CQ University Melbourne Campus

Student Subjective Wellbeing Survey, April 2010

Jonathan Sibley

Executive Summary

A study has been undertaken to measure the subjective wellbeing of students studying at CQ University Melbourne Campus. Subjective wellbeing examines how people assess their sense of personal wellbeing (how satisfied they are with aspects of their life and with their life as a whole). Data was collected during the four weeks of the Term One 2010 enrolment period.

Overall, the community of students at Melbourne Campus appears to be well adjusted to their life at CQ University and in Melbourne:

- The Australian Base-line Personal Wellbeing Index is 75.93. The normative range for Australia is 73.4 – 76.4 points. The normative range for Western means is 70-80 points
- The Melbourne Campus student Personal Wellbeing Index is 71.58. This is within the normative range.

A regression analysis found no significant predictors of wellbeing. For example, younger students are no more likely to be satisfied than older students; students studying for a Masters level qualification are no more likely to be satisfied than students undertaking a Foundation course; students who have been studying in Australia for several years are no more likely to be highly satisfied with their wellbeing than students who have been in Australia for a shorter period.

There appears to be some impact from the recent media activity highlighting assaults on male Indian students. However this has reduced levels of satisfaction rather than resulted in dissatisfaction.

A separate sample was taken of MAP students. These students evidenced a lower level of wellbeing than that of the general sample. The difference between MAP students' subjective wellbeing and the wellbeing of the general student population is statistically significant. The Index for MAP students is 63.27. This is outside the normative range.

- Responses for MAP students from China and SE Asia were generally in line with, although slightly lower than, those of Asian students in the general student population.
- There are significant differences in the level of wellbeing reported by MAP students from the Sub-Continent relative the Sub-Continent students from the general student sample. Sub Continent MAP students are significantly less satisfied with their achievements in life, their safety, their sense of being part of the community and their future security. These findings must be tempered by the sample size. They may, however, indicate this group of students is experiencing greater difficulty in acculturating to life and study in Australia.

CMS Executive and Melbourne Campus Executive are thanked for their support for the study.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Introduction

A study has been undertaken to measure the subjective wellbeing of students studying at CQ University Melbourne Campus. Subjective wellbeing examines how people assess their sense of personal wellbeing (how satisfied they are with aspects of their life and with their life as a whole). Subjective wellbeing is important as it is known that, in addition to personal factors such as chronic pain or chronic stress, the environment can have a significant impact on how satisfied people are with their life. If people are not satisfied with aspects of their life, this can affect their overall sense of wellbeing and can result in anxiety and/or depression (Cummins, 2003).

The study contributes to our ability to monitor student welfare and to support students during their studies. By understanding factors which may have a significant influence on students' subjective wellbeing, the campus can determine and monitor early warning signs to ensure appropriate interventions are implemented before problems escalate.

Method

Research Design

A quantitative design was used. This was considered appropriate as the objective of the study was to measure the wellbeing of the student population and sub-groups within the population.

Instrument

An extant, validated scale was used: The Personal Wellbeing Index-Adult (Version 4, 2006) (International Wellbeing Group, 2006). The scale was developed by Cummins and colleagues at the Australian Centre on Quality of Life at Deakin University, Melbourne and has been validated and deployed in a range of contexts, both in Australia and in several developed and developing countries. In Australia the scale has been regularly administered by the Australian Centre on Quality of Life since April 2001 (The Australian Unity Wellbeing Index Survey). There is therefore a validated Australian base-line (n> 40,000) against which to compare Melbourne Campus students.

The scale comprises eight questions measuring aspects of life. Overall satisfaction is determined by averaging the responses to all questions:
- Satisfaction with standard of living
- Satisfaction with health
- Satisfaction with achievements in Life
- Satisfaction with relationships
- Students satisfaction with safety
- Satisfaction with connections with the community
- Satisfaction with future security
- Satisfaction with spirituality or religion

In order to generate dependent variables against which to measure subjective wellbeing, several demographic questions were asked. These are detailed in the attached copy of the Survey which forms part of this Report.

Data Collection

The survey was administered during the four weeks of Term One 2010 enrolment (15 February through 12 March 2010). Administration of the instrument was managed by Ritesh Chugh. Participation in the study was voluntary and responses were anonymous. (This was stated on the survey form). The survey was administered to students while they were waiting to meet with an Academic Advisory, or with a Student Services Advisor. If students completed the survey at Student Services they did not subsequently complete the survey in the Enrolment Room. The percentage of students completing the sample on a given day was broadly consistent with the number of students enrolling that day (Correlation=0.675)[1].

Figure 1: Number of Students Completing the Survey Compared to All Students Enrolling
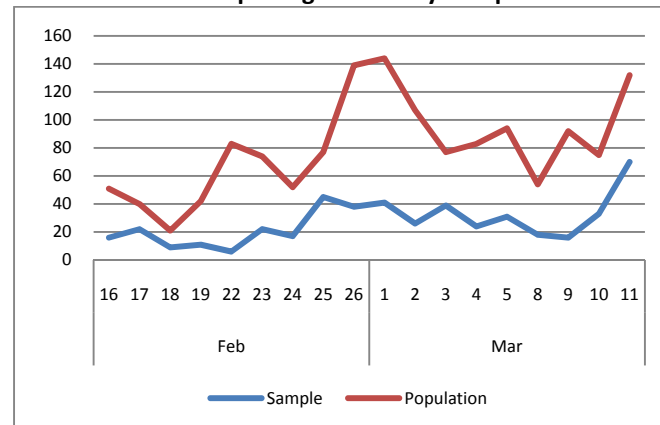
Data Entry

Data was collected by paper based survey. Data entry was undertaken by student volunteers. All surveys were entered twice and keying errors were corrected manually.   Data entry was supervised by David Hamilton, Ritesh Chugh and Jonathan Sibley.

Sample

Two samples were collected: A sample of the general student population and an additional sample of MAP students interviewed during enrolment (the general sample also includes MAP students).

---

[1] Excluding the first and last days of enrolment

General Sample

A total of 544 surveys were completed. This represents 30.0% of the student population. The sample is representative of the population:

Table 1: Melbourne Student Population and Sample (1)

	Foundation	Under graduate	Post graduate	Male	Female	New	Continuing
Population	5%	40%	55%	62%	38%	29%	71%
Sample	5%	42%	54%	63%	37%	29%	71%

Table 2: Melbourne Student Population and Sample (2)

	China	India	Other Sub-Continent	SE Asia	Other
Population	37%	36%	13%	11%	4%
Sample	33%	41%	13%	9%	4%

The sample does not match the population in respect to age. There is a significant difference between the percentage of students aged 22 years and those aged 23 years. This is due to the age intervals used, rather than sampling error. Had the grouping been 18-23, rather than 18-22 the sample would closely match the population:

Table 3: Comparative Age Structure

	18-22	23-30	31-40	>40
Population	17%	75%	8%	0%
Sample	23%	71%	5%	1%

Figure 2: Melbourne Campus Age Distribution 18 - 30
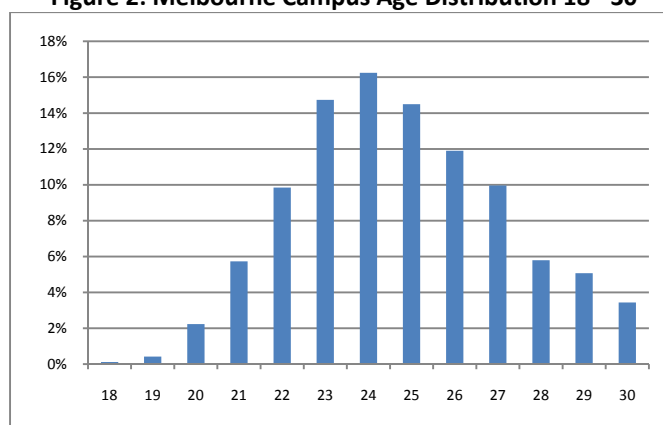
MAP Sample

A separate sample of MAP students interviewed by Student Services during the enrolment period was also taken. 47 surveys were completed. The sample, whilst small, is generally representative of the MAP students interviewed by Student Services during the enrolment period. The sample is biased to undergraduate students and students from China.

Table 4: Melbourne MAP Sample (1)

	Foundation	Under graduate	Post graduate	Male	Female	New	Continuing
Population	2%	67%	31%	68%	32%	0%	100%
Sample	0%	**76%**	24%	64%	36%	0%	100%

Table 5: Melbourne MAP Sample (2)

	China	India	Other Sub-Continent	SE Asia	Other
Population	54%	26%	5%	10%	5%
Sample	**64%**	19%	6%	9%	2%

The sample does not match the population in respect to age. In part the difference may be due a lower than expected number of 23 year old students in the MAP population. The difference between the age distribution of the general sample and the MAP sample is, however, not significant.

Table 6: Melbourne MAP Sample - Age

	18 - 22	23-30	31-40	>40
Population	30%	64%	6%	0%
Sample	13%	87%	0%	0%

Figure 3: Melbourne Campus MAP Sample Age Distribution 18-30
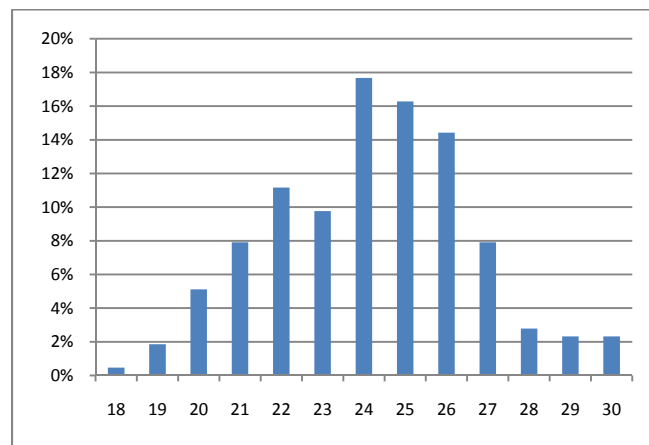
Analysis

Reliability and Readability

The Scale was tested for reliability and found to be reliable (Cronbach's Alpha 0.85). This level is significant and is in line with the reliability reported by Cummins (International Wellbeing Group, 2006). As English is a second language for most students at Melbourne Campus, the scale was also

tested for readability. The Flesch-Kincaid Index was used and indicates the Scale should be able to be comprehended at first reading by a reader with English literacy equivalent to Year Six or better. Melbourne Campus students have an IELTS of at least 5.5 (Year 11) and should therefore be able to comprehend the survey at first reading.

Subjective Wellbeing

Students were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with each subjective wellbeing domain using an eleven point scale. Responses are multiplied by 10 to give a scaled response:

Figure 4: Subjective Wellbeing Response Scale

Completely Dissatisfied					Neutral					Completely Satisfied
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
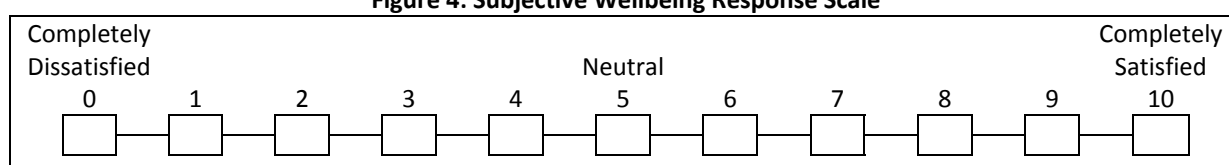
The Australian Base-line Personal Wellbeing Index is 75.93 (Cummins, Woerner, & Chester, 2009). The normative range for Australia is 73.4 – 76.4 points. The normative range for Western means is 70-80 points (International Wellbeing Group, 2006, p. 18).

- The Melbourne Campus student Personal Wellbeing Index is 71.58. This is within the normative range. The standard deviation is slightly broader than that for the Australian population. This is likely to be due to sample size.
- The Index for MAP students is 63.27. This is outside the normative range.

The Melbourne Campus results need to be considered at a lower level of aggregation as Chinese and SE Asian cultures have been found to answer 10 percentage points lower than comparable 'Western' groups (Lau, Cummins, & McPherson, 2005).

Table 7: Subjective Wellbeing Ranges

	Mean	SD
Australia	**75.93**	**12.31**
Melbourne Campus General Sample	**72.31**	**14.71**
Asian	68.06	13.71
Sub-Continent	75.36	14.62
Other	70.69	15.79
Melbourne Campus MAP Sample	**63.27**	**14.16**
Asian	61.83	14.54
Sub-Continent	65.94	13.02
Other*	78.75	NA

* N=1

Whilst Asian students report lower wellbeing than other students (and the Australian base-line) the difference is only slightly outside the normative range and when probable response bias is taken into account this suggests Chinese and SE Asian students generally experience high levels of wellbeing. Overall, students from the Sub-Continent report equivalent levels of subjective wellbeing to those reported by Australian respondents.

MAP students report wellbeing between 9% and 13% lower than the general sample, irrespective of ethnicity. It cannot be determined whether this difference is due to situational factors (students completed the survey whilst waiting to meet with a member if Students Services) or is representative of lower wellbeing. However, the size of the variance suggests the difference may due at least in part to a generally lower level of wellbeing.

Predictors of Subjective Wellbeing

In order to test predictors of subjective wellbeing a regression analysis was undertaken. The general sample and the MAP sample were compared separately. In order to control for possible cultural response bias the Asian group was considered separately from the Sub-Continent Group. Due to the small sample size and wide variation within the group, a regression analysis was not undertaken for the 'Other' group. Theory does not provide indications for a hierarchy of variables. Standard multiple regression was therefore used with all variables entered simultaneously.

The following variables were used to develop the model:
- Age
- Gender
- Qualification studying for
- Year commenced study in Australia
- New or continuing (General Sample Only)

The variable relating to the number of courses the student needs to take to complete their qualification was not included due to variance between qualifications.

The regression analysis found no model to be significant. We can therefore conclude that, of the variables tested, no variable predicts students' overall subjective wellbeing. For example, younger students are no more satisfied than older students; students studying for a Masters level qualification are no more satisfied than students undertaking a Foundation course; students who have been studying in Australia for several years are no more likely to be highly satisfied with their wellbeing than students who have been in Australia for a shorter period[2]. There is some indication Indian men are likely to report a slightly lower level of satisfaction than Indian women (men = 74.06, women 78.08). However, reported levels are within the normative range.

Overall, the community of students at Melbourne Campus appears to be well adjusted to their life at CQ University and in Melbourne.

---

[2] This does not include students who have just arrived in Australia. The sample size was too small to analyse.
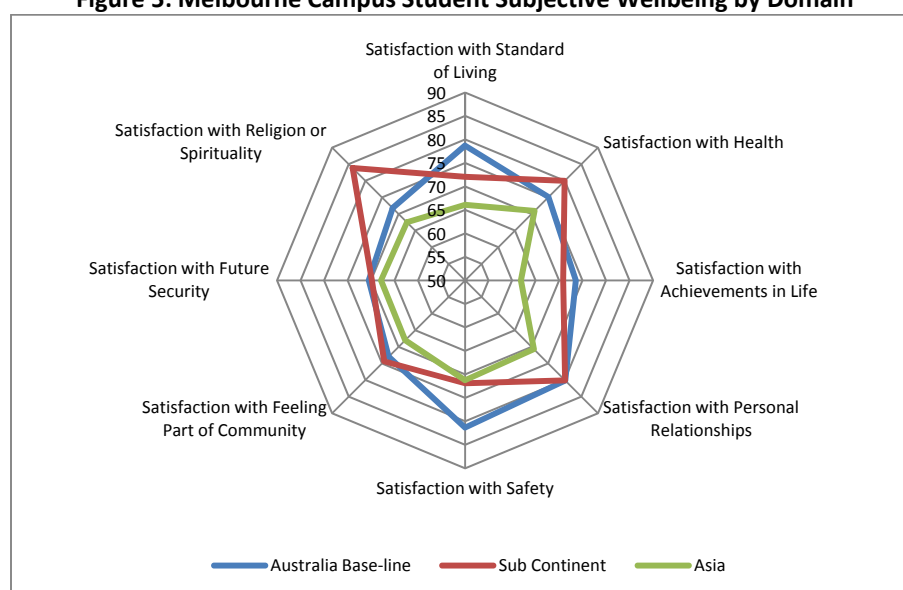
Subjective Wellbeing Domains

General Student Sample

An analysis was undertaken of students' responses to each of the domains that comprise the wellbeing scale. Responses for students from China, SE Asia and the Sub-Continent were analysed. Collectively, students from other jurisdictions comprise a small and heterogeneous sample and have therefore not been analysed. Whilst students' responses were slightly lower than the Australian base-line, all responses were within the normative range (allowing for probable Asian response bias). Sub-Continent students report higher levels of satisfaction overall, in particular in respect to their satisfaction with their spirituality. However Sub-Continent students report lower relative levels of satisfaction with their safety (albeit still within the normative range).

Table 8: MIC Students Satisfaction with Subjective Wellbeing Domains

	Australian Base-line[3]	General Sample Asia	General Sample Sub-Continent
Satisfaction with standard of living	78.69	66.08	72.06
Satisfaction with health	75.11	70.91	79.97
Satisfaction with achievements in Life	73.58	61.88	70.90
Satisfaction with relationships	80.15	70.72	80.10
Students satisfaction with safety	81.33	71.25	71.91
Satisfaction with connections with the community	72.99	68.03	74.35
Satisfaction with future security	70.51	67.88	69.83
Satisfaction with spirituality or religion	71.79	67.49	83.85

**Figure 5: Melbourne Campus Student Subjective Wellbeing by Domain**

---

[3] Cummins, Woerner & Chester (2009)70.90

The direction and extent of difference of each domain from the overall level of subjective wellbeing was examined to determine whether students' perceptions varied from those of the Australian base-line. It is evident students are relatively less satisfied with their standard of living and relatively more satisfied with their health. It is also evident Sub-Continent students are relatively less satisfied with their safety and relatively more satisfied with their spirituality than the Australian baseline.

Table 9: Subjective Wellbeing Domain Percentage Differences from SWB Mean

	Australia Base-line	Sub Continent	Asia
Satisfaction with Standard of Living	4%	-4%	-3%
Satisfaction with Health	-1%	6%	4%
Satisfaction with Achievements in Life	-3%	-6%	-9%
Satisfaction with Personal Relationships	6%	6%	4%
Satisfaction with Safety	8%	-5%	5%
Satisfaction with Feeling Part of Community	-3%	-1%	0%
Satisfaction with Future Security	-7%	-7%	0%
Satisfaction with Religion or Spirituality	-5%	11%	-1%

☐ = Directional difference to Australian Baseline

Satisfaction with wellbeing domains was also examined separately for each of the two major geographic groups. Differences between age and gender were examined. Students from China and SE Asia do not report significant gender based differences in wellbeing. Younger students are, however, slightly more satisfied on most domains than older students.

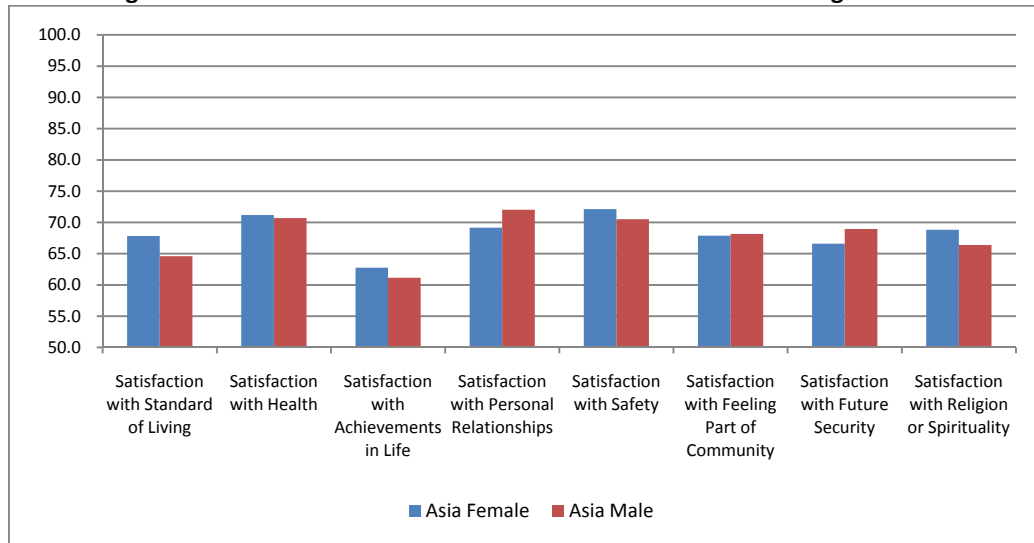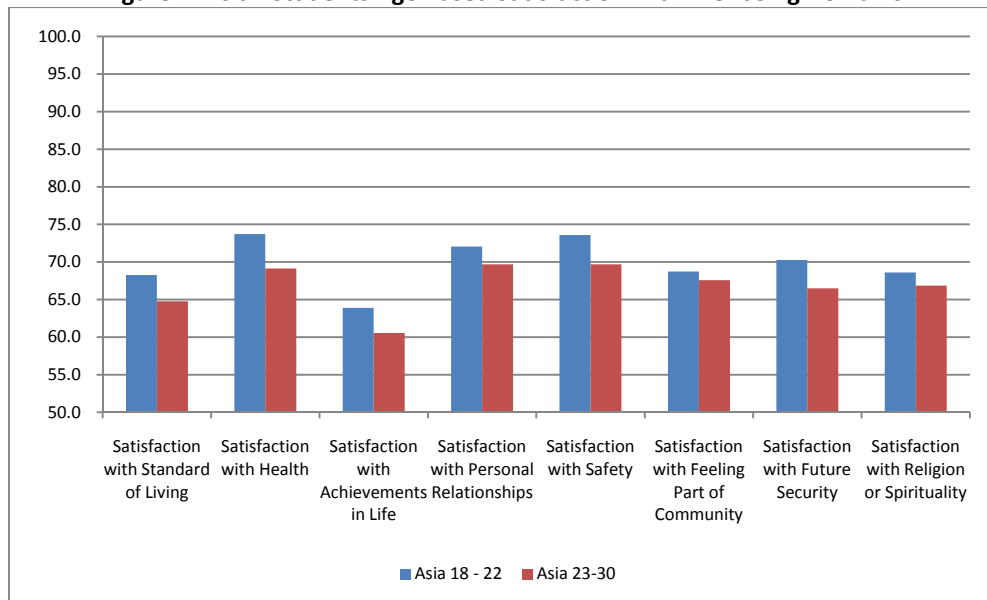**Figure 6: Asian Students Gender Based Satisfaction with Wellbeing Domains**

Figure 7: Asian Students Age Based Satisfaction with Wellbeing Domains

Students from the Sub-Continent evidence a similar pattern of age based satisfaction with wellbeing domains as Asian students. Younger students tend to be slightly happier than older students. There are, however, significant gender based differences among Sub-Continent students. Women are significantly more satisfied with their personal relationships (p<.001), their safety (p<.05) and their spirituality (p<.001). Women rate their level of satisfaction with their relationships and their spirituality very highly. The average level of satisfaction with these domains is above the normative range. The reason why female students from the Sub-Continent are so much happier with their personal relationships and their spirituality than their male counterparts is not known. The gender difference in satisfaction with safety is possibly due to recent media activity which has highlighted incidences of violence against Indian males.

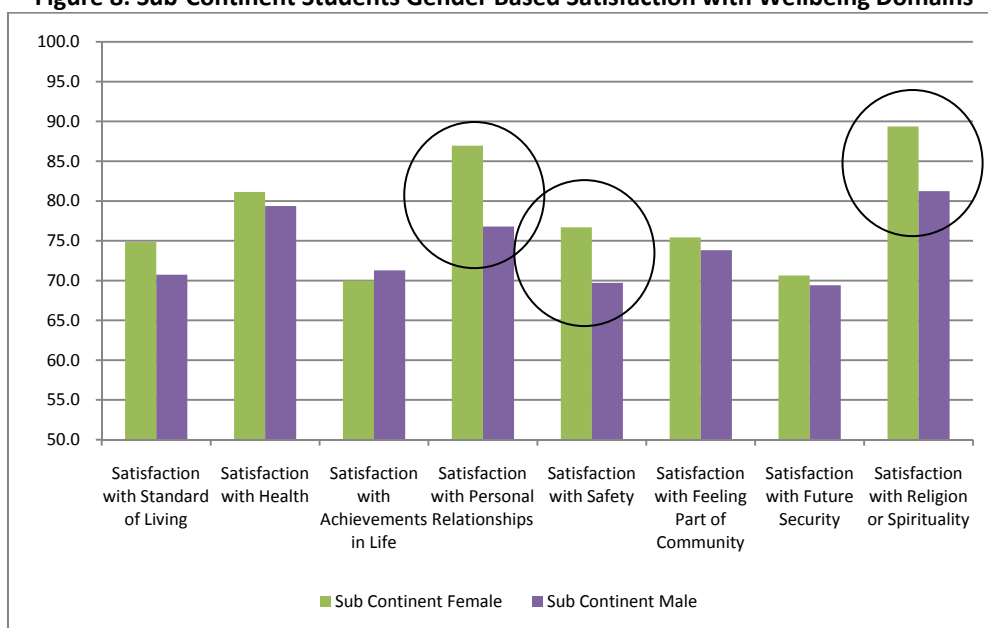**Figure 8: Sub-Continent Students Gender Based Satisfaction with Wellbeing Domains**
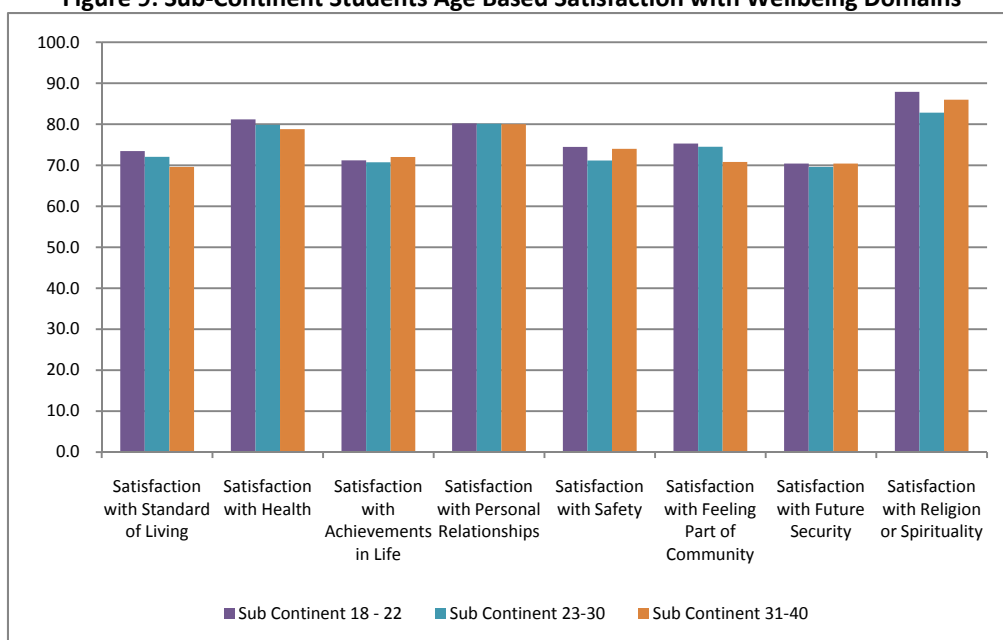

Sub Continent Female ■ Sub Continent Male

Figure 9: Sub-Continent Students Age Based Satisfaction with Wellbeing Domains

Sub Continent 18 - 22 ■ Sub Continent 23-30 ■ Sub Continent 31-40

MAP Student Sample

An analysis was undertaken of MAP students' responses to each of the subjective wellbeing domains. Students' responses were generally lower than the Australian base-line and the general student sample. The variance is significant ($p<.001$). It would appear MAP students have a significantly lower level of subjective wellbeing than that of the general student population.

All MAP students reported low levels of satisfaction with their achievements in life. This may reflect students' understanding of their academic progress. Asian students responses were generally within

the normative range (allowing for response bias), other than for satisfaction with standard of living and achievements in life.

There was considerable variation in Sub-Continent students' responses. Some caution must be exercised in interpreting responses as the number of Sub-Continent MAP students in the sample was small (n=12)[4]. Sub-Continent students report higher levels of satisfaction overall, in particular in respect to their satisfaction with their spirituality and religion. However students reported considerably lower relative levels of satisfaction with their safety.

Table 10: MIC MAP Students Satisfaction with Wellbeing Domains

	Australian Base-line[5]	MAP Sample Asia	MAP Sample Sub-Continent
Satisfaction with standard of living	78.69	57.58	74.17
Satisfaction with health	75.11	63.94	74.17
Satisfaction with achievements in Life	73.58	55.45	61.67
Satisfaction with relationships	80.15	66.36	74.17
Students satisfaction with safety	81.33	67.58	49.17
Satisfaction with connections with the community	72.99	61.82	61.67
Satisfaction with future security	70.51	62.12	52.50
Satisfaction with spirituality or religion	71.79	59.69	80.00

Figure 10: Melbourne MAP Students Subjective Wellbeing by Domain

---
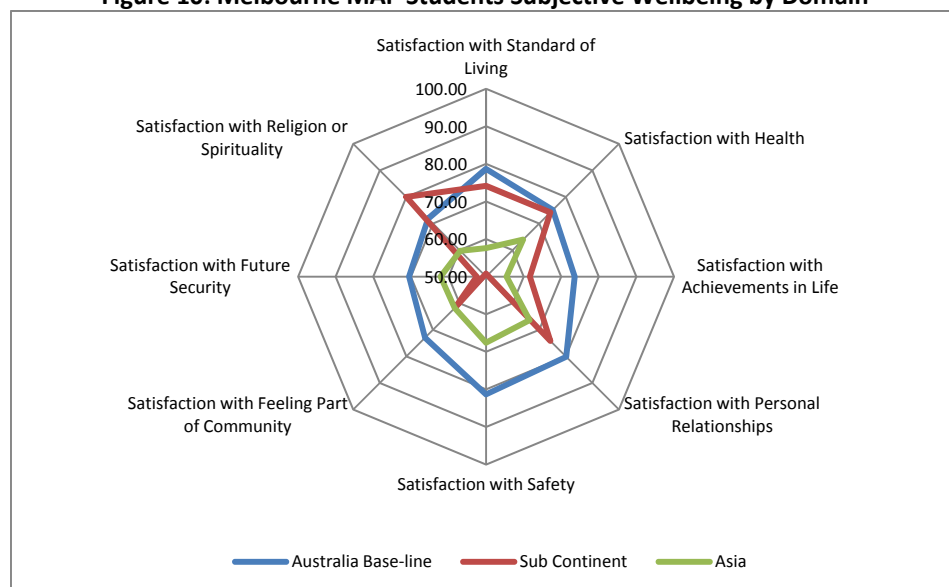
[4] Given the size of the difference between Sub-Continent MAP and general students, the results can still be considered to be strongly indicative. However they cannot be considered to be representative.
[5] Cummins, Woerner & Chester (2009)70.90

The direction and extent of difference of each domain from the overall level of subjective wellbeing was examined to determine whether students' perceptions varied from those of the Australian base-line. MAP students, in line with the general student population report higher relative levels of satisfaction with their health than the Australian base-line. Asian MAP students are relatively less satisfied with their standard of living. Sub-Continent MAP students are considerably less satisfied with their safety and considerably more satisfied with their spirituality. The sample has not been analysed by age or gender due to the sample size (n=47).

Table 11: MAP Student Subjective Wellbeing Domain Differences from SWB Mean

|	Australia Base-line	Sub Continent	Asia
Satisfaction with Standard of Living	4%	8%	-4%
Satisfaction with Health	-1%	8%	2%
Satisfaction with Achievements in Life	-3%	-4%	-6%
Satisfaction with Personal Relationships	6%	8%	5%
Satisfaction with Safety	8%	-17%	6%
Satisfaction with Feeling Part of Community	-3%	-4%	0%
Satisfaction with Future Security	-7%	-13%	0%
Satisfaction with Religion or Spirituality	-5%	14%	-2%

Comparison of MAP and General Sample

The MAP and general student responses for each wellbeing domain were compared for the two major ethic groups. In general terms the differences between Asian MAP students and the general sample of Asian students are not significant. Asian MAP students appear to be significantly less satisfied with their standard of living ($p<.01$) and with their spirituality ($p<.05$). The reason for this is not known.

Figure 11: Comparative Satisfaction with Wellbeing Domains - Asian Students
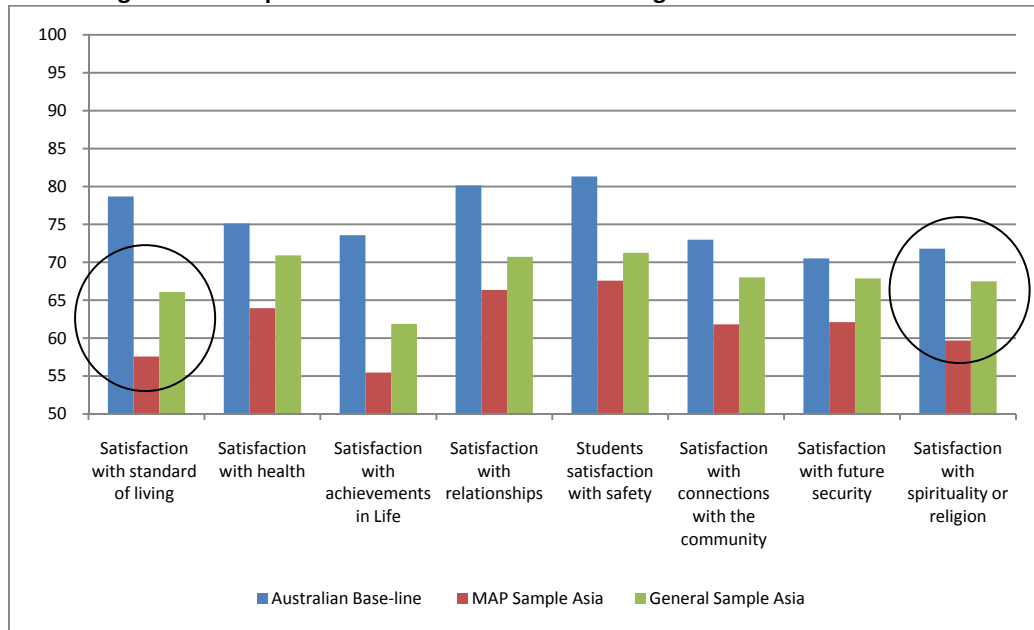
There are indications that there are significant differences between the Sub-Continent general student population and the Sub Continent MAP student population. MAP students sampled are significantly less satisfied with their achievements in life (p<.05), significantly less satisfied with their safety (p<.001), significantly less satisfied with feeling part of their community (p<.05) and significantly less satisfied with their perceived future security (p<.01). These findings are indicative and should be the subject of further research as they may indicate that MAP students from the Sub-Continent are more vulnerable in their interactions with the environment in Melbourne relative to other sub continent students and the student population generally and are experiencing difficulty acculturating to study in Australia.

Figure 12: Comparative Satisfaction with Wellbeing Domains - Sub-Continent Students
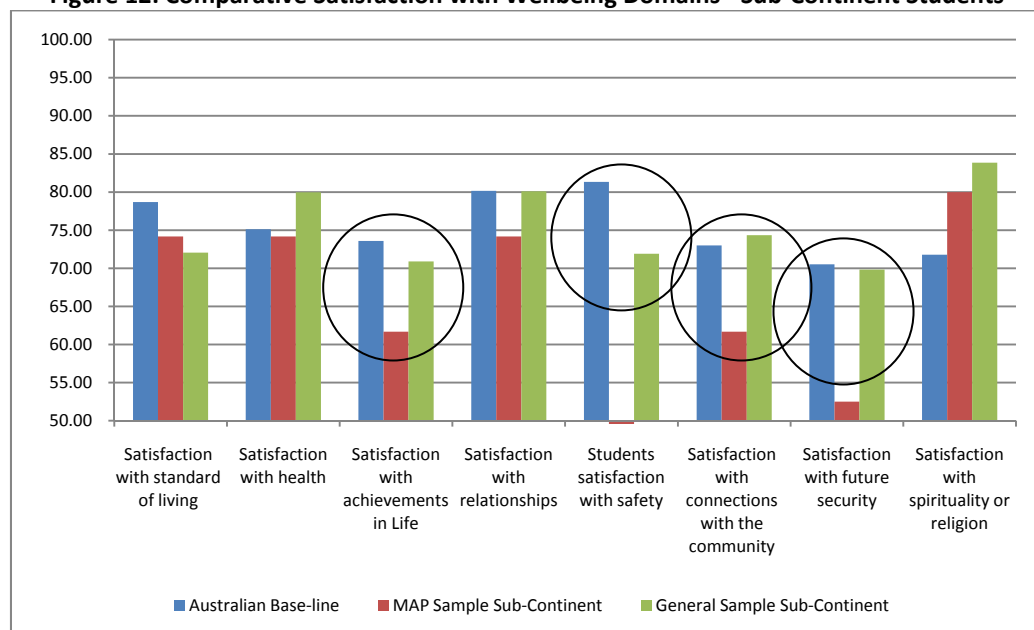
Conclusions

Overall, students at Melbourne Campus appear to be acculturating well to study at CQ University and to living in Melbourne. The reported levels of wellbeing are within the normative range of prior studies and compare well with the Australian base-line. Most students at MIC are as satisfied with their life, and aspects of their life as are Australians generally. There are no demographic variables which predict student wellbeing.

The recent media activity in respect to assaults on male Indian students appears to have had an impact on some students' satisfaction with their safety. However this has reduced levels of satisfaction rather than resulted in dissatisfaction.

MAP students report significantly lower levels of personal wellbeing. In particular MAP students from the Sub-Continent report low levels of wellbeing on several key environmental domains (safety, community connectedness and future security). This may indicate a lack of acculturation to living and studying in Australia.

CMS Executive and Melbourne Campus Executive are thanked for their support for the study.

Jonathan Sibley
April 2010

References

Cummins, R. A. (2003). Normative Life Satisfaction: Measurement Issues and a homeostatic model. *Social Indicators Research, 64*, 225-256.

Cummins, R. A., Woerner, J., & Chester, M. (2009). *Australian Unity Wellbeing Index Survey 20.1*. Melbourne: Australian Centre on Quality of Life Deakin University.

International Wellbeing Group. (2006). Personal Wellbeing Index. from (http://www.deakin.edu.au/research/acqol/instruments/wellbeing_index.htm.)

Lau, A. L. D., Cummins, R. A., & McPherson, W. (2005). An Investigation into the Cross-Cultural Equivalence of the Personal Wellbeing Index. *Social Indicators Research, 72*, 402-432.

CMS

C Management Services Pty Ltd
ABN: 11088415829

Student Wellbeing Survey

Why we are asking you to complete this Survey and how to complete the Survey:

As part of continually improving our service to our students, we want to better understand how you evaluate your personal wellbeing – put simply how happy do you feel about aspects of your life at this time. <u>Your participation in the Survey is voluntary and your answers are anonymous (we will not know who you are)</u>. If you do not want to complete this Survey please hand the uncompleted Survey to the Checking Officer at Station D: Academic Advice. As you complete the survey please do not ask anyone else what answer you should give. If you do not understand a question please leave the question blank. Please put the completed survey in the box at Station D: Academic Advice.

Please write today's date in the box below:

Day	Month

Please tell us about yourself:

What is your age?

Please tick one:

Less than 18 years	18 – 22 years	23-30 years	31-40 years	Over 40 years

What is your gender?

Please tick one:

Female	Male

What is your nationality on your passport?

Please write you nationality in the box below:

What level of qualification are you enrolling in today at CQ University?

Please tick the level of qualification you are enrolling in:

Foundation	Diploma	Bachelor s Degree	Postgraduate Certificate or Postgraduate Diploma	Masters Degree

When did you begin your study in Australia?

Please write the month and year you began your study in Australia

Month	Year

Are you a new or continuing student at CQ University?

Please tick one:

New	Continuing

Including the courses you will take this Term, how many courses do you need to take to complete your qualification?

Please write the number of courses in the box below:

Please read the information in the box below:

> The following questions ask how <u>satisfied</u> you feel, on a scale from zero to 10. **Zero** means you feel completely dissatisfied. **10** means you feel completely satisfied. And the **middle of the scale is 5**, which means you feel neutral, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Please answer each question by ticking the box that best represents how satisfied you are:

Thinking about your own life and personal circumstances, how satisfied are you with <u>your life as a whole</u>?

Completely Dissatisfied					Neutral					Completely Satisfied
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

How satisfied are you with <u>your standard of living</u>?

Completely Dissatisfied					Neutral					Completely Satisfied
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

How satisfied are you with <u>your health</u>?

Completely Dissatisfied					Neutral					Completely Satisfied
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How satisfied are you with what <u>you are achieving in life</u>?

Completely Dissatisfied					Neutral					Completely Satisfied
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How satisfied are you with <u>your personal relationships</u>?

Completely Dissatisfied					Neutral					Completely Satisfied
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How satisfied are you with <u>how safe you feel</u>?

Completely Dissatisfied					Neutral					Completely Satisfied
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How satisfied are you with <u>feeling part of your community</u>?

Completely Dissatisfied					Neutral					Completely Satisfied
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How satisfied are you with <u>your future security</u>?

Completely Dissatisfied					Neutral					Completely Satisfied
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How satisfied are you with <u>your spirituality or religion</u>?

Completely Dissatisfied					Neutral					Completely Satisfied
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Thank you for completing this survey.

Please put the completed survey in the box at Station D: Academic Advice. (PWI-A, 4th Edition, 2006)