

# First-Year Student Transitions: Engaging With the ‘Whole’ Student Experience

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# Student Experience Project

- GENIE CETL.
- Two cohorts of First-year undergraduates.
- Use of small, hand-held video cameras.
- Focus groups.

# Anthropology and pedagogy

- Rich understandings of liminality and rites of passage.
- Range of theoretical literature on self and social identities.
- Studies of transnational migration.
- Emphasis on social and kin relations.
- Research method.

# Temporal dimension

- A longitudinal research project.
- Transcends use of research methods located in specific time.
- Weekly video diaries.
- Highlights often contradictory thoughts and perceptions of students.

# Spatial dimension

- Transcends assumption that, ‘because students are *at* university they sit inside or are located within university boundaries’ (Palmer et al 2009).
- Multiple spaces of being and belonging.
- Offers a nuanced basis to explore issues of transition, belonging and retention.

# The student voice

- *The perspective of students.*
- Student-centred research increasingly valued by researchers.
- Transcends managerial or ‘top-down’ approach.
- Feed research into larger studies.

# Friendships and transitions

- Transitions are often viewed as a *linear* process.
- Movement from one state of being to another.
- Importance of friendships?
- Facilitate academic transitions?
- Social side feeds into academic side ...

# Friendships and social transitions

- Students establish friendships in varied ways.
- Some students build supportive friendships within weeks.
- Some may struggle to ‘fit in.’
- Other concerns of ‘fitting in’ - i.e. alcohol.
- Pressures of friendships.
- Bioscience students: different hours/routines.

# Christmas holidays

- End of 1<sup>st</sup> semester - students exhausted.
- Bioscience students and work schedule.
- Look forward to ‘the comforts’ of home
- Soon fall back into ‘dependent’ relations with parents.

# Home and revision

- An emotional need to distinguish between home and university.
- Impending assessed examinations at beginning of 2<sup>nd</sup> semester.
- Compromises ability to revise for exams.
- More concerns on return to campus ...

## Concluding remarks

- Complexities of ‘fragmented’ student transitions.
- Need to engage with the ‘whole student experience.’
- The diversity of the student experience.
- Complex relationship between social and academic transitions.