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Transitions in, through and out of
university for local students

Background and aims

- Aim to explore the transitions to, through, and from university for local and non-traditional students.
- how these transitions are negotiated by students as well as how practical changes can be made to learning, teaching and induction processes to improve how these transitions are experienced.

<http://research.ncl.ac.uk/studenttransitions/>



Transitions to, through and from university

- Transitions
 - To (starting university, experiences in the period before and after starting university) (**induction**)
 - Through (from one year/level to the next, one from semester/term to the next, to dissertation, etc)
 - From (onto Masters, PCGE, into the labour market, etc) (**outduction**)
- **Academic transitions** (Lectures, seminars, workload and assessment expectations, dissertation etc)
- **Social transitions** (personal life, friendships and relationships, housing, work, family etc)

Methods

- Participatory diagramming and group discussions with Geography undergraduate students
- Individual interviews with Geography undergraduate students
 - Thinking about the transition to, through and from university
 - Thinking about teaching and learning
 - Thinking about living at home

Good

More friend connections

Go to see school friends in unexpected ways home ③

easier for can keep old job part time

still have money

still have money

know the city
Able to drive around it

less to worry about

Can't appreciate clothing + clean clothes + nice house + good car as much.

Friends can't come visit you
They visit home in general = see everyone but to nobody

still see friends + family at home

Don't get annoyed by friends when doing work.

Idea that living at home is annoying + bad.

Have your own time ②

Being a student (living at home) studying Geography at Newcastle

Segregation between obvious Private + obvious Public education
Very Snobby
side of people ②

food + also washing.

Still have people to look after you.

Pace of lectures + not many only 1 a day = difficult to take part in independent learning.

not as much independence

Your own bed

still have a car

still have my friends from home close

Spending time with family whenever I want ①

Very few contact hours therefore effort to come in.

Excluded from part of it

Parents still need to know where you are

Mums foot + washed clothes because I can't cook or clean/wash clothes

Far away from library

Not in halls

Excluded from activities in halls ①

Bad

3 cohorts

- Cohort 1 - graduated in 2011 (interviewed in 2009, 2010 and 2011) (9 students)
- Cohort 2 - currently in year 3 (interviewed in 2009 and 2011)
- Cohort 3 - currently in year 2 (interviewed in 2011)
- 49 interviews conducted so far

Critical moments

- A critical moment is an event mentioned in a research encounter 'that either the researcher or the interviewee sees as having important consequences for their lives and identities' (Thomson et al, 2002: 339).
- May include major life events (e.g. starting university) or events not always thought of as particularly significant (e.g. changing friendship group).
- Some critical moments are literally moments whereas others can last much longer.
- Some may be agonised over and considered in great depth, yet others could be small decisions made without much thought or consideration.

FAMILY

Being kicked out of home
Parents splitting up
Disclosing abuse
Father remarrying
Falling out with step parents
Parental unemployment
Disowned by mother

DEATH AND ILLNESS

Death of a parent
Aunt committing suicide
Loss of a baby
Diagnosis of dyslexia
Diagnosis of chronic illness
Death of grandparents
Depression

EDUCATION

Sitting *GSCE* exams
Choosing *GSCE*s
Failing *GSCE* exams
Dropping out of school/college
Excluded from school
Bullying at school
Changing/leaving school
Starting college
Careers Advice
Conflict with teacher

rites of passage

18th birthday

(Thomson et al, 2002: 341)

Passing driving test

'Coming out'

Religious conversion

TROUBLE

Getting caught taking drugs ('busted')
Getting arrested
Getting pregnant
Father going to jail
Getting into drugs

LEISURE AND CONSUMPTION

Becoming involved in gay community
Joining amateur dramatic society
Starting to go to the pub
Going clubbing
Getting a mobile phone
Getting a car

MOVING

Moving town
Moving house
Moving country

RELATIONSHIPS

New boyfriend
Falling out with best friend
Making new friends
Being excluded from friendship group
Changing friendship group
Breaking up with girlfriend
Girlfriend going to university
Sexual experience

Thinking about your last three years of your life whilst studying at Newcastle. What would you say are three of the most significant critical moments that have occurred in your life?

George

1. As I've mentioned above, my parents split up just as I was preparing to begin university, which had some major consequences on my life. When I first made the decision to go to Newcastle, I obviously hadn't expected any of this, and I've often wondered whether I would I have made the same decisions had I known what was about to happen
2. After my first year at university, I felt that my lack of confidence was holding me back a lot, and I resolved to get help to try and conquer my shyness, so I went to see a doctor. I think to an extent I did improve, and by second year I felt much more confident in and around university. However, this was arguably shutting the door after the horse had bolted, as it was first year when most friendships seemed to be made. Still, it made a huge difference on my life

I find it difficult to think of specific 'critical moments' in my life, as I don't think there have been many individual incidents which have had a particularly huge impact on my life. Most relevant examples I can think of took place over a large period of time, such as the way I was treated by my dad (which affected my self esteem), my experiences of school (which were often difficult) etc

Andrea

1. Started seeing my boyfriend in semester 2 of first year.
2. Preparing for and having my interview for PGCE
3. Moving home to start university

What would you say are three of the most significant critical moments that have occurred in relation to your studies at university?

Lyndsey

- 1 Carrying out independent research in a country where English was not the first language
- 2 Graduating with a first after so much hard work, but in particular, getting a high mark in the essay I cared most about.
- 3 Talking in the seminar in front of other academics.

Andrea

1. Death of my grandfather - disrupted some of my first year study
2. Boyfriend - positive encouragement and support
3. Moving away from home and living independently - managing my own time/study

Social and academic transitions

- Critical moments included a mix of academic and social issues (but more of the latter)
- Social aspects of transitions are regarded as very important by students - in particular, how these affect confidence at university and shape academic transitions.



Some emerging themes

- Most of our local students aren't widening participation students.
- Recruiting local students: school visits (with amenable teachers) more successful than open days. Need personal reassurances.
- Still felt perception of Newcastle as a "snobbish" university - many feel this to be case throughout their degree but are prepared to put up with this to get a "good degree"
- Family and close friends encouraged students to stay local.
- Teachers sell the idea of moving away for the "full uni experience"
- Many local students articulated a strong sense of isolation (particularly at the start of their first year).
 - often local friends had moved away.
 - induction processes and early residential fieldcourses important for countering this (Michael will say more about this).
- Local students tend to befriend other local students - but don't see polarisation of cohort as a problem.
- Upon graduation, prepared to move out of NE for employment - but not as flexible as other students, e.g. anti-London sentiment expressed.