

Psychological Services at The Juilliard School

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Abstract—The Juilliard School is the first independent performing arts institution to develop its own on-campus comprehensive psychological service. This article describes the nature and philosophy of Juilliard's Psychological Services, offers a brief history, and provides data gathered from its first three years. It also cites future challenges to be met by the Service and the institution. The article was written as a response to the interest of colleges and universities throughout the United States and to encourage other performing arts institutions to provide similar services. *Med Probl Perform Art* 5:41–44, 1990.

The growth of Juilliard's Psychological Services, which is reviewed and analyzed here, has been in response to the needs of Juilliard's performing arts students. The commitment of Dr. Joseph Polisi, President of The Juilliard School, and his Administration led to the creation of this unique mental health facility within an independent performing arts institution. The Service was conceived with the recognition that a student's artistic growth is intricately related to emotional well-being and maturation. In the 1986–87 academic year, a 12-hour a week position was created to provide students with on-campus psychological care. For 13 years prior to this, 40 to 50 students each year had met with an off-campus clinical psychologist, who in turn referred them to clinical resources within the community. Other than this experience, no other data existed on which to predict student needs. During the 1986–87 school year, 74 students sought psychological help. Realizing the need for more comprehensive psychological care, the Administration made a commitment to build an on-campus psychological service.

In the following academic year, 1987–88, the psychological service began to emerge as a formal autonomous institutional entity—with a name (Psychological Services), a private office area, and a budding staff. Official procedures and policies were created, such as “readmission to the Juilliard School after psychiatric hospitalization” and “the ad-

ministrative referral.” The Juilliard School Health Office collaborated with Psychological Services to develop “Emergency Guidelines” as well as statements on confidentiality and sexual coercion.

During the 1987–88 academic year, 83 students were seen; during the 1988–89 academic year, student use increased by 42%. In its third year, Psychological Services' staff provided direct clinical service to 118 students, 14.5% of Juilliard's student population. Indirect service was also provided to 23 other students through consultations with concerned staff, faculty, and family members when appropriate. In addition, new services were offered, such as psychological testing for possible learning disabilities, and an ACOA group was formed for adult children of alcoholics. The Services' psychological consultant also began to confer, free of charge, with members of the Juilliard staff and faculty about their needs and to provide them with appropriate community mental health referral information.

STAFF

The Service is composed of a staff of five: two social workers, two psychologists, and a psychiatrist. All have had extensive experience in clinical work with performing artists, and the three women staff members have themselves performed. The clinical staff offers students more than 35 hours a week of on-campus direct clinical care. The Service does not limit the sessions to an arbitrary number but focuses instead on how best to meet the performing arts student's emotional and practical needs.

SERVICES PROVIDED

Basic services include assessment, treatment, or referral for treatment. One or two sessions, which may include a

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consultation with the Services' staff psychiatrist, are spent defining the nature of a student's problem. Individual psychotherapy and counseling are the cornerstones of the Service and are provided as indicated. Medication and monitoring of medications are also provided by the staff psychiatrist when necessary. Crisis intervention and special quasi-educational topic-focused groups are offered. The Service also makes off-campus clinical referrals for students who request such a referral or for whom an off-campus referral is judged to be in the student's best interest.

All services are offered without charge. This policy was developed in response to the large percentage (80%) of Juilliard's students who require and receive financial assistance. Even though some students may be able to afford off-site psychological care, it is important to provide on-campus services in order to accommodate the time demands on performing arts students. Performance responsibilities make it impossible for most students to schedule regular appointment times or to follow the norms of most off-campus mental health resources. Service appointments are scheduled primarily on a week-by-week basis and often with an alternate week or 10-day appointment span. This scheduling method is compatible with the lives and time obligations of most performing arts students as well as with the number of clinical hours presently available.

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Services are offered during the nine-month academic year, which entails a number of forced separations for a student in therapy: national holidays, winter and spring recesses, and summer break. However, this arrangement conforms to performing opportunities available to many performing arts students: music and dance festivals and stock companies over the summer, and auditions and free-lance work over the holidays and shorter school breaks. These separations also help to prepare a performing arts student for life in the performing arts when "routine life" is interrupted by performing.

Today's performing arts student lives in an age when one in five Americans seeks some type of mental health treatment. The development of a psychological service supports the growing acceptance of seeking assistance in resolving emotional difficulties without feelings of shame or self-consciousness. The Service recognizes that in New York City Juilliard students study in an urban environment filled with physical and psychological stresses. The disruption caused by urban life often interferes with the performing arts student's need to maintain strict discipline and concentration. The Service offers a quiet and safe place in which to deal with the internal chaos that may result.

CONFIDENTIALITY

To ensure that students perceive Psychological Services as a safe place as well as to maintain the professional requirement of confidentiality, the Service is guided by the principles of confidentiality and self-motivation. Students are seen in the Psychological Services office where no secretarial help is used and students deal directly with Psychological Services professional staff. The Service has its own private telephone number, and messages on its answering machine are accessible only to Psychological Services' staff. Consent forms for release of student information are used for confidential communication between Psychological Services and member(s) of the Juilliard community, relevant professionals outside of Juilliard, or a student's significant other(s) when and if appropriate.

Only two circumstances exist under which confidentiality may be waived: an acute emergency and an administrative referral.

Administrative Referral. Developed by the Service, this procedure is a formal administrative requirement that a student consult with a designated member of the Psychological Services' staff in order to assist the administration in reaching a particular decision about a student or to determine an appropriate course of action for the student. Administrative referrals involve students who require testing for cognitive functioning, students who have experienced recent psychiatric hospitalization, or students who pose behavioral problems for the Juilliard community. Psychological Services created a special administrative liaison staff position to address joint institutional/clinical concerns and to implement administrative referrals.

TYPES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF PERFORMING ARTS STUDENTS

Ironically, the talents of many performing arts students can create or exacerbate certain psychological difficulties. Conservatory students, for example, who have spent much of their early lives confined to a practice area, alone with their instruments, and guided by one or two teachers and mentors, are apt to experience difficulty with interpersonal skills and relationships. Musicians frequently report feelings of loneliness and alienation. Dance students, on the other hand, tend to feel more comfortable in a group setting, having spent so much of their lives in dance class. Voice students describe the burden of dealing with and protecting the invisible instrument within. Theater arts students not uncommonly experience identity problems. One of an actor's best resources in the development of a dramatic role is his or her own emotions and life experiences. Therefore, transformations from personal to professional and back again often create identity confusion and internal disruption. In addition, unlike music and dance students, most theater arts students have not grown up thinking of themselves as actors. The discipline and commitment required to learn their craft often result in serious stress and acute anxiety.

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Predictability and certainty are not often part of the performing arts student's repertoire. Students enter their educational settings having chosen a profession filled with potential "occupational hazards." They are often able to forecast their lifestyle difficulties. Most are aware of the possibility of employment uncertainty, financial instability, geographic unpredictability, and erratic time demands. These potential realities can have negative repercussions on the self-esteem and interpersonal relationships of dedicated and talented students. In addition, the competition within the performing arts industry is so intense that it is difficult for the performing arts student to maintain a belief in values such as cooperation, collaboration, and trust.

Still another form of inconsistency involves the performing arts student who has either been a child prodigy or has been considered "special" in the family, school, or community. These students can become immediately disappointed and dejected when entering an institution replete with similarly gifted peers. Juilliard's Psychological Services represent a constant within the variable world of a performing arts school. In performing arts institutions, where students have such rare and unique qualities and abilities, it is important to recognize that they are, after all, still college students! The hundreds of thousands of dollars spent on college and university counseling services testify to the enormous mental health needs of the college age student. Juilliard's Psychological Services addresses developmental issues such as independence, autonomy, and identity concerns to help its young adults proceed with their lives as performing artists and as human beings.

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The most common problems encountered by the students reflect those that are both age- and stage-appropriate as well as those specific to performing arts students. They include:

1. Identity concerns—self-esteem, self expression and motivation, self and body image
2. Relationships problems—separation and loss from specific significant others (family, colleagues, teachers, partners, etc.); general instability in relationships with most people
3. Traumatic events—death, abuse

4. Career concerns—goals, work-blocks, the "business" of performing, performance anxieties and behaviors, performing situations (lessons, auditions, competitions, rehearsals, recitals, concerts); feelings of doubt and inadequacy, stagnation, and desperation. Depression and anxiety are pervasive problems.

For many students, their difficulties reflect lifetime patterns that are deeply embedded in their characters and personalities. At the same time, for many performing arts students, choosing the life of a performing artist marks a constructive (and often brilliant) psychosocial adaptation to those patterns as well as a sensitive and authentic representation of their most productive selves.

DATA ON USE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES IN THE 1988-89 ACADEMIC YEAR

The following data collected for the 1988-89 academic year reveal the utilization of the Service as it matured in its third year.

Psychological Services was contacted by four new-to-the-Service students a week; each student was seen for an average of nine sessions.

The cancellation rate for appointments was below 5%, and cancellations were largely due to illness or unscheduled performing responsibilities (rehearsals, coachings, fittings, etc.).

The seriousness with which Juilliard students take their psychological work conforms to an emerging profile of performing arts students as young people who are intense, disciplined individuals. They place a high priority on time and are quite selective about involvement in non-artistic activities that require commitment, energy, and attention.

Female utilization of the Service outnumbered male by a 1.7 to 1 ratio (75 females, 43 males). However, there was a 1.2 to 1 female to male ratio in the entire Juilliard enrollment during the 1988-89 academic year.

The average age of the students seeking help was 22 years, which corresponds to the average age of students using the Service in previous years.

Students from 14 of the 40 countries represented among The Juilliard School's student population contacted the Service.

Services were provided for 86 undergraduates (17.5% of the undergraduate population) and 32 graduate students (8.5% of the graduate population). Twenty-one of these students (17.7%) were either undergraduate freshmen or first-year graduate students. There were 98 freshmen and 167 first-year graduate students in the entire student population.

Thirty-seven (31%) of the 118 students who had used the Service graduated in May 1989, 20 of whom received Master's degrees.

Sixteen percent of the 230 students who graduated with degrees in May 1989 had been directly served by Psychological Services during the 1988-89 academic year.

Usage by division within Juilliard's extensive educational complex (combined undergraduate and graduate students) is described in Table 1.

It is estimated that the Service will respond to 20% of Juilliard's student population in the 1989-90 academic year.

EFFECT OF A PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICE

There are only a few direct means of measuring the effect of a psychological service on either students or the institution, because confidentiality is crucial to the success of any formal psychological experience. However, the benefits derived from the administrative referral can be documented. For example, students who were discovered to have special learning requirements through an administrative referral, were able to make changes in their programs of study which facilitated positive educational experiences. Others have successfully re-entered school after a medical leave-of-absence because of the opportunity to have their readiness to return carefully assessed. In several situations involving students who posed behavioral problems, the administrative referral enabled the Administration to review information thoroughly and to select courses of action that have benefited both the students and the school. The administrative referral is both expedient for the institution and humane for the student.

There are also several indirect indicators that the Service is having a positive effect on the students and the institution. In addition to self-referring, students are being referred to the Service by the entire Juilliard community: students, Health Office, Office of Student Affairs, other student services, faculty, staff, and Administration. Furthermore, rapid and steady increased utilization of the Service, a student petition for additional services and staff hours, direct expressions of satisfaction by student leadership to administrative personnel, and "grapevine" expressions of appreciation seem to indicate that the students perceive the Service to be responding to them in helpful and meaningful ways and also see The Juilliard School itself as an increasingly caring place.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Although the development of Psychological Services has been steady and careful, there are areas of concern that still need to be addressed.

TABLE 1. Number and Percentage of Students Using Psychological Services by Division

Division	Total No. of Students	Student Usage	% of Division
Dance	76	18	23%
Drama	74	18	24%
Music*	660	83	12.5%

*Composition, conducting, instrumental, and vocal.

1. The Service is presently unable to provide clinical service for students requiring intensive and/or specialized psychological care.

2. Student referrals to off-campus clinical resources present numerous problems. Referral to outside clinical facilities means that Juilliard cannot monitor the care that the students are receiving. The Service statistics show that 70% of those who are referred either refuse the referral or go one or two times and stop. Reasons for refusing or stopping treatment include a lack of time and/or money. In addition, many students become confused by an off-campus referral when on-campus services are clearly available to others students. They often resent the perceived injustice of a service that helps one student and "farms out" another. Based on observations from other campuses, when students believe a campus mental health facility makes a significant number of referrals or that a Service does not treat a specific disorder, students begin to assume that the Service is inadequate and may avoid seeking help.

When the performing arts student does accept an off-campus referral, it is often difficult for the off-campus clinician to accept the student's realistic difficulty in scheduling and attending appointments. According to some students, their unusual time demands are often interpreted as resistance to treatment rather than as a reality in the life of a performing arts student. Students also report that they are often obligated to pay for appointments that they are unable to keep or to reschedule during the same week. However, the off-campus clinician should not be faulted; the life of a performing arts student simply needs to be observed in order to appreciate the magnitude of the students' time commitments.

3. As in the population at large, there are subgroups in the student population which, although often troubled, tend to be underutilizers of psychological services. These subgroups include ethnic groups, minorities, and other culturally diverse students, students with addiction problems, and students at high risk for contracting sexually transmitted diseases.

These concerns underscore the need to expand future services to include additional and more comprehensive clinical care and to increase prevention through program development and outreach.

CONCLUSION

The very existence of this special student service, as well as the fact that Psychological Services is growing, is a testimony to The Juilliard School's commitment to be as in tune with the needs of students as developing individuals as it is to their needs as evolving performing artists. The Juilliard School's Psychological Services is dedicated to responding to the psychological concerns of performing arts students in ways that help them to fulfill their personal, interpersonal, and performance potentials.