents.

Student No. 13

2nd Yr., Male, Engineering Student (non-client)

This student seems to have a positive attitude to college life yet still feels the pressure at exam time. Seeing beyond college life has helped him cope. He

presents as feeling self-adequate. This is not to say that the necessary developmental tasks have been completed. He is currently seeking to clarify his career choice. However, he approaches this task with a level of confidence and self-acceptance that is likely to ensure a satisfactory outcome.

Student No. 20

2nd Yr., Male, Engineering Student (Client)

This student comes from a secure family background and is now in the process of separating from home. He has a very balanced lifestyle between academic commitments and social outlets. He is self-accepting when confronted with challenges. He presents with a positive self-image and reports no significant stress.

Summary and Conclusion

The present study proposes, as a common theme in the experience of student stress, the threat to self-adequacy in the context of developmental tasks. The results highlight how the threat to self is experienced in a variety of different ways by students. For example, some students experience difficulties primarily in one area of their lives such as family (S2, S18, S19), social or academic (S6). For other students this threat to self can occur in more than one area e.g. academic and family (S16, S25), academic and social (S4, S7, S21) or social and

family (S5, S8). There are some students for whom the threat is extensive, affecting them in all aspects of their lives, including family, social and academic (S14, S15). There are other students for whom there is little or no threat from any of these aspects of their lives and who experience minimal stress.

Patterns of stress have been identified within each of the three main stressful areas of students lives i.e. academic, family and social. The most dominant patterns to emerge within each of these areas were academic over-identification, parental conflict and social inadequacy respectively. Between them, these three patterns account for almost two-thirds of all the stressed students in the present sample and contribute significantly to the theoretical discussion which follows.

We can conclude that there is an underlying threat to self-adequacy occurring for all students experiencing stress but that this is experienced in different ways and in varying degrees for students depending on their most important developmental needs at that time.

3.5 INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS IN THE CONTEXT OF A SELF-ADEQUACY AND DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL OF STUDENT STRESS.

3.5.1 Introduction.

Stress research initially began from an illness perspective (see section 1.1). In contrast with theories of personality and psychotherapy, there has been a noticeable lack of a developmental component in most models of stress. This is

a serious omission which the present study has endeavoured to correct. Stress cannot be treated in isolation from the lifelong development of the person. The stresses reported by the present sample of students have been directly related to the specific developmental issues facing them. In the present study a meta-model of 'what is at stake' (Lazarus, 1976; see section 1.3) for students under stress has been proposed. This meta-model, based on student developmental issues, has been used as a framework within which to explore the stresses of participants.

The results outlined in the previous section confirm the broad relevance of a number of Chickering and Reisser's (1993) vectors of development to the experience of student stress. Chickering and Reisser, however, made no attempt to deal with psychopathology in development. They presented a comprehensive theory of how the normal development of students takes place. The present study provides data on how this development can be impeded. As a result a definite relationship between student development theory and a model of student stress can be proposed. The developmental model of student stress (based on the theoretical considerations of Erikson, 1963, Chickering, 1969 and Combs et al, 1976, as outlined in sections 1.3.3 and 2.4.2.8) offers a unifying framework within which the patterns of stress identified in the present study can be understood. Within the developmental model, stress is due to the threat to self-adequacy posed by developmental tasks. Developmental tasks are, therefore, considered as "central issues" in the lives of students (see Bernstein, 1987). This relationship between development and stress has not been formally incorporated

into previous models of student stress. The implications of incorporating a developmental component in a model of stress are examined below.

The stress experienced by the students in the present study has been researched by examining the main areas of student stress (i.e. academic, family and social) and the linkages between them. The relationship between each area of stress and the developmental tasks of college students has been discussed. It is the unique interaction between these different factors that sets student stress apart from stress experienced by non-students. In particular, the contribution to student stress of three developmental challenges has been highlighted, (a) the need to achieve/fear of failure, (b) the struggle for autonomy/separation and (c) the need for intimacy and belonging.

The present model of stress recognises the ongoing need for esteem and adequacy without which healthy development of the self will not occur (Maslow, 1954, 1962; Combs et al, 1976). Where the internal feeling of self-adequacy is lacking there will be a greater need for approval from others (Chickering and Reisser, 1993). This need for approval is demonstrated in the present study by the felt demands to be adequate academically (e.g. to achieve academic standards, C1) socially (e.g. to be accepted/to fit in, C8; to be as good as others C9) and in the family (e.g. to please parents, C41; to be as good as siblings, C47). Together, these categories of adequacy and approval occur across all three major developmental areas and between them have been referred to in varying degrees by every student.

A number of patterns of student stress have been proposed (see Table 3.4) based on the inter-relationships identified amongst the 49 categories generated from the interview data. Three patterns of student stress, namely academic over-identification (pattern no. 1), conflict with parents (pattern no. 3) and social inadequacy (pattern no. 6), representing almost two-thirds of the stressed students in the present study, are given particular consideration below. Patterns of this nature have not been reported previously in student stress research. The tendency has been for researchers to report on specific stressful events without regard to the broader experience of students within a developmental context. While the patterns of stress identified in the present study may not be exhaustive of the types of stress encountered by students, they do provide a useful basis for assessment and intervention strategies (I will return to discussing these strategies in the next section). In particular, such patterns can be understood within a developmental context.

The current model of stress makes two significant contributions to stress theory. First, it establishes the central nature of the self within a model of stress. Second, regarding the development of self for young adults, it refers to the threat inherent in the development of autonomy and inclusion. I will outline below how the self is incorporated into a developmental model of stress. I will then examine specific aspects of student self development, namely the development of autonomy and inclusion, and their relevance for student stress.

3.5.2 Incorporating the self within a developmental model of stress.

The developmental model of stress explains stress within the context of the development of the self. The self is what we refer to when we wish to single out one person from the rest. The basis on which one is singled out can be many and varied. In the context of the present study, the self can be considered as 'that zone of mediation where meaning is made' (Kegan, 1982). This definition fits comfortably within the self-adequacy model of student stress, previously outlined, incorporating, as it does, the importance of appraisal (i.e. the process that imbues a situation with meaning, see Lazarus, 1976) as part of person-environment interaction (see section 1.3).

We have seen how psychodynamic and trait-based definitions of stress have been replaced with interaction- based definitions (Endler and Edwards, 1978). Interaction models of stress, however, fail to recognise that the self can be defined in interactional terms. Developments within the interactionist tradition, such as that of Lazarus (1976), suggest a model of stress requiring a central position for the self (see section 1.3.2). Yet models of stress, including the appraisal model of Lazarus, do not contain any specific reference to the self. Instead, these models include factors, such as personality, as one of a range of personal variables that interact with environmental variables, resulting in stress.

A developmental model of stress locates the self at the centre of human well-being. For human development to occur, the self must be adequately maintained (Combs et al, 1976). My analysis of the stresses experienced by the present

sample of students reveals a group of young people for whom self-confidence and the sense of self-adequacy is poor. The struggle to master developmental tasks, so as to meet important needs, has been shown to be hampered for these students.

Models of stress must include an understanding of the self and its developmental process. The current model has borrowed heavily from humanistic models of the self with particular reference to the work of Combs et el (1976) and Perls et al (1951). These theorists locate the self in a central position within an interactional perspective.

The present model treats the person and environment as inseparable i.e. it is not possible to consider the person without considering the environment with which that person is in contact. Simplistic notions of, for example, the student and the campus environment as two separate variables in an interaction model of stress, do not adequately capture the nature of interactionism. In the history of interactionism, going back to the formulations of Lewin's (1951) field theory and Murray's (1938) need-press theory, we find the basis for an understanding of interactionism which views the person and environment as a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts.

The formulation of clear person-environment contact allows persons to meet their needs in the environment (Korb et al., 1989). This process of need satisfaction is what Perls considers to be the driving force of growth or

development. The self is the organism's system of contacts with the environment, integrating all levels of the organism's needs. For example, Perls would suggest that for many of the students in the present study, contact with their environment has been limited to the extent that they were unable to satisfy their developmental needs.

I have explained that, with an interaction model of stress, the environment is determined by how it is perceived through personal appraisal (see section 1.3). I have already pointed out that where efforts have been made to examine the external environment, such studies were flawed because of their limited definitions of the environment. It is only by recognising the internal self processes that a true understanding of the environment emerges. Interaction with the environment is a personal process, by which individuals engage with the environment, based primarily on how they perceive it. What is perceived is influenced to a large extent by what is experienced internally. For many of the students in the present sample, the external environment is experienced as threatening because of their internal sense of inadequacy either in their academic ability (pattern no. 1) or their ability to develop relationships with others (pattern no. 6).

Because of the influence of internal factors, the interactionist perspective must prioritise personal ownership of stress. The internal developmental process, with particular reference to the development of autonomy and inclusion, lies at the heart of an interactionist approach to student stress.

3.5.3 Autonomy, Inclusion and Student Stress

It is necessary to understand the development of the self in the context of the polarities of relationship and independence. Numerous theorists have agreed that the developing self can experience its existence in two forms: as (a) being a member of a group, being in relationship and connection with others and (b) the progressive development of individuality in terms of clarity, achievement and authenticity (Rowe, 1987; Kegan, 1982). It is not difficult to identify these forms of existence in the experiences of the students interviewed for the present study. The patterns of student stress relating to academic over-identification (pattern no. 1) and social inadequacy (pattern no. 6) in particular reflect the difficulties encountered by students with their experiences of independence and relationship respectively. The threat of self-annihilation (Rowe, 1987, see section 1.3), resulting in the experience of stress, can then be due to the fear of either (a) "complete isolation, being kept totally, utterly and forever alone, thus withering, fading away, disappearing into nothingness" or (b) "as losing control of yourself and your life and falling apart, falling into chaos, fragmenting, crumbling to dust" (see Rowe, 1976).

Rowe, influenced by the writings of Carl Jung (1971) on psychological types, argues that people have a preference for either inclusion or independence. Kegan (1982), on the other hand, views development not as an 'either/or' predicament but as revolving around these two fundamental 'yearnings', what Bakan (1966) refers to as 'the duality of experience'. The self seeks to integrate the need to be independent, through accomplishing and achieving, and the need

to be included, through intimacy and relationship (Kegan, 1982). The autonomy/relatedness dualism remains a central problem for contemporary developmental theorists (Hoffman, 1992). The present study highlights the importance of these polarities (i.e. independence and inclusion) in the development and related stresses of young adults.

Results from the present study identify the stresses for both male and female students in developing independence from home, so as to function as autonomous adults (see pattern no. 4). Developing competence and achieving academic success is a means by which some students can establish their autonomy and independence. Stress for students also occurs where they do not experience intimacy in their lives due to their lack of self-confidence in forming close relationships (see pattern no. 6). In the present sample, the male students, in particular, encounter difficulties in meeting their needs for intimacy, while both male and female students struggle with their need for achievement/competence (see pattern no. 1). The present results indicate that student stress is often due to a difficulty with, or neglect of, the need for intimacy and inclusion. Some students compensate for this neglect by over-identifying with academic achievement. Male students, in particular, struggle with wanting to be intimate but lack the necessary social skills and self-confidence to do so.

Feelings of social acceptance and belonging are lacking for many of the present sample of male students (see pattern 6). There is a difficulty for these men in

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fitting-in with others. The problem of fitting-in may be influenced by external factors such as the expectations of others but is ultimately due to a lack of a personal sense of self-adequacy. What is significant about these men is that they do not conform to the stereotypical male image of acquiring a social identity through separateness and achievement (Kegan, 1982). Based on the present results, some men encounter great difficulty in acquiring a sense of belonging and inclusion, confirming Gilligan's (1982) theory that the development of inclusion comes more naturally for women than for men. This difficulty becomes particularly stressful for males who, at a certain point in their development, may show a preference for belonging over separateness. A male perspective highlights the fact that men need to belong as well as to be separate, but in a male dominated society, this can prove considerably difficult. It seems to me that for these students the self is in crisis (see Erikson, 1968) due to a sense of social inadequacy.

Lacking confidence in their ability to develop relationships and perceiving the high value society places on academic accomplishment, some students over-identify with academic success as their means of psychological survival (pattern no. 1). A false sense of belonging can be attained through achievement - acquiring social status rather than providing any personally meaningful validation. This crisis for self is likely to occur because of the value society places on intellectual education and the devaluing of its emotional counterpart. The development of relationships is risky as it involves being seen intimately by

another. In relationships the individual may be exposed to feelings of upset and vulnerability. Under these circumstances, achievement dominates over intimacy.

The predominance of achievement may be seen as the outcome of a male-dominated society (French, 1986). Because of this dilemma, male and female students are likely to experience different types of stressors in relation to their separate struggles at developing an equilibrium between inclusion and independence. The fact that only male students are represented in pattern No. 6 regarding social inadequacy is indicative of differences of this nature. The challenge of reaching a point of equilibrium becomes a tension for students when the two poles are experienced as being in opposition to one another, as outlined above, rather than as complementing one another (see Hoffman, 1992).

Results from the present study suggest that what is at stake for male and female students under stress may differ in some respects. The differences represent a fundamental dichotomy that is present for all of us, between autonomy and inclusion. Male students tend to have a difficulty in acknowledging their need for closeness and inclusion (see Kegan, 1982). They may rely on achieving and accomplishing as a means of compensating for their not being able to adequately address their need to belong and to have relationship. For the female students what seems to be at stake - and thus stress inducing - is their ability to stand alone and have the confidence to be separate from others. Women tend to have difficulty acknowledging their need for distinctiveness and personal power (Kegan, 1982). For both sexes however there is the on-going struggle to find a

balance or equilibrium between independence and inclusion. The fundamental threat at all times is to the maintenance of an adequate self (see Combs et al, 1976).

Differences in stress for males and females, such as I have outlined above, have, in the main, been neglected by researchers. I have not located any studies in the literature which have looked specifically at gender differences in stress. By incorporating a developmental aspect to our understanding of stress, gender differences in the experience of stress can be highlighted.

3.5.4 Summary and conclusion

Both Grayson (1989) and the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry (1983) propose that student developmental tasks can be incorporated into the three main areas of identity, separation and intimacy. The present study emphasises the importance for students of the need to achieve, as a further key developmental task. It seems, in fact, that identity formation (Erikson, 1963) is the basic issue for young people, encompassing three developmental tasks: achievement, separation and intimacy.

Academic success for students is an important means of establishing autonomy and separation from their families (see Maffeo, 1980). The present results highlight the struggle for students between establishing autonomy through academic achievement, and developing intimacy through interpersonal

relationships. It seems that students may differ in terms of the priority they attach to these two poles. This is one aspect of student stress that warrants examination by further research.

In conclusion, existing models of student stress have neglected to include key elements of the self. The present study highlights, in particular, the importance of including human needs and developmental tasks in any such model. It is not until these factors are given due consideration that the nature of student stress can be properly understood.

3.6 IMPLICATIONS OF RESULTS FOR INTERVENTION WITH STUDENTS.

3.6.1 Introduction

Within an interactional approach to student stress, environmental and personal strategies of stress management can be addressed in separate but complementary ways. It need not be a case of adopting solely a personal or an environmental response to stress. Both responses occur simultaneously, contributing to one another as appropriate.

The various patterns of student stress identified in the present study, such as academic over-identification, family conflict and social inadequacy, (see Table 3.4) require particular personal and environmental intervention strategies. For example, at a personal level, family therapy might be of benefit to students from

a dysfunctional family background (Lopez, 1991; see Pattern No.3). At the more preventive environmental level, colleges could address students' general lack of confidence (see Pattern No. 5) through interpersonal communication skills training within degree programmes (see Christopoulus et al, 1997). Third level colleges can also encourage students to adopt a more balanced lifestyle and not invest their energies solely in attempting to accomplish academic goals (see Pattern No. 1). A variety of intervention strategies for students who experience stress will now be explored in the context of the developmental approach to stress. Two broad approaches will be outlined based on the present results. First, a personal developmental approach to the treatment of student stress will be outlined. Second, the more general environmental intervention approaches of third level institutions will be examined.

3.6.2 A developmental approach to the treatment of individual students under stress.

Student counsellors require a theoretical understanding of student stress. A developmental understanding of student stress has certain implications for counsellors: they will need to develop expert knowledge and skill in the handling of specific student developmental issues. These developmental issues include students' fear of failure, difficulties in the development of relationship skills and attachment/separation difficulties, referred to in the different patterns of student stress previously outlined.

The developmental counsellor does not see students as patients or as ill or as problems but rather as "evolving persons" (Kegan 1982). The key therapeutic

issue to emerge from a developmental perspective is an understanding of what role, if any, the counsellor can play in resolving a developmental crisis for the student. The most difficult dilemma facing the counsellor is how to help the student to grow up.

A student development approach can be usefully applied in psychotherapy, whereby crises are treated as opportunities for growth (Margolis, 1976). The identity crisis of late adolescence (Erikson, 1968), can therefore be considered an important developmental opportunity. This positive outlook promises a good prognosis and is free of the labels and stigma attached to a more reductionist approach (see Ajaya, 1983).

Whitaker (1992) argues strongly against what he sees as a current fashion in student counselling of focusing on symptoms, which he says:

effectively stultifies growth by obscuring underlying developmental dilemmas and sending out the message that developmental needs are unimportant or even non-existent.

The counsellor's task is to help restore students' developmental progress. Psychotherapy/Counselling, therefore, involves the student in a developmental process :

Psychotherapy, as I see it, is applied developmental psychology. The therapist uses his or her knowledge of normal development to reach some conclusions about the reasons for a patient's malfunctioning and how one may enter the developmental spiral either to foster or reinstate a more productive or at least less destructive, developmental process (Basch, 1988).

Whitaker (1992) argues that students become empowered when they are enabled to take seriously their own developmental needs. This empowerment consists of understanding themselves, finding a better sense of direction, and actively collaborating in their own therapy.

The late adolescent developmental stage which most students are at can be a major asset to them in psychotherapy. They are at an age when they are ready for self-exploration. Furthermore, students can use the therapeutic relationship for testing their identity. The developmental model of student stress provides a useful therapeutic framework within which student counsellors can operate. Based on findings from the present study, this developmental model ought to focus on the need to achieve, the need for autonomy/separation and the need for intimacy as the core developmental tasks facing college students in their identity formation. These tasks can be easily recognised and dealt with in the context of students' i) family, ii) social and iii) academic lives.

i) Family - Assessment of the security of the family base will provide some indication of the severity of the student's difficulties. Lopez (1991) stresses the importance, in particular, of assessing the nature of the parent-adolescent relationship. A poor relationship between parents and student, as with profile no. 3, suggests a pattern of insecurity and negative self-image which can be difficult to change. A positive relationship, on the other hand, suggests a solid and secure home base which will have fostered the development of a sense of self-adequacy (as in pattern no. 7).

The results of the present study highlight the need for counsellors to be aware that the family is an important source of support for students. Attempts to promote separation prematurely can be unhelpful (Lopez, Cambell and Watkins, 1986). Separation will occur when the student is ready. Students need to know that it is acceptable for them to rely on their family network for support. Meanwhile, counsellors need to be aware that difficulties with separation, based on weak attachments, can prove considerably stressful for students (see pattern no. 3 and 4).

Counsellors can assist a student who has had poor attachment relationships in the past, to take advantage of the new opportunities the college experience presents. Kenny and Rice (1995) advise counsellors to undertake preventative work in this area by working with incoming students and their parents, to negotiate a new balance in the relationship between them. Not only must students be oriented to college life but parents need to be prepared for the resultant family consequences.

Medalie and Rockwell (1989) make the point that students who have lacked a close attachment to a parent may need, above all else, a supportive or reparative relationship with a therapist (Clarkson, 1995). Counsellors can provide a secure base where that base has been previously missing. According to Medalie and Rockwell (1989), students in therapy will keep manoeuvring to find a developmentally comfortable level of closeness to the therapist. This may

consist of a strong child-like attachment, an adolescent conflicted dependency relationship (which is resistant and ashamed of the attachment) or an adult-to-adult relationship. Brief therapy, in particular, supports the need of "normal" students to develop into autonomous adults (Blos, 1946; Bragan, 1980; Haggerty, Baldwin and Liptzin, 1980; Pinkerton and Rockwell, 1982). Kenny and Rice (1995) recommend that the counsellor should strive to attain a balance for the student between connectedness and individuation. Rice's recommendation is consistent with the findings from the present study which highlight the significance of the tension between these two central developmental needs.

ii) Social - Counselling can help students examine their difficulties with relationships and the development of intimacy in their lives. This work will often centre on challenging students to overcome the risks they perceive in relation to letting go of their emotions, experienced as a loss of control. This challenge seems to be more of an issue for the males than the females in the present sample of students. Students need to be comfortable with handling their emotions and accepting their emotional selves, while realising that this will not mean the complete abandonment of control or of separateness. Through counselling, students can discover and acknowledge the importance of intimacy in their lives. This discovery and acknowledgement will involve having to let go of fears of rejection and disapproval from others.

iii) Academic - Students who over-identify with academic success may need to address the underlying issues and external motivating factors which drive them to invest so much energy solely in academic achievement (see Pattern No. 1). Presenting issues may vary from poor social skills to excessive fear of failure to meet parents' expectations. The experience of examination failure or the fear of failure, when dealt with in counselling, can often result in a breakthrough in the student's development. Students can move from a position of over-identifying with academic success to a position of self-acceptance on realising that they can survive the fear of failing or failure itself and go on to successfully complete a degree. Having to face examinations can be an important developmental challenge for students. In particular, students learn from having to face the prospect of failure and even from the experience of failure itself (see pattern no. 1). In some instances students may seek to avoid examinations - at times going to extreme lengths to do so - rather than face the prospect of failure.

Whitaker (1992) points out that college counsellors who are attuned to students' special developmental needs, as well as being suitably trained and experienced as therapists, will be able to recognise and utilize the many advantages of a developmental model. He goes on to identify four ways by which the counsellor can utilise a developmental model effectively:

i) assessing a student's current developmental stage;

ii) relating a student's difficulty in the present stage of life to earlier difficulties;

iii) understanding how development is being helped or hindered by current interpersonal and environmental influences;

iv) gearing therapy to help the student to advance to a further stage of growth and/or help to consolidate a certain stage.

A fifth therapeutic strategy which can be included is for counsellors to be able to share with students an understanding of their difficulties within a developmental framework.

Margolis (1989) suggests a number of general questions which counsellors might use when considering the larger developmental issues that often underlie the dilemmas and turmoil such as those reported by the present sample of college students:

How do you feel about being away from home and family?
What personal qualities or interpersonal skills would you like to gain?
What do you most fear?
What do you despair of?
What losses and deaths have you experienced?
How do you experience your differences from other students (e.g. racial, religious, cultural)?
What are your beliefs about yourself, others, and the world that fosters your status quo?
How do you experience the differences between who you want to be and what others want of you?

What things have you left unsaid to significant people in your life?

To what and to whom are you saying hello and goodbye?

The results of the present study suggest a number of additional questions :-

What do you most need right now?

Do you feel that you belong ?

Do you feel that you can stand apart from others ?

Do you feel Okay (adequate) as a person ?

What is at stake for you when you are afraid ?

While these questions may not be asked directly of a student, they can usefully guide the counsellor in working with the student in a developmental context.

According to Kenny and Rice (1995) a developmental approach to the counselling of students can draw on many of the different treatment modalities from insight and emotionally corrective therapy to cognitive behavioural interventions and family therapy. They suggest that social skills training, anxiety management, problem solving skills and coping skills training should all be part of the college counsellor's repertoire.

To summarise, I have dealt above with the personal counselling interventions that can be adopted within a developmental approach to student stress. These interventions are centred on the family, social and academic areas of students lives. Interventions dealing with autonomy, relationship and achievement issues in particular have been addressed. In the next section I will examine a range of

the more general environmental interventions that can take place to help relieve stress on campus.

3.6.3 Student Stress and the University's Contribution to Student Development.

The present model of stress is centred on impediments to need satisfaction which hinder student development. According to Maslow (1962), the social preconditions for need satisfaction are "freedom justice and order". He maintained that society has placed far too much emphasis on material and economic success, and too little on human, psychological and spiritual success. According to Friedman (1967) we are rich in everything but remarkably poor in providing sources for discovering personal direction and authentic existence. Nowhere is this more evident today that on our campuses. Because of this, students today have many layers of materialism to break through in order to get in touch with what they truly need. Results from the present study indicate that it is from their inability to recognise and consequently seek to satisfy their relevant needs that student stress has emerged.

It is the function of a campus community to assist its members in their need satisfaction so as to maintain a less stressful environment. A healthy environment will encourage and permit the satisfaction of psychological needs. An unhealthy and stress promoting/maintaining environment is one where need satisfaction is frustrated and the (inadequate) self feels threatened (Goble, 1970; Combs et al., 1976). A psychologically sick community according to Maslow

has "not enough love, affection, protection, respect, trust, and too much hostility, humiliation, fear, contempt and domination". University campuses need to be assessed in the light of these factors.

It is worth pointing out that by improving the campus, individuals are improved and vice versa. The most effective means of changing society is to change ourselves, through the achievement of a greater sense of adequacy. This can be disconcerting since it is much more comfortable to "change the other guy" (Combs et al, 1976). The environment can accommodate to a greater or lesser degree the individuals need to accomplish self-adequacy. I am arguing that it is not until individual students empower themselves and take ownership of their community and culture that true change can come about (see Goble, 1970; and Combs et al, 1976). In order to ensure well adjusted and mature graduates, the campus community must simultaneously endeavour to protect the development of students' selves at this significant stage in their lives. This protection can be accomplished by promoting student adequacy rather than presenting threats and unrealistic expectations. A spirit of inclusion is required, satisfying individuals' need to belong and to feel accepted by the campus community.

Universities need to recognise that the unifying task of late adolescence is that of identity formation. The university has a key role in contributing to this sense of identity. Important questions to be asked by any university in this regard are: What does it mean to be a student at this university? Is it a source of pride and esteem? Can the student identify with the values and goals of the university? A

sense of belonging at a university can be of tremendous support to a student who feels isolated or inadequate. The university must therefore look to its own identity to see what type of identity it offers its students. Efforts must be made from orientation onwards to make students feel welcome. This promotion of inclusion will entail academic and non-academic staff being aware of their collaborative role in the education of students.

The present study emphasises the importance of developing self-adequacy as a means of alleviating student stress. Social inadequacy, academic over-identification and family attachment difficulties in particular need to be addressed if self-adequacy is to be attained. While professional counsellors can work with a small number of the more severely stressed students, the institution, through its policies and practice, can instigate a range of campus-wide preventive strategies aimed at reducing stress in the general student population.

To begin with, greater opportunity, support and reward need to be made available generally on campus for the promotion of student self-adequacy (Banning & Kaiser, 1974). Within a highly competitive environment, if recognition is accorded only to academic achievement, there is a danger that self-adequacy will be excessively threatened. Tinto (1975) has argued that the resulting over-identification may be one of the reasons for student attrition.

An important argument of the present thesis has been that the promotion of personal development is synonymous with the alleviation of stress (see section

1.3). A developmental perspective on student difficulties supports the educational role of student counsellors and means that counsellors must take a broader role on campus alongside one-to-one consultations (Warnath et al, 1973; Upcraft and Gardner, 1989). At the University of Limerick, as a direct outcome of my involvement in the present research, a student development unit has been established under the auspices of the counselling service to promote this broader development of students on campus. The unit deals with a range of preventive and educational programmes that are organised by the counsellors, including stress management, assertiveness, communication skills, interview skills and social skills. The common theme throughout these programmes has been the promotion of self-adequacy through attaining greater balance between autonomy and inclusion.

Increasing the number of student counsellors is not sufficient in order to deal with the problem of student stress. In order to ease the stress on campus, universities need to adopt the recommendations of Chickering and Reisser (1993) for promoting student development, namely to (a) maintain opportunities for students to fulfil developmental tasks, (b) encourage and promote frequent and friendly encounters between students and faculty, (c) provide an educationally powerful curriculum that promotes human development in its broadest sense, (d) value competent teaching, (e) encourage student participation in clubs and societies, (f) make available student development professionals who define themselves as educators, working collaboratively with faculty.

At the University of Limerick we have recently completed a project, Vision2020, which aimed to examine and outline plans for the University over the next 25 years. One of the committees set up under this project was entitled Educating the Whole Person. This committee, of which I was a member, has made a number of important recommendations, for a more balanced approach to the development of student potential:

a) given that the primary requirement of the University is the pursuit of intellectual rigour and high academic standards, the mission statement of the university should nevertheless include a commitment to the education of the whole person;
b) informal learning should be encouraged through the provision of greater resources to clubs and societies and the promotion of faculty, staff and student interaction;
c) a developmental model of student learning should be adopted to underpin the design of the campus environment.

The implementation of these recommendations will represent a significant element of the institution's response to student stress. However, they do not specifically tackle the issue of self-adequacy. O'Donnell and Gray (1993) propose a "health promoting college framework" in which they encourage the development of self-adequacy as part of the institution's response to student stress. They refer to the importance of students' self-empowerment as a means of managing stress. Within their framework, O'Donnell and Gray recommend:

- encouraging staff and students to show respect and consideration for one another,
- encouraging self-help groups,
- encouraging students to plan and participate in a programme on coping with examination pressure,
- reviewing communication channels between staff and students and
- developing strategies to increase effective communication.

Implementing frameworks and recommendations such as those outlined above requires a revision of the role of the university. The primary role of a university continues to be debated both in Europe and in the U.S. Should universities address all students' developmental needs or merely vocational needs? Bloland, Stomatakos and Rogers (1994) in their critique of student services/affairs point out that student development must not be placed over and above the primary academic mission of a University i.e. intellectual rigour. In fact it is not a question of student development over-riding the academic mission since the ideal learning environment of well motivated students is one in which their needs as whole persons are recognised (Chickering and Reisser, 1993). A campus that facilitates learning, which is its primary aim, is by definition a campus that facilitates student development and growth (Caul, 1993) and as a result reduces stress. Put simply, Universities must not over-value academic success and devalue other aspects of the person (Caul, 1993). Academic staff are one of the main channels through which such values can be transmitted.

One role of academic staff in stress prevention is to ensure that students are properly motivated. Motivation occurs in the context of need satisfaction. According to the present developmental model of student stress, need deficit leads to stress, tension, dissatisfaction and lack of motivation. Davies (1986) makes the following recommendations to academic staff for increasing motivation amongst students:

1. give students regular feedback on their work;
2. provide students with sufficient success experiences;
3. do not use threatening language with students;
4. enable students to compete with themselves;
5. provide students with relevant tasks, support, interest and a climate of trust and communication;
6. listen to students with empathy;
7. act as a suitable role model for students ('practise what you preach');
8. encourage and challenge students appropriately.

Measures such as these will help alleviate much student stress. However, they do not emphasise enough the establishment of more personal relationship between student and faculty. Whitman et al (1984) strongly encourage positive student-faculty interaction as a means of enhancing students' sense of self-adequacy and of reducing stress. For example, academics whom students view positively should teach a number of the beginning courses. These staff need to be rewarded in a meaningful way for both good teaching and good advising.

Another way faculty might help reduce unnecessary stress amongst students is to give more control, information and feedback. Students' self-adequacy can be

enhanced by providing them with experiences of success early on in their courses. Feedback to students regarding their coursework must be specific rather than general, descriptive rather than evaluative, informative rather than advice-giving, well timed, not demeaning when negative, and positive when deserved (Whitman et al, 1984).

As well as improving student motivation, universities can address a wide variety of student developmental requirements. John Gardner and his associates at North Carolina University have pioneered the First Year Experience (see Upcraft and Gardner, 1989) which provides a useful template for the structuring of an Irish third level curriculum on personal development for first year students. This program incorporates credited modules addressing such issues as orientation, study skills, advising, stress management, communication skills, careers, values etc. One significant outcome of the present study at U.L. has been the creation of a lifeskills module which has been adopted by the College of Education as an optional module for all its first year students.

There is a need for third level colleges in Ireland to adapt the personal development programmes which have been introduced to primary and secondary schools over the past twenty years. There are many students at University who have not yet participated in a learning environment where value has been placed on the open discussion of relationships, communication, self-confidence, emotions and sexuality etc.

Universities can play an important role in facilitating or hindering students' separation from their family. The traditional 'in loco parentis' level of responsibility adopted by Universities has thankfully given way to an environment where students are treated as adults and where they are expected to take responsibility for their actions. The campus has, therefore, become an experimental ground for students to test out their new found responsibility and freedom. It is important that their self-respect and self-adequacy be validated as they go through this process. Trust and confidentiality are an integral part of this role. For example, universities must communicate with parents only with the student's consent. At the University of Limerick first year orientation programme, the parents of new students are invited to a meeting where the college's relationship with its students is outlined. Parents are also offered guidelines and support with regard to their 'letting go' of their children.

According to Whitman et al (1984) the reduction of stress in college students begins with their taking more control over their college education. Indeed Fisher (1994) proposes a model in which stress is due to a reduction of personal control over their lives. Acquiring control can be viewed within a developmental context. A sense of control comes as students become more independent (Whitman et al, 1984). Whitman et al refer to the 'help us help you' approach to stress management, whereby students will work out a relationship with the college system that helps them define themselves and reach their own goals (Schoonmaker, 1971; Walker and Beach, 1976).

Whitman et al provide some further guidelines to colleges, to assist students in managing stress by enhancing their sense of control. They suggest that students need to become familiar with the services and activities within the college and the local community. A comprehensive student orientation programme is essential in this respect, with the aim of making students feel at home on campus.

3.6.4 Summary

I have examined in some detail both personal and environmental intervention strategies based on a developmental model of student stress. Common to all of these interventions is the promotion of self-adequacy through the facilitation of student need satisfaction. The success of these strategies will depend upon the willingness of students and staff to recognise the importance of addressing student needs.

3.7 RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS: REVIEW AND FUTURE STUDIES

The present study has attempted to bridge an important gap in stress research, by highlighting the need for a more qualitative dimension to our understanding of stress, consistent with the form of (humanistic) stress management being

provided by many counsellors. In the present study, I have proposed a meta-model of student stress and examined its validity with reference to students' reported experiences. The framework proposed in the study provides a very broad theoretical basis for the understanding of student stress by student counsellors and others. My own need was to establish a broad enough framework within which I could begin to make sense of individual students' experiences of stress. The present study is my attempt, as a student counsellor, to make sense of and create meaning from students' reported experience of stress. Kegan (1982) refers to this sense-making process as a fundamental activity of being human. I expect that my 'sense making' will be of direct benefit to me and others in our work as student counsellors. During counselling, my sense making of students' experiences aims to concur with students own personal understanding of their experiences. The counselling relationship is dependent on agreements of this nature.

Further studies are required to examine in greater detail students' understanding of their experience of stress in the context of the developmental framework provided here. For example, it would be useful to talk to students about the various patterns of stress presented in this study. The limited collaboration between myself and the students has been a notable, yet necessary feature of the present methodology. Collaboration of this nature would amount to engaging in a deeper therapeutic relationship with the students. It has been necessary for me to initially establish a working model within which I could understand students

experiences. As a result, the findings represent my sense-making capacity, as researcher, rather than representing students own understandings of their stress.

There are some notable differences between the present study and traditional studies of stress :

1. I have not referred to levels of stress in this study. I did not want to focus on measuring levels of stress, and so risk losing touch with understanding the students' experience of stress. I discovered that when I incorporated levels of stress in my method, the study began to take on a very different format, directed more by quantitative than by qualitative criteria.
2. Although most current studies of stress place an emphasis on coping skills as an important element of stress, I make no reference to such skills. I have treated coping as secondary to and a product of what is at stake for people experiencing stress (see Lazarus, 1976). Coping will occur where that which is at stake has been clearly identified and dealt with.
3. Stressful life events are considered in the context of students' overall developmental tasks. Events have not been singled out in isolation, as is the case in many of the traditional studies of stress. Instead, categories of life events can be seen to contribute to and reflect the various different patterns of stress that have been identified.

I have encountered numerous difficulties in carrying out this research. Perhaps the single greatest difficulty I encountered was in trying to manage the concept of stress as a topic of research. Stress is a generic term relating to health and well-being (see section 1.1). In focusing on stress there is an acknowledgement

that health and sickness are determined by the way we live life and in particular, by the demands we experience (Selye, 1976). Attempting to address such a broad issue, while necessary, was bound to be problematic. The main problem in dealing with a generic concept of this nature is in defining just exactly what aspect of stress was to be studied. An added difficulty I encountered was that I found few references in the literature to studies which have adopted an approach similar to mine. For example, I was unable to find any studies which examined the self-adequacy model of Combs and his colleagues (1976). While this ensured the originality of my work, it also presented a significant challenge.

The self-adequacy model of stress, as outlined and examined in the present study, is recommended as a sound theoretical basis for future studies. In addition, the patterns of student stress generated by this study are worthy of further exploration. These patterns incorporate a comprehensive range of developmental issues, which contribute to student stress and are presented here in a framework not previously identified. Academic over-identification, family conflict and social inadequacy, in particular, need to be explored further, perhaps in consultation with students themselves.

The present study reinforces the inclusion-autonomy polarity as an important aspect of human development (see Section 3.6). I believe that further study of this dichotomy can contribute significantly to our understanding of stress. Previous studies of stress have failed to identify the tension between these poles as significant aspects of stress. Gender studies would be of particular interest in

this regard, since males and females may be aligned with the autonomy and inclusion poles respectively. Growth, development and the removal of stress occur through the ongoing resolution of the tension between these poles. Treatment strategies specifically addressing the issue of autonomy/inclusion need to be established and examined. These strategies will invariably differ for males and females who will tend to approach resolution from opposite ends of the autonomy/inclusion continuum.

In conclusion, I hope the present study will stimulate further research which will be influenced both by the methodology adopted and the theoretical framework which I have presented. As with most research, the aim was to generate as many questions as were answered.

3.8 SUMMARY

A qualitative study of student stress was carried out, based on the analysis of interviews with 27 students regarding their experiences of stress. From this analysis a comprehensive list of stressful demands on students was generated. Further analysis revealed a number of patterns of stress amongst the sample of students. These patterns consisted of an integration of academic, family, social and other stresses within a developmental framework. Based on the present results, the relationship between stress and development has been highlighted and is recommended as a firm basis for future studies of stress in general and student stress in particular.

Further studies are now needed to examine in more detail each of the patterns outlined above. Social inadequacy, academic over-identification and triangular conflict with parents are each worthy of considerable exploration perhaps through more detailed case studies. The students' perspective and response to these patterns of stress would also be of value.

The present study has attempted to highlight the importance of what students experience as stressful. The emphasis has been on studying the experience of stress in its own right rather than reducing it to quantifiable elements.

The outcome of this inquiry has been to highlight self-adequacy as the central element in the experience of stress. Threats to self-adequacy occur for students in a number of ways, represented here by a range of patterns of student stress. By relating stress to the self, the emphasis is being placed on the individual. This focus on the individual has two effects. First, it underlines the importance of empowering students to improve how they feel about themselves. Second, it may help universities to recognise and address the needs of individuals.

In the past student stress research has focused primarily on academic stressors. A developmental approach to student stress recognises, in addition, the significance of the family and social relationships. The present study proposes that the major tasks of late adolescence are identity formation through the development of achievement, intimacy and separation. The need for approval and acceptance by others has been established as a primary concern of students

as they address these developmental tasks. The need to achieve is an added task which perhaps needs to be examined more by researchers in relation to students.

In conclusion, the central developmental issue for students is that of identity formation accomplished through three developmental tasks of achievement, separation and intimacy. Throughout their development, students' need for self-adequacy must be maintained. Where self-adequacy is threatened and development does not progress, stress is said to occur. These findings have important implications for the approach of the student counsellor for service delivery on campus and for future research on student stress.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

C.A.R.S. Survey of 574 N.I.H.E. Students (Aherne, 1991)

Table : C.A.R.S. Survey, University of Limerick, 1991.

Mean scores for total responses (n = 574)

Item	Item title	Mean Score	No. rating this item	% Indicating some degree of stress
P14	feelings of anxiousness or general tension	8.3	263	45.8%
A11	giving a class presentation	5.4	445	77.5%
A4	receiving a D or F on a test	5.3	396	68.98%
A14	being suspended or placed on academic probation	5.3	161	28%
P1	personal pressure to get good grades	5.0	323	56.2%
A6	studying for a test	4.7	539	93.9%
P17	fear of failure	4.4	391	68.1%
A3	failing to complete assignments	4.3	369	64.28%
A5	taking a test in class	4.1	503	87.63%
A21	difficulty motivating myself for classwork	4.1	471	82%
P15	feeling depressed	4.1	357	62%
F3	health concerns of an immediate family member	4.1	293	51%
F7	concern over personal problems of a family member(s)	4.1	200	34.8%
F11	death of parent	4.1	73	12.7%
S3	death of friend	4.0	249	43.3%
S24	having something stolen	4.0	234	40.7%
P24	lack of self-motivation	4.0	368	64.1%

P7	difficulty in budgeting money	3.9	412	71.7%
P25	lack of self-confidence	3.9	390	67.9%
F13	death of a relative	3.9	177	30.8%
A12	completing a research paper	3.8	310	54%
A22	falling behind in class(es) because of illness	3.8	192	33%
S7	concern over problems with friends	3.8	383	66.7%
P3	difficulty in making vocational selection	3.8	198	34.4%
S15	being alone when others are socializing	3.7	270	47%
P12	personal shyness	3.6	381	66.37%
P2	responsibility for unwanted pregnancy	3.5	82	14.2%
A17	being called on in class	3.4	421	73%
P9	lack of assertiveness or ability to speak up for what I believe	3.3	351	61.1%
P11	fear of being alone	3.3	319	55.5%
F12	death of brother or sister	3.3	62	10.8%
F16	conflicts between parental goals/values or morals and my own	3.3	214	37.2%
A20	completing reading or writing assignments	3.2	438	76.3%
P8	disliking personal physical appearance	3.2	342	59.5%
A13	conflict with my instructor(s)	3.1	219	38.1%
P6	fear of pregnancy	3.1	139	24.2%
S2	lack of approval from peers	3	299	52%

P23	concern over physical health	3.0	277	48.25%
F24	fear of failure to meet family expectations	3.0	267	46.5%
A9	receiving a graded test back in class	2.9	445	77.5%
A10	pressure to get an A or B in a course	2.9	451	78.5%
A23	cheating on a test	2.9	133	23%
A25	dropping/adding a course	2.9	172	29.9%
P4	conflict with personal sexual morals	2.9	251	43.7%
P10	lack of ability to make decisions	2.9	327	56.9%
F18	diffiuclty with my own changing attitudes toward family and hometown	2.9	189	32.9%
A16	experiencing confusion about my selected major/minor	2.8	247	43%
F15	criticism of my social life from parents	2.8	232	40.4%
P5	conflict with religious values	2.7	270	47%
A19	working while going to school (including workstudy, assistant ships)	2.6	207	36%
S8	meeting new people	2.6	463	80.6%
P16	contemplation of suicide	2.6	139	24.2%
P19	change in personal habits (sleeping, eating, etc)	2.6	229	39.8%
P21	fear of personal harm	2.6	193	33.6%
F5	past/present verbal abuse in the home	2.6	157	27.3%
F14	rivalry with a brother or sister	2.6	88	32.7%

S14	lack of social activities	2.5	330	57.4%
F8	feeling homesick	2.5	200	34.8%
A18	requesting help from a tutor or other support personnel	2.4	335	58%
S12	peer pressure against getting good grades	2.4	340	59.2
S13	maintaining friendships	2.4	430	74.9
S22	competing on an athletic team	2.4	180	31.3
P13	my own use of alcohol or drugs	2.4	272	47.3%
F9	parents fighting	2.4	152	26.48%
A8	seeking assistance from one of my instructors	2.3	383	66.7%
S25	pressure from upper class persons	2.2	163	28.3
F1	having an alcoholic parent	2.2	89	15.5%
F10	parental separation/divorce	2.2	56	9.75%
S1	pressure from peers regarding my dating behavior	2.1	368	64.1%
S11	socializing with members of the opposite sex	2.1	459	79.9%
S9	getting along with roommate	2.0	291	50.6%
A7	taking notes during a lecture	1.8	502	87.45%
A24	falling asleep during class	1.8	254	44%
A2	skipping class and attending class after skipping	1.4	422	73.5%
S5	peer pressure involving drugs or alcohol	1.4	375	65%
P18	diffiuclty in accepting homesexuality of peers	1.4	111	19.3%
P22	difficulty with personal sexuality or homosexuality	1.4	139	24.2%

F17	going home for visits or vacations	1.4	227	39.5%
F25	past/present physical abuse in the home	1.4	56	9.75%
S4	peer pressure involving sex	1.3	312	54.3%
S10	socializing with members of the same sex	1.3	434	75.6%
A1	walking late into class	1.2	463	80.6%
S6	becoming a member of a campus organization or social fraternity/sorority	1.2	346	60%
S23	visiting bar or night club with friends	1.2	383	66.7%
S21	conflict with Room Assistant/ Head Resident	1.1	83	14.45%
P20	difficulty in resloving past military experiences	1.1	66	11.4%
F21	illness in my own children	1.1	49	8.53%
S18	Conflict with campus rules	1.0	151	26.3%
S20	registering a compalint with with Room Assistant	1.0	86	14.9%
F6	pressure from family regarding marriage	1.0	83	14.45%
F19	past/present incestual relationship (any sexual contact between family members)	1.0	53	9.23%
F22	my own marital difficulties	1.0	46	8.0%
S16	feeling of discrimination because of my race, sex, religion	0.9	172	29.9%
S19	living in campus housing	0.9	123	21.4%
F2	receiving mail, phone calls or visits from family members	0.9	283	49.3%

A15	visiting or using the library	0.8	463	80.6%
F20	gain of a new family member	0.7	62	10.8%
F23	making child care arrangements for my children	0.7	44	7.66%
S17	peer pressure to marry/to become engaged to marry	0.3	126	21.9%

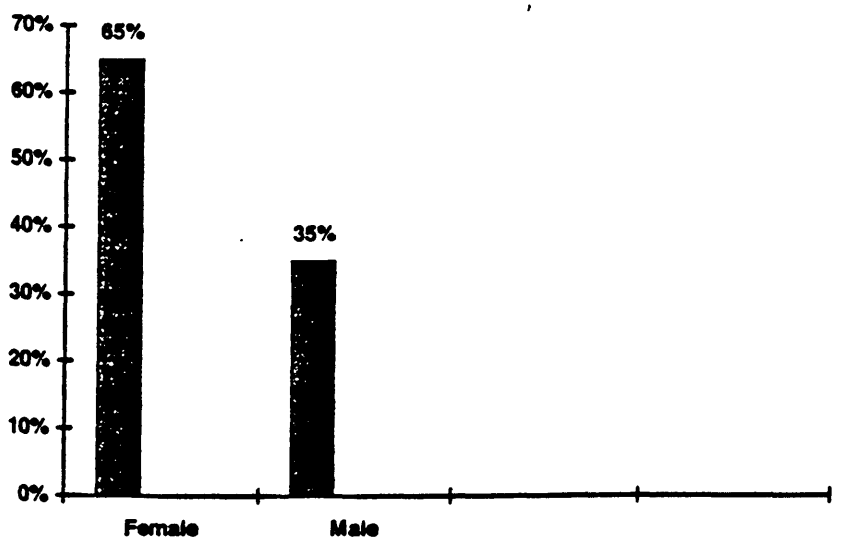
Appendix 2

1996/1997 COUNSELLING STATISTICS SUMMARY

Total Students Seen
Semester one and two

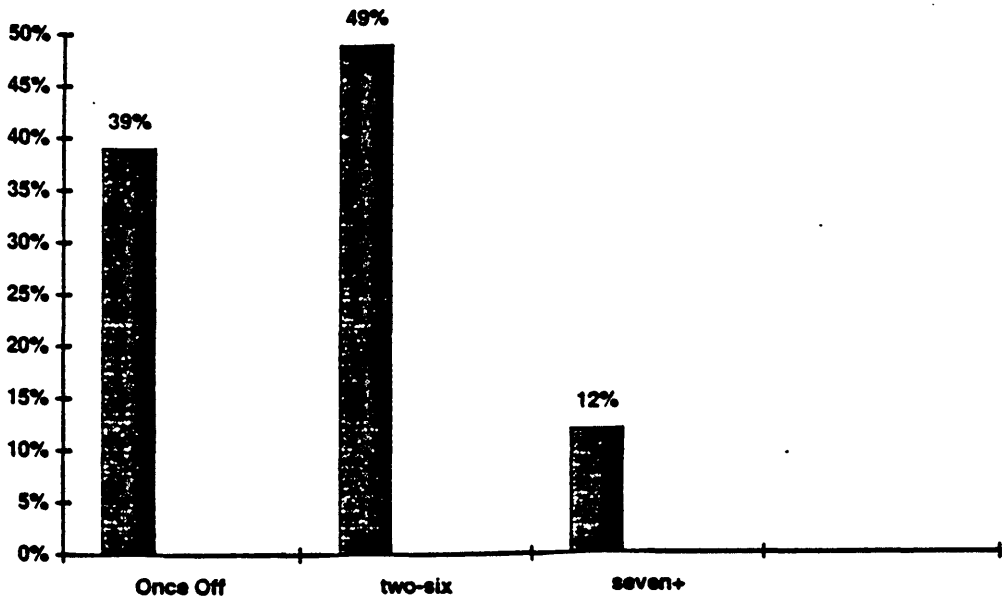
Term one = 210
Term two = 261

	Total	Percentage
Male	167	35%
Female	304	65%



Total Sessions = 1,316
Semester One and Two

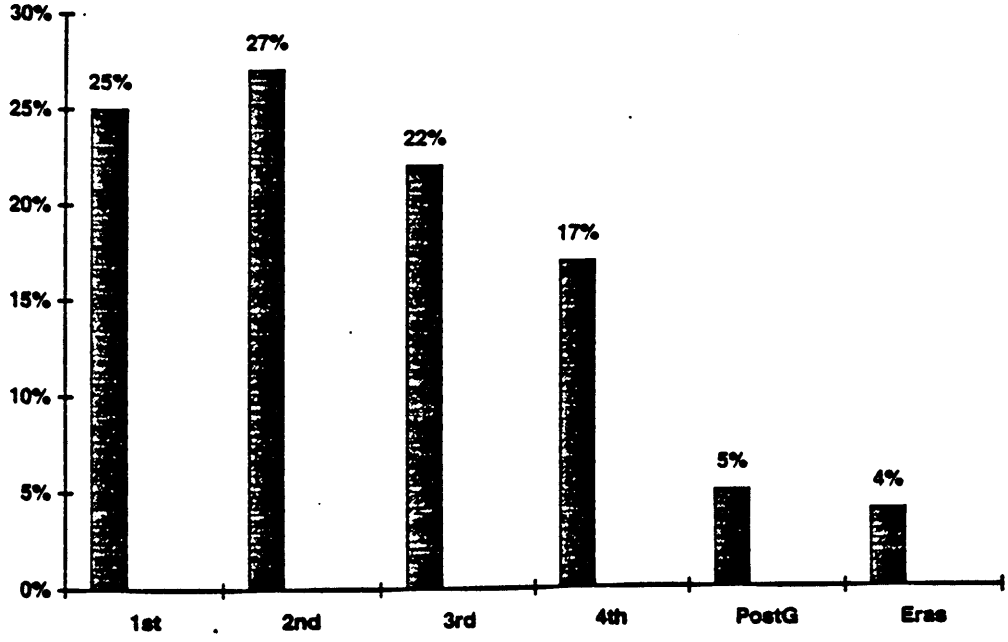
	Total	Percentage
	1,316	
Once off	469	39%
2-6	572	49%
7+	134	12%



Student Years

Semester One and Two

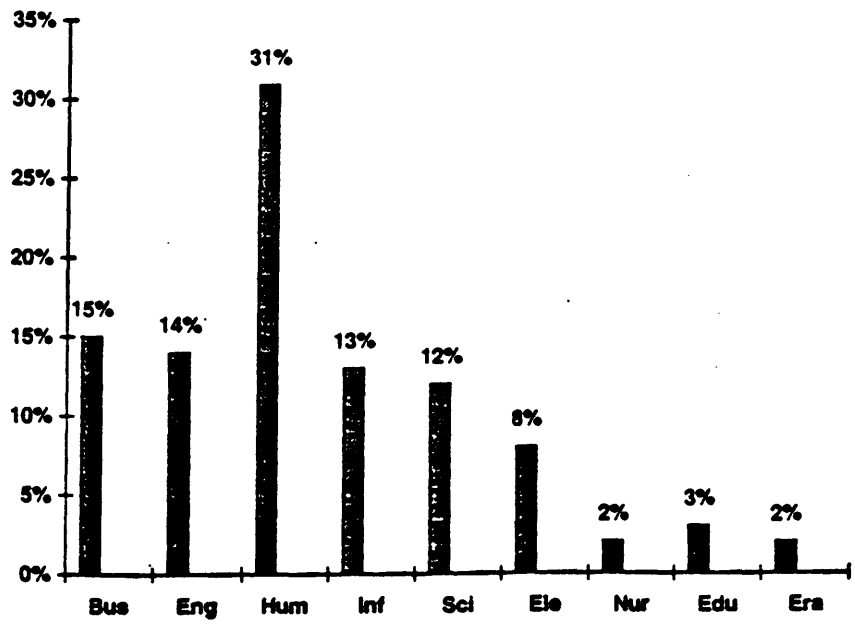
	Total	Percentage
First Yr	116	25%
Second Yr	127	27%
Third Yr	104	22%
Fourth Yr	80	17%
Post Grad	26	5%
Erasmus	18	4%



Colleges

Semester One and Two

	Total	Percentage
Col. Of Bus	71	15%
Col. Of Eng.	68	14%
Col.Of Hum.	146	31%
Col. Of Inf.	52	13%
Col. Of Sci	57	12%
Col. Of Ele.	39	8%
Dip. In Nur.	11	2%
Col. Of Edu.	15	3%
Erasmus	12	2%



Referral Source

Semester One and Two

	Total	Percentage
Self	350	67%
Med Cent.	40	8%
Out G.P.	4	.8%
I Grade Com	1	.2%
Friends	13	3%
Family	16	4%
Stu. Ser.	6	1%
Faculty	36	7%
MWHB Soc. Work.	1	.2%
Dis. Com.	1	.2%
Oth. Coun	3	.6%
Kilmurry Village	1	.2%
Chaplain	5	1%
Co-op	11	3.2%
Access Off.	4	.8%
Mary I	4	.8%
Students Union	8	1.8%
Nurse Tutor	1	.2%

Reasons for Referral
Semester One and Two

Reason for Referral - Second Semester

	Total	Per %
Depression	33	7%
Preg/Abortion	11	2%
Academic	133	28%
Exam Anx.	64	13%
Sub. Abuse	12	2%
Obsessional	4	.8%
Bereavment	38	8%
Adj. Diffic.	11	2%
Sleeplessness	3	.6%
Sex. Difficulties	4	.8%
Relationships	28	6%
Psyciatric	6	1.2%
Family	33	7%
Sex Abuse	15	3%
Eat Disorders	19	4%
Co-op Issue	8	5%
Worried Friend	11	2%
Disability	3	.6%
Child of Alo Par	3	.6%
Other	3	.6%
Rape/Assault	4	.8%
Suicidal	4	.8%
Social Skills	4	.8%
Inter Skills	10	2%
PTSD	4	.8%
Sexuality	1	.2%
Psychosomatic	1	.2%
Financial Aid	1	.2%

Reasons for Referral
Semester One and Two

Reason for Referral - Second Semester

	Total	Per %
Depression	33	7%
Preg/Abortion	11	2%
Academic	133	28%
Exam Anx.	64	13%
Sub. Abuse	12	2%
Obsessional	4	.8%
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Sex Abuse	15	3%
Eat Disorders	19	4%
Co-op Issue	8	5%
Worried Friend	11	2%
Disability	3	.6%
Child of Alo Par	3	.6%
Other	3	.6%
Rape/Assault	4	.8%
Suicidal	4	.8%
Social Skills	4	.8%
Inter Skills	10	2%
PTSD	4	.8%
Sexuality	1	.2%
Psychosomatic	1	.2%
Financial Aid	1	.2%

Appendix 3

LETTERS TO PARTICIPANTS

March 1990

Dear Student,

As part of my ongoing research into the nature of stress at the University, I am inviting you to participate in a series of interviews with me over the coming term. The aim of these interviews will be to clarify our understanding of the demands you experience as a student. All interviews will be taped to allow for detailed analysis of data. Total confidentiality is assured and no information will be used without your consent.

A total of three interviews will be carried out in all, each interview lasting roughly 30 minutes. The following are the times and dates of your interview:

1.
2.
3.

All interviews will be carried out by either myself or my consultant Hank O'Mahony.

Participation in this study will in no way interfere with your rights. This study is supported by the Student Union and College authorities. I look forward to your co-operation.

Many thanks.

Yours sincerely,

Declan Aherne
Student Counsellor

Appendix 3 Continued

I hereby give my consent for this consultation to be tape-recorded on the understanding that:

(a) It is to be used for research purposes only,

(b) Total confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained, and

(c) My rights as a student will in no way be infringed.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 4

SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEWS

PROCEDURE

Some students were interviewed by interviewer one (D) only, some by interviewer two (H) only, whilst others were interviewed by both.

Number of interviews by D only = 12
Total number of interviews by D = 46

Number of interviews by H only = 3
Total number of interviews by H = 20

Summary Schedule of Interviews

	Interview No 1	Interview No 2	Interview No 3	Total Number of Interviews
Subject No 1	D	-	-	1
2	H	H	D	3
3	D	D	D	3
4	D	D	H	3
5	D	D	H	3
6	H	D	-	2
7	H	H	D	3
8	D	D	D	3
9	D	H	-	2
10	D	D	H	3
11	H	-	-	1
12	D	D	D	3
13	D	D	D	3
14	D	D	D	3
15	D	H	D	3
16	D	-	-	1
17	D	D	D	3
18	D	D	D	3
19	H	H	D	3
20	D	-	-	1
21	D	D	D	3
22	H	H	H	3
23	D	D	-	2
24	D	D	H	3
25	D	D	H	3
26	D	-	-	1
27	H	-	-	1
		Total Interviews		66

Appendix 5

DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Description of Individual Participants

Student	Gender	Age	College	Year	Status
1	F	19	HUM	2	CLIENT
2	M	18	ENG	1	CLIENT
3	M	21	ENG	4	GENERAL
4	M	20	BUS	3	GENERAL
5	M	22	BUS	4	GENERAL
6	M	22	BUS	4	GENERAL
7	F	22	ENG	1	GENERAL
8	M	18	HUM	3	CLIENT
9	M	22	ENG	4	CLIENT
10	F	21	ENG	4	CLIENT
11	M	22	ENG	2	CLIENT
12	F	19	ENG	3	GENERAL
13	M	20	HUM	2	GENERAL
14	M	19	ENG	3	GENERAL
15	M	20	ENG	3	CLIENT
16	F	20	ENG	2	CLIENT
17	M	17	ENG	1	CLIENT
18	F	18	HUM	1	GENERAL
19	F	19	ENG	2	CLIENT
20	M	18	ENG	2	CLIENT
21	F	20	ENG	3	CLIENT
22	F	21	BUS	3	CLIENT
23	M	17	BUS	1	GENERAL
24	M	21	ENG	3	GENERAL
25	M	21	HUM	3	CLIENT
26	M	22	BUS	4	CLIENT
27	M	18	ENG	1	GENERAL

Appendix 6

DESCRIPTION OF EDITING RATERS

Sex

9 Male (M)
5 Female (F)

Profession

Rater	
(a)	College Counsellor, Psychologist (M)
(b)	College Graduate, Engineer (M)
(c)	College Graduate, Psychotherapist (M)
(d)	College Graduate, P.E. (F)
(e)	College Doctor (M)
(f)	Psychotherapist, Psychologist (M)
(g)	College Nurse (F)
(h)	Psychotherapist, School Counsellor (M)
(i)	College Student (M)
(j)	Family Therapist (F)
(k)	College Counsellor (M)
(l)	College Graduate, Secretarial (F)
(m)	College Lecturer, English (F)
(n)	College Graduate (F)

Appendix 7

INSTRUCTIONS TO EDITING RATERS

You are asked to read this trnascript and identify all key statements you consider to be contained in it. A key statement is any group of words you consider to be significant in your understanding of what is being experienced by this student. Such statements may summarise what has been said or express in a helpful way, what the student means.

Statements can be as short or as long as you wish. The purpose of this editing process is to eliminate as much of the data as possible in order to reduce the data to its most meaningful elements.

Appendix 8

SCHEDULE OF EDITING RATERS

Transcript Student No.	Team of Raters		
1	*A	B	C
2	A	B	C
3	A	B	C
4	A	B	C
5	A	D	E
6	A	D	E
7	A	D	E
8	A	D	E
9	A	F	G
10	A	F	G
11	A	F	G
12	A	F	G
13	A	H	I
14	A	H	I
15	A	H	J
16	A	H	J
17	A	K	L
18	A	K	L
19	A	K	L
20	A	K	L
21	A	M	N
22	A	M	N
23	A	M	N
24	A	M	N
25	A	O	J
26	A	O	J
27	A	O	J

(* See Appendix 6 for rater description)

Appendix 9

Initial List of Topics

ACADEMIC

STUDY

		Demand Category Number
a. Approach		
1.	Doubt about approach	7
2.	Impact of study approach	7
3.	Never enough done	7
4.	Need pressure to work	7
5.	Doubt about	7
6.	Difficulty with studying	7
7.	Reaction to study	7
8.	Priorities of study	7
9.	Beginning to study	7
10.	Fear re study	7
11.	Attitude to study	7
12.	Negative prediction of study	7
13.	Stress	7
14.	Approach to exams	7
b. Workload		
15.	Attitude to Workload	2
16.	Worry re	2
17.	Workload	2
18.	Course work difficulty	3
c. Project		
19.	Projects	2
20.	Project uncertainty	2
21.	Unhappy with	2
22.	Finished	2
d. Deadlines		
23.	Worry re	2
24.	Deadlines	2
25.	Time limited	2

STANDARDS

a. Not wanting to do badly / Needing to do good		
26.	Concern re dropping QCA	1
27.	Importance of doing well	1
28.	Implications of doing badly	1
29.	Worry re doing badly	1
30.	Worry re doing well enough	1

31.	Expectations re performance in	1
32.	Setting own high standards	1
33.	Not doing well	1
34.	Used to doing well	1
35.	Ambitious	1
36.	Success	1
37.	Trying too hard to do well	1
38.	Get it done well	1
39.	Not as confident of doing as well as before	1
40.	Pressure to do well	1

FAILING

a. Failing		
41.	No experience of	1
42.	Attitude to	1
43.	Negative experience	1
44.	Not wanting to	1
45.	Implications of	1
46.	Failure is	1
b. Fear of Failing		
47.	Worry re failing	1
48.	Fear of failing	1
49.	Effects on study of fear	1
50.	Attitude to fear	1

EXAMS

a. Stress		
51.	Prospect of cracking up	1
52.	Pressure re	1
53.	Difficulty re doing	1
54.	Apprehension re	1
55.	Fear of having to repeat	1
b. Exams		
56.	Attitude to	1
57.	Feelings approaching	1
58.	Importance of getting	1
59.	Successful record	1
60.	Repeats	1
61.	Unexpected	1
62.	Difficult	3
63.	Past records	/
64.	Performance in	/
c. Motivation		
65.	Effects of poor	4
66.	Lack of for course	4
67.	Motivation to work	4

d. Miscellaneous		
68.	Co-op v college	/
69.	Significance of week 1	/
70.	Schooldays	/
71.	Getting exam results	/
72.	Hoping to do Erasmus	5
73.	Decision re attending lectures	/
74.	Predicting hard term	3
75.	Wrong subject choice	5

CAREER

a. Career uncertainty / Career Choice		
76.	Uncertainty	4
77.	Career concern	5
78.	Career choice satisfaction	4
79.	Motivation of career choice	4
80.	Future enjoyment of work	5
81.	Job preference	5
82.	Doubts about what I'm doing	4
83.	Motivation for doing course	4
84.	Motivation for staying on course	4
85.	Career path	4
b. Jobs concern		
86.	Concern	6
87.	Difficulty getting job	6
88.	Importance of getting job	6
89.	Attitude to work	/
c. U.L.		
90.	Attitude to college/course	4
91.	Enjoyment of course	4
92.	Suitability to U.L.	4
93.	Affect of Co-op	4
94.	Feelings re college	4

PERSONAL

a. Self-description (neutral)		
95.	Description	/
96.	Assessment	/
97.	Expression	/
98.	Exposure	/
b. Self-image (negative)		
99.	Doubt	/
100.	Image	/
101.	Judging	/
102.	Pressure	/
103.	Despair	/

104.	Critical	/
105.	Defeat	/
106.	Damaging	/
107.	Cautious	/
108.	Anger	/
109.	Lack of Respect	/
110.	Denigration	/
111.	Wish for improvement	/
c. Self-image (positive)		
112.	Coping	/
113.	Control	**38**
114.	Acceptance	/
115.	Awareness	/
116.	Happiness	/
117.	Confidence	/
118.	Challenging	/
119.	Assured	/
120.	Assertion	**37**
d. Feelings		
121.	Good	/
122.	Disappointed	/
123.	Panicky	/
124.	Confused	**32**
125.	Pissed off	/
126.	Crying	/
127.	Annoyed	/
128.	Irritated	/
129.	Uncomfortable	/
130.	Drifting	/
131.	Hypocritical	/
132.	Sad	/
133.	Resigned	/
e. Personal behaviour		
134.	Unwinding	/
135.	Concentration	**7**
136.	Sleep	**28**
137.	Panic	/
138.	Reaction	/
139.	On hold	/
140.	Perfectionism	**1**
141.	Interpreting	/
142.	Responsibility	**48**
143.	Showing emotion	/
f. Attitude/thoughts		
144.	Regrets/no regrets	**32**
145.	Atmosphere	/

146.	Not prepared enough	/
147.	Demand	/
148.	Lack of motivation	4
149.	Decision making	39
150.	Change	/
151.	Settling	/
152.	Independence	49
153.	Missing out	18
154.	Wasting time	29
g. Issues		
155.	Sport/recreation	36
156.	Finance	24
157.	Health	33
158.	Limerick	/
159.	The weather	/
160.	The interview	30
161.	Religion	31
162.	Sleep	28
163.	The past	/
164.	The future	/
165.	Sex (see social)	20
166.	Grief	25
167.	Smoking	/
168.	Alcohol (see social)	27
169.	Suicide	/
170.	Pregnancy (see social)	/
171.	Appearance (see social)	23
172.	Time (see academic)	2
173.	Atmosphere	/
174.	Obsession	/
175.	Showing emotion	35
176.	Rationality	/

SOCIAL

FRIENDS

a. significance of having/not having friends		
177.	Friendship	11
178.	Lack of	11
179.	Desire for more	11
180.	Difficulty making	15
181.	Importance of	11
182.	Fear of not making	11
183.	Attitude to making new friends	11
184.	Support of	19

b. Effect of friend on me		
185.	Attitude to friend whose dad died	**19**
186.	Upset by plans of	**19**
187.	Friend thinking of leaving course	**19**
c. Relationship with friend		
188.	Not getting on well with	**13**
189.	Break-up with	**13**
190.	Losing touch with old friends	**22**
191.	Not wishing to upset	**13**
d. Girlfriend / Boyfriend		
i) Relationship with		
192.	Relationship with	**13**
193.	Feeling a burden on	**13**
194.	Feeling awful for refusing	**13**
195.	Difficulty being told I'm loved by	**13**
ii) Importance of		
196.	Importance of	**21**
197.	Concern re having	**21**

e. Males / Females		
i) Relating to		
198.	Fear of	**14**
199.	Conscious of	**14**
200.	Upset by approach of	**14**
201.	What male thinks of me	**14**
202.	Significance of knowing male	**14**
203.	Relating to	**14**

Self Critical re:

SEX

a. Concern regarding		
204.	Poor sex life	**20**
205.	Unsure re sex	**20**

HOUSEMATES

a. Behaviour of		
206.	Behaviour of	/
207.	Hassle between	/
b. Feelings toward		
208.	Feeling toward	/
209.	Ref. Atmosphere with	/

OTHERS JUDGING

a. Comparing self to others		
210.	Disappointed at not being as good as	**9**
211.	No upset that others re better than me	**9**
212.	comfort of others being like me	**9**
213.	Comparing self to	**9**
214.	Feeling not as good as	**9**
215.	Having same problem	**9**
b. Acceptance of me by others		
216.	How others perceive me	**16**
217.	Judgement of	**16**
218.	Fear of not living up to expectations of	**16**
219.	Effects of expectations of	**16**
220.	Expectations of	**16**
221.	Concern re image with	**16**
222.	Seeking approval of	**16**
223.	Wanting to be accepted by	**8**
224.	Fear of not being accepted by	**8**
225.	Needing others to be there	**8**
226.	Fear of rejection by	**8**
227.	Worried about what others think of me	**16**
228.	Trying to fit in	**8**
229.	Not fitting in	**8**
230.	Feeling left out	**8**
231.	Disapproval of by	**16**
232.	Rejection by	**8**
c. Relating to others		
233.	Judging	**16**
234.	Intimidated by	**16**
235.	Annoyed by	/
236.	Attitude to	/
237.	Panic reaction of	/

OTHERS SOCIAL

a. Being with others v being alone		
238.	Worry re being alone	**10**
239.	Not wanting to be alone	**10**
240.	How it feels being alone	/
241.	Lonely feelings	/
242.	Having people to talk to	**19**
243.	Importance of company	**19**
b. Social skills		
244.	Worry re meeting new people	**15**
245.	Uncomfortable being centre of attention	**15**
246.	Poor social skills	**15**
247.	Difficulty conversing	**15**

248.	Lack of confidence to speak	**15**
249.	Attitude to talking to other	**15**
250.	Shyness	**15**
251.	Putting on an image	**15**
252.	Reaction to strangers	**15**
253.	Self critical re social behaviour	**15**
254.	Difficulty in getting to know people	**15**
255.	Sharing personal information	**15**
c. Social activity		
256.	Amount of social activity	**18**
257.	Frequency of being alone	**10**
258.	Social life	**18**
259.	Poor social interaction	**15**
260.	Not participating	**10**

FAMILY

FAMILY HOME

a. How it is in the family		
261.	Fighting at	/
262.	Description of	/
263.	Feelings towards me by	/
264.	Impressions of	/
265.	Conflict in	**43**
266.	How it is at	/
267.	Communication within	/
268.	Business of	/
269.	Changes from past in	/
b. How it is in the family for me		
270.	Depressing at	/
271.	How I feel in	/
272.	My role in	**48**
273.	Not enticing	/
274.	Support from	**44**
275.	Prediction re going to	/
276.	Not fitting in at	**49**
277.	Concern for	**42**
c. Separating from family		
278.	Separating from	**49**
279.	Feelings about separating from	**49**
280.	Attitude to staying with	**49**
281.	Affect of me being away from	**49**
282.	Contact with	**49**

PARENTS

a. Relations between me and parents		
283.	Fear of	**43**

284.	Pressure from	**41**
285.	Letting down	**41**
286.	Expectation of	**41**
287.	Changing attitude to	/
288.	Unhappy with relationship with	**43**
289.	Concern for	**42**
290.	Not needing	**49**
291.	Feel a need to tell	**44**
292.	Irritable with	**43**
293.	Disappointing	**41**
294.	Living up to expectations of	**41**
295.	Contact with	/
296.	Relationship with	/
297.	Feeling towards	/
298.	Views of my standards	**41**
299.	What they think of me	**41**
b. Description of parents		
300.	Effect of sister on	/
301.	Financial hassle of	/
302.	What they say	/
303.	Relationship of	/
304.	Attitude of	/
305.	Behaviour of	/
306.	Concern of	/
c. Dad		
i) Relationship with Dad		
307.	How I'd like to be with	**43**
308.	Relationship with	/
309.	Attitude to	/
310.	Affect on me	/
311.	Predicting behaviour of	/
312.	Feelings towards	/
313.	Communication with	/
ii) Description of Dad		
314.	Motivation of behaviour of	/
315.	Description of	/
316.	Reaction of	/
317.	Request of	/
318.	Dead	/
d. Mum		
i) Relationship with Mum		
319.	Feelings towards	**42**
320.	Worried about	**42**
321.	Sharing with	**44**
322.	Wanting to please	**41**
323.	Anger towards	/

324.	Relationship with	/
325.	Pressure from	41
326.	Affect on me	/
	ii) Description of Mum	
327.	How she is	/
328.	Attitude of	/
329.	Brothers relationship with	/
330.	Health of	/
331.	Under pressure at home	/
332.	Responsibilities of	/
333.	Description of	/
334.	Death of	/
e. Brother		
	i) Relationship with brother	
335.	Feelings towards	/
336.	Upset visiting	/
337.	Concern re	46
338.	Relationship with	/
339.	Comparing with	47
	ii) Description of Brother	
340.	Health of	/
341.	Description of	/
342.	Not pulling his weight	/
f. Sister		
	i) Relationship with Sister	
343.	Comparing self to	47
344.	Can't understand doing better than me	47
345.	Not jealous of	47
346.	Difficulty with her being free	47
347.	Difficulty with not being with	45
348.	Attitude to	/
349.	Relationship with	/
350.	Rivalry with	47
351.	Feeling toward	/
352.	Difficulty with	45
	ii) Description of Sister	
353.	Does well	/
354.	Free in evenings	/
355.	Difficulty with living at home	/
356.	Attitude to parents of	/
357.	Behaviour of	/
358.	At home	/
359.	Description of	/
360.	Sibling - behaviour of, feelings toward	/

Appendix 10

CATEGORY TITLES, DEFINITIONS AND EXAMPLES:

1. To achieve academic standards

This category refers to specific demands regarding academic results, and in particular refers to students struggle with the fear of failing and their need to achieve. Identity and self-image seem to be very much a part of this struggle. This category reflects students attitude to college and exams. It gives an indication as to what academic results mean to students. The examples on this category indicate that the current student population are a highly competitive group of people, striving to achieve excellence. The danger associated with this approach of course is that it can lead to an over-identification with academic success, to the neglect of other aspects of development.

This category represents a major academic stressor for students and is referred to by many students in the present study.

The need to achieve, based on intrinsic motivation is what this category refers to and is not to be confused with categories 9, 41 and 47 which refer to outside influences on the need to achieve i.e. social comparisons rather than task oriented (Nicholls, 1984).

This category incorporates Chickerings vector of 'developing competence' as well as the need to achieve motive as outlined by McClelland et al (1953).

> *e.g. "I've got my ambition to get an honours degree out of here".(1)* "Just to prove to myself....I came here to do well".(3) "You get a great*

sense of achievement when you do well in an exam...it's important ...it's something to live for....under constant pressure to prove to myself that I could do it.....if you don't get a good Q.C.A. Your sort of a stupid bimbo....I want to do well just for a sense of achievement....there's no one putting pressure on me but myself" (7) "I wouldn't like to fail an exam cause that would be a failure in me...I've never failed." (10) "If I fail I fail, if I get my degree I get it" (24)
(indicates transcript number)*

2. To get academic work done (time and workload constraints)

This category refers to the demand due to the amount of work to be done, including time demand. Workload is a very real demand facing students, but tends not to be monitored by faculty. Each lecturer will tend to take the workload for his/her own module into account, but will rarely be aware of what other course work demands students are given.

Even if the lecturer were to know the students overall workload, there are no definitive guidelines available as to what is too much and what is tolerable. The decision will be based on both the quality of the work as well as the quantity. This demand may also be a reflection of poor study skills, such as time management, resulting in their 'cramming' work coming up to deadlines.

e.g. "The amount of material is unbelievable" (1). "A lot of coursework to be done" (12). "The feeling that I'm not going to get it all done" (19) "Main thing is the thesis...has to be in for Wednesday." (5) "It's the project at the moment...is well behind schedule" (3).

3. To get academic work done (difficult work constraints)

This category refers to the difficulty of the work to be done, making it qualitatively different to categories 2 and 7. The difficulties can be due to the individual students own lack of ability or suitability to the course or it may be

due to course work that is too difficult for most students - something which would need to be addressed on a class basis, by a class representative for example.

> *e.g. "A lot more technical... it takes me a lot longer to get through things" (1) "It's just very hard to understand it mainly" (24)*

4. To be satisfied with being at the college

This category includes statements indicating that students do not feel they fit in very well at the college. This category highlights the importance of goodness-of-fit between student and campus for student well being. This category also includes statements concerning career dissatisfaction and difficulties with the college 'system'.

Many students in third level education are doing courses they do not wish to do but are doing them as a result of the points system which enabled them to gain a place at third level. This has resulted in many students being very poorly motivated to study.

Goodness of fit of students to courses is determined not just by the course content, but also by the campus environment within which the course is being carried out. Environments can differ in terms of emphasis, climate and ethos, factors which may or may not combine successfully with the students personality and circumstances.

> *e.g. "Finish up here as fast as possible...a lot of things I'm doing I haven't the slightest interest in... (the system) is based on cramming...you don't get a chance to understand" (3) "I'm not suited to college at all"*

(14) "I don't enjoy the course but I'm going to stick with it" (6) "It's all just geared towards exams" (14)

5. To be able to pursue a chosen career

This category includes statements regarding future career plans and hopes. Statements in this category are very often connected to those in category 1, i.e. the academic standards required for career objectives.

e.g. "I know what I want ...I'd like to have the decision to choose...I would apply for a masters degree" (3) "I'm hoping to go on Erasmus" (18) "I want to do a postgrad in computers so this year all my results are up again, because I know I have to study to do that" (27)

6. To get a job

This category concerns the difficulty in getting jobs due to a very real scarcity of jobs. With over ¼ million people unemployed in Ireland, students can no longer be guaranteed of a job upon completion of their course of study. The stress of job prospects is most likely to occur for final year students more so than students in other years.

e.g. "Fear of being turned down, might end up with nothing (re: Job)"(5)

7. To be able to study (skills constraints)

This category contains statements illustrative of the way students study, their style and pattern of study, and difficulties in trying to study. Such difficulties include lack of motivation, poor concentration, organisation and exam panic.

The reason many students under-perform at college is not due to a lack of ability but because of poor study skills. Third level students are required to abandon

the rote learning approach to study prevalent in secondary school and replace it with a more meaningful approach to study ,based on the critical analysis of material. Furthermore, students are required to take greater responsibility for their study than heretofore. The importance of time management becomes more crucial in this situation where students are required to organise their own study arrangements without the watchful eye of either parents or schoolteacher.

> *e.g. "I just can't motivate myself...if I had no option to leave then I'd get down to it" (10) "I spend a lot of the day on things that shouldn't really be spending your time on...I'm not well organised" (3) "All on edge...just can't concentrate (7) "I find it very hard to get organised...I'd like to be better prepared...just getting it started...just panicked" (12)*

8. To be accepted by/fit in with others

This category refers to statements indicating or inferring a demand to be accepted by others or to 'fit in'. This category also refers to statements indicating or inferring that students feel in some way rejected or left out by others and highlights the importance of having a sense of belonging. Maslow (1954) refers to this need to belong as important for development to occur.

> *e.g. "Not being accepted ... not fitting in anywhere ... immediately your on the outside of the group...rejected" (5) "I suppose I want to be accepted" (13) "That I wouldn't be accepted ... have no friend." (18) "If I'm with a crowd I don't feel comfortable with, I feel I'm not liked" (7)*

9. To be as good as others

This category includes statements indicating or inferring a comparison of self with others, and also statements indicating or inferring thoughts and feelings of not being as good as others or being inferior to others. This category is influenced by the students level of self confidence and can be a source of extreme stress. Social comparisons of this nature are indicative of the external

factors which influence the need to achieve, very often producing a heightened fear of failure.

> *e.g. "I'm trying to keep up with the rest of them.I would always feel that I wasn't as good as other people" (21) "When everyone else is coming out with really high Q.C.A.'s you don't want to be a failure..it makes you strive to do better so that your just as good as everybody else and that nobody can put you down in that way" (7) "you have to work over yourself to keep up with the really intelligent ones...I feel stupid.. less bright" (14)*

10. To be with others/not to be alone

This category refers to statements indicating or inferring that students do not want to be on their own and feel lonely. This category also includes references to the need for others. Loneliness has been referred to as a significant stressor for students. Without others ones need for intimacy cannot be fulfilled. The college experience offers a great opportunity for experimenting with the formation of relationships of varying sorts. Each attempt to reach out to others in pursuit of friendship and companionship however also brings with it the risk of rejection. Because of this many students who lack confidence to make friends will find themselves alone and lonely.

> *e.g. "I just hate being alone" (7) "I'm a bit lonely as well" (9) "I worry about being on my own a lot...I don't want that...it seems to be happening a lot recently" (15) "I feel very lonely" (24)*

11. To have friends, someone to turn to

This category refers to statements indicating and inferring any reference to students needing to have someone to turn to. It also refers to the importance of having friends. This category is very similar to C10, and highlights the importance of friends as a support, with whom one can talk and share.

e.g. "I don't seem to know enough people.I don't seem to have enough friends...I'd like to have a broader circle of friends" (15) "no support...not having friends" (9) "I try to get to know loads of people so that I have people to talk to" (13) "It takes an awful lot off you when you can talk to someone" (24) "I have loads of friends" (14)

12. To get on with housemates

This category includes any statements indicating or inferring that students are/are not getting on with housemates. For the first time in their lives perhaps college students have to live with people other than their family. They may have to share rooms with people other than a sibling. One may end up in a situation of living with people one does not know and whom has very different routines and interests. Situations such as this require tremendous levels of adaptability which in turn will require confidence.

e.g. "It's still very noisy (where) I am .... you can take so much .... I just got up then and asked them to be quiet."(18)

13. To get on with others including boy/girlfriend/friends

This category includes statements indicating or inferring students difficulties in getting on with others including boy/girlfriends. Because relationships are of paramount importance in the life of a student, whenever relationships are strained there is a lot at stake for the student.

e.g. "My relationship with my girlfriend is strained because she's in the States."(20) "The other boys (in project) I don't really get on with."(14)

14. To be able to relate to the opposite sex (including being able to ask someone out)

This category refers to the social skills required to ask out a girl or boy, and not knowing what to say for example. This mainly has to do with self-confidence. This may be new for many students whom have not previously had intimate relationships.

Some students will not have been in a co-educational environment in the past and so skills of relating to the opposite sex may be poor.

> *e.g. "(I suppose fear of) rejection...I feel they are a lot stronger emotionally...I'm too self-conscious" (9)*

15. To be able to get to know and relate to others

This category is similar to 14 above and contains statements indicating or inferring a difficulty relating to others due to shyness or lack of confidence.

> *e.g. "I'm a fairly shy person. Trying to make conversation and find something in common."(5)*

16. To be thought well of by others

This category includes statements indicating or inferring students concern about being thought well of by others. This category is similar to category 8 and 9 regarding acceptance by others.

Ones confidence is influenced by what others think of you. Everyone likes to be liked. This in turn influences identity formation and ones sense of who one is.

The less confident you are in yourself the more important the approval of others then becomes.

> *e.g. "You'd be embarrassed more than anything that you'd make an eegit of yourself."(2)*

17. To be supported by/relate to lecturer

This category includes statements indicating or inferring lack of support from a lecturer or any trouble/bad feelings towards a lecturer.

The relationship between a student and lecturer can be of tremendous importance to the student in his/her development. Personal tutoring roles for example have been developed at many colleges to enhance this relationship. Unfortunately, colleges have tended not to give this function enough priority and it suffers in competition with research, for which ample recognition is provided.

The quality of the informal relationship with faculty has been shown to have a positive effect on student learning and success. Very often faculty are not aware of the significance of this relationship or of the power and influence they have over students. Skills development and self-awareness is therefore highly important for all faculty.

> *e.g. "I feel this person is over me, has control over my destiny".*

18. To have time to socialise

This category includes statements related to the demands to get work done in no. 2 and 3. However, this demand to work is often referred to as an excuse not to have to socialise when social skills are poor and self-confidence is low. Students need the opportunity to socialise in order to satisfy needs for relationship development and intimacy. 'All work and no play makes Jack (and Jill) a dull boy (and girl)'. Whilst too much socialising is always a danger, a balanced approach to both work and leisure time is likely to produce the best results.

> *e.g. "I don't mix much outside of my class... I don't socialise much anymore...I don't have time" (3) "I don't really have a social life...I would prefer to have a better social life... it's difficult to have a decent relationship and study at the same time" (14)*

19. To be close to someone

This category includes statements indicating or inferring a difficulty with being close to somebody. Whilst we all need closeness in our lives for some this can be very threatening. To relate to and be intimate with others requires confidence and trust as well as the ability to be comfortable with ones own emotions. Unfortunately not all students have these characteristics.

> *e.g. "I stop people getting close to me" (9) "It's very hard to get to know me" (5) "I don't want him to be very concerned about me...I felt awful when he wanted me to go with him...I don't want him to get attached" (16)*

20. To be sexually active

This category includes statements referring to difficulties with being sexually active. Included in this category are statements indicating or inferring a wish to be sexually active and reflects a normal development task for late adolescents.

Students are at an age where sexual intercourse may be experienced for the first time. This is bound to involve issues around peer pressure and moral values, particularly in the context of Catholic Ireland where premarital sex is frowned upon.

> *e.g. "My sex life hasn't gone too well" (17) "I'm not really sexually active" (9)*

21. To have a relationship i.e. boyfriend/girlfriend

This category includes statements indicating or inferring a desire to have a relationship. This category also includes statements referring to a lack of relationships.

The formation of steady intimate heterosexual or homosexual relationships is very common in this age group. However there are some students who are not ready for such involvement or commitment yet. Within this group there are then some for whom the whole area of relationship development is very frightening and whilst, within themselves they would love to be 'going steady', they just don't have the confidence in themselves to proceed.

> *e.g. "I've never really had a strong relation towards anyone." "I haven't done a lot of socialising with members of the opposite sex" (5)*

22. To maintain friendships

This category contains statements indicating or inferring a wish/no wish to maintain friendships and refers to the growing apart that occurs when coming to college and when leaving college. Being a third level student inevitably involves having to let go of old friends from school who you no longer meet and

with whom you may discover you have less and less in common. Some friendships formed during the college years will endure throughout life, having found in each other significant commonalties. Other friendships formed at college will be purely for convenience, as housemates and classmates with whom to 'hang out' with.

e.g. "I don't think our friendship is as good as it used to be."(16)

23. To look well

This category refers to the importance of appearances for self-image and identity. Society through the media places a high value on appearances, in particular for females. This can often lead to difficulties where one is struggling to gain social approval. Eating disorders are a frequent outcome of this dilemma for many female students in particular.

e.g. "If you were more happy with your personal appearance, you would have more confidence ...it's a thing that maybe worries me."(19)

24. To have enough money

This category includes references to money shortages and budgeting difficulties. Financial difficulties are referred to by students as a common stressor. The stress may be due to discrepancies between what students receive and what they expect or aspire to rather than being due to any real poverty. Students at UL can avail of financial assistance either as short term interest free loans or as Waivers of Fees in cases of extreme hardship. These facilities are common in many colleges.

e.g. "Money, I have none...grant didn't come through...annoying.., you want to buy things and you can't...I have books to buy" (7) "Money is a bit of a problem...I have enough if I budget properly" (23)

25. To cope with the death of a family member

This category refers to the tragic life event of a family member dying and its impact on the student. Every year dozens of students will experience the death of either a parent, grandparent or sibling. This will involve a natural grief process which is not stressful per se. The stressful element of grieving is that part which threatens the adequacy of the bereaved, either through feeling they cant cope with their emotions or that they cant carry on without their loved one.

e.g. "The last thing I want is people trying to comfort me...it's just a stage you have to get through...I know for a fact that he's not gone...it's very painful" (24)

26. To cope with the threat of physical violence

This category refers to the fear of being beaten up. We all have a basic need to survive and nobody, I'm sure, enjoys being beaten up. Whilst physical assaults are not a common feature on campus, certain individuals, perhaps due to past attacks or bullying may feel more frightened than others.

e.g. "Fear of physical...very wary walking up against a fella"(24)

27. To cope with peer pressure to drink

This category includes statements indicating that self-image and acceptance by others are put to the test.

Drinking is a major focus of social life on campus and there is therefore tremendous pressure on young people to conform with their peers. A certain degree of assertiveness is needed in dealing with this situation.

> *e.g. "(there's always a bit of) peer pressure...I shouldn't really have been drinking" (9)*

28. To get adequate sleep

This category includes references to any difficulties in getting to sleep. Sleep disturbances are common outcome of stress amongst students. This symptom in turn becomes a further stress for student particularly around exam time. Sleep is a basic need for all of us, although some people need far less sleep than others.

> *e.g. "I find it very hard to sleep" (18) "I couldn't sleep" (14)*

29. To have something to do

This category includes references to boredom. Sometimes having too much time on ones hands can lead to reflection or having to address emotions which one may prefer to ignore. Students need to feel challenged and stimulated in order to develop. They also need to know how to occupy themselves in a healthy manner.

> *e.g. "I think it was the two weeks off, I had nothing to do the whole time and I was feeling down"(10)*

30. To cope with doing the Interview

This category refers to statements by those for whom the interview itself posed a threat, primarily due to the personal nature of what was being discussed. Certain students did express their reservations about the interviews. Some saw it as an invasion of their privacy. This would have applied to the non-counselled

students in particular. All concerns were listened to and where students no longer wished to participate, this was respected. For those who did agree to participate, they had to contend with feeling vulnerable having to share personal details with another person.

> *e.g. "It's very personal, I don't like to think that someone is going to listen to it"(22)*

31. To be moral/right

This category refers to issues in moral development. Students at third level face important questions regarding moral values and behaviour. Within a Catholic society, such as Ireland, there are certain values with which many young people have to come to terms or reject. This is an important development task of this age group (Kohlberg, 1963). Chickering (1969) refers to this task as part of developing integrity

> *e.g. "The conflict with religious values...is fairly important for me...it's getting harder to believe in something" (25)*

32. To have meaning in life

This category is concerned with the development of purpose See Chickerings, 1969, 7th. vector). Students at this age are consolidating a framework within which to live their lives. How they deal with this developmental task will have important implications for their motivation and self-acceptance.

> *e.g. "I don't want to become one of those people that just drifts along...find some meaning in life" (18)*

33. To be healthy and fit

This category refers to statements which express concerns regarding health. Whilst physical well being is a basic need for all of us, this category refers to the more neurotic element of hypochondriasis, where a student worries unduly about his/her health.

> *e.g. "I just always tend to look after myself ...conscious of picking up a cold...when I get sick I get an awful dose of it" (24)*

34. To deal with being accused of cheating in an exam

This category refers to the unpleasant event of being accused of cheating at an exam. Such an occurrence will have severe recurring moral questions.

> *e.g. "I was accused of cogging inside the exam...I knew well she had to do her duties....I was really sour at your man" (24)*

35. To express emotions

This category includes statements indicating or inferring students difficulties with expressing emotions. The suppression of emotions can lead to many physical and psychological difficulties. Yet due to fears attached to experiencing these emotions many people will 'prefer' to leave them unexpressed. Chickering (1969) refers to the managing of emotions as a key issue facing late adolescents.

> *e.g. "I'm not a very emotional person...I could never imagine myself (on a love drug)...I wouldn't be so expressive about it...I think I suppress them a lot of the time" (1)*

36. To play sports

This category refers to statements concerning students wishes to play sports. Sports and recreation have many resources and the student population are encouraged to use these excellent facilities. Both as a healthy past-time and as a social outlet, sports activities play an important role in the development of the student.

> *e.g. "When I see a lot of people playing sports...I should be doing something"(2)*

37. To be assertive

This category includes statements indicating or inferring that students are not assertive and would like to be. This category contains further indication of a lack of self-confidence. Assertiveness skills provide students with a degree of confidence and are thus included in many stress management programs.

> *e.g. "I couldn't really walk away, I wouldn't be strong enough it avoids confrontation" (9) "I just get into the habit of not speaking...wanting to speak out...being afraid to speak out" (7)*

38. To be in control

This category includes statements indicating a demand to be in control or illustrating that student is not in control of a particular situation. Lack of control can lead to feeling insecure and has been identified as a major contributing factor to stress (Fisher, 1994). Control is a psychological factor which can be absent or present in any situation we experience. Sometime this control is within our power and other times it is external. However, even in extreme

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conditions of external control, individuals have learnt to survive by establishing their own internal control network (see Frankl, 1959). For students, issues of control very often have to do with the struggle for independence and removing themselves from the controlling influence of their parents.

e.g. "You don't do anything about it...feel helpless...caught in a rut" (5)

39. To be able to make decisions

This category includes statements indicating students are unsure about something or illustrating a demand to be sure or to make a decision. The student age group are faced for the first time with having to make decisions which may have an influence on the rest of their lives. Key decisions made at this point for example include a choice of career direction. Indecision can often reflect a lack of confidence in ones ability to make good choices. In some cases students will never have been allowed or given the opportunity to make decisions for themselves as they were growing up.

e.g. "I'm not quite sure yet what I'll do, I'm working on it." (10)

40. To cope with having something stolen

This category refers to the particular and unpleasant life event of having something stolen that can have negative consequences for the victim. To have had something stolen poses a very real threat to ones sense of security and this will require self reassurance. Furthermore, there are implications for resources if some of ones belongings are stolen .

e.g. "I had my wallet stolen and it really annoyed me...damn cheek... the long haul of getting all my cards back" (6)

41. To please parents \ to be approved of by parents

This category includes statements indicating that students are experiencing/not experiencing a demand to meet expectations of their parents. Very often this has to do with academic performance (see no.1). It would seem that parental approval has an influence on self-approval and self-confidence. Parents are the most significant people in the life of a child in terms of their psychological development. Contrary to popular opinion, parents still play an important role in the lives of students at third level. The need for parental approval however can be an unhealthy one, where a student feels that that approval has never been forthcoming in the past, or where the student feels that no matter what he/she does , parents will not be pleased. Some parents try to fulfil their own dreams through their children. Therefore they may push their children into doing things which they themselves wished to do but never got the opportunity. Unfortunately, in some cases the student themselves are caught between wanting to please their parents and wanting to do what they are interested in themselves.

> *e.g. "I'm afraid of what my parents will say" (16) "I'd love to get an honours for them"(3) "Parents expect me to get through... a good deal of the time I don't need that expectation" (15)*

42. Parents to be well

This category includes statements indicating that students concerned for their parents welfare. This category infers a demand that parents be okay and also suggests a caring for ones parents. A difficulty emerges where there is over-concern and a role confusion, whereby the child takes on a parental role in

looking after other members of the family including parents. Over-concern can also be due to a fear by the child that something bad is going to happen at home.

e.g. "My mother is very upset, (i.e. is causing concern)." (8)

43. To get on well with parents

This category includes statements indicating or inferring the lack/presence of a happy family life. It includes evidence of friction, tension etc. within the home and students thoughts and feelings illustrating an unhappy family life, conflict and poor communication.

A happy and stable home is a great source of security and support for a student. Where home is unhappy, then it no longer is a place of refuge to turn to. Furthermore, it may underline a negative self image based on a lack of reinforcement and encouragement.

e.g. "Whenever I go home the mood totally drastically changes. A drastic mood swing from grand to total depression." (16) "It doesn't make for the happiest of homes... a lot of arguments...no attraction to go home" (5) "I never really talk to my father ... there's a communication block...I'd prefer it to be better" (14) "I don't really get on with him ..he gets very angry" (12) "Tension between the two of us...I'd like it to be different...I don't get on with my father" (17) "The family is fine...the least of my worries"(10)

44. To be supported by Parents

This category includes statements indicating that students are/are not being supported by parents regarding finance, letters, etc. Parental support is a core aspect of the secure base required by a child. The emotional support offered from a distance can have a powerful impact on a students well-being.

e.g. "Mum, you don't really give a damn about me."(19) "Always on about how much money he's spending on me...makes me feel unwanted"(16)

45. To get on with siblings

This category includes statements indicating or inferring a demand for students to get on well with their siblings. It is in the home that we first learn to get on with others. It is important to learn to accept and understand those we live with. Where siblings do get on well, a family harmony is evident. This is encouraged by the parents and their communication patterns. Typical conflicts between siblings can often be due to personality clashes.

e.g. "I probably got on with him the best."(6)

46. Siblings to be well

This category includes statements indicating or inferring a demand that siblings are well and includes a genuine concern for the well-being of siblings.

e.g. "I'd be worried about what could happen to my sister."(5)

47. To be as good as a sibling

This category includes statements indicating a comparison between self and sibling and inferring a demand to be as good as ones siblings. This category refers to sibling rivalry, which has to do with seeking approval from parents (see 41 above).

A heightened rivalry suggests an underlying sense of insecurity or lack of confidence. Parents can often contribute to this rivalry by comparing siblings to one another with the supposed intention of getting the best out of them.

e.g. "Three brothers did good - I don't intend to do as much books as they do." (24) "I find it hard to accept that she can do better" (21) "I've worked hard at the maths side of things...it's the only way I can beat her...I'm trying to prove that I'm bright as well" (14)

48. To fulfil a role at home

This category includes statements indicating or inferring experiencing the demand to fulfil a certain role at home, and that this is expected by others or by oneself. Role expectations exist in families which can be quite restrictive. There may be poor role boundaries, leading to children taking on a parental role due to the absence (emotionally) of either parent. Restricting or conflicting roles for children can prohibit their natural development - which would involve having to abandon such roles.

e.g. "I feel a bit guilty for not helping more"(18) "My relationship with mam...me taking a role that a normal husband would take (16) "I'm kind of responsible...you have a feeling you should be doing more."(5)

49. To be independent

This category includes statements indicating that the student is growing up and away from home towards independence/separation etc. and related struggles. This is a normal developmental task for college students and is the culmination of an ongoing process from birth to adulthood. Independence allows the student to engage in an adult-adult relationship with others including ones parents.

e.g. "I feel like I've grown away from them...not part of the family anymore"(16) "I've grown out a bit of being at home...a great relief to be my own boss"(17)

Appendix 11

SUMMARY CASE REPORTS

Case Report 1

1st. yr.,
Female,
Humanities Student.
Client.

Family
Transcript Summary
- This student reports on the stress she will experience when she goes home if their is friction with her father.
- Just knowing the situation is there to be confronted makes her tense.
- She doesn't dwell on it too much.

Academic
Transcript Summary
- She is feeling the pressure as the exams come closer.
- She is working to get a good QCA.
- Lecturers are giving assessments that were not expected.
- She has a heavy workload.
- She finds it difficult to allocate time between her study and her projects.
- She struggles between trying to get a bug out of a computer programme or leaving it and going home annoyed.
- When she is studying and looses her concentration, she is thinking of the computer programme.
- She is struggling with programming and says how easy it is to convince yourself that you are useless. Particularly when you compare yourself to other whizkids.
- On co-op it was different she says. Then you finished work at 5.00 pm and you could forget about it.

Social
Transcript Summary
- She describes herself as a private person, who is not prone to sharing her feelings.
- She has never really had a strong intimate relationship with anyone, although she has gone out with guys.
- She has never fallen madly in love with anyone.

Personal
Transcript Summary
- She often feels like crying but doesn't do so.
- Tears would have come to her eyes but she could not cry.
- When she cried at the interview she felt hugely relieved afterwards she said.
- She felt like a big tank had been removed.

Comment

This student does not have a happy home environment. In particular her relationship with her father is strained.

She is a private person who does not express her emotions openly and has not had any close intimate relationships. She found crying during the interview hugely relieving.

This girls study skills seem poor and she finds it hard to allocate her time properly. She lacks confidence in doing computer programmes where she compares herself to others and is left feeling very inadequate.

Case Report 2

1st. Yr.,
Male,
Engineering Student.
Client

Family
Transcript Summary

- K is the eldest in his family.
- He reports feeling quite guilty for all the hassle he has caused his parents over his eating problem.
- He really wants to please his Mum whom he says he is closest to.
- He finds his Dad a rigid and unaffectionate type, which frustrates him.
- He reports being quite angry with his Mum this week because when he told her how he'd completed an 1km swim, which he was very proud of, she made it sound as if he'd done something wrong.
- Then his mum asked him would she notice a difference in his weight and that really made him mad, he said.

Comment
K is closely attached to and dependent upon his mother and her recognition, whilst being more distant from his father.
A noticeable difficulty for many male students is their difficulty in expressing emotions. In the present case we see the importance of the father figure as a role model in this regard.
K does not feel accepted within his family and therefore home does not provide him with the secure base necessary for development.
A secure base occurs where a child feels loved and accepted by both parents unconditionally and were there is open communication in the family.

Academically
Transcript Summary

- K imagines that others are doing much more that they actually are and that he should be doing as much as he imagines they are doing.
- Typically, whenever he goes out he feels he should be studying and he feels very stupid, he says, when he discovers that all the others have been out for the evening when he thought they were studying. However, no matter how many times he gets this conflicting evidence, he is not convinced enough to change his outlook.

Comment
K is very unsure of himself and is constantly comparing his performance to that of others. He does not feel adequate or okay about his study.
This seems more related to his concern to be like others than with his need to succeed and his fear of failure academically. His fixed and rigid outlook prevents

him from developing from this position. This rigidity may also be due to fear of letting go of old ways.

Social:

Transcript Summary

- K feels anxious when he sees others playing sport and he's not.
- He feels he has to be doing it all the time to make up for what others are doing, so as to be normal.
- He forces himself to do what he can because he feels he should if everyone else is. However, he can't understand how people actually enjoy exercising. He exercises so as to relieve the tension of not doing it. He says he feels lazy if he does nothing.
- When asked about the history of this behaviour, he relates it back towhen he was at school, one was a nobody if you weren't on a team. He had been overweight, so he then turned to getting fit and this felt good, even though he didn't enjoy what he was doing.

Comment

Once again, K is unsure of himself. There is a distinct lack of closeness or relationship in his life. He has no close friends whom he can trust and with whom he gets on. His lack of self-confidence leaves him very frightened of intimacy with others.

Personal

Transcript Summary

- K says he feels afraid of getting into the habit of eating too much and not being able to go back to normal. He feels he eats more than the normal person, after which he always feels full.
- K reports how he sees other people as being perfect and that he models himself on his perception of others.

Comment

K's eating behaviour shows a similar pattern to his study and social activities. He also provides a good description of his struggle with perfectionism and control.

Conclusion

A most noticeable pattern is evident in K's experiences. He seems unable to recognize what is normal in himself, and seems deeply afraid of being abnormal and perhaps unacceptable by being lazy and fat. This profile is not unusual for a person with an eating disorder.

The stress as K experiences it is between some idea/expectation he has of how he should be (physically, academically, socially or for his family) and how he sees

himself. He appears not to know how to handle this discrepancy, even though he is aware of how stupid a lot of it seems.
K feels very inadequate in himself. He has not developed a secure Identiy with which he feels okay. His struggle for acceptance would need to begin within the family dynamic. He needs to learn to live independent of his parental approval. Presently, this is a most frightening prospect for him.

Case Report 3

4th. yr.,
Male,
Engineering student,
Non-client.

FAMILY
Transcript Summary

- J's parents live abroad and write regularly. They 'coach' him about putting in the effort in his study so as to have no regrets afterwards. This annoys him.
- J feels that his parents may be feeling guilty for being away from home while he's studying.
- He believes that this is related to the way it was for his brother, who didn't do particularly well at Trinity College and who took 5 years after finishing college to get a decent job.
- Again his parents may have felt guilty because he was living away from home. For these reasons he would like to get an honours degree for his parents as well as for himself.

Comment
J appears to have had a secure family base and is now functioning independently of his parents - the lack of connectedness may be more typical of males than females. However, the connection between family dynamics and academic performance is still evident.

Academic
Transcript Summary

- J had been performing adequately in his exams up until the previous term. Last term a friend in his house tried to kill himself just prior to exams. Due to the upset J took 4 I grades and got a QCA of 1.00.
- Now this term J is feeling the pressure of the extra workload, having to do the exams he missed.
- J had been hoping for an honours degree so as to go on and do a masters. The prospects of this were now poor, he admits.
- Even though he got an extension to his project, he was still behind schedule.
- He reports feeling hurried.
- He appears not to be terribly interested in his studies and as a result doesn't feel motivated to work. Nor does he feel 'scared' enough. He needs pressure to work, he says.
- By exam week, J still felt demotivated primarily because the honours seemed out of reach.
- To only pass won't be the end of the world, he says, though he will be disappointed. He comes across as very sure of himself and of what he wants. He sees his change in circumstances as merely holding back his career plans.

Comment

J demonstrates a need to be competent without showing undue fear of failure. This is not a developmental crisis for him. A balance of tension is needed in order to perform. J's attitude throughout is one of great confidence, confident of getting by.

Personal

Transcript Summary

- J has had the death of 2 not so close friends on his mind lately, one of whom committed suicide.

Social

Transcript Summary

- He is quite happy with his social life in that he gets on well with a good mix of people in the house where he finds he can relax. He doesn't go out much however.

Conclusion

The main stress experienced by J throughout this term is in relation to his pursuit of an honours degree. He wants to do well this term but a number of factors make this unlikely. He shows tremendous ability to negotiate the tension of this demand to do well, through a post realistic and accepting approach as well as self-confidence.

Family and social experiences do not appear over demanding for him.

This case provides an interesting example of a number of the key academic stress factors for students interacting with one anoher incl.workload, standards, motivation, study skills, college system, career

plans and family expectations.

J does not present with distress and in general we can conclude that he has attained a satisfactory level of self-adequacy.

Case Report 4

4th. yr.,
Male,
Business Studies Student,
Non-Client.

Family
Transcipt summary-

- M is an only child, who lives at home.
- He reports that he gets on very well with his parents, doing most things together including holidays, long walks etc.
- He finds his parents a great support to him.
- Sometimes his dad and himself would argue and not talk to each other for a while but he says this is nothing serious.
- His mum has an ongoing sickness and he finds it upsetting to see her in pain.

Comment -
M's family seem to provide a secure base for him so as to feel confident enough in himself to face the outside world. Being an only child may bring with it the tendency for isolation, having learnt to be alone as a child.

Academically
Transcript Summary-

- M is a high achiever at college and has high career ambitions. He wants a first class honours degree, so as to pursue a specialised post-grad programme. To do this he must get A grades.
- He accepts that his goals are very high, but he wants to get on in life.
- Failure for him would be not to reach his goals.
- At this stage it is expected by everyone that he'll do well and he'd be bitterly disappointed if he didn't.
- His parents don't push him to study but have come to expect that he'll do well.
- He likes what he's studying and has a certain system of studying.
- He would like to be more consistent in his study.
- This term he has a huge workload with projects and 5 double weighted modules.
- He feels panicky that he mightn't get the work done on time to meet deadlines.
- He is finding it difficult to get into his work, as there is so much to be done.
- He finds the work harder now than before he went on Co-op. Perhaps he mightn't do as well as he did before.
- The fine weather doesn't help the study, he says.
- Coming up to exams he isn't unduly anxious, but worries whether the material he has covered will come up.
- His pattern at this time of term is to bury himself in the books, whilst eating and sleeping very little.

Comment

M presents with a strong need to achieve and be competent. Whilst this is not an unhealthy factor per se, it does have the inherent risk of driving him to the point of over-identifying with this singular aspect of himself. To ensure this does not happen, P would need to also develop and address his other needs, in particular his social needs for companionship and intimacy.

Social

Transcript Summary-

- M doesn't have an active social life.
- The fact that he lives at home, he says, makes it difficult.
- Also, he says he couldn't afford the time away from his study.
- When he's in studying and others are out he feels maybe he should be out having more fun.
- However upon further discussion he states that basically he's a very shy person and that he lacks self-confidence.
- He wouldn't know what to talk about with new people he meets.
- He'd worry also about being made to look a fool.
- In class he'd be hoping the lecturer wouldn't call on him, as everyone might think you're trying to play up to him by answering all the time.
- Also, when it comes to asking a question of the lecturer he'd worry that the lecturer might think it trivial.
- He has acquaintances but not many close friends.
- He has one very close friend whom he can share his low feelings with.

Comment-

Whilst M has obvious capabilities academically he lacks the skills necessary to develop social relationships. Typically many students in this situation will focus on that area at which they excel often to compensate for what they find they cannot do. This then leads to the neglect of often basic needs.

Personal

Transcript summary

- M says that he regularly feels quite depressed, particularly when there is not a lot to do. This may last 4/5 weeks and then suddenly lift. There is not an awful lot you can do about, he says, it until the cause goes away i.e. study.
- He asks himself" is it all worth it what he's doing, is it worth going on". A lot of this has to do with the workload he faces as well. He also describes himself as very indecisive which can be most tormenting for him.

Comment

M's depression can be directly related to his lack of intimacy and relationships in his life. Attaining academic success can never compensate for a lack of closeness and companionship. However, due to M's lack of social skills he is unlikely to be able to correct this.

Conclusion

This student seems to have a very unbalanced lifestyle with all of his energies invested in his academic goals. Because his study progress can't always run smoothly, he's high ambitions are in jeopardy. It's not surprising that this should lead to him feeling depressed.

Depending on his academic success for self-confidence doesn't seem to have proven effective. However he shows no eagerness for expanding into other areas such as friendships.

Here we see a very clear example of how academic and social stresses interact within the life of a student. Interestingly, however, there is no evidence of an insecure home base from which his lack of confidence might emerge - which had been the case for a number of other students. In cases where family life is reported as happy, it is possible that in these situations there may be a lack of role models for social skills.

Case Report 5

4th. yr.,
Male,
Business student.
Non-Client.

Family
Transcript Summary

- T has a sister who is mentally handicapped and she is causing a lot of tension at home. She puts a lot of pressure on his mum and he worries about this.
- Also he worries about what will happen in the future to her.
- He feels he should be doing something more and that the parents will be unhappy with him for not doing more to help.
- His younger brother also causes trouble at home by being blunt and not pulling his weight.
- T fears these worries may kill his mum.
- There's no great peace at home he says.
- There's lots of fighting there and so he's not so inclined to go home too often.

Comments
T is struggling between the demands of family obligations, in particular as the eldest in the family and his needing to be independent. T doesnt have a sense of a secure base from home from which to launch himself into adulthood. Case 18 is similar in many respects to this case, but invovles a female student, suggesting that this struggle may not be gender specific.

Academic
Transcript Summary

- T had to have his final year project in this week. He felt a relief at having it done.
- T expressed his difficulty with doing mid-term exams. He finds he's not as psyched up as for end of term exams.
- T says there's more distractions during term, with other lads wanting to play pool etc.
- T reports that some students don't even go to lectures and come out with better results then he does.
- T needed to keep his honours level and this was a pressure for him.

Comment
It has been my experience that the run up to submission deadline for final year projects can be one of the most stressful times students have to face. Typically students will work around the clock during this period and suffer an amount of trauma as they await the final printout. Inevitably there are mistakes and for some even the disaster of discs being wiped out. The stress in this situation is due to the immense workload requiring considerable effort by the student and which can lead to exhaustion

Being psyched - up is what gets a student motivated to work. Each student will have his/her own means of getting this motivation. It is important that students know themselves what works best for them.
Students need to develop a certain discipline and a degree of assertiveness to ward off distractions from study.
Study skills programmes will very often focus on developing students ability to organise their time so as to ensure there is enough time for both recreation and study. It can be very disheartening for the student who needs to work very hard in order to get adequate results, when he sees those who do not work as hard getting good results .

Social
Transcript Summary

- T expresses his lack of confidence in giving a class presentation and worried that he may make a fool of himself.
- He'll manage he says, but it annoys him to have to do it.
- He feels rejected by others if he doesn't go out with them and studies instead.
- The other lads in the house who wouldn't be doing as good as him at college would hassle him for studying. So he is trying to balance having friends and getting his work done.
- T runs a farm which is 50 miles from his home. The farm is his responsibility he says. This time of year he's very busy and has the fear of losing calves.
- People think he's crazy, he says, operating such a distance from home and when things go wrong they say 'told you so'.
- T says he feels tied down by the farm and hasn't much time for socialising.
- He'd like to be more involved in hurling.
- He feels he's hanging in limbo and he says he ends up not having much in common with the lads at home and he's not in college on week -ends so he doesn't meet people there.
- He feels he doesn't fit in anywhere. He doesn't drink and feels on the outside of the group, on his own. He feels like this a lot, he says.
- The fact that he's not making much progress in his relationships with women is also a bother for T. He's not getting any younger he says and wonders if there's not something wrong with him. He fears he may never form a realtionship with a woman.
- He doesn't have the 'golden tongue' he says and needs to get to know them well first. He had asked a girl to dance recently and she was to come except something else clashed. This felt like a real kick in the teeth for him and he went back into his shell.
- T feels he should be going out more but he doesn't have the time.
- Also the lads in the house are going steady and so they don't go out.
- He wouldn't go out alone because he feels he'd be left on his own. He feels he's seen as the straight guy who doesn't drink and so doesn't fit in. He feels depressed at times about this. T says he's uncertain of how to deal with women. He feels he might do the wrong thing and they'll think him an idiot.
- T goes on to say he's afraid he'll have no friends and no one to turn to. He would like to have someone to depend on.

- Also he'd like to go out with a crowd who weren't going out to get drunk.
- He's very short and says on football teams he's written off straight away. Also people crack jokes about it.
- He feels different and rejected and inferior. He trains a lot to make up for this.
- He feels he's written off by girls also because of this. It's something he's always had to grapple with and there's nothing he can do to change he says.
- He feels he won't be thought of as good as others.

Comment

T's performance anxiety is based on self-consciousness and the need for the approval of others. Here we have two competing developmental tasks facing T, namely the need for friendship and the need to achieve. The farm may also be acting as an excuse to avoid socialising due to his lack of confidence and his concern regarding his height.

Personal

Transcript Summary

- T says he exercises a lot and likes to keep fit.
- At the end of the talks he said how he had forgot to mention his height.
- An ongoing issue this term for T has been his choice of job. At the end of the term he still doubts his choice and feels he may regret it.

Conclusion

There seems to be quite a lot of issues going on for this student. A common theme throughout is of him not fitting in. Related to this would be a concern over his height I feel. He seems to have created an isolation for himself to cope with his feelings of inadequacy.

This student lacks self-confidence and social skills and he tends to work instead of mixing with others. He also struggles with his sense of duty at home and yet wanting to be independent.

This student presents with a strong sense of inadequacy. In particular this applies to the social domain of his life. To feel OK about oneself and to feel adequate seems to be very much linked to the need for approval and acceptance by others. A student who fits in and feels as good as the next person will have adequate confidence to cope with the stress of college life.

Case Report 6

4th. yr.,
Male,
Engineering Student,
Non-client.

Family
Transcript Summary

- P has a brother who he got on well with who left home 5 years ago because of conflict with parents and whom he hasn't seen since. P just wished it was different but feels there's nothing he can do and nobody is to blame.
- He says it's brushed under the carpet though it's on his mind a lot.

Comment
P did not discuss his family in detail but what he has spoken about indicates a certain level of dissatisfaction but also of acceptance. It is difficult to draw any definite conclusions from this.

Academic
Transcript Summary .

- P reports that he doesn't enjoy his course and isn't interested in a career in electronics.
- P is now faced with making major decisions about his future after graduating. By the end of term this had been resolved and he felt relieved at having got a job.
- P says that he was pushing for an honours degree but now that that was out of reach he was happy to sit back and get a pass. There had been some slight pressure from home, he says, regarding attaining this standard.
- P describes himself as an exam machine, without necessarily knowing the subject material.
- When it comes to exams P, however, doesn't worry unduly about failure and tends not to panic.

Comment
Students regularly present with this type of dilemma regarding career and motivation to study - perhaps the outcome of a points system to get into college which forces people into unsuitable courses. Being in a course one is dissatisfied with is bound to affect ones motivation for working at that course.
The security of knowing that one has a job after graduation acts as a buffer and a support for final year students as they tackle their last academic hurdle.
P's approach to study is what is referred to as a surface learning approach - where there is no attempt to develop a depth understanding of a subject. This approach has typically been associated with fear of failure and poor academic performance.

Social

Transcript Summary

- P has a core group of 6 friends who have been the cornerstone of his social life in college. He says he regrets making snap decisions about others which prevent him from getting close to them later.
- Having friends is an important support for this student.
- He feels it's a pity that he'll not see some of his class again once they break up although he will be with some of them so it's not so bad.

Comment

The inevitable ending of relationships that occurs at the end of college is a not insignificant issue for most students to have to deal with. Hopefully, a student has benefited from these relationships enough to allow him to proceed with confidence to other new relationships. Meanwhile core friendships can be established at college with people of a like mind, which will endure throughout ones adult life.

Conclusion

P describes himself as quite content and he seems to be coping well with the academic pressures despite the fact that he is not all that keen on the college. His self-acceptance is a strength in this regard.

P shows no evidence of feelings of inadequacy nor is there any indication of family, social or academic dysfunction.

Cases such as this are useful as a contrast with some of the more stressed students.

Case Report 7

1st. Yr.,
Female,
Humanities student.
Non-Client.

Family
Transcript Summary

- P reports very little conflict at home now
- However, upon looking back on her life she realises that she didn't really have a happy childhood.
- Her dad was an alcoholic and her mum she says was very domineering.
- Her mum is really nice to her now.
- P hates to look back on the past. It's not really upsetting for her now she says because she just doesn't think about it.
- P expressed some disappointment at not getting a letter from home as she would like to receive one.

Comment
Whilst P does not express demands concerning her home life now , P's family life growing up was perhaps not very happy. Like so many other students in Ireland, she had to contend with and survive an alcoholic father. This may not have been a very secure home base for developing self-confidence.

Academic
Transcript Summary

- At the beginning of term P reports not being particularly worried as she knows that if she works, there's no reason why she should get an F.
- With regard to 'fear of failure', she says that with everyone else doing so well - her best friend is getting A's - she doesn't want to fail.
- It's important to get good grades because she wants to prove to herself she can do it.
- Whereas before it may have been 'cool' to get low grades, now she says it's 'cool' to get high grades and to be comfortable and happy also. She sees this as something to live for.
- She says she knows that she's as good as the rest of her class.
- She has found reading lecture notes as the key to her success at study.
- She could not work in the hot weather even though she had an essay to complete.
- By week 10 of term P sees that there's so much to do in so little time and that this is a pressure. She feels she should be studying more and so is on edge. However she feels like this always coming up to exams and she expects it to happen
- Her aim is to get a QCA of 3.0.
- She says that she finds the trimester system very manageable.

- Everything based on ones QCA she finds 'pathetic', even though it does make her strive to do as good as others.

Comment

Academic achievement is important for P, and contributes to her sense of self-adequacy and Identity. Her Identity is closely related to how well she does academically and how this is perceived by others. She does not overidentify with academic success. This achievement motivation is not a male preserve and although P alludes to the "fear of success" in the past, she now wishes to compete and be successful at her studies.

Social

Transcript Summary

- P says that other people tend to have a big influence on her.
- She hates to think that people might be talking about her behind her back.
- She doesn't see herself as very confident and tends to stay with people she feels comfortable with.
- If she's with a crowd she doesn't feel comfortable with she feels she's not liked so she tries to avoid such situations.
- Related to this perhaps is the fact that a number of people have told her she's not very assertive.
- P agrees that she's afraid to speak out and feels that people must then think her weak-minded.
- She would like people to think of her as being a stronger person.
- P doesn't have a best friend but tries to get to know loads of people to talk to.
- She hates being alone, she says, asking herself 'why am I alone'.
- Due to past experiences in school she is wary of being used by people.
- P reports being bored when in the house and wishes her boyfriend was with her. She doesn't go out while at college but makes up for this when she goes home at weekends.
- A further concern for he is the fact that her boyfriend doesn't like going out when she's not at home.
- An ongoing concern for P would be fear of pregnancy. Because of this she feels both her boyfriend and herself need to be more alert and responsible and this brings them closer together, she says.

Comment

P presents with considerable social anxiety resulting in her feeling insecure and paranoid with others. This is an extreme example of somebody whose Identity and sense of self-adequacy is very much shaped by what others think of her. Due to her own internal insecurity, she is oversensitive to and overreliant upon the approval of others. P shows very little self-acceptance and is unwilling to take the risk of trusting others.

Personal

Transcript Summary

- During term P began on a diet. Sometimes she gives in on these. She feels she should have more will power. This causes tension to build up.

- Sometimes she likes herself as she is and more times she'd like to be different.
- P's grant has been late in coming through. This has been annoying and disappointing and depressing even. She felt sure it would have been in by now.
- P doesn't like asking her parents for money.

Comment

P's dieting is a further indication of her lack of self-acceptance.

Conclusion

P does not feel OK about herself. This girls poor self image is mostly reflected in her social life, where she seems to lack considerable confidence. P does not feel OK about herself in comparison to and in the company of others. Rather than aim to develop her social skills, P seems to be more interested in achieving confidence through competing successfully with others particularly in her academic work. This strategy of achieving self-confidence in an area of expertise rather than develop the skills in which one is deficient is not unusual and has been adopted by a number of other students in the present study. The danger in this approach is that needs being addressed in the deficit area (e.g. the need for intimacy) get neglected.

Here we see the inter-play between social and academic issues and how one may offset or compensate for deficiencies in the other. This would appear to result in different needs - namely the need to achieve and the need to belong \ the need for intimacy - being in competition with each other.

Case Report 8

3rd. yr.,
Male,
Engineering student.
Client.

Family
Transcript Summary

- M is the eldest of 7 children.
- He feels he doesn't fit in at home.
- He feels his parents don't have time for him.
- He also says their boring giving no sense of anything to look forward to in life.
- His dad, whom he describes as a cold man makes him feel guilty and bad about himself.
- M himself finds it difficult to show emotions, also.
- His family isn't like other families, who are very close.
- He sees himself leaving his family now and not knowing anything about love, having missed out a lot on this aspect of family life.

Comment

M presents a very negative picture of home and of his parents in particular. His expectations regarding family life have not been met and he is left feeling very disappointed. M's poor relationship with his father and the lack of communication between them at an emotional level seems to have been a big disappointment for M. This dynamic between father and son is not unusual and in fact is present in a number of the present case reports.
This environment has not been the loving and supportive place, with positive attachments to his parents, which would be necessary for him to have developed a sense of self-adequacy. Coming from this backround it will be difficult for M to feel confident and secure in himself as an independent adult.

Social
Transcript Summary

- A major concern for M during our talks was his feeling isolated and left out, not being a part of the gang.
- He feels he never has anything to say and that he's boring, highlighted by the fact that others seem to be having a great time.
- Basically he feels he doesn't get on well with others and yet he feels he should have lots of friends.
- M feels he's missing out on a lot socially and therefore he is a failure.
- Also, he sees his life as always being like this, and he isn't very hopeful about the future.
- He feels that he lacks the basic social skills of interaction. As a result he has gone into situations and gotten hurt.

Comment

Fitting in with others and being accepted socially would seem to be of immense importance for M. That he is not able to experience these things, therefore, becomes a significant stress for him.

Academic

Transcript Summary

- M reports that he doesn't know how to go about his exams this term since last term he worked hard and didn't do well.
- He says he always feels that what he does just isn't good enough and that he can't really compete with others.
- At the end of term all his attentions was on his study. It's nice to concentrate on exams, he says, rather than to give way to other pressures.

Comment

M does not seem overly anxious about academic success or exam pressures. He does not seem to be overly reliant on academic achievement for self-worth.

Personal

Transcript Summary

- M says that he hasn't achieved anything in his life and that the past 22 years have been a waste of time so why go on.
- This outlook has made him depressed and even suicidal at times.

Comment

This student has an extremely poor image of himself and this has inevitably resulted in his feeling extremely depressed

Comments

In talking to M there certainly appears to be an ongoing issue in his life having to do with not being good enough and feeling left out of things and not fitting in either in his family, socially or academically. In the times I've met him I'm struck by how unsure of himself he is, particularly in terms of how he feels he should be with others. This seems centreed on his social life at the moment. He compares himself a lot with others and feels he doesn't match up. This case is a good example of how stress interacts across different experiences. Self acceptance is lacking, as is the feeling of acceptance by others both at home and socially. M has not invested a lot of energy in academic achievement however, although he does use study as an escape.

Case Report 9

4th. yr.,
Engineering,
Male Student.
Client.

Family
Transcript Summary

- P's mother died last year.
- He says he doesn't get on well at home and he was never happy at home.
- He doesn't go home because it depresses him.
- P's mother had been a domineering woman, he says, who treated his dad badly. They fought a lot.
- He felt it unfair that now she's gone.
- He misses her he says.
- His dad is very old and he finds it hard to have a good conversation with him. P says he is angry with his parents.
- He goes on to say that he was never taught how to take care of himself properly growing up at home.
- P is concerned about his younger brother who is shy and the effects home have had on him. He has older brothers who have left home and with whom he has little contact.

Comment
Family life does not appear to have been a very happy place for P and did not provide a secure base from which he could develop his autonomy with confidence. Once more there seems to be a weak father-son relationship which hinders P's development.
Because of his family situation P, as with Case MB, does not see himself adequately prepared for adult life.

Academic
Transcript Summary

- P feels under considerable pressure this term to complete his final ear project. He feels he must push himself harder.
- He is under pressure to get good grades he says as he is in line for an honours degree.
- P feels that he could work a lot better under less pressure. The pressure is in counting the weeks to go in term and having no freedom or break.
- He finds deadlines a pressure to meet.
- P is unsure as to whether or not it was his own decision to do the course he's doing.
- By week eight he had completed his project but he still reports feeling very hyperactive.

Comment

P does not present with a heightened fear of failure, although he does feel the pressure of the mounting workload.
Interestingly other students report working better with deadlines to meet, as this motivates them.

Social
Transcript Summary

- P describes himself as anti-social. He doesn't get on well with others and feels lonely.
- He stops people from getting close to him as this makes him feel uptight.
- He's afraid of getting hurt.
- He says he feels inferior and that his views aren't important.
- He feels he's not capable of gaining others respect and so he keeps his distance.
- He feels afraid to start a relationship with a girl with whom he feels shy and inadequate.
- He feels he has no one to share his problems with and no support.
- Whilst he doesn't like doing things he doesn't want to do he allows himself be dragged out drinking by peers, to avoid confrontation.
- He tends to put on a front with others, never showing how he really feels.
- When asked would he go to fellow students for help if the work was difficult he said that he'd feel uncomfortable asking them because they might tell him to go away.

Comment

To develop relationships requires a certain degree of self confidence. If this is lacking the student will tend to avoid asking people out, because of the risk of rejection and hurt. Yet the consequence of this is a feeling of isolation, with no intimacy or closeness present.

Personal
Transcript Summary

- P seems to feel a lot of guilt. He feels guilty whenever he gets angry with others because he may have hurt them. He also feels guilty over masturbation and some homosexual urges he experiences.
- P says he'd like to have things more under control. He'd like to be able to control his reactions more, for example not loosing his temper.

Comment

P has thought about suicide in the past, indicating a very negative self-concept, and believing that he is worthless and even in need of punishment.

Conclusion

P has had little education in handling emotion and is now afraid to express any emotions. He lacks confidence and self-esteem and considers himself inferior to others. This is reflected mainly in social situations. For P. establishing social relationships is much more important than needing to achieve academically. In his life he does not appear to have developed any close/healthy attachments, necessary to provide the security from which to explore the world. For P, his family and parents in particular have not provided the foundation he would need to feel confident and accepting of himself.

P certainly does not feel OK about who he is. It is important that he learn that he is OK. To begin with he could learn that it is OK to have and to express his emotions as this seems to be an important aspect of himself which he denies.

Case Report 10

4th. yr.,
Female,
Engineering student.
Client

Family and Social
Transcript Summary

- Family and social life were fine, she says, with her family fully supportive and understanding of her.

Personal
Transcript Summary

- At the beginning of term she had been depressed and lonely. She says this was due to having nothing to do and just worrying.

Academic
Transcript Summary

- When J returned to college after co-op and a further year off, for the first time she realised she had the option to leave college.
- Beforehand everything had been planned out - do well, go to college etc.
- Re-adjusting after the time delay, having been away, was difficult for her. The work was hard and not very interesting.
- J began to doubt whether she really wanted to do this course. This whole situation she found very confusing.
- She's bad at making decisions at the best of times and prefers to be told what to do.
- She is deciding to stay in the course because it's the safer bet and she's afraid if she leaves she might regret it with only one year to go.
- When it comes to exams, she finds it very difficult to get stuck into the work.
- She is not well motivated to study. However she always does well and by the end of this term was feeling more relaxed than before. She was under pressure to get all her work done but was living from day to day and wasn't afraid of failing.
- She has never failed and says she doesn't know what it would be like to fail. What's the point in doing an exam if I think I'm going to fail, she says.

Conclusion

J is struggling with her vocational direction. She is balancing what she would like to do with what is a 'safer bet' for her. She does not appear to have the confidence to do what she wishes. In the past these kinds of decisions have always been made for her. Now the developmental task requires her independent decision making regarding developing a purpose in her life. She has settled, for now, with staying put, which gives the feeling that no great development has taken place. This may prove stressful again in the future. She may settle for being in an environment in

which she does not have to take responsibility. Meanwhile, she lacks motivation in doing a course which she is not interested in.

Case Report 11

2nd. yr.,
Male,
Business Studies Student.
Non-Client(one interview only)

Family
Transcript Summary

- D says his parents would freak out if he said he was leaving college.
- For them, him being at U.L. is very important and a lot better than art college where his older brother is and where there is little chance of getting a job from.
- He describes his parents as very religious. On Sundays they think he's gone to mass and he has no intention of doing this.
- It doesn't affect him what they think, however, he says.

Comment
There is a struggle for D between doing what he would like and doing what his parents would wish him to do.

Academic
Transcript Summary

- D had a repeat exam to do at the beginning of term which he hadn't yet started preparing for.
- What was uppermost on his mind however has been a group project he's involved in. He is working with 2 others whom he doesn't get on with. This is annoying but because he has to do it, he'll grin and bear.
- D reports a difficulty in getting into his work. Upon discussion it transpires that he doesn't really want to be in this course and he's bored here.
- He wished he went to art college instead. D is afraid to leave now because it might be a mistake. This is depressing at times for D.

Comment
I feel that not enough work is done for students in preparing and assisting them in group work projects. These projects require a range of skills not the least of which are assertiveness, flexibility and adaptability. The evidence suggests that a high proportion of students are dissatisfied with their course choice. In the present sample alone quite a number of students have expressed career dissatisfaction. Very
little is done in third level to assist these students. The IAUCC has recommended greater flexibility during first year to enable students review their career options. Interest in a course is a primary motivating factor in getting through an exacting programme. If a student is not interested in what he is doing then it is likely that he will drop-out, underachieve or suffer from stress symptoms.

Social

Transcript Summary

- D is interested in asking out a particular girl but doesn't.
- He is afraid of being rejected by her and being hurt.

Comment

Establishing relationships are fraught with risk and danger for students. However by not taking the risk and avoiding the possibility of pain, students end up neglecting their need for intimacy and closeness in a relationship.
D shows a distinct lack of self-confidence, necessary to face the challenge of relationships.

Conclusions

D describes his stresses as a number of minor things coming together. The major on-going stress for D is not being motivated in his work due to poor career choice. This has resulted in him feeling considerably depressed. Were he to discuss his concerns openly with his parents, matters might not seem so desperate. As D only attended for one interview, insufficient information was gathered concerning the factors contributing to his lack of confidence. In particular little is said about family relationships.

Case Report 12

3rd. yr.,
Female,
Humanities student,
Client.

Family
Transcript Summary

- A main concern for V initially was having to tell her dad that she wanted to go to the U.S. for the summer .
- She doesn't get on with her Dad, whom she says, tends to see things only his way. She was afraid that he would be angry with her and that he might drink and then that he might "take it out" on the others at home.
- Whilst she would like to get on better with him, she isn't really too bothered by him anymore.
- She doesn't take everything he says as "gospel" anymore either.
- V gets on okay with her mum.
- Later in the term V reported that things were going very well for her.
- She also stated how surprised she was at her Dads openness to her trip to the U.S. With none of the catastrophic expectations occurring, things were now fine at home, she said.

Comment
Whilst V has some difficulties with her father, she is showing signs of growing away from dependency on home and is not as influenced by home as much as she used to be. For some people, maturity can involve the shattering of childhood illusions - waking up in the adult world is realising that it's OK to let go of some attachments.

Academic
Transcript Summary

- At the beginning of term V was faced with the difficulty of trying to get started into her heavy workload.
- She says she finds it hard to plan her study, but this wasn't stressful yet for her this term.
- She says she puts pressure on herself to get B grades.
- After her Co-op she says she did little work and got C+'s in most exams. The next term she did no work and still only got C+'s. So 'what's the point in doing all the work' she says, when she just can't get B's.
- Last term when she worked hard for the first time, she panicked and "blanked" when she found she didn't know all her material for the first exam.
- When V was at school she pushed herself to get to the top of the class and succeeded. At college she finds she can't do this and feels disappointed for herself and her parents. She may just have to settle for a pass degree, she says.
- She worries about job prospects if she only gets a pass degree.

- During term V. felt panicky when having to complete work including a repeat exam. V felt relieved when this was over, as she did fine.
- V sees herself as being much more positive this term (she attended a Study Skills Module and Stress Management classes), aiming to do the best she can.
- By the time exams came around she felt much calmer than usual. .She felt happy just to pass the exams.
- V reports seeing things in life other than exams.
- She feels she hasn't "dossed" this term and feels she is coping.
- She found staying away from studying in the library, where everyone else was panicky, was helpful.

Comment

V shows definite signs of needing to achieve - and has no 'Fear of Success'. In the past this has obviously been too intense and led to her anxiety and panic. Now however, the overriding attitude is her acceptance of her limitations, that she's not perfect. This has been an important learning for her, resulting in a more balanced and calmer approach to her exams.

Social

Transcript Summary

- V states that she has loads of friends and that her social life is not a problem area for her.

Comment

V seems quite extrovert and I believe her ability to get on well with others acts as a support to her whilst also satisfying her need for companionship, intimacy and a sense of belonging.

Conclusion

This girl seems to be coping quite well this term following her panic last term. She seems more accepting of herself and yet is getting down to her work. Other aspects of her life do not seem to be a major concern right now. V presents as a most friendly and outgoing person. Difficulties experienced with her dad do not have a major impact on her any longer.

V feels OK about herself and her Identity and seems to have reached a balance in her life with the three major developmental tasks she faces, namely her need to achieve, her need for relationships and her need to separate.

Case Report 13

2nd. yr.,
Male,
Engineering Student.
Non-Client.

Family
Transcript Summary
- P says his family are a support and he has regular contact with them.
- He feels loved at home.
- He is the youngest of five children and all the others have done well.

Comment
Whilst P has little to say about home, what is said is enough to indicate a secure base. This is in marked contrast to other students for whom family life is in disarray. P is content with family life and is therefore in a position to get on with developing his own autonomy confident in the support from home.

Academic
Transcript Summary
- P received his first D+ grade last term and describes this as a shock to the system. P says he has been expecting first class honours and sees himself as a perfectionist.
- Perhaps it has been good to get a D+ P says, and that maybe he has learnt a lesson.
- P as the term progressed reports being relaxed and happy without any pressure.
- He feels optimistic with time enough to get the work done.
- For him the continuous assessment is suitable as it keeps him on his toes.
- In school he says he used let things build up til too late.
- By the end of term it was all go in study and everything else took a back seat. This had been the toughest term yet for him with lots of work. He has been studying late into the night and has been getting headaches and feeling very tired.
- His fear is of not getting it all completed.
- He finds it difficult to motivate himself at times. He tries to shut everything else out.
- He says that he is managing and it's not getting the better of him.
- He says he feels like a machine without any emotion. He feels he could fail but doesn't think about that.
- The summer ahead helps motivate him to keep going.
- He expressed relief at having just handed in a completed report.

Comment
Striving for perfection can result in students putting immense pressure on themselves to achieve. P's insight shows a marked maturity and indicates a positive coping style of acceptance. Whilst admitting to perfectionist tendencies, P does not demonstrate an over-identification with academic success, with the risk of self neglect and perhaps burn-out.

P is aware of the style of study that suits him best and he has learnt that cramming material at the end of term is stressful. That he is willing to act on these insights is again a very positive sign.

Social
Transcript Summary

- P sees his friends as a support and he socialises regularly. He also participates in sport.
- P does not report any difficulties with mixing with others or with making friends.

Comment
P's developmental needs for intimacy and relationships are being adequately met.

Personal
Transcript Summary

- An ongoing issue for P is whether or not to join a religious order. He takes this one day at a time, accepting his position which rather than being stressful, he says helps him cope with college stress.

Comment
It's as if P realises there are more important things to life than getting exams. It is this spiritual dimension to P that generates his acceptance of things and which in turn acts as his stress coping mechanism.

Conclusion
This student seems to have a positive attitude to college life yet still feels the pressure at exam time. Seeing beyond college life had helped hip cope. P presents as feeling self-adequate. This is not to say that the necessary developmental tasks have been completed. Far from it. P is in the midst of clarifying a sense of purpose in his life based on his career choice. However, he approaches this and other tasks with a level of confidence and self-acceptance that will ensure a satisfactory outcome.

Case Report 14

3rd. yr.,
Male,
Engineering student.
Non-Client.

Family
Transcript Summary

- JR feels his family think he's selfish in that he never does anything to help out at home. His view is you have to be selfish if your to get on in life.
- He has an older sister who is very bright and he says he's trying to prove that he's bright as well.
- His mum doesn't seem to care how he does and JR doesn't communicate with his dad at all.
- He'd prefer if this situation were different, but he's got used to it.

Comment

These family circumstances do not give the feeling of a supportive and understanding base for JR. The reassurance he needs at home so as to feel good about himself has not been forthcoming from either his mother or father. Instead it seems that he is struggling for recognition within the family as evidenced by his sibling rivalry.

Academic
Transcript Summary

- JR is an ambitious student who says he expects too much from himself.
- He sees a pass degree as a waste of time.
- He doesn't feel very confident about his exams.
- He did very badly last term yet hopes to get an honours degree.
- He feels he's just not suited to the college system, of having to study all the time to keep up with the intelligent ones, who push up the standards.
- Exams just don't come naturally to him he says.
- He sees himself as being naturally very good at computers and that he knows a lot of stuff better than most. Because of this he feels cheated at exams and also jealous of others who do well.
- Even during the middle of the term when things were very quiet he was worried about an outstanding F grade.
- He was also afraid that he wouldn't be able to stay calm for the exams, although he usually doesn't panic until the night before the exam.
- By exam week JR wasn't at all confident of doing well, but he was so busy working he says he didn't have time to think.
- His attitude was to do the best he can
- However he felt if he began badly then they'd all go bad.
- The only reason JR came to college was to get a decent job in computers. He sees College as having been a waste of three years however when he could have been out in the real world.

- Not coming to college wasn't ever considered by him before but now he sees it as a mistake to have come and he regrets it.
- JR reports how he found it very difficult to settle back in to college after his Co-op. work experience.
- He left it too late to revise his material. He had forgotten this aspect of his study.

Comment

Here is a student with a strong need to demonstrate his competence who finds himself in an environment to which he feels he's not suited but which he thought would bring him the success he yearned for. This has led to difficulties for him with study and exams.

Social

Transcript Summary

- JR says he doesn't have a social life.
- If he had a social life he wouldn't be able to concentrate on his studies he says. There just isn't any spare time.
- However, he would love to get back into cycling.
- JR says he has loads of friends to talk to but he'd love to have a girlfriend with whom he could discuss his feelings.
- He sees himself as naturally shy and an introvert.
- He hates going places where he might be on his own and doesn't feel very confident.

Comment

Here we see that JR has an unfulfilled need for intimacy. He is unable to satisfy this need because shyness and of lack of the necessary social skills. Instead he has turned, unsuccessfully, to academic achievement- a common strategy - as his means of feeling more adequate about himself.

Conclusion

This student seems quite unhappy with his lifestyle but at the same time he seems to have resigned himself to it and doesn't appear to be overly anxious. His ambition to succeed seems to be hindered by a system that doesn't suit him. JR is in an Identity struggle between being what is acceptable to others and being the way he likes himself. This case demonstrates once again the strong interactions between family, social and academic issues.

Case Report 15

2nd. Yr.,
Male,
Engineering student.
Client.

Family
Transcript Summary

- This student describes how his relationship with his parents is changing. He does not want to be relying on them as much anymore.
- He feels guilty about this but he also gets frustrated when his parents try to look after him too much.
- He is afraid that he would upset his parents if he gave them the impression that he did not need them as much as he used to - they may not be able to accept this.

Academic
Transcript Summary

- He reports considerable fear of failure. He feels he has to prove himself that he is capable. Failing his exams would mean he is not capable. He feels he would be letting himself and others down.
- He sees himself putting pressure on himself so as to prove that he can do it.
- Due to putting so much pressure on himself to do well he ends up being demotivated and not doing any work at all.
- He has been avoiding studying
- A lot of his problem has to do with his lack of confidence.
- He doesn't believe he can cover the material adequately.
- He feels that others think the can get through without any bother but in fact for him it is a struggle. He feels this isn't recognised by others.

Social
Transcript Summary

- This student does not mix very well socially and doesn't have any close friends. He does not feel confident in the company of others.

Conclusion
This student is struggling with trying to gain independence from home without upsetting his parents. He has been recognised solely for his academic success in the past and as a result he has not felt valued by others for just being himself. He lacks confidence socially and does not mix well with others. His main concern is that of forming relationships and fitting in with others.
He also feels a mixture of a lack of motivation - he is disillusioned with a purely academic identity - and the fear of failure - since academic success is the only thing for which he has gained recognition.

Case Report 16

2nd. yr.,
Female,
Engineering student,
Client.

Family
Transcript Summary

- D's mother and father are in constant conflict, she says, and her mother has coped very badly with this, relying on D a lot to get things done, as she is the eldest.
- D's mother has been in psychiatric care in the past.
- D reports feeling left out of home also and that she's growing away from them.
- She dreads going home and finds her mood changes whenever she's going home.

Comment
D's family situation seems most upsetting for her, in particular her relationships with her father who seems very possessive. D is involved in a triangle-relationship situation within her family whereby she plays an important role within the marital relationship. This is a very unhealthy situation for her to be in with poor role boundaries and conditional self-worth, which prevents her from developing a healthy sense of autonomy, whereby she can feel confident to get on with her own life, assured that her parents and their relationship can survive without her intense involvement.

Academic
Transcript Summary

- D reports not being suited to doing exams. She gets very uptight in this type of situation and much prefers practicals.
- She has done most of her exams in the sick room and has struggled through them due to panic and blanking. Underlying her anxiety is that she reports putting huge expectations on herself for her exams in order to satisfy her parents.

Comment
D's fear of failing in exam situations has proven a major stumbling block for her. The difference between this type of situation and practicals is that the latter does not involve an intense, all-or-nothing scenario, where there is no support and where mistakes cannot be rectified. The question remains as to how important it is to establish ones ability to cope with just such a situation as a factor in determining ones professional competence. Whilst the need to achieve and be competent are part of the healthy personality development, it's corollary, fear of failure, is the unhealthy response to the need and search for approval in ones life where such approval and unconditional loving is desperately lacking.

Social

Transcript Summary

- D mixes well and has friends on campus. However, she can be quite demanding on friends. She has a fear of sexual relationships which she says is due to an attempted rape a number of years ago.

Conclusions

This case demonstrates the very direct link that can often exist between a presenting academic stress regarding exams and the underlying family dynamics. D's home situation would seem to be most stressful for her due to poor role boundaries and parental conflict. This situation has an influence on the pressure she puts on herself at college, in her attempt to please her father and be approved of by him. However her task is impossible since she can never do enough to compensate for what is lacking within the family, and in particular, in her parents relationship.

Case Report 17

1st. yr.,
Male,
Engineering Student,
Client.

Family
Transcript Summary

- B doesn't get on well with his father and this is a source of major stress for him. There is always tension with him yet he would like for them to be friends. However he feels that he'd have to make all the effort, in being compassionate.
- B describes how he would like this relationship to be different.
- He feels that his dad knows nothing about what he's doing in college and that they never talk about anything meaningful.
- When he's at home during the day he feels guilty because his dad thinks he should be at lectures.
- B's father has been in AA for 30 years and B says that the family only take second place to this.
- B says he's never liked his dad, he reminds him too much of himself.
- He is unable to show feelings.
- He gets along well with his mum even though she sides with dad and blames B for their not talking.
- B feels he'd like to get out and have a place of his own. Then perhaps he could visit home and get on better with dad.

Comment
Not much has been written about differences in attachment to father or mother. However, in that the father acts as a role model for every son, this relationship has an important significance.
Staying off drink requires a huge commitment, very often leading to the neglect by the alcoholic, of others in his life. Due to the high incidence of alcoholism in Ireland, there are many hundreds of third level students who are children of alcoholics, having to deal with the demands this presents. For this reason support groups or AlAnon would be a useful adjunct to campus services. Perhaps this is why the development of autonomy is so important.

Academic
Transcript Summary

- B feels under considerable pressure to do well this term as he is on the borderline and cannot afford to repeat, he says, as he'd be too old.
- B has already repeated his leaving cert. in order to get the points to get into college.
- Either he gets his exams this term, he says, or he's out of college.
- B had recently discovered he had to have a report in in an hour and he left it at home, but he was sure he'd get it done in time.
- By the time exams came around he wasn't thinking about anything else so nothing else was a problem.

Social

Transcript Summary

- B presents as a friendly and likable person who says he has lots of friends. He finds this a release.
- However he is concerned about his sex life which is non-existent. He worries that perhaps he'll never have a girlfriend .
- Getting to meet and know them in the first place i.e. social skills, he finds hardest.
- He worries that he won't know what to say.
- A girl he knew did show interest but he seemed to question her motives.
- B has been involved in amateur drama production in the past and is wondering about getting involved again, as he has been asked to.

Comment

Having a sexual relationship is an important feature of student life, reflecting the development of intimate relations with others. Here we see a student addressing his need for intimacy but finding himself hindered in the pursuit of this due to his lack of confidence.

Personal

Transcript Summary

- A further ongoing issue for B has been a foot defect for which he has been receiving treatment and is awaiting an operation. This gets him down and makes him feel self-conscious.

Conclusion

B presents as quite an anxious young man who has been attending for counselling throughout the year with much of the sessions focusing on the home situation. This student is very much affected by what is happening in his family particularly in regard to his relationship with his father. Because of this , home has not provided the secure base from which B can move confidently into adult life, in particular with regard to developing intimate relations. He has low self esteem which influences his social life, dating women in particular. The stress for him would seem to be that his dad is not the way he'd like him to be, that he would like to have a girlfriend but doesn't and that he has to do well this term because he can't afford to repeat

Case Report 18

1st. yr.,
Female,
Humanities Student.
Non-Client.

Family
Transcript Summary

- I's dad is dead and her mum runs family pub.
- In the past I has been depended upon by her mum for support but now I finds that she is moving away from her family and wanting to live a life of her own.
- Yet she still worries a lot about her mum who is sick.
- She feels guilty for not being more involved. Added to this is the strain of having her brother sick.
- I says that her brother also is putting a strain on her mum by blaming her a lot and this is further worry for I.
- She is finding that her home situation is not bothering her now as much as before once her brother came out of hospital.
- Sometimes she gets depressed over it.
- Her brother is also prone to getting depressed.

Comment
Family stress for I consists of her perceived role responsibilities and how these prevent her from developing her own autonomy, separate from the family. In this instance autonomy, although desired by I, is being hindered by her family circumstances. This is not a tension between connectedness and separation but rather between that part of the person that wishes to be independent and the sense of duty and obligation one feels towards ones parents.

Academic
Transcript Summary

- She wants to get good enough grades to give her as many options as are there.
- By the end of term she had made her choice and seemed happy about this.
- During Week 10 exams were on her mind but she wasn't too worried she said, since she was studying.
- She'd prefer to have them over with.

Comment
Though faced with large workloads, I is not feeling too much pressure and in fact seems to be coping well with these demands, and showing no signs of inadequacy.

Social
Transcript Summary

- I does lack some self-confidence and does worry about being accepted by others.

- She seems to get on well with friends and goes out with boys.
- During the term there was some tension in the house with one of the girls not getting on well with the others. This sorted itself out by Week 10.
- Another issue for I was her experience of loosing contact with old friends, despite her best efforts to maintain contact. She's finding that she doesn't have as much in common with some of her old school friends as before.
- She was having difficulty with a particular lecturer at the start of term whom, she reported, was picking on her in class which she found embarrassing.

Comment

Getting along with housemates is a requirement which third level students have to face for the first time. Never before did they have to cope with living with others outside of their family. This new situation invariably brings demands with it and requires students to be flexible and have an ability to adapt to the different styles of living which others will introduce. The excitement of being free of parental supervision as well as the development of close relationships act as an encouragement during this process.

Difficulties in maintaining friendships is a most common occurrence for students coming to college. It is particularly difficult for students whose friends did not go on to pursue further education. Throughout adolescence, relationships play an important role in development. However, during the cycle of growth there is also the making and ending of relationships which people must come to terms with.

Lecturers have a considerable impact on students both inside and outside of the lecture. It is crucial that lecturers are sensitive to the needs of students and that they exercise caution and discretion in their handling of student concerns.

Personal

Transcript Summary

- By and large I feels she's coping.
- She is confident of getting by.
- She is currently struggling to find where she stands with regard to religion. She's less sure than before.
- A major concern for I during this term has to do with her uncertainty about her choice of a major option. She's afraid she may make the wrong choice.
- During the final interview I presented as very uptight. She wasn't sure what this was about, was it home, exams, or just the fact of talking. She felt by this time that things were going okay for her.

Comment

Up until now students will have generally gone along with their parents religious values and practices. Now that they are away from the parental surveillance, they begin to question their own values and practices. This is a healthy and normal development but not without its confusion. Third level education in Ireland does not tend to cater formally for dealing with this inevitable confusion. Rather, it is left to the informal peer discussion and debate to iron out these difficulties. Within an holistic education framework there is a case to be made for addressing

such issues more formally within the curriculum - as a means of contributing to the broader education of the student and resulting in a better quality of graduate.

Conclusion

This girl seeps to be coping well despite the strain of her home situation. Her coping seems to be based on self-acceptance and a willingness to let go of family obligations enough to enable her to get on with a life of her own. She seems to have the confidence to do this. The family role of being the coper and the one to turn to may prove a hindrance to her in that it doesn't allow her to be vulnerable and to turn to others for help.

Case Report 19

2nd. yr.,
Female,
Engineering Student.
Client.

Family
Transcript Summary .

- Most of N's first interview focused on her relationship with her parents.
- N reports getting on very well with her dad who is understanding and supportive. He is a bank manager and is a good judge of people, she says.
- With regard to her mum however, N says her mum doesn't care about N or her problems, but only that N is studying enough.
- N cares about her mum and wants her mum to care for her.
- She feels her mother doesn't believe her and just considers her melodramatic.
- Mum sees no need for N to attend the counsellor.
- Another example N gives of her mother not believing her was when she told her about a teacher interfering with her in school.
- N's dad is an alcoholic.
- N says she looks up to her dad.
- She has been concerned lately that he may think she's not as intelligent as he had thought. She feels he may be disappointed in her.
- To a degree she says she's living her life for him.
- She wouldn't want to tell him she failed.
- Because her dad is a bank manager N says the family are under constant threat and she worries for her own safety.

Comment
N is involved in a triangle of conflict with her parents, based on her intense relationship with her father. This case is similar to Cases 16 and 25, and there are strong unresolved oedipal dynamics in operation it would appear. Having an alcoholic parent brings with a lot of the uncertainty that we have witnessed with other students also. Little is known about the relationship between mum and dad. The family situation does not appear to provide N with the security that she needs to feel confident about herself

Academic
Transcript Summary

- N reports having felt terrified before going into her exams.
- The night before an exam last term she had stayed up most of the night trying to learn the material, but she couldn't recall it and ended up at the medical centre next day.
- N says that studying for exams scares her in that she is afraid she won't get all of the work done.
- By Week 10 she didn't feel worked up about exams but was somewhat unsure of her prospects of being able to progress into second year.
- She really wants to come back to college but doesn't want to repeat the year.

- At this stage she says she'll have to get down to study but she is too caught up in other issues.
- She knows she's intelligent enough to succeed.

Comment
N experiences a heightened fear of failure at exam time. Her anxiety can be understood in the context of her family situation, whereby she feels under significant pressure to gain her fathers approval.

Social
Transcript Summary
- In the final interview most of the conversation focused on N's confusion with boyfriends.
- Basically she's going out with one guy and she's afraid of hurting him by breaking it off so as to go out with former boyfriend again.
- N also says that when socialising she feels under a lot of peer pressure - not deliberate- to drink.

Comment
N seems well able to mix with others and make friends.

Personal
Transcript Summary
- N expresses concern over her weight loss - she is very thin.
- She also has a bad cough and in general looks run down. She is anaemic and so looks pale at the best of times.

Comment
N's physical well-being may well be symptomatic of her internal emotional struggle for self-acceptance.

Conclusions
This girl indeed does appear somewhat melodramatic. She has attended for counselling in the past. I am sure that the relationship's within her family contribute to any extremes in this hysteria.
N in counselling explored how she can get on peoples nerves - which she does. She feels people tolerate her. Certainly she doesn't seem like the easiest of people to get on with.
N experiences stress in her life due to difficulties with separation and attachment within her family. Her intense emotional involvement with her father has a direct bearing on her academic need to achieve and results in extreme fear of failure around exam time.

Case Report 20

3rd. Yr.,
Male,
Engineering student.
Client.

Family
Transcript Summary

- This student feels that he is growing away from his family and feels displaced.
- He says that he feels like a stranger in his own house.

Academic
Transcript Summary

- He has exams pending and he is finding it hard to get down to his work.
- There's not enough time, he says, to get all the work done.
- He feels that he has left it too late.
- All the pressure to do well is his own.
- He'd be disappointed if he didn't get a 3.0 QCA.

Social
Transcript Summary

- He is missing his relationship with his girlfriend as she is in the U.S.

Conclusion
This student comes from a relatively secure family backround but is currently experiencing what it is like to become independent of home. He has a balanced lifestyle between academic and social commitments. He is self-accepting when confronted with challenges. He presents with a positive self-image and does not report any significant stress.

Case Report 21

3rd. yr.,
Female,
Engineering student.
Client.

Family
Transcript Summary

- H reports that her family are a marvellous support to her.
- They see her doing her best.
- However H has a younger sister a year behind her in college whom she is very close to and with whom she compares herself a lot.
- H finds it hard to accept that her sister can do better than her. She feels that she has the same ability as her sister but that her sister is a stronger personality than her and is more mentally able for things.
- H has found that she was coming to terms with this fact.

Comment

Whilst this family appears to provide H with the security she needs, there is considerable sibling rivalry which is stressful for H. Rivalry between siblings (see also case 14) is very often a struggle for approval and acceptance within the family.

Academic
Transcript Summary

- At the beginning of term H reports feeling very positive and says she has resigned herself to not being the best in the class and that others are better than her.
- She feels she's at the bottom of the class and that is upsetting for her.
- She feels she's got things more in perspective now however.
- Although she says she should have got on better last term, she's not going to let it get her down now.
- It's not the end of the world and she'll probably come out a better person for it.
- At this stage she says she just wants to get through and have a job.
- She'll do her best and that's all she can do.
- As the term progressed she found that she was well able to get stuck into her work. She was getting her material covered and was up to date in her work. .H was thinking positive and wasn't afraid of failing.
- H recalled how when she was at school and even at the beginning of college, she always did well in college. Then, for the last few exams she had done badly. She has found the course getting harder and harder and she began to lose confidence
- The course is still hard but she feels better able to cope now and she is working more.
- A friend of H's who is one of the best in the class was thinking of dropping out of the course and this was upsetting for H.
- Whilst H found it a comfort that someone else could feel what she was feeling, it was upsetting, though not unduly. If someone so good had to drop out what hope was there for her.

Comment

This case shows the progression of a student from an extreme fear of failure to a position where she has developed an acceptance of herself and her limitations. She is no longer struggling to prove herself through her academic achievement.
H also makes reference to a common dilemma for students whereby the have to come to terms with no longer being the top of the class - a position they very likely would have held at secondary school in order to make it to third level.

Social

Transcript Summary

- H says she doesn't really go out a lot due to a lack of interest. When she's finished college she'll go out more, she says.
- She hasn't any close friends in college because she lives at home.
- Also she's not very close to her classmates.
- She doesn't get on very well with people, she says.
- H finds it hard to study while others are out, free, enjoying themselves e.g. her family on a Saturday evening. She misses the fun.

Comment

H does not take the opportunity to develop relationships outside of her family. This lack of socialising means that her need for intimacy is neglected. H shows an ambivalence about developing relationships which is perhaps due to her lack of confidence in her social skills.

Personal

Transcript Summary

- H was now feeling more in control of her life and wasn't at all as nervous as she used to be.

Conclusion

This girl attended the counselling service at the end of the previous term due to acute panic regarding her fear of failure. Her anxiety resulted in her not sitting two exams. She went on to do a stress management course.
H presents as an anxious type of person who speaks with a sense of urgency about her. She certainly coped far better this term than last.
Whilst family seems supportive, it would appear that there is some element of anxiety within the family. Interestingly her sister presented with the same acute panic a year later and chose to take a year off college as she felt she couldn't cope with the workload.
H has moved from a position whereby she had been over-identifying with academic success to a new and more accepting position of feeling OK about herself no matter what the outcome of her academic work. This company of growing self-confidence will hopefully free H up to get out and enjoy the others more.

Case Report 22

3rd. yr.,
Female,
Business Student.
Client.

Academic
Transcript Summary

- A feels under pressure to do well this term as she failed an exam last term when she left the exam hall. She doesn't want to feel under as much pressure at the end of this term as she did last term, so already she has begun studying, whereas usually she crams.
- Because of the huge workload this term she feels she should be even doing a lot more, instead of being out socialising for example.
- Later in the term AP was under pressure to have a title ready for her project. Her lecturer expects her to do a particular one she says so she can't go and talk to him about it. She doesn't know what to do she says.
- By Week 6 A was feeling fed up with the college. She had just completed an exam in a subject she really liked and felt she just hadn't the opportunity to show how much she knew.
- She feels the college is too work orientated and boring.
- By exam week, she said she doesn't know how lecturers expect students to cover the amount of work they give.
- The weighting on this term was worth twice the last term so this is an important term. Also the present set of exams were contributing to the degree. 1st and 2nd year exams didn't matter, except for the student to pass.
- In the past, A could never sit still for more than an hours study but now she feels she needs to be doing three or four hours work each day.

Comment

There is a constant tension for students between the social and academic aspects of their lives. This reflects the two greatest developmental areas for students which are the need for competence and the need for intimacy. In this respect it is important for faculty and project supervisors in particular, to have adequate communication skills and be sensitive to the vulnerabilities of students. There is some evidence to support the idea that certain types of colleges suit certain types of people. Indeed I find it encouraging when some of our students remark on their frustration at not being able to develop a deeper knowledge of a subject. In other words they are dissatisfied with a purely surface approach to learning..
It is true to say that no single lecturer will ever know - or perhaps sometimes even care about - how much work a student has to do across their entire course. Course leaders have an important role to play here I feel, in monitoring the demands put on students.
Time management for A would consist of establishing how much time was required and available to study and then allocating specific but brief time periods

to study each day, ensuring maximum concentration as well as time for recreation and relaxation.

Personal

Transcript Summary

- A reports feeling a general peer pressure about having sex but she feels she may not be ready for it yet. Beforehand she knew she didn't want to have sex, now she's not so sure. She's more inclined to having sex now, but doesn't feel in control of this. It isn't as clear cut as before.
- A also says she'd prefer to feel better about her own physical appearance, to give her more confidence.
- A found the interviews very personal and didn't like to think that someone would be listening to her. She felt exposed and felt her privacy was infringed.
- She feels she'd have to trust who she talks to. She has very good friends who she can do this with. They'll accept her and wouldn't laugh at her. They'll listen and understand.
- She'd also be able to talk things out with her mum.
- A wanted to know what was going to happen to the tapes and she was told. When she came for her last interview she said she didn't want to do it as the last 2 had been too upsetting and now that the exams were near she didn't want to be upset anymore. Also she felt she hadn't benefited from the talks.

Comment

A describes very accurately what it's like right in the middle of this very normal dilemma in the developmental process concerning sex, involving play moral values as well as physical changes and the need for intimacy.

A's concerns about the interview highlights ethical issues regarding this type of research. Although she had been briefed on the research and she was under no compulsion to participate, she obviously had some ambivalence coming into the interviews from the beginning. Her wishes were respected

Social

Transcript Summary

- A moved houses recently to get away from the noise. But it's still noisy, she can't sleep and this is very annoying.
- She had to get up and tell her housemates to quieten down. They're not as bad as the last house, she says.

Comment

As this is the first time for students to be living together like this it is bound to raise difficulties. It may be useful for colleges to do some workshops for students to assist them in dealing with accommodation difficulties.

Conclusion

A seems under some pressure trying to work at U.L.

Her difficulty with the interviews limited the amount of exploration possible in this case. For example very little was said about her family situation. Findings are inconclusive in this case.

Case Report 23

1st.yr.,
Male,
Business student.
Non-Client.

Family
Transcript Summary

- At the start of term F finds he has more time to worry about the family. In particular he is concerned about his father who is starting his own business and the related financial burdens.
- Also his father has had an illness which his parents didn't tell him about.
- F is fairly close to his dad.
- Another family concern has to do with his brother who is in his final year in college and who gets down at exam time. F says he is more worried about his brother than his brother is.
- F feels that his brother has had a hard time and he'd like to see him happy.
- 'The family is happy if I'm happy', he says, and therefore he wants to satisfy them and to keep them happy.
- He sees himself as a bit of a worrier.

Comment
F appears to have an unusually heightened concern about family members. Considerable energy is invested in ensuring that everybody is happy at home. This may be an important role for him to maintain in the family. The family may have difficulty coping should he not worry or should something traumatic occur.

Academic
Transcript Summary

- At the beginning of term F reports no pressure, compared to what's to come later in the term.
- He found the first term the most difficult.
- He experienced extreme anxiety at exam time when he had to leave the exam hall and pull himself together. Eventually he went back in to the hall and did okay in the exam. It was the first multiple choice he had ever done and he was afraid of messing it up, he says.
- F did fail another subject and this devastated him as he had worked for the exam. He saw other students who did not work as hard as he did and they did not fail.
- A current afraid of getting another fail this term and then he cold not continue with his studies.
- Nobody likes failing, F says.
- F says he has huge expectations of himself and wants to succeed so as to make money.
- The F grade he received didn't help matters. Eventually however he knows he'll get there.
- For him an educational qualification is his form of success.

- By Week 6 he felt the pressure mounting. With the exams on the horizon, what helps he says is the fact of the holidays coming after.
- Not wanting to fail is always at the back of his mind and it helps motivate him.
- He also feels under pressure to get Erasmus so as to improve his French which isn't as good as others in his class, he says.
- Then, he worries that if he does get an erasmus place, what will that be like.
- A slight stress for F is doing a group project worth 30% and having to depend on others to get it in, after having made his own contribution.

Comment

This student has a strong urge to succeed and places a high value on success. On the basis of his exam anxiety last term, he may be overvaluing this success. When his results do not match his expectations this has been frustrating for him, resulting in further pressure to succeed at the next attempt.

Social

Transcript Summary

- F doesn't go out all that much in college but he does go out at home every weekend, he says.
- To go out is expensive and money is a problem for him.
- F has a few good friends at college. He knows a good few of his classmates and he gets on well with his class in general, he says.
- However he finds it an effort to get to know people.

Comment

F avails of the opportunity to develop relationships with people he knows. A lack of confidence may prevent him from making new friends. This does not appear to be a major concern for F.

Personal

Transcript Summary

- Sometimes F thinks 'am I better off here at all' but he doesn't seriously think of killing himself.
- A friend he knew fairly well committed suicide last term. He was the last person you'd expect to do it, F thought.
- F wouldn't have the courage anyway and he sees it as a selfish thing, when he sees how much his friends family suffered.

Comment

F's comments on suicide, sensitised by the recent death of a friend, reflects a common attitude amongst students concerning suicide. F gives no indication of being depressed or actively suicidal.

Conclusion

F appears to be the worrying type, somewhat overly concerned about members of his family. His role within the family dynamic could be examined further.

He sets high standards but doesn't appear unduly stressed by them, having a fairly positive outlook.

F 's identity struggle is based on establishing an Identity that is not solely dependent on family role and/or academic success.

Case Report 24

3rd. yr.,
Male,
Engineering Student
Non-client.

Family
Transcript Summary

- Two months prior to our first interview, L's handicapped brother had died and much of our conversations focused on what he was experiencing in relation to his loss' ncluding the pain, the fond memories, the gradual accepting and the letting go.
- L is not one to share his feelings a lot.
- He says he doesn't want people feeling sorry for him. Because of this, he seemed to welcome the opportunity to talk to me about the death. In fact I would say this was assisting him in his grieving.
- When another brother had been killed in an accident, L suffered from insomnia and resulting depression after this. No link-up between the accident and the insomnia was made available to him at the time.

Comment
L's brother has died and this has resulted in a very understandable grief reaction. L welcomes the opportunity to share his feelings. This experience does not present a crisis for L as long as it does not threaten his own self-adequacy. For L, however, this death has reminded him of a previous loss as well, for which he may not have had the opportunity to express his grief.

Academic
Transcript Summary

- L had done very well in his exams the previous term. Had he done badly he was ready to leave college, he says.
- He did not seem overly concerned about failing.
- However, because he wasn't known for his application to books at home, he did want to prove to his Mum that he could do well.
- He describes his parents as very easy going and not pushy about exam results.
- A niggling issue for him was the fact that he was caught cheating last term and has to repeat the module. He claims he did not intend to cheat.
- He hates been asked questions in class as he feels he might make a fool of himself.
- He reckons he did badly in the last term because he choose the wrong options.
- When exam week came around L reported feeling down in the dumps.
- What's it all for at the end of the day, he says, if you do all this study and don't pull through.
- If he did not get through his exams he wouldn't repeat, he says.

Comment

L does not present with any significant academic stress or fear of failure. He is somewhat ambivalent about being at college and does not appear all that confident in his academic ability.

Social

Transcript Summary

- L's social life wasn't discussed nor did L make reference to any difficulties he was experiencing in this domain.

Personal

Transcript Summary

- L reports being quite health conscious. This is perhaps related to the serious car crash he was involved in, in which his shoulder was damaged and at a younger age when he was beaten up by two older boys.
- Ever since he seems cautious about anticipating trouble breaking out on the rugby field, walking down the street or when a stranger calls to the door.

Comment

L appears to have experienced a number of traumas in his life which have made him less confident in himself.

Conclusion

L presents as a friendly and genuine person who seem to enjoy sharing. He is presently going through a grief reaction to his brothers death, which has been traumatic for him.

He does not present as being overly anxious about his academic progress. However, he does appear not to be all that confident in himself and may be prone to depression when under stress.

This case gives a very vivid presentation of one students experience of the death of a sibling. Bereavement is something that many students go through during their time at college and for which they will need adequate support.

Case Report 25

3rd. yr.,
Male,
Humanities Student.
Client.

Family
Transcript Summary

- X is the eldest child in his family .
- Much of X's anxieties have to do with his home situation and in particular with regard to his parents impending separation. X believes his parents are just not suited to one another. He seems to be very close to his mum and feels the hurt she is going through at this time.
- He feels his dad should leave the home.
- X reports that he is not that close to his dad, but says he doesn't hate him. In fact when his dad told him he was leaving X was very upset
- The strain for X has been in going home for weekends and not knowing what to expect there.
- In the past it seems X has gotten involved in his parents disputes. It always had taken 3 to 4 days to settle back to college after being home. Now, he says, he's not going home as often and therefore the situation plays less on his mind.
- Also things seems to be 'progressing nicely' between his parents. By the middle of term he hadn't been home for 3 weeks and reported being as happy as he could be with the situation.
- The fact that his sister had found a nice boyfriend also seems to have helped.
- With regard to his family, he says that he is now 21 years old and must begin to have a life of his own.

Comment

X seems to have been involved in a triangle of conflict (Lopez, 1996) between his parent and himself, whereby he was acting the surrogate husband role to compensate for his fathers neglect. In this role he has taken on tremendous responsibilities within the family. As he has matured, his need to be independent seems to have outweighed his role within the family and he is now beginning to let go and accept that his parents must sort out their own difficulties.

Academic
Transcript Summary

- Last term this student experienced 'burnout' as a result of overwork. He actually had what he describes as a 'fit' during which he passed out, having been studying intensively for exams. X took 4 I grades due to his situation. These I grades were now a headache due to the resultant increased workload.
- X describes himself as being a perfectionist - just like his dad, always doing the best possible.
- He goes on to say that his QCA (3.5) was unrealistically high last term and that there would be a pressure on him to maintain this standard. Nonetheless, his attitude to

study this term was that he would no longer push himself doing 'all nighters' etc. No matter how bad he'd do this term he knew he wouldn't get 'kicked out' of college.
- By Week 8 X was beginning to feel the tension for exams. He felt he was far behind in his studies, that he was wasting time and that he had better get down to work.
- He describes this feeling as being 'out of control'.
- He was finding it hard to motivate himself to study.

Comment
Very often students, such as X, will try to achieve well at college in order to compensate for difficulties at home or to ensure that there are less worries at home e.g. "my mum has enough to worry about - I must not do badly in my exams. The need to achieve in this situation has changed from being a natural urge to be competent at a task to a learnt and unhealthy fear of failure.

Social
Transcript Summary
- X seems quite an extrovert and sociable type of person. He says he tends to get on better with females than males
- He has recently renewed an old girlfriend relationship, which makes him feel secure and happy.
- He has noticed a gap develop with his friends at home as they don't have as much in common to discuss anymore.

Comment
X's ability to socialise is an asset to him and enables him to share his feelings and have support from others, particularly women. He has said that he is closer to his mother than his father.

Personal
Transcript Summary
- X describes how his life in Germany last year was very much in his control but now it's not. However by the end of term he would be his "own boss again".
- X is financing his studies himself and so works throughout the year. He says that he is very bad at budgeting money.

Comment
X refers to the importance of being in control and of how being independent can provide him with this. Being out of control in the past therefore would seem to have been due to his involvement in his family circumstances.

Conclusions
X hasn't been living a life of his own, being very much involved in and affected by his parents conflict. X very definitely aligns himself on his mother's side, with whom he seems over involved. X's burnout may be seen as a result of his efforts not to add to mums concern by doing well at college. X's Identity struggle has been to see himself as a person outside of and separate to his parental conflict. He has learn that it is OK to be X who is not within that family dynamic.

X is a very outgoing and affable type of person who seems well able to cope socially. This is a tremendous asset to him and he should be well able to cope with getting on with a life of his own. Acceptance of the reality of his situation has been an important step forward for X.

Case Report 26

3rd. Yr.,
Male,
Engineering student.
Client

Family
Transcript Summary
- This student reports that his parents have difficulty in making ends meet and therefore he doesn't like to trouble them for money.
- He says how he gets on better than most with his parents.
- He is currently worried about the fact that his sister has moved into home with her husband and child and that this is inconsiderate of his parents.

Academic
Transcript Summary
- He is worried about getting his project done in his job because it will mean having to complain his boss.
- He finds it hard to study easy material and syas he is not worried about what level of degree he gets.

Social
Transcript Summary
- He is worried about a friend having made a pass at him recently at a dance and the effect this might have on his image.
- He has a core group of friends who are there for him, and that's all that matters.

Conclusion
This student reports a good relationship with his parents. He also indicates that he is able to mix socially and has plenty of friends. He reports certain difficulties regarding academic family and social matters. Each of these difficulties he addresses in a positive fashion and is in no doubt that he can cope. He presents as a confident and happy student with no significant stresses.

Case Report 27

1st yr.,
male,
Business student.
Non-client.

Family
Transcript Summary
- This student reports that his mother is a very pushy person who wanted him to do business. He himself wants to do computers and so he's going to change to this.
-

Comment
Here we see career choice being influenced by parental factors.

Social
Transcript Summary
- He is not looking foreward to giving two presentations this term. This is because it means you stand out and attract attention.
- He describes himself as a shy person.
- He doesn't want to stand out.

Comment
It is sometimes forgotten that in order to be able to give class presentations, a significant level of self-confidence and communication skills are required. Yet at third level, this aspect of the learning process is frequently neglected.

Academic
Transcript Summary
- Now that he knows what he wants to do with himself and his career he feels better motivated to study.

Comment
Motivation is a key ingredient for learning. Yet for many students who find themselves in courses which they are not interested in, motivation is vry poor. Presumably this would account for significant attrition rates in many third level colleges.

Conclusion
This student is not very happy in himself. He is full of self-doubt and uncertainty regarding his career choice. Because he does not like what he is doing he lacks the motivation to study.
He seems to lack self-confidence in general and says that he would like to be able to handle people better than he does.

Appendix 12

CATEGORY CODING INSTRUCTIONS

- **Be familiar with detailed category descriptions provided.**
- **Any statement can be coded into one or more categories.**
- **A unit of analysis can vary (as does meaning) from words to phrases to sentences to paragraphs. In other words coding can be carried out at all four levels.**
- **The unit of analysis for any particular coding must be specified. This can be done by putting the appropriate code number beside the unit of analysis.**
- **Coding into categories can be based solely on the word content of the statement without any other reference. However, the more relevant code might be based on the context within which the statement occurs e.g. the rest of the sentence or paragraph may provide a clearer idea of the proper code for this particular unit.**
- **All statements should be coded if possible. However, if there does not seem to be an appropriate category do not try to squeeze in or stretch the bounds of belief, merely note the statement by coding it under "no demand".**