

Introducing The Student Experience Project

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Summary Aims of the Project

- To develop a richer, more personal understanding of issues that are central to students' lives in the 21st Century
- To gain insights into the interactions between students' personal, familial, social and academic lives
- To use these understandings to help improve the overall student experience of university life and bioscience study in particular



Project Outline

- 20 1st yrs recruited prior to arrival
- Submit weekly video diaries
- Participate in focus groups
- Recordings and transcripts analysed by 3 researchers.



1 Year On

- 14 students remain committed, entering 2nd year
- Submitting regular diary entries
- Attended 12 focus group sessions
- New 1st yr cohort currently being recruited



The Student Voice

“It’s really cool that we can actually send in these videos and it’s like us being heard ’cos first years at university are normally never listened to”



Transitions

- Transitions are often viewed and talked about as a *linear* process.
- “Transitions are recognised as more individualised, reflective and fragmented” (Holdsworth, 2006)



Fragmented Transitions

- Students are continually adjusting and *re-adjusting* to the transition from home to university.
- During the first semester students occupy an ambiguous 'middle space' between home and university.
- Adapting to university is compromised by the desire and need to return home during the Christmas holidays.



Mid-term Blues

All the excitement's gone. Fresher's was amazing and it just feels like you're on a massive come down now of how amazing everything was and now it's just like gone. You want to go home. You miss your mum. You miss your friends. It's like you have friends here but they're not like real friends yet.It's really unsettling. I mean I know lots of people here but it's not the same as knowing everyone back home.



End of Semester 1

It's gone so fast. I'm really starting to enjoy Uni though. It's getting really good. I'm sort of looking forward to going back (home) but sort of not. I think it's going to be a big adjustment going back home and then when we come back in January it's going to be an adjustment as well.



Multi-layered Transitions

- Students experience a variety of different social and academic transitions at the same time.
- The various social transitions they engage with feed into and complicate their ability to adapt to new processes of teaching and learning (and visa versa).
- The transitions are not linear but fragmented



Final Comments

- Ethnographic research methods offer fresh insights into the complexities of student transitions.
- The research demonstrates the need to engage with the ‘whole student experience’ if we are to understand how and in what ways students make sense of the social and academic transitions of the first-year experience.

