NEW PLACE, NEW PERSON? IS ACCLIMATISATION TO UNIVERSITY ACCOMPANIED BY CHANGE IN SCORES ON PERSONALITY TESTS?

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Thesis Abstract

Introduction: Personality Trait theories uncritically accept the lay perspective of personality as an internal phenomenon linked to individuality and agency. This view flies in the face of empirical evidence demonstrating environmental influences on behaviour (Bargh & Ferguson, 2000). The idea that agency resides within individuals, and that a separation exists between individuals and their environment, has long been contested by theorists and clinicians arguing for acknowledgement of contextual factors (Skinner, 1971; Smail, 1999).

Scores on personality measures based on the Five-Factor Approach (FFA; Costa & McCrae, 1985) have shown instability across the lifespan in relation to factors such as relationships (Neyer & Lehnart, 2007), and short-term changes in response to major adverse events (Lockenhoff, Terracciano, Patriciu, Eaton & Costa, 2009). That "personality" scores change in response to the environment highlights the weakness of the trait concept as a way of understanding behaviour.

The move to university represents a major change of social environment that is sudden but predictable, and persists for a long time. It is therefore a time at which we can expect to observe changes in behaviour. Previous research into university acclimatisation and "homesickness" has assumed personality scores to be a static variable (e.g. Fisher & Hood, 1987) that impacts upon the relocation without being affected by it.

This study sought to investigate the hypothesis that novel identity narratives would be evoked by a new environment and that this would impact upon acclimatisation. The study aimed to test this hypothesis by examining participant accounts.

Method: First-year students (N = 7) completed two questionnaires designed to assess personality and homesickness. These measures were re-administered after six and fourteen weeks. Participants were

interviewed at all three time-points, describing their experiences of adjusting to life at university.

Interviews with participants were used as a basis for comparison with scores on psychometrics designed to measure personality and homesickness. These were analysed using a method that aimed at exploring narratives likely to impact on participants' acclimatisation and presentation of themselves.

The extended paper details a quantitative analysis of psychometric scores amongst a larger sample of 1st year students (N = 58).

Results and Discussion: Participant accounts were analysed in terms of identity narratives to allow formulation of their experiences in relation to their psychometric scores. Participants described behaving differently at university and taking on new roles that impacted upon their acclimatisation. Despite reporting changes, participants expressed essentialist views about the self.

Results from the quantitative study were not supportive of the hypothesis that homesickness would be associated with change on FFA measures.

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Statement of Contribution

The idea for this study was discussed by the author and Dr Mark Gresswell. Further discussion with Professor Todd Hogue led to the adoption of an abbreviated personality measure. Mark Gresswell and Dr Dave Dawson provided feedback for an application for ethical approval.

The author carried out all recruitment of participants, data collection and transcription. Quantitative analysis was carried out after consultation and advice from Dr Nima Moghaddam. Mark Gresswell provided supervision throughout.

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Abstract

Introduction: Much of trait psychology is underpinned by the assumption of personality as internally located and relatively stable across times and locations. Such a position is phenomenologically and empirically contestable. The change in social context experienced on arrival at university provides an arena in which to explore the impact of environment on the self-concept and narratives of identity. Previous research into the effect of such transitions as "homesickness" is considered.

Method: Seven participants, selected for their scores on a measure of homesickness, provided narrative accounts of their experiences at three time-points across their first year at university. The psychometric scores and narrative accounts were considered together in order to generate an understanding of the ways in which participants constructed their experiences and identities.

Results and Discussion: Participants' accounts were analysed in terms of identity construction through interpersonal relationships. Participants' reports of their experiences revealed that the construction of their identities was affected by transition. The results are discussed in relation to relevant research

Key-words: Mixed methods, narrative, identity, personality, homesickness

Introduction

Gordon Allport, one of the founders of trait psychology, held that the existence of personality was so self-evident as to not require justification. Indeed, he answered those who argued for a more environmental understanding of behaviour by noting that the logical conclusion of their position would be to eliminate the concept of personality "an eventuality that seems merely absurd to me." (p1; Allport, 1966). He proposed the notions of personality *genotype* and *phenotype* to illustrate his view that, while environment shapes expressed behaviour, underlying motivations and dispositions remain internal and separate. Humans possess agency and individuality, separating us from animals (e.g., Allport, 1960; 1966).

Allport's assumptions have informed current personality theory, including the influential Five-Factor Approach[1] (FFA; Costa &McCrae, 1985), whose adherents have argued for an even more limited role for the environment than that suggested by Allport (McCrae et al., 2000).

One reason for this may be the intuitiveness of the idea of personality, stemming from the perception of a continuous self and the capacity for action. Evidence from the field of neuroscience offers explanations of these phenomena that challenge the notion of personality. Cromby (2004) posited a model of subjectivity that incorporates both neuroscientific and social-constructionist perspectives. With the consideration of conformity, this model offers an alternative framework through which identity processes can be understood (*a detailed description is contained in the extended paper*).

[1] McAdams (1992) makes the case that the FFA does not merit the status required to be described as a *model*. In accordance with this evaluation, the term *approach* is preferred throughout.

The current research sought to compare the use of psychometric measures of "personality" with participants' self-reports, within a population experiencing an environmental shift. A second measure, designed to measure homesickness was used to screen for people likely to be affected by the relocation.

Arguments for and against the concept of personality are summarised, an explanation of the narrative analysis method is provided. The idea of narrative identity is proposed to replace that of homesickness. The choice and use of psychometrics is also discussed.

Contextualism vs. Personology

Since the time of Allport, critics of personality theory have contended that notions such as individual agency are logically insupportable and that human behaviour is only understandable with reference to the environment in which it occurs (e.g., Skinner, 1953). Allport himself described his own position as *interactionist* (as contrasted with *situationist*; p2: Allport, 1966), but stated that:

> Whatever tendencies exist reside in a person, for a person is the sole possessor of the energy that leads to action. Admittedly different situations elicit differing tendencies from my repertoire. I do not perspire except in the heat, nor shiver except in the cold; but the outside temperature is not the mechanism of perspiring or shivering. My capacities and my tendencies lie within. (Allport, 1966, p2)

The debate appeared to have swung towards the situationists in the years following Mischel's (1968) demonstration that individuals' behaviour displays little consistency across different situations. Trait psychology rallied in the 1980's, with the emergence

of the FFA (Costa & McCrae, 1985), and its five cardinal trait domains: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness to Experience. This model developed out of the factor analyses of Tupes and Christal (1961) and Norman (1963), and Goldberg's (1981) advancement of Allport and Odbert's (1936) lexical hypothesis. The latter contended that concepts that are of importance to humans eventually become encoded within language as single words.

The statistical analysis of English trait terms has underpinned the development of the FFA (McAdams, 1992), which has gained popularity such that it has been suggested as an alternative to the categorical diagnoses in the current Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV, APA, 1994; e.g., Widiger 1993; Rottman, Ahn, Sanislow & Kim, 2009; Skodol & Bender, 2009).

Proponents of FFA have argued that personality change is not determined by experience, but instead follows a developmental pathway driven by biological factors. They argued that, although personality-scores change across the lifespan, they do so in ways that are predictable and universal. The role of the environment is limited to shaping the way in which personality is expressed:

> (FFA) deliberately asserts that personality traits are endogenous dispositions, influenced not at all by the environment. (p175; McCrae et al., 2000)

Although critiques of personality continue to be made, their influence has been limited. This has occurred despite a backdrop of increasing empirical validation for the role of situational variables in eliciting behaviour. Bargh & Ferguson (2000) described several examples of automaticity, or ways in which the environment influences actions, often without the actor being aware of the influence. Neyer & Aspendorpf (2001) administered FFA measures with young German adults, twice at

four-year intervals. They found that changes that changes in mean group scores that they described as "maturation" were moderated by the young people's relationships with others. Neyer & Lehnart (2007) studied the same population after a further four years, finding that individual changes in traits were associated with the progress of personal relationships.

Trait psychology's concessions to this evidence include the idea of personality trajectories (which are nevertheless still described as both endogenous and universal), and the recognition that a few individuals will change profoundly (McCrae et al., 2000; Lockenhoff, Terracciano, Patriciu, Eaton & Costa, 2009).

Social-Constructionist Critiques of Personality

Millon's (1991) appraisal of the taxonomy of psychopathology conceded that classification systems do not reveal natural structures, but create frameworks for the convenience of those who devise them. He contended that these "splendid fictions" (p246) served to structure thinking, especially in the social sciences. The same argument could be applied to the concept of personality. Although it may not describe a "real" entity, it has served as the basis for numerous diagnoses and psychotherapeutic models that are used by mental health professionals and systems all over the world.

From a post-structuralist stance, this line of argument appears simplistic, in that it fails to recognise that "splendid fictions" affect and alter the things that they refer to. Psychiatric labels do not merely describe the world from a distance, but impact upon people's lived experience. This confers a responsibility on theorists to be explicit about the constructed nature of their theories. Personology uncritically accepts the lay concept of personality, which acts as an impediment to the interpretation of evidence.

The use of homogeneous samples in the factor-analysis studies that explored the lexical hypothesis has been criticised as inadequate, due to the possibility that some of those asked to rate trait terms might not be familiar with some of the words (Block, 1995). A less structuralist critique is that "correct" comprehension does not exist, and that semantic content is highly subjective and likely to change significantly over time. Words as common as "bad" and "nice" are imbued with multiple and contradictory meanings according to context, confounding the factor-analyses carried out by the likes of Goldberg (1981).

The second criticism of personality theory concerns the way that legitimising the concept of personality impacts upon reality. Narrative therapy in particular has drawn attention to the effects of totalising descriptions (White, 2007). Terms such as "personality disorder" convey an impression that clients' problems are intrinsic to their being and untreatable, with serious implications for people seeking help (Cawthra & Gibb, 1998).

That the idea of endogenous personality is detrimental to an understanding of behaviour and subjectivity is evident from the way that personologists have clung to it in the face of growing evidence for the importance of context. In doing so, they have moved from the idea of personality remaining stable over time (Strong, 1951) to stable adult personality (Costa & McCrae, 1988) to the idea of internally-directed personality trajectories (McCrae et al., 2000).

Critical psychologists have argued that the persistence of personality as an idea reflects an increasingly reductionist, individualistic psychology that abstracts persons from their social contexts, thereby masking the effects of inequality and locating the responsibility for distress within individuals (e.g., Smail, 1999; Cromby &

Nightingale, 2001). This situation therefore serves to perpetuate inequality within society.

However, this does not explain the ready acceptance of personality, compared to the negative attention received by the practice of diagnosis, which has been similarly described as a form of ideological control (Sadler, 2004). An answer may lie with the ubiquity of the lay concept and its resonance with our experience of our own selves.

Explaining the Appeal of Personality

Bem and Allen (1974) listed a number of biases leading to exaggeration of the consistency of others' behaviour, including underestimation of our own role in eliciting behaviour and of the limited and similar contexts in which they are encountered. For example, the tendency to perceive information that confirms what we think we already know means that our first impressions of others are likely to be reinforced in subsequent encounters, even if much behaviour is inconsistent with those impressions.

Such factors are undoubtedly important, but perhaps even more so is the perception of our own self as continuous and separate from our environment, with the capacity to direct our own behaviour. Perceiving these qualities within ourselves, humans have inferred their existence in others, describing them as "personality" or "soul".

Modern neuroscience however, has described both the sensation of agency and that of the continuity of the self-concept as artefacts of conscious experience and memory. Of particular relevance is the work of Damasio and Gazzaniga. Damasio (1999) postulated an explanation for the sensation of the continuous self, while Gazzaniga

demonstrated that the perception of agency is not the same as actual agency (*both of these theories are discussed more fully in the extended paper*).

Narratives and Preferred Identities

Cromby (2004) has proposed a model of subjectivity incorporating these neuroscientific findings. In doing so, he has attempted to address shortcomings within social-constructionism (namely, the failure to deal with materiality or subjective experience) and produced a framework for understanding identity processes as fundamentally linked to the environment (*see extended paper for a more detailed account*).

The term "narrative" is used to refer to the linking of events across time (Wigren, 1994). From the social-constructionist perspective adopted here, identity refers to the presentation of self within given social contexts (France & Uhlin, 2006). Identity narratives are social constructions that link these presentations across time.

Narrative analysis has been used for both quantitative and qualitative research. Wigren (1994) used narrative completion to measure traumatised cognition. At the other end of the spectrum, sit those such as Kohler-Riessman (1993) and Gergen (2005) whose research uses narratives as a way of representing participants' voices more faithfully. Others, like Viney and Bousfield (1991), occupy a point somewhere in between.

Crossley (2000) proposed a 5-step method for narrative analysis as a tool for self-discovery: 1 Reading and familiarising; 2 Identifying concepts to look for; 3 Identifying narrative tone; 4 Identifying imagery and themes; 5 Weaving together a story.

The current research adopted a modified form of Crossley's (2000) method, whilst incorporating Halliday's (1973) functions of narrative (*see extended paper for a summary*). Identity is conceived here as enacted through the performance of particular narratives.

Homesickness

Moves from one place to another represent an ideal opportunity for the exploration of environmental influence on identity. Distress accompanying moves has been conceptualised as homesickness. Vingerhoets (2005) summarised conceptual and methodological issues around the study of homesickness. He noted the imprecise nature of the label, which can be applied to people with dissimilar experiences. He expresses some surprise that relationships are more important than distance in determining homesickness, and that nostalgia is described as a similar feeling. Considered in terms of lost identities, both of these findings are easily understandable. Vingerhoets decries the lack of attention given to homesickness, with Fisher's (1989) book on the subject still the most comprehensive work.

Fisher (1989) observed that homesickness is most straightforwardly described as a syndrome comprising distress, intrusive thoughts of home and mild cognitive deficits, most pronounced in times of inactivity.

She noted the importance of the post-transition environment and briefly acknowledged the idea that homesickness is merely a particular expression of distress rather than a specific disorder related to relocation from home, but appears to discard the idea despite citing evidence that supports this idea.

For instance, Fisher, Frazer and Murray (1984) found that, although 76% of a boarding school sample reported homesickness when prompted, only 16% did so unprompted. Fischer and Stueve (1977) found that up to a fifth of the US population were involved in relocation, but distress was only present where other issues, such as wealth, pre-existing illness or racial prejudices came into play. Relocation is often associated with such adverse life events, as might be surmised from the number of homesickness studies, looking at enforced slum clearances, asylum seekers. The aetiological fallacy produced by the fixation with home obscures other sources of distress, feeding the unsupported claim that moves are intrinsically distressing.

Homesickness has usually been found to have no association with gender. However, Fisher, Elder and Peacock (1990) found higher incidence amongst females at a mixed boarding school with a focus on outdoor activities. The authors suggest higher stress, or increased symptom reporting as the cause, but a simpler explanation is that the validation provided by physical activity was less compatible with preferred female identities.

Fisher, Murray and Frazer (1985) found that physical distance from home was associated with homesickness amongst university students, but not among school-boarders. The authors ascribed the difference to perceived control. Fisher (1989) found that homesickness was associated with low decisional control.

Fisher and Hood (1986) found that homesick students were less committed to new environments than the non-homesick, arguing that this attenuated the new location's power to distract. However, establishing whether the lack of commitment or homesickness came first is less straightforward.

The constructionist-narrative position suggests that relocation produces performances of new identities. Distress may well be produced to the extent that identities associated with the previous location are preferred to those in the new. The current study offers an opportunity to compare the utility of these paradigms by comparing a measure of homesickness with participants' accounts.

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Summary and Aims

The lay idea of personality may stem from artefacts of subjective experience that produce the sensation of a continuous interior self. Trait psychology has failed to critique this concept, instead creating misleading personality diagnoses and psychometric tools. This situation derives from and perpetuates an individualistic approach to psychology, obscuring the effects of power and context.

It is suggested that "personality" as measured by psychometrics is not stable, but is affected by the environment, rendering the concept a confusing and unhelpful way to understand behaviour. This study aimed to test this hypothesis by eliciting participants' own accounts of changes in self-perception. These accounts were formulated in terms of identities, to determine whether the selves generated in different locales were associated with feeling settled, with comparison made with FFA measure scores and a measure of homesickness.

Method

Overview: The methods used aimed to investigate the effects that a shift in social environment would have on scores on personality measures and narratives of identity.

The transition to university was hypothesized to be accompanied by the diminishment of previously established identities and the development of new performances of self.

As it was conjectured that participants' distress might result from the loss of valued identities, it was hypothesized that changes in personality scores would be greater among those reporting higher levels of distress[2]. A measure designed to assess "homesickness" was therefore used as a screening variable.

One of the criticisms of personality psychometrics put forward in this paper was that they fail to reflect the complexity of experience of those completing them. The exploration of identity narratives was an attempt to avoid replicating the same mistake by allowing detailed qualitative information to be provided in participants' own words.

Participants: 84 first-year students at an East Midlands university completed psychometric questionnaires on paper or through a survey website. The only exclusion criterion was based on the ability to speak fluent English and read written English. Since all those invited to participate were undertaking degrees taught in English, this did not prove problematic. Respondents were asked to indicate their willingness to be interviewed three times. Those obtaining the six highest and the two lowest DRI scores were contacted for this purpose, though one of the high scorers did not respond.

Measures: (*A rationale for the choice of measures is contained in the extended paper*) The Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI; Gosling, Rentfrow & Swann, 2003) and the Dundee Relocation Interview (Fisher, 1989) were administered to all participants. The TIPI was used as an FFA "personality measure" and was selected in preference to

[2] This hypothesis was explored further in the wider study described in the extended paper.

longer instruments in order to reduce participant attrition. The TIPI was easily and quickly administered in an online format, while still retaining good test-retest reliability (mean $r = 0.72$, $p < 0.05$) and having reasonable convergent validity (mean $r = 0.77$, $p < 0.05$) with the Forty-four item Big Five Inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999). The TIPI uses the label "Emotional Stability" rather than "Neuroticism", so the latter term is preferred hereafter.

The DRI is a 26-item questionnaire designed as a screening tool for homesickness amongst undergraduate students. Based on boarding school and university students' definitions of homesickness, it examines orientation towards home, memory dysfunction, and satisfaction with the current environment. In this study, the DRI was used as a measure of transition-related distress.

Fisher (1989) asked 85 students who had previously been assessed as homesick or non-homesick completed the DRI. Those assessed as non-homesick (n = 34) obtained a mean score of 5.3 (sd = 1.1), compared to 17.5 (sd = 1.1) for the non-homesick group. This difference was significant at $p < 0.001$.

Fisher noted that Test-Retest reliability would not necessarily be meaningful for a measure of homesickness. However, she did note that retest correlation coefficients of 0.71 after two weeks and 0.81 after six months were obtained with non-homesick participants. This was compared to 0.59 and 0.21 for participants assessed as homesick. Construct validity was assessed through teacher-ratings of boarding-school pupils, giving a correlation of 0.40 ($p < 0.02$).

Procedure

Participants completed both measures at three time points (T1, T2 and T3), approximately five, eleven and eighteen weeks after their arrival at university. The gaps between administrations were based on the six-week period used when assessing the TIPI's test-retest reliability. The gap between T2 and T3 was slightly longer in order to avoid clashing with participants' examinations.

The initial interviews took place 1-2 weeks after the completion of questionnaires, but all subsequent measures were completed in a face-to-face setting, immediately prior to interviews. Participants were given £10 at the start of each interview.

Interviews were carried out using a semi-structured interview protocol designed to elicit participants' descriptions of their relationships at home and at university, as well as their understanding of the term "homesickness" (see Appendix 1). In line with a narrative approach to data collection (Kohler-Riessman, 1993), participants were encouraged to give answers as they saw fit, telling their own stories. Further questions were asked in order to follow up interesting threads, or to urge interviewees to keep talking.

The narrative analysis was based on Crossley's (2000) method, but with some key differences, principally at Step 2, where, in line with the requirements of the current research, themes were pre-decided, not drawn out of interview data. The question schedule and interview process were explicitly geared towards answering three questions about identity: Do different selves emerge in new environments? Is the acceptability of these selves related to how positively relocation is experienced? If it does have an impact, how important is it likely to be?

After reading and re-reading the transcripts, segments of text where participants described themselves or others directly or indirectly were marked. The same was done for segments where relationships were mentioned.

Finally, the transcripts were re-read to identify statements that did not directly refer to either of these, but which nevertheless appeared to say something about that person's identity (e.g. "History is a boring subject…").

The selected quotes were reviewed considering alternative interpretations that could be made according to Halliday's (1973) narrative functions. In doing so, the TIPI and DRI data were used for triangulation, as well as the various accounts. For example, reading one participant's declaration about their fellow students evoked the remembered responses of other participants to the same question (thereby providing a framing context).

For the identity analyses, each participant was reviewed in turn, looking at the performances of identity that were both described and enacted in their accounts (again bearing in mind Halliday's (1973) functions). Each participant's interview and questionnaire responding was synthesized as a formulation of preferred identities they described and performed in interviews.

Results and Discussion

Participant demographics:

7 students were interviewed and completed the measures across the three time-points (see Table 1.), of whom 6 (86%) were female. This might reflect a difference in the acceptability of reporting distress, but is also likely to be due to the high percentage (69%) of female respondents to the questionnaires[3]. Mean age at T1 was assessed as whole numbers, with five 18 year-olds, one 19 year-old and one 21 year-old.

Participants' scores on the TIPI were evaluated using an adapted Leeds Reliable Change Index Calculator (Agostinis, Morley & Dowzer, 2008). When provided with information about a measure's retest reliability and the standard deviation (sd; of the sample from which this figure was calculated). This tool calculates a figure for two sd from the mean, beyond which any changes seen are unlikely (p <0.05) to be due to measurement error. This was done for each of the TIPI scales, based on the test-retest correlation and sd from responses to the questionnaires completed for an extended quantitative analysis (*the details of which can be found in the Extended Paper*). The results are shown in **Table 1**.

The scores of two participants, Jane and Fahimah[4], varied at different time-points by more than two sd. Jane's Emotional Stability score dropped from 12 to 3 (T1-T3), while Fahimah's fell from 14 to 5 in the same time period[5]. Fahimah's score for Conscientiousness fell from 9 to 5 (T1-T2). None of the other score changes were above the calculated threshold for significant change.

[3] This, in turn is likely to be largely due to the gender ratio on the undergraduate psychology course from which the majority of participants were recruited.
[4] All participants names have been altered
[5] Changes to Emotional Stability T1-T2 were not assessed as the test-retest correlation was not significant at p <0.05.

Table 1. Participants' Psychometric scores T1-T3

	T1 (5 weeks after term beginning)						T2 (11 weeks after term beginning)						T3 (18 weeks after term beginning)					
Participant	DRI	Ex	Ag	Con	Em	Op	DRI	Ex	Ag	Con	Em	Op	DRI	Ex	Ag	Con	Em	Op
Lizzie	25	14	12	11	8	12	**12#**	13	12	11	10	10	**12#**	13	13	12	9	11
Bradley	4	9	12	14	13	11	3	11	9	12	13	10	6	11	9	13	13	10
Vivian	19	11	10	12	7	11	14	10	12	12	9	13	**12#**	9	11	11	9	11
Fahimah	23	8	9	9	14	6	20	4	11	**5#**	4*	6	**15#**	6	8	6	**5#**	7
Kelly	20	7	11	12	9	9	15	8	10	12	7	9	18	8	9	11	6	10
Amy	4	11	8	14	8	9	3	10	8	14	10	9	3	12	8	14	10	9
Jane	24	2	11	13	12	10	**16#**	4	11	13	3	10	**11#**	5	10	13	**3#**	10
Mean	17	8.86	10.43	12.14	10.14	9.71	11.86	8.57	10.43	11.29	8	9.57	11	9.14	9.71	11.43	7.86	9.71
Standard deviation	9.13	3.81	1.51	1.77	2.80	1.98	6.51	3.46	1.51	2.93	3.56	2.07	5.10	3.02	1.80	2.64	3.39	1.38

Change from T1 significant at $p < 0.05$ level
* Fahimah's change on Emotional Stability (T1-T2) was not assessed as the test-retest correlation was not significant at $p < 0.05$.

Identity Analysis

The aim of the qualitative analysis was to determine how the identities participants constructed in different environments, and the values they placed upon these selves, affected their ability to acclimatise to university life. *Space does not permit full presentation of the interviews, but larger extracts can be found in Appendix 1.*

Table 2. Lizzie

Psychometrics	Biographical details
At T1, Lizzie's DRI score was high at 25. At T2 it had reduced to 12, where it remained at T3. Lizzie's TIPI scores did not change significantly at p <0.05	Lizzie, the eldest of four children, had moved to university from the North-West of England, though her family had moved several times in her childhood. She described herself as Christian and a non-party-goer and had expected to be homesick. The change in Lizzie's DRI was reflected in her experience of settling in to university.

Lizzie recognised that some identities were linked to particular environments:

> [T1] L: The whole little fish big pond thing was one of the things I was really worried about as well because I was rather recognised at home and school and everyone knew who I was um… whereas here when I came no-one knew who I was, no-one knew who anyone was and… I was just one of those "freshers"… the way people perceive me here like in halls or in my course, is very different to the way I was perceived at home in school. Or at church In halls I'm one of the quiet ones uh because I'm not a big party-goer or anything like that.

Lizzie's comment here showed that the positive role at school had not reappeared at university, echoing a theme within her extended narrative that the university environment was reinforcing of a particular type of sociability that would have been incompatible with Lizzie's identity as a Christian.

Lizzie described initially feeling unable to "be [her]self", but she gradually became more comfortable performing her new identities:

> [T2] I've just I dunno I'm- I act- I know that I'm different with friends at home than to friends here and I think I presumed that I was more myself at home I guess just 'cos' I've been there longer and this is a more normal experience I think instead that I've noticed different parts of myself whilst I'm here and I still catch myself noticing parts of my personality that I don't really like, like that seem to have come out whilst I've been here.

Lizzie's assertion that the change in her behaviour is due to the revealing of parts of her that already existed highlights an essentialist understanding (i.e. that individual's behaviour is determined by an inner essence, whether understood as "personality" or "soul") that was echoed by other participants. Her understanding is explained as resulting from a continuous sensation of self as described by Damasio (1999).

Lizzie had commented that part of her adjustment to university had come through the realisation that she was able to maintain desired identities through electronic communication with her loved ones, and that her place within her family would not be lost. In the final interview, feeling more comfortable at university, Lizzie talked about wanting to reclaim other valued roles:

> [T3] L: I think I mentioned before- I was quite well known in almost every circle that I was in and here that's not the case at all very few people know me… I'm very definitely a leader and people at home know that about me whereas here it's not so much a big deal, my mum said to me before I left um "I think it would be really good for you to get involved with- kind of more involved with the uni"… I think that she's right in that I need that other part of my life back um I really enjoyed being house captain at my school um kind of just the organisation and getting on with people and being competitive and whatever.

Lizzie was unusual amongst the participants in that she accepted the label "homesick". Both she and Vivian, the other participant who did so, saw being homesick as part of a positive identity relating to their loved ones at home.

> [T3] [*talking about friends from university*] they were both really keen to come back after Christmas and they'd both be texting me saying they were really bored and they couldn't wait to be back um and I was like "Why don't you go meet up with your friends and stuff?" They were like "Well, I've met up with them enough now- I've seen them enough" So I get the feeling that they don't have relationships at home like I do um so they might be really content with the friendships that we've got here now whereas for me like because I've got the ideals- what I think are ideal and friendships that are really, really strong and have been through a lot together and stuff.

The final extract from Lizzie is included because it denotes the alteration of her behaviour through a label given to her by others:

> [T1] People are really picking on the fact that I don't swear and that's different for them, and so it's made me more of- aware of the fact that, now I can't swear (laughs) if I'm surrounded by people that do.

Table 3. Bradley

Psychometrics	Biographical details
At T1, Bradley's DRI score was one of the lowest, at 4, at T2 it was 3, and at T3, 6. Bradley's TIPI scores did not change significantly at p <0.05	Bradley was an only child, raised by his mother in an offshore part of the UK. He had never met his father, described as African-American, and had frequently experienced racism. His experience of the transition to university was overwhelmingly positive. Bradley felt that the DRI scores were a fair reflection of his experience.

In stark contrast to Lizzie, Bradley, one of the lowest scorers on the DRI, spoke of dissatisfaction with his home life, and eagerness to experience novelty. Bradley talked about acquiring new identities in his time at university, about taking more responsibility for his studies, engaging with his work in a way he had never previously done, and even becoming a course rep. He expressed surprise at fitting in well with his socially-active new flatmates (as contrasted with the "nerd crowd" in his hometown):

> [T1] I: You said that you have done some things more quickly than you expected at university. Do you think that there's been any change in your personality?

B: I'd say so. Like, as I said, I never went out. Um, but I'm definitely more of a party person now I enjoy dressing up as well now

I: That's not something that you would have done before?

B: Nope. Not at all. Wouldn't have even thought about doing it.

University not only provided Bradley with opportunities to establish more positive identities, but changed the nature of his key relationship at home, thereby improving his life at home. At our initial meeting, he expressed no desire to return:

[T1] I: Um, what do you understand by the term "homesick"?

B: I don't. Never

I: If somebody said to you that they felt homesick, what would you-

B: Well, I would assume that they miss home, want to go home, but I don't understand it 'cos' it's never happened to me.

Bradley's relationship with his mother improved markedly through him moving to university. This was accompanied by a shift in his stance towards home:

[T2] I: How are you feeling about going back for Christmas?

B: I'm actually looking forward to it. Like in contrast to last time, I'd probably say I don't really care if I go home. Now I'm looking forward to going home. I'm not looking forward to the work I'm going to have to do when I'm home. I'd rather just do the work here and have fun back home. Yeah, definitely looking forward to it. There's a lot of people I have to visit who I haven't seen in a while.

In his final interview, Bradley confirmed that he had enjoyed being home. He was not surprised by the increase in his DRI score, agreeing that it accurately reflected his feelings. For Bradley, missing home had become a more acceptable feature of his identity as his relationships there improved:

> [T3] B: [referring to his DRI score] It's got higher. Yeah definitely.
>
> I: Does that reflect the experience that you've had then?
>
> B: Yeah. I would never say that I'm homesick, but I definitely, yeah I definitely look forward to going home as compared to a few months ago, which was blatantly I didn't want to go home, glad I was away, didn't want to see anyone.

Despite reporting that university had changed him, some of Bradley's statements seemed to contradict this.

> I'm still the same person. Just I was able to see it more. I knew I was sociable and stuff like that, but I've been able to see it more since coming here... I've never had the chance to prove that to myself, but this has been that chance.

As with Lizzie, Bradley's statement implies an essentialist position. Bradley's positive experience of the transition accords well with Fisher's (1989) declaration of the importance of the post-transition environment. Bradley's account may also have some parallels with Fahima's (see below).

Table 4. Vivian

Psychometrics	Biographical details
Vivian's DRI score at T1 was 19. At T2, it was 14, and 12 at T3. Vivian's TIPI scores did not change significantly at $p < 0.05$	Vivian was born in a southern European country, moving to London at seven with her family, initially speaking no English. She had a brother one year younger and a sister fourteen years younger. She described herself as very close to her family. Vivian was surprised by her DRI scores, stating that she did not feel any distress, though she missed her family.

Vivian was clear that relationships were very important to her happiness at university:

> [T1] Well, as soon as I came, I was obviously trying to get friends because I didn't know anyone from here. None of my friends came from my high school so I didn't know anyone That's all I needed when I came first here.

Like Lizzie, Vivian's family had also moved while she was young, meaning that she had already experienced a transition and the accompanying shifts in identity. She too saw the fact that she missed her family as a positive feature of her love for them:

> [T1] Yeah I felt homesick, because I'm really close to my family, so it was a bit I don't know, so it was a bit strange to move, but I like keep in touch with them…
>
> Well, I suppose it depends on their relationship wit- to their family and friends there 'cos I know lots of people who don't miss home and who don't have that much contact with their parents and don't mind it.

Unlike Lizzie, Vivian did not see herself as particularly homesick. One reason for this might be that she saw fitting in at university as more feasible than Lizzie. This

echoes the findings of Fisher, Elder and Peacock (1990). Where Lizzie's Christian identity acted as a barrier to social validation, Vivian did not perceive any such issue.

Table 5. Kelly

Psychometrics	Biographical details
Kelly's DRI scores at T1, T2 and T3 were 20, 15 and 18 respectively. Kelly's TIPI scores did not change significantly at $p < 0.05$	Kelly, an only child, had moved from a neighbouring county, having chosen to come to a university where she would be able to return home frequently to see her boyfriend and mother. She returned home for one night every week to continue her part-time job. Like Vivian, Kelly did not feel that the DRI score reflected her experience.

Kelly's account presented some interesting questions in that she had chosen to remain close to her home and went to some lengths to maintain contact. Kelly described coming from a close-knit community, where people were generally aware of each other's history and family background:

> [T3] I: Does it take you a long time to confide in people?
>
> K: Not so much at home, because people know your whole background, they know your family, but here it's kind of an opportunity for things that you don't really want to- like if something really bad happened it's a good way to detach yourself by not having to talk about it because they don't know about it, so there's no way that anyone would have to know, so you could kind of

> detach yourself from it. I don't know. Like, it's not necessarily a bad thing to not be able to confide in someone.

Kelly's statement conveys her appreciation of some of the positive aspects of living away from her home. It also reveals a rootedness in a geographical community that did not appear to be true for any of the other participants (though both Vivian and Lizzie showed similar attachments to their respective families) and emphasised the importance she placed upon relationships and identities connected to that place. Even the most positive aspect of Kelly's university experience, demonstrating her independence, was framed in terms of its relevance to her parents and friends at home.

It is also possible that Kelly's statements reflect a reframing of her situation in order to provide her with control (something that was evident in other participants' accounts). This would tie in with Fisher's (1989) finding that perception of control was inversely correlated with distress. Kelly was the only person whose account hinted at the idea of relocation as intrinsically distressing (as described by Fisher), but she was also clear that distress was prevented through maintenance of valued relationships (and therefore identities) related to home.

Table 7. Fahimah

Psychometrics	Biographical details
Fahimah's DRI score was 23 at T1, 20 at T2 and 15 at T3. The change in Fahimah's score for Conscientiousness between T1	Fahimah grew up in a Middle-Eastern state. She described problematic relationships with her family (the youngest of four siblings) and had left her studies as a medical student in her home country after being stalked by another student and

(9) and T2 (5) was significant at p <0.05. Her Emotional Stability score dropped from 14 (T1) to 5 (T3), which was also significant.	being disappointed by the response of the authorities. Fahimah vehemently denied that her scores indicated homesickness, ascribing the scores to "cultural difference". The changes in her responses to the TIPI were something that she acknowledged, reporting that reminders of her stalker were particularly prone to affecting her responses.

Fahimah had originally stated that she had not felt like making friends. However, she later retracted this:

> [T2] I: When we first spoke you talked about telling your friends from home that you weren't really interested in making friends here. So what's changed?
>
> F: If you just don't think about it, it happens naturally I guess. If you don't try too hard, like "Okay, today I'm gonna make a friend" or you know, it just sorta happens
>
> I: So before, it wasn't that you didn't want to make friends, but-
>
> F: I was just focussing on saying to myself "It's not important if you have friends, like if you just keep thinking about" God, I sound like a hippy (laughs) "Like don't focus on it, you're here to study and you'll see someone else and you'll have the same interests or whatever and you'll get along. That sort of thing
>
> I: So it has always been important to you to know other people and to have people that you can talk to
>
> F: Yeah, yeah. I think it's important to have someone to talk to because I don't think it's good if you just keep everything bottled up inside.

This appears to be a deliberate negotiation of meaning on Fahimah's part, in order to assume an 'in control' identity, though unlike with Kelly, Fahimah appears to have been conscious that this is what she was doing.

It is possible that Fahimah's denial of homesickness served a similar function, protecting her from negative feelings, though the fact of her relocation to the UK is ample evidence of the unpleasantness of her situation in her native land. This does suggest that Fisher's (1989) recognition of the importance of the post-transition environment is more accurately to do with the contrast between pre- and post-transition identities. Unlike Bradley, for whom relocation was wholly positive, Fahimah's pre-transition environment had once been pleasant for her, so it is possible that the DRI score reflects this. Nevertheless, Fahimah clearly did not feel that any distress was due to the move.

Bradley and Fahimah were the two students whose homes were the most distant from university, but their different experiences are consistent with Fisher et al.'s (1985) findings that the relationship between distance and distress is not straightforward.

Another area where Fahimah's statements appeared to have the effect of projecting a desired identity related to academic performance:

> [T2] I: How do you find the workload at university?
>
> F: I feel like I'm not doing anything. I feel like it's nothing compared to what I used to do before…
>
> I: And do other people who are on your course feel the same way?

F: No. They feel like it's too much like "Oh it's a lot of work" Like they don't understand and um I help them with their lab reports and I help them with their essays.

I: Do you think that it's a difference between [Homeland] and the UK or between the course and what you used to do before?

F: I used to do medicine before, so the course is- not because, not because of UK and [Homeland], yeah. Like I'm used to going back home and reviewing immediately what I took the same day. They don't do that, they're like "Okay let's go out" I'm like "No, I have to study first"

I: And has that been reflected in the marks that you get for coursework?

F: Um my coursework, like my first coursework I got a B and my first essay I got a B as well, and when I compared my grades to my friends' and like my other classmates' they all got like Ds and Cs.

Fahimah's comments about her fellow students finding the workload heavy are interesting in light of the opposite being reported by other participants who were interviewed for this study[6]. It may be that that she felt her identity as someone academically able was under threat because of her change from medicine to psychology. Her assertion offered her a way to preserve this valued identity by sharing it. These statements and interpretation also reflect the significant fall in Fahimah's score for *Conscientiousness*.

[6] It is possible that this reflects a selection bias within the sample, towards highly able students. However, Fahimah's grades did not suggest she was working to an exceptionally high level.

Table 7. Amy

Psychometrics	Biographical details
Amy's initial DRI score was 4. At T2 and T3, it was 3. Amy's TIPI scores did not change significantly at p <0.05	Amy, the elder of two sisters, had come to university from a south-eastern suburb, after a gap year in which she had worked in the city of London. She had planned to travel, but had put off her plans to do so because of a family situation which was partially resolved by the time she left. Amy felt her DRI scores were a fair reflection of her experience.

Amy's expressed the idea that university represented the fulfilment of a valued identity which she was unable to express at home:

> [T3] A: I feel- I feel yeah I feel like I belong here a lot more because it's letting me develop as a person I think when you think you belong somewhere it's where you've got a role and you're established and you're recognised … as part of this community, whereas when I was at home… you don't have other elements which define you as a person, whereas here I feel like I'm defined as part of the university

Amy welcomed the change from her home life:

> [T3] One of the biggest things is the independence and the freedom. I think there's a massive constriction when you go back, and I think that that's where the root of the conflict lies because you've- I've changed as a person, but my parents and my family haven't been around to see that change so they expect- almost the expectation is that you'll be exactly the same as you were before and then you go back and they assume that you'll have the same role. I mean you – I

> wouldn't say I've changed dramatically, but I just think there can be a bit of conflict because of what is expected of you and then what actually you come back like. Changed in some ways.

This mirrors some of the experiences of Bradley and Fahimah. Despite reporting change, Amy talked in essentialist terms expressing that she remained the same person.

> [T3] When you're at home, everyone's so similar that it's a lot more difficult to see how you are as a person to other people and so when I come here I've definitely been able to draw that parallel, but in terms of just- I don't think that I would look that differently on me, because I think I'm the same but just in a different environment.

Like other participants, Amy also linked her happiness to feedback about her academic performance, which informed her identity as a capable student:

> [T2] A: I haven't actually had any marks back yet. That seems quite unusual but erm… it's kind of uneasy in a way because you have no indication of what level you're performing at because we haven't actually got any marks back

Table 8. Jane

Psychometrics	Biographical details
Jane's DRI score at T1 was 24, 16 at T2 and 11 at T3. Her score for Emotional Stability	Jane, the younger of two sisters, moved to university from a neighbouring county. She stated that she did not like to go to pubs or clubs, and that she had hoped to find people at

fell from 12 to 3 between T1 and T3, which was significant at p <0.05.	university who would share her interest in learning. At T1, she had reported that the difference between home and university was not as great as she had hoped. Jane disagreed with the DRI scores, as she did not feel that she had been homesick at any stage.

Jane denied having important relationships prior to university, suggesting the absence of a strongly valued identity at home:

> [T1] I: And before you came to university, was there anyone else that would have been important to you?
>
> J: Just a couple of friends really, nothing nobody really, really important.

Like Bradley, Jane's relationship with her family seemed to benefit from time away from them. Having stated in her first interview, that being away from her family was one of the positives about university, her attitude softened by the second discussion:

> [T2] I: And another thing you talked about last time was your family and you said that you hadn't always got on well with your family
>
> J: Oh yeah (laughs)
>
> I: Tell me some more about that
>
> J: Erm well I don't know I do get on with them, but we're not a family to sit around and talk about how we feel and how we think about things, so yeah we just get along, but don't really talk much
>
> I: There's no specific arguments or disagreements?

J: No, not really, no…

Jane's description of her family portrays a situation where certain behaviours (conversations about thoughts and feelings) were not modelled for Jane. One possibility is that she did not feel comfortable talking about her family's importance to her, ironically because she saw herself as like them, so conformed to their behaviour.

[T3] I: And do you think that there was anything different in the way that you were at home, compared to before.

J: I don't know, I think I'm more open here, like I can talk to my friends about stuff that I don't talk to my parents about, but I don't know.

Jane's previous declaration that her family did not speak to each other about thoughts and feelings suggests that she would have considered such behaviour from them unusual. For her to now begin opening up to others might explain the significant change in her self-rating for *Emotional Stability*.

As with other participants, Jane was pleased to have positive feedback for her academic work:

[T2] well my essay was really good I got A minus in that so a low first, I was happy with that, my lab report's more two one at the minute so I wanna get that up (laughs) bit of a perfectionist… I think getting back my essay was very much like "Ooh I am doing okay" like, so, yeah… I think I've found more people who are more like me and are focussed more on the things that I am 'cos' erm I'm a member of the book club at the university, so going to the meetings then and

being able to actually have conversations is good, so I get to meet people that way as well.

Participants reported feeling better at university once they had had work marked and were reassured that they were able to make the great. This may reflect a reluctance to invest in a particular identity where validation is uncertain, explaining Fisher and Hood's (1986) finding that homesick people were less committed to new environments.

Conclusion

Considering the costs and benefits associated with different ways of seeing oneself helped to make sense of participants' responses. Each of the participants provided statements indicating that they saw themselves differently in different places. These different selves impacted upon their ability to feel settled. Gathering information about these identities illuminated the ways that participants negotiated meaning.

Several participants expressed essentialist ideas about the self residing within individuals, highlighting the persuasiveness of the subjective experience of continuity and agency. No participants offered reasons for the belief that they had merely noticed different things about themselves rather than having been changed by their circumstances. Instead they referred to the feeling that they were still the same people, even when recognising that they had been changed by being at university.

The hypothesis that participants scoring highest on a measure of homesickness would show changes in TIPI scores was not supported. Of the severity re-measurements of personality scales, only three scores showed change greater than that expected from

measurement error, providing no evidence of change in personality scores (*see Extended Paper for further exploration of this hypothesis*).

In light of previous research showing change in personality scores in this age group (Neyer & Aspendorpf, 2001; Neyer & Lehnart, 2007), the most probable reasons for this finding is that the timing of the stages did not provide sufficient environmental transition. All interviews and psychometrics were completed between 5 and 18 weeks from the beginning of semester.

This reduced the possibility of observing change. Assessment over a longer period might offer one solution to this problem. Being able to interview participants when they returned to their homes would also go some way to a remedy.

The use of the DRI as a measure may have also have been problematic, given that two participants receiving high scores denied being homesick. This finding highlights the way that psychometrics, when used uncritically, can produce thin descriptions that do not reflect lived experience. Nevertheless, the fact that the three areas assessed (*orientation to home*, *distress* and *cognitive deficit*) did not require a minimum presence for a high score is a potential source of error.

It seems likely that *orientation to home* in 1989 might have been associated with distress, as travelling or calling home would have been more problematic. In this sample, participants endorsing these items may simply be those like Kelly, who chose to maintain their previous identities through frequent contact.

The research might therefore have been improved by a psychometric aimed at measuring distress.

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Extended Introduction

This section aims to map out some of my decision-making processes for the current research, and to provide a more in-depth critical review of pertinent literature. Firstly, I discuss my epistemological stance and how this has shaped this study. I then discuss in turn, the Five Factor Approach (FFA; Costa & McCrae, 1985), a constructionist account of subjectivity, Homesickness, Narrative research practices, and the selection of measures for the study.

Epistemology

My exploration of identities reflects a belief in the relativism of subjective experience. The idea of knowing is problematic, dependent as it is on external referents and unprovable assumptions. An easy conclusion to reach is that nothing can be known. I prefer to believe instead that nothing can be known with absolute certainty (Lehrer, 1973). From this sceptical position, I have sought to challenge my own assumptions about the universe I perceive. I retain those ideas that prove robust in terms of conceptual clarity and practical utility (in terms of shaping my subjective experience) but do not designate any form of knowledge as beyond question. These ideas have formed the core of the shift towards qualitative methodologies in the social sciences (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Reductionism is a necessary component of our ability to represent and understand the world. Academic and clinical enquiry is necessarily reductive for the benefit of researchers and clinicians. We do not identify things that are possessed of objective reality, but merely lay down frameworks for our own convenience (Millon, 1991). This is not to dispute the usefulness of conceptualising, but to argue for caution when we think we have “truth” pinned down.

One feature of my interactions with my universe is an awareness of the importance of social and material factors. As a human being I am motivated to modify my experience of the universe in terms of, amongst other things,

food and companionship. As a clinician within the talking therapies, I believe that there is a danger, of failing to acknowledge the social and material contexts that are often a source of distress for our clients. The importance of such factors is apparent in empirical literature examining the role of inequality in social development indicators (e.g., Wilkinson & Pickett, 1999; Kondo et al., 2009).

Social constructionism is distinguished from constructivism through consideration of processes that impact upon the way individuals co-construct ideas about the world; where constructivism accords total agency to the individual, social-constructionism states that certain discourses are privileged through social interaction and the workings of power and interest. To me, social-constructionism's acceptance that human beings are part of a world comprising social, cultural and historical processes signifies recognition of a realist ontology, insofar as those processes necessitate the existence of agents beyond the individual. This allows social-constructionism to validate the multiplicity of subjective experiences without being too relativistic to address issues of abuse and power (Kogan & Gale, 1997).

Cromby and Nightingale's (1999) critique of discursive social constructionism, noted that the ways in which we make sense of the universe may be dominated by language, but are also influenced by events that are conveyed through other means, such as sensations and events that occur before we are able to apply linguistic labels to them. Phenomena such as attachment, acquired at a pre-verbal age, would be considered meaningless from a viewpoint that excludes experience that cannot be communicated linguistically.

I feel that it is therefore important to recognise that a study conducted through language cannot entirely represent participants' experiences. This applies equally to quantitative and qualitative methodologies, both of which I have used within this research, though being careful to maintain an awareness of their limitations.

I have therefore written this thesis from an ontologically realist and epistemologically relativist position, which acknowledges the relativity of meaning, but holds that reality is ultimately non-negotiable, using a mixed-methods approach. This reflects both an attempt to use multiple sources of data to refine a picture of reality, and the belief that the distinction between qualitative and quantitative methodologies is less clear than is sometimes implied.

I have used the first person writing style throughout to reflect my involvement in the research, but I have used the third person in the journal article, as this is in line with the traditions of personology.

Following social-constructionist principles, I do not believe that it is possible to discard theoretical assumptions and have therefore chosen to explicitly base my analysis on a theory of subjectivity that accords with my epistemological position.

The narrative method I used was attractive to me because it allows participants' meanings to emerge within the context of the stories they constructed, rather than as highly-edited segments whose meaning is twisted or lost entirely. This method requires the use of lengthy unedited quotations, something that would pose a serious burden in terms of word-limits. My solution has been to place a selection of extended quotations in **Appendix 1**, which are referred to within the qualitative results section of the extended paper. Without the narratives taken as a whole the qualitative analysis would not have been possible.

Extended Literature Review

The Five-Factor Approach to Personality

Since the 1980s, the five-factor solution to personality has become increasingly influential, being used to subsume other typologies of human behaviour and individual difference (McAdams, 1992). Costa & McCrae (1985) argued that personality can be understood in terms of five factors: *Extroversion*, *Agreeableness*, *Neuroticism*, *Openness to Experience* and *Conscientiousness* (see **Table 9.**). My purpose here is to site their work within a historical and theoretical context, partly through the excellent histories of McAdams (1992) and Block (1995), but also by exploring the contributions of previous theorists. In doing so, I hope to reveal the assumptions, guesswork and prejudice that are concealed by the presentation of the FFA as a reflection of intrinsic properties of human beings. I will begin by revisiting the background to the FFA, before outlining some of the criticisms that have been made of it.

Introversion and Extraversion

The oldest of the FFA's five dimensions was devised by Carl Jung (1923/1971) in his typology based on an examination of Greek and Roman literature and the works of William James (Costa & McCrae, 1987). He coined the terms *extraversion* and *introversion* to describe a focus on action and the external world, or on thought and the internal world, respectively. This distinction was supplemented by two opposed pairs of functions (i.e. ways of obtaining or processing information): *thinking/feeling* and *sensing/intuiting*. *Thinking* and *feeling* form the *rational* or *judging* elements, while *sensing* and *intuiting* are the *irrational* or *perceiving* functions, independent of reason.

Jung contended that, though capable of using any of the four functions, individuals operate a hierarchy of functions with the opposed pairs at opposite ends. So a person who most commonly prefers *thinking* will resort to *feeling* last. The different combinations, together with hierarchies of

Table 9. Trait Descriptions, adapted from Caspi, Roberts and Shiner (2005).

Trait	Properties
Extraversion-Introversion	Social inhibition, Sociability, Dominance, Energy. Extroversion is construed as lowered social inhibition, along with increased sociability, dominance and energy levels.
Agreeableness	Antagonism, Prosocial Tendencies, Cynicism. Agreeable people are less antagonistic and cynical, more likely to accommodate the needs of others.
Emotional Stability/Neuroticism	Sensitivity to threat, Self-esteem, Locus of Control Emotionally stable individuals are perceived as less prone to experience distress and negative emotion, and to have greater self-esteem and a greater perception of agency.
Conscientiousness	Impulse-control, Attention, Achievement, Motivation, Orderliness, Responsibility, Conventionality. Conscientious individuals are seen as having high levels of all these features, being able to control their behaviour and cognition.
Openness to Experience	Tendency to explore and seek novel stimuli. Ability to learn. This is described as the least well-understood of the personality dimensions.

function create sixteen possible personality types. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI; Myers & McCaulley, 1985) was designed to assign those tested to one of the sixteen types. Although the MBTI remains popular amongst organisational psychologists, clinical psychologists have criticised the typology as inadequate to fully grasp variation amongst personalities and have sought to develop more nuanced measures (McCrae & Costa, 1987). Nevertheless, the concepts of introversion and extraversion have become firmly embedded within both lay awareness and personology.

Eysenk

Another contributor to the FFA was Hans Eysenck, who introduced the trait *Neuroticism* (Eysenck, Eysenck & Barrett, 1985). This trait was concerned with the propensity of individuals to experience emotional pain. Eysenck conceived of this scale as being predictive of psychotic illness, though longitudinal studies have found little support for this position (Chapman, Chapman & Kwapil, 1994)

Allport

Although it has been argued that he was not a trait psychologist (Zuroff, 1986) Gordon Allport was nevertheless a key figure in the development of personality trait theory and therefore crucial to the FFA.

The assumption that personality is essential, stable and internal can be found throughout his writing and within personology as a whole, along with references to the specialness of human beings:

> …the individuality of man extends infinitely beyond the puny individuality of plants and animals, who are primarily or exclusively creatures of tropism or instinct. Immense horizons for individuality open when billions of cortical cells are added to the meager neural equipment of lower species… all of the animals in the world are psychologically less distinct from one another than one man is from other men. (Allport, 1960, p22.)

Although he declared that he saw some value in techniques such as factor-analysis, Allport viewed traits as idiographic, since traits would inevitably vary in their importance from person to person. George Kelly's (1955) repertory grid method might be seen as the epitome of this approach, and is widely used in clinical practice and research (e.g. Jain & Singh, 2008). However, the clamour for standardised tools and their incompatibility with this position have prevented researchers from following up on Allport's work, diverting them instead towards nomothetic approaches (Winter, John, Stewart, Klohnen and Duncan, 1998).

The Lexical Hypothesis

Allport's importance to the FFA owes not only to his defence of traits, but to his development of the *lexical hypothesis* (Allport & Odbert, 1936), which states that any important trait concept will eventually be denoted by a single-word term. Allport and Odbert drew up a list of 17953 one-word terms describing individual differences, which they reduced to 4504. This list of terms was subjected to computer-analysis by Cattell (1943a/1943b) but only after the addition of all the terms he could find for psychological phenomena (Block, 1995).

Having asked participants to rate people they knew in terms of the words on the list, Cattell factor-analysed the results to produce a list of 12 groups within which he felt the terms could be placed. With the addition of four further factors (on the basis that he felt they were important), Cattell devised the Sixteen Personality Factor (16PF) Questionnaire (Cattell, Eber Tatsuoka, 1970).

Cattell's work was used for further factor analyses by others, notably including Tupes and Christal (1961) and Norman (1963), whose factor analyses first suggested that five separate factors could explain the variance within peer-ratings on traits. Trait theory became unfashionable in the following years, partly due to Mischel (1968), who demonstrated that traits were not predictive of behaviour across different situations, highlighting the importance of context (McCrae & Costa, 1986). The five-factor structure faded from view until re-emerging in the 1980s (McAdams, 1992). This resurgence owed much to the work of Lewis Goldberg, and that of Paul Costa and Robert McCrae.

Goldberg's contribution, based on the lexical hypothesis, was to research trait terms (e.g. Goldberg, 1981), eventually building up a wealth of evidence to support the idea of a five-factor structure of personality descriptors (Block, 1995). Costa and McCrae connected the lexically derived structure to a practical method of personality assessment, turning it into an applied tool for clinical use.

NEO-PI

The first personality questionnaire devised by Costa & McCrae, the NEO Inventory (Costa & McCrae, 1978) had been based on only three factors, *Neuroticism* (N), *Extraversion* (E) and *Openness to experience* (O). Both extraversion and neuroticism were well-established through the work of Eysenck, while O emerged through their analysis of Cattell's 16-PF questionnaire. They added two further dimensions, *Agreeableness* (A) and *Conscientiousness* (C) after being impressed by the work of Goldberg (Block, 1995) to form the NEO-Personality Inventory (NEO-PI; Costa & McCrae, 1985).

The FFA has since been used to subsume other models of personality such as Jung's personality types (McCrae & Costa, 1987), while factor-analyses have been used to claim that the FFA dimensions are inherent within other instruments used to measure personality, including those of McCrae (1989). Outside the clinical realm, McCrae and Costa (1996) have argued that the FFA offers insights into "economic systems, legal and religious codes of conduct, and methods of childrearing and education." (p57). Research has been conducted into the potential use of the FFA for, amongst other things, investigating academic performance (Poropat, 2009) and as a selection tool for recruiters (Schmit & Ryan, 1993).

The use of FFA methods in non-clinical work pushes the associated concepts into the lay arena, establishing narratives of the dimensions with an independent momentum and effects from the academic use of the terms (just as *Extraversion-Introversion* and *Neuroticism* have entered the common parlance, but may have different meanings than those understood by personologists). Rosse, Stecher, Levin and Miller (1998) described the effects of the NEO-PI's routine use as an employment screening tool. Their findings indicate that the clear incentives for scores valued by employers lead to a distorting effect on norms (and therefore on subsequent uses of the NEO-PI).

Criticisms of the FFA

Acclaim for the FFA has not been universal. Commentators such as McAdams (1992) and Block (1995) have raised substantial concerns with the FFA, questioning the lexical hypothesis, and rejecting the notion that the FFA represents a character structure universal to all humans.

McAdams (1992) pointed out that arbitrary decisions such as whether intellect should be considered a feature of personality or as something separate have a significant bearing on the way personality is conceived. Block (1995) additionally noted that the factor-analysis methods used to derive the five-factor structure are affected by the researchers' assumptions. His detailed history of the FFA conveys the extent to which subjective decisions played a role in every stage of its development. For example: Cattell's (1943) insertion of words relating to psychopathology into his analysis, followed by the addition of four extra factors to those derived from factor-analysis; Tupes and Christal's (1961) selection of the five-factor solution (as opposed to the contemporaneously generated eight- and twelve-factor solutions; Norman (1963) embedding the five-factor structure into his research.

Block's line of critique is borne out by the fact that factor-analyses using different assumptions have generated seven-, three- and even single-factor solutions (e.g., Tellegen, 1993; Waller & Zavala, 1993; Just, 2011).

The lexical hypothesis, upon which all factor-analysis approaches to personality hinge is based on a naïve positivistic view of language. The use of peer-ratings to generate measures of central tendency for subjective meaning is a bizarre exercise. Goldberg's own work demonstrated divergence of meaning between investigators and participants (Goldberg & Kilkowski, 1985).

Block raised two further issues: firstly that the factor-analysis methods used effectively create a confirmatory bias. They do not reveal an underlying

structure inherent in the data, but simply allow data to fit into the structure set up by the researchers. Block's second criticism is that the congruence with the structure is only possible in "homogeneous and somewhat special" (p.200) circumstances.

Block also refutes Goldberg's (1982) assumption that the English language must already contain all the necessary descriptors for a theory of personality. This claim is exposed by the existence of personality concepts for which no single-word term exists (Block, 1995).

McAdams (1992) attacked the incompleteness of the FFA. He argued that, just as peer-ratings of intelligence rarely correspond to scores achieved on tests of the same, psychometrics based on the FFA say nothing about features of personality that are not available to individuals or those rating them. Further, the focus on traits excludes other phenomena that personality theorists have viewed as important, such as motive and how different components integrate into the whole.

McAdams further argued that, unlike Eysenck, the FFA is not underpinned by any biological theories of behaviour, and exists as a single layer of analysis disconnected from all others.

Arguably even more damning is McAdams' contention that the FFA is an extremely efficient psychology of the stranger, but little else. He suggested that the reason for the five –factor models is not because these are inherent within personality, but because they reflect the amount of information we can process whilst thinking about a stranger. While this might be useful when dealing with persons unknown to us, it tells us little of note about people whom we do know.

McAdams (1992) posited that, the FFA as it is does not merit the status of a psychological model and designated it as an approach (the terminology used here).

Narrative Critiques of Personality

Personality is itself a narrative associated with ideas of permanence, essentialism and personal agency (e.g. Allport, 1960). Social-constructionists have argued that this narrative helps to obscure inequalities within society and locate the blame for problems within those with the least power to resist such descriptions (Smail, 1995; Cromby & Nightingale, 2001). Before qualitative approaches became popular, similar sentiments were expressed by Skinner (1971), the noted behaviourist, who also argued that notions such as individual agency were misleading and damaging.

One advantage of the FFA from a narrative perspective is that, as a dimensional model, it does not create pathological categories that entrap and stigmatise individuals into diagnostic narratives such as “personality-disordered”. However, as with such labels, the use of personality to understand experience locates problems within individuals (Carey & Russell, 2002). People who have experienced serial sexual and physical abuse may not be described as having a borderline personality disorder within an FFA framework, but perhaps as excessive *neuroticism*, which is scant improvement.

Social-constructionist critiques of personality theory stress the importance of context in determining behaviour, drawing on behavioural literature that makes the same point (Mischel, 1960; Bargh & Ferguson, 2000). Personology persists in the face of such evidence by introducing new ideas about personality change.

Personality Change

Bem and Allen (1974) admitted to a well-established lack of empirical support for consistency of behaviour across situations, but ascribed this to methodological error rather than the absence of traits. They referred back to Allport’s description of traits as idiographic, arguing that studies attempting to assess consistency did not take this sufficiently into account, describing behaviour as inconsistent which did not fit into preconceived notions of traits.

While this argument has some merit, the authors' subsequent attempt to demonstrate improved prediction merely serves to underscore the importance of context in determining behaviour.

Various studies have demonstrated that scores on measures of personality are not static across the lifespan (see Roberts, Walton & Viechtbauer, 2006 for a meta-analysis). Personologists' response to these findings was to argue that personality change is not determined by experience, but instead follows a developmental pathway driven by endogenous factors that transcend cultures (McCrae et al., 2000). They argued that, although personality-scores change across the lifespan, they do so in ways that are predictable and universal. The role of the environment is limited to shaping the way in which personality is expressed.

Neyer and Lehnart (2007) conducted an 8-year longitudinal study with German adults, finding that, rather than varying in uniform fashion, as predicted by McCrae et al. (2000), individuals' personality scores were associated with changes in intimate relationships. They also found that shifts in neuroticism were predictive of the beginning of relationships (personality-event profiles).

Lockenhoff, Terracciano, Patriciu, Eaton and Costa's (2009) longitudinal study of personality in urban Baltimore, found that people who reported recently experiencing major, adverse life events showed increases in neuroticism, decreases in agreeableness and openness to experience. The authors suggest that is due to the existence of a post-traumatic personality profile, a predictable response to trauma that is likely to be short-lived.

The adherence to the notion of personality throughout the literature, despite the reams of evidence demonstrating the influence of the environment, does not appear to be based on anything more concrete than the initial assumption, made by Allport and taken for granted by all subsequent personologists, that such a phenomenon exists.

An Alternative to Personality

Damasio's Autobiographical Self

Damasio (1999) described the necessary conditions for consciousness as including the capacity to translate sensory information into a representation of the universe. This represented universe is divided into me and not me (the self and the environment) and includes all the sensory data available to the organism at any given moment. Subsequent moments of consciousness are layered upon each other, so that each contains a memory of all those that preceded it. Damasio proposed that information about the body's internal state is retained and used for decision-making. Internal representations of past experiences and prospective courses of action are labelled with "somatic markers" (Damasio, 1996, p1413), the body's evaluation of each option. These markers act as a repository of prior learning that serves to guide decision making. Consideration of choices evokes different physiological reactions, based on past outcomes, which are experienced as emotional responses, so that particular decisions feel right or wrong.

An interesting feature of this theory is that any instant of consciousness would result in the sensation of movement and continuity through time, due to the presence within it of all the instants that had gone before. This explains the sensation of a self that persists across time, one of the aspects of experience otherwise attributable to personality.

Gazzaniga's Interpreter

Gazzaniga, (1998a) described studies conducted with people who had undergone surgical separation of the two neural hemispheres to prevent epileptic seizures. Instructions were presented to the non-verbal hemisphere, but concealed from the verbal hemisphere. When participants were asked to explain their actions, they were unable to report the instruction presented to the non-verbal hemisphere, but did not admit ignorance. Instead they provided a logical-seeming rationale based on the

information available to the verbal hemisphere, creating meanings and insisting that they had chosen to act in the way that they had.

Gazzaniga (1998b) put forward the idea that verbal cognition, produced by the left (in right-handed people) neural hemisphere, parallels and interprets behaviour, providing a running commentary that links actions to emotional states. He contended that this interpreter does not directly control behaviour, but does create the sensation of personal agency, the second feature of subjectivity typically attributed to personality.

Cromby's Embodied Subjectivity

Cromby (2004) argued that social-constructionism's preoccupation with language ignores aspects of human experience that cannot be wholly described, such as materiality and subjective experience. He proposed that the work of Damasio and Gazzaniga, taken together, provide a structure for understanding embodied subjectivity, connecting social, psychological and material processes. Constructs accessed through language are encoded within the brain, along with representations of feeling states. These feeling states are responsible for behaviour. In this way, the understanding of social-constructs is linked to actions.

For example, children access constructs of morality by being told directly about right and wrong, by observing differences between the behaviour of others who are identified to them as good or bad people, and through their perception of how actions are reacted to by others. All these are encoded as somatic markers to produce a moral sense that is experienced as a feeling of right and wrong (often described as a conscience) that guides behaviour.

From this model, we can expect different learning experiences to predict variation in both concepts of propriety and the importance attached to moral behaviour. Testable hypotheses could also be generated for other constructs. The concept of conformity takes on importance at this point, accounting for much of the performance of acquired constructs. However, given that not all humans act identically, or expect others to do so, a

mediating factor must be introduced. Identity narratives are one way of resolving this complication.

Identity Narratives and Conformity

From a constructionist-narrative perspective, identity refers to the presentation of self within given social contexts (France & Uhlin, 2006). Identity narratives are social constructions that link information about social roles and expectations, describing how a given type of person behaves. Individuals conform to these narratives to the extent to which they perceive them to be accessible and desirable. So, a male child may observe that it is advantageous for him to identify himself as masculine. To the extent that this is the case, he will endeavour to conform to behaviour that is consistent with that construct.

Conformity, the tendency to behave like others, and to experience discomfort when acting differently to others, was demonstrated by Asch (1951). Further research into conformity has found moderating effects for factors such as gender and ethnicity (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004), with identities perceived to be desirable inducing greater conformity. These findings point to reflexive identity acting as a mediating variable for the action of conformity. Narratives concerning different social roles inform presentations of the self, directing individuals to behave in what they believe to be the appropriate manner in any given situation.

Individuals behave so as to be consistent with social roles that they perceive to be desirable and relevant to them. If the role of a psychologist appeals to a person, and she perceives that a good psychologist should smoke a pipe and wear a beard, she will emulate these actions insofar as they are not superseded by more desirable identities (such as that of the healthy non-smoker), or by practical constraints (the inability to grow a beard).

Individuals entering new locations may find that previously held identities no longer pertain in the new environment. Whether this change is experienced as distressing will be determined by whether or not it is perceived to be socially advantageous. For example, an identity-narrative established

between a child and her parents might reflect her status as the youngest member of the family. If, when she begins school, her interactions with others do not fit easily in this narrative, she will be unable to enact that particular identity. If the relationships she forms offer her an identity that is palatable to her, the loss of that previous aspect of identity will not upset her.

Where new situations impede the performance of valued identities and do not offer scope for their replacement with similarly positive narratives, individuals would be expected to experience distress and to wish to return to their former location. People in such a situation might evoke the pleasurable memory of their valued identities through consideration of their former environment, approximating the presentation commonly referred to as homesickness.

Homesickness

In *Homesickness, cognition and health*, Shirley Fisher (1989) summarised the theoretical and research perspectives surrounding the transition to university (and other educational environments), and gathered empirical data in order to test out a variety of explanations that have been put forward for “homesickness”. Another of Fisher’s stated aims was to examine the relative contributions of situational and personality factors to vulnerability to homesickness.

Fisher (1989) acknowledged the difficulty of determining whether longing for “home” can be separated from the circumstances that surround the relocation, which are often themselves a cause of distress, but concluded that:

> Taken collectively, however, there is a strong case for arguing that there is an apparent associative link between mobility and mental health or physical disorder (p1)

It is not clear on what basis Fisher made this claim. The interpretative problem is common to the individual studies and so the idea that this should not be the case when the studies are considered as a whole makes little sense. Nevertheless, the same idea is repeated by van Tilburg, Vingerhoets and van Heck (1996), and Vingerhoets (2005) in later reviews of homesickness.

Summerfield (2001) highlighted the aetiological impact of post-traumatic labels that connect distress to particular events, thereby overshadowing other factors. Homesickness is a similar case in point. Distinct and even dissimilar episodes are assumed to be connected, with the concept of homesickness reified into the idea, stated explicitly by Fisher, that the act of moving is intrinsically distressing.

The notion that transition is, of itself, a source of malady, has such currency that Fisher's expressed surprise at the seemingly straightforward notion that when a person moves from one situation to another, the second environment is relevant to the likelihood of distress ("The Importance of The Post-Transition Environment", pxiv; Fisher, 1989).

Despite adopting this position, Fisher provides ample evidence for the importance of context. She cited Fried's (1962) study examining enforced re-settlements from slum housing, in which status (as measured by income, education and occupation) and planning were associated with more favourable reactions to the move (72% of those designated as higher-status were deemed to have successfully adjusted, compared to 22% of the lower-status group. 52% of those who planned for the move, compared to 24% of those who had resisted the move, adjusted well).

Fisher (1989) reported the consistent result, from a review of studies looking at nurses, students and boarding school pupils, that 50-70% reported homesickness when asked directly. Of these, approximately 10-15% reported constant rather than episodic homesickness, representing the severely homesick.

Homesickness and Health

Physical Health

Homesickness has long been associated with a number of physical ailments. Corp (1791 c.f. Fisher, 1989) British army recruits suffered a variety of physical complaints, including tinnitus, giddiness and wasting, which were resolved on return home. Fisher (1989) cited research showing increased risk of circulatory, gastro-intestinal and respiratory disorders (Medalie & Kahn, 1973; Cruze-Coke, Etcheverry & Nagel, 1964, Christenson & Hinkle, 1961) and studies (e.g. Fisher & Hood, 1987; Kane 1987; Fisher, Elder & Peacock, 1990) that have found increased incidence of physical complaints amongst the homesick in educational institutions. The latter two studies found that the homesick reported significantly more ($p < 0.05$) non-traumatic ailments, but a similar number of traumatic injuries, supporting the notion that low mood preceded physical complaints rather than the reverse. Fisher proposed that situations with high demand and low control might increase stress, thereby disrupting cortisol levels and increasing susceptibility to illness.

Mental Health

Vingerhoets (2005) opined out that the rapid onset and remission of psychiatric and psychogenic symptoms amongst homesick people offer a fascinating insight into stress processes. Fisher (1989) summarised evidence from a number of studies demonstrating that participants reporting homesickness also receive elevated scores for psychoneurotic symptoms, such as anxious, depressed, somatic and obsessional symptoms (e.g. Fisher & Hood, 1987; Kane, 1987). The former study also found that many of the homesick group had showed elevated psychoneurotic scores *prior* to attending university, suggesting a variable increasing vulnerability to homesickness. However, while homesickness is linked most strongly with depression, anxious and obsessive symptoms were predictive of future homesickness, while depressive symptoms were not.

Fisher (1989) reported a strong association between self-reports of homesickness and psychoneurotic symptoms as measured by questionnaires. Fisher noted that determining a threshold for clinical levels of homesickness was problematized by the question of whether number or intensity of symptoms would indicate greater severity.

Fisher, Murray and Frazer (1985) asked participants to provide written definitions of homesickness. They did not find differences between the definitions written by homesick and non-homesick participants and so concluded that reporting was not based on a different understanding of the term.

Situational Associations

Fisher (1989) reported a degree of context-specificity to circumstantial factors affecting homesickness that she described as unexpected. She noted that while some studies have found that females who reported homesickness showed a greater increase in psychoneurotic symptoms (e.g. Fisher & Hood, 1987; Hood, McLachlan & Fisher, 1987), few studies of homesickness have found differences in incidence between sexes. A rare exception (Fisher, Elder & Peacock, 1990) found higher incidence at a boarding school where outdoor activities formed a central focus.

Fisher et al. (1985) found that geographical distance was associated with homesickness amongst university students, but not boarding school pupils. For university students, distance from home had implications for the ease of returning home that are not true of boarding school pupils, who had less choice about the number or frequency of trips home. Fisher (1989) dismissed culture shock as a relevant factor on the basis that English students (at a Scottish university) were not disproportionately represented amongst the homesick. However, this argument assumes that culture does not vary continuously within England and Scotland, ignoring the possibility that students from Northern England might experience less cultural dislocation in Scotland than they would in Southern England.

Fisher (1989) reported anecdotal accounts of certain rooms at universities being associated with homesickness. When conducting research, she was informed that certain rooms were known to have poor conditions, and the occupants of these rooms (in different cohorts) reported homesickness. This again highlights the importance of the new environment to the success of a move.

Fisher and Hood (1986) found that the homesick are less committed to their new environments than the non-homesick, arguing that this attenuates the new location's power to distract and engage. While this may indeed reflect a feedback cycle in homesickness, establishing causality in either direction is not straightforward.

Clayton, Crozier and Reay (2009) investigated the experiences of students from working class backgrounds at different institutions, with an emphasis on some of the difficulties faced by working class students. Their descriptions highlight the complexity of the transition from home to university. For instance, despite some participants describing their home areas as less pleasant than their university environments, this did not necessarily mean that no homesickness would be experienced, since perceptions of both places were more nuanced than simply positive or negative. The authors conclude that transition is more difficult for students who are marginalised in terms of their access to social-capital (for example, by not being able to seek advice from family members who have attended university before them).

Personality

That associations between homesickness and personality have been specifically investigated emphasises the degree to which personality is reified into a concept seen as independent from social context or environmental factors.

On the Middlesex Hospital Questionnaire (MHQ, Crown & Crisp, 1966) extroversion showed a low negative correlation with homesickness (-0.19, $p < 0.05$; Fisher, 1989), Hysteria was also negatively correlated, but, as Fisher

noted, factor analysis of the MHQ suggested that the Hysteria scale forms a continuum with Dysthymia, potentially confounding this result. It might also be pointed out that if a “personality trait” variable forms a continuum with a “state” variable such as depression, then the trait itself is confounded.

As Fisher pointed out (p71; 1989) “Trait factors cannot be distinguished from states of psychoneurotic symptoms which may be manifestations of current stress or vulnerability”.

Nevertheless, she cited Fisher and Hood’s (1987) study which found that participants scoring higher on *depression* and *obsessionality* subscales of the MHQ prior to leaving home were more likely to develop homesickness.

Fisher (1989) reviewed studies looking for patterns in home background and life history, coming to the conclusion that participants’ descriptions were influenced primarily by their condition at time of asking, meaning that nothing definite could be said. This insight is compelling because of the implications it has for information gathering in clinical settings.

Theories of Homesickness

A variety of explanations have been put forward to explain homesickness. Some of these are summarised in **Table 10**. Vingerhoets (2005) pointed out the heterogeneity of homesickness presentations and the overlap with different psychological theories, something that is evident from the number of theories relevant to the area.

Table 10. Based on Fisher (1989).

Theory	Description
Congruence model (Stokols, 1979)	Environmental stress is caused by poor fit between an individual’s needs and the environment they are in. Stokols distinguishes between Experiential and Mental Congruence in order to explain why the same environment might be experienced differently

Attachment (Bowlby, 1969)	Distress and longing for "home" resembles separation anxiety within attachment relationships. Individuals mourn for the loss of their familiar environment and/or relationships, just as they would mourn a bereavement. This model does little to explain why some people do not experience homesickness or recover quickly, while others suffer enduring problems.
Interruption Theory (Mandler, 1975)	Planned activity releases tension. When plans are thwarted, tension builds up. The loss of familiar routines results in anxiety due to the inability to enact plans. This might account for the finding that people who plan for their moves fare better than those who resist. This model suggests that replacement activities function to release tension, thereby reducing homesickness.
Control Theory (Fisher, 1986)	New environments are characterised by a loss of control, as individuals are unfamiliar with the demands of the new situation. This theory helps to explain findings such as Fried (1962) where the positive benefits of the move may have been offset by the lack of control available to those moving.
Role Change Theory (Wapner, Kaplan & Ciottone; 1981)	Adaptation to new roles requires a period of transition, during which people experience social anxiety. Old and new roles may conflict. Without others to maintain and reciprocate roles they become weaker, which may be experienced as distressing.
Conflict Theory (Cameron & Margaret, 1951)	Where a situation offers a trade-off of costs and benefits (such as the prospect of higher education against leaving a familiar environment) the tension between the discordant desires (to stay in the new situation or to return home) that results in psychological pain.
Cognitive Organisation Theory (Fisher, Frazer & Murray, 1984)	Some people have a memory organised in so as to allow thoughts of the past to predominate. Such individuals are vulnerable to homesickness and exhibit distress following a move. Fisher argued that this represents a formerly adaptive mechanism that has become maladaptive in the modern world. This theory was weakened by the finding that memories of home tend to be positively experienced.
Emotion-attribution Theory (Schachter & Singer, 1962)	The somatic features of homesickness are identical to those that accompany "lovesickness", but are experienced according to the circumstances that accompany them. This theory offers little explanation as to why unusual physiological states might have arisen, or even whether they are genuinely unusual.
Social-learning Theory (e.g. Aldwin & Stokols, 1988)	Based on a drug model: positive-reinforcers are experienced as less and less reinforcing, but the removal of that reinforcement is experienced as aversive. Departure from home is experienced as negative punishment.

Fisher's Multi-causal descriptive theory of homesickness (Fisher, 1989)

Vingerhoets (2005) opined that Fisher's (1989) book remains the most comprehensive attempt to conceptualise homesickness in theoretical terms. Fisher summarised the findings of her research as follows:

1. Homesickness is a complex syndrome in which preoccupation with the home and the past are paramount and associated with distress.
2. Homesickness appears to be largely independent of age factors or sex differences.
3. Episodes of homesickness are self-reported for about 50-70% of most populations studied when there is a prompted decision.
4. The episodes occur in the morning or at night suggesting that the day's activities have the capacity to keep homesickness at bay.
5. Episodes of homesickness thoughts are more likely during passive tasks and during 'mental' rather than physical activity.
6. Severely homesick individuals (about 10-15%) report the experience of homesickness to be continuous (non-episodic).
7. Homesickness subjects score higher on psychoneurotic symptoms and absent-mindedness as compared with their non-homesick counterparts. They have difficulties with concentration suggesting that control over the attentional mechanism is affected.
8. Homesick subjects are more likely to report low decisional control over the move, to be separated from home by greater physical distance and to be depressed prior to leaving home.
9. Homesick subjects are more likely to have intrusive trains of home-related thoughts rather than to be worrying about problems created by the move, or by problems which exist prior to the move.

10. Homesick subjects perceive home in positive terms and are fast to produce positive thoughts of home and negative thoughts of university.
11. The new university environment provides a source of strain for all students as evidenced by increases in psychoneurotic symptoms for resident and home-based students alike.
12. Homesick subjects are more likely to be dissatisfied with university and to report high demand and low control – the ingredients associated with job strain in other occupational settings.
13. Those who have left home to reside in an institution before are less likely to report homesickness. Leaving home for other reasons may not ameliorate homesickness. (p113; Fisher, 1989)

While this list does not attempt to explain homesickness, it offers a useful list against which to test theories' explanatory ability.

Social-Constructionist Understandings of Homesickness

From a social-constructionist perspective, homesickness is not an entity, but a way of describing experience. In the absence of evidence that transition is intrinsically upsetting, it is likely that symptoms of homesickness are an expression of distress that might be occasioned in many different ways. Homesickness might often be a damaging narrative in that it stigmatises affected individuals and does not inform any type of intervention other than reversal of the transition, which may be impossible or undesirable (White, 2007).

A formulation of distress based on Cromby's (2003) description of subjectivity and incorporating narratives of identity does not apply only to homesickness, but to other situations where a situational change is accompanied by changes to the self. Two such occasions are bereavement and loss of communication abilities.

Fredman (1997) described bereavements as the loss of opportunities to express selves that were co-constructed with the deceased. Geographical

transitions represent similar, though reversible, losses. A person's sense of self in a new place will be unable to be fully expressed due to not being shared with others in that place. At quiet moments, individuals might access those unexpressed aspects of themselves through contact with those they have left behind, or by calling to mind images of the lost environment (however they have represented that to themselves). If the person develops an identity that is acceptable to them in the new location, then this need will reduce, but if the identity that forms is not acceptable to the person (and seeing themselves as "homesick" is unlikely to help), they may continue to experience distress.

The concept of the "vulnerable self" (p.268, Rubinstein, 2000) has been used by psychologists working with the elderly, to draw attention to the way expression of the self becomes problematic for people in residential care-settings, with deteriorating language and independence skills. This situation potentially combines the negative impacts of homesickness, bereavement and the loss of expressive abilities.

Identity narratives, unlike homesickness, can be used to bridge diverse experiences of distress and provides a framework that can explain heterogeneous presentations.

Qualitative Approaches to Research

Riessman (1993) described the shift towards qualitative and narrative methods in the human sciences as having taken place in the late 1980s and early 1990s, borne out of an increasing recognition of the limitations of positivist approaches when faced with human experience and the diversity of meanings associated with even the smallest action. Rather than applying the methods of the material sciences whilst ignoring the impact of the researcher on research, qualitative methods seek to include considerations of researchers' contributions to any findings. Efforts to use reductive methods to determine precise facts have been increasingly eschewed in favour of constructing meaning with participants.

Cresswell (2009) lists a number of different methodologies used to achieve this, including ethnographies, Grounded theory, Phenomenological and Narrative Research.

Ethnographic research involves the collection of data from cultural groups by observing them in their environment over a lengthy period of time. While undoubtedly informative, this method requires a greater investment of time than was possible for this study.

Grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) is the creation of a theory specific to the data collected for a study, with alternating rounds of analysis and data collection conducted until a "saturation point" is reached. Grounded theorists aim to approach their participants with as few preconceptions as possible, often reviewing relevant literature only once data collection is complete. Notwithstanding scepticism about the achievability of approaching a topic with no preconceptions, this approach is diametrically opposite to my journey towards this project. Rather than attempting to construct a new theory, I was interested in collecting data against which to evaluate an analysis method originating in a specific theory of subjectivity.

Phenomenological research aims to approach near to the essence of participants' lived experiences. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Smith 2011), the most popular such method, aims to do this whilst making explicit the process of information-gathering. Rather than talking about participants' lives, IPA researchers describe the meanings they themselves construct through their encounters with participants. Though useful in terms of clarifying the role of the researcher in the creation of data, IPA still imposes researchers' meanings onto data provided by participants. Narrative approaches represent an attempt to address this issue.

Narrative Research

Riessman (1993) opined that humans use narratives in everyday life to organise information, constructing temporal sequences and incorporating information about emotions and meanings. She recounted collecting data

for a project and realising that what she had previously seen as rambling, irrelevant stories, were her participants' efforts to convey their own understanding. By breaking their accounts into fragments to fit into her analysis she decontextualized their utterances and moved away from their meanings, reducing their active participation from the research.

The term *narrative* can be understood in many ways, from life-stories (e.g. McAdams, 1995), to brief *ad hoc* stories constructed in response to specific triggers (e.g. Riessman, 1990). The definition of narratives I have used here attempts to bridge the two through "an evolving series of stories that are framed in and through interaction" (Riessman, 1993, p7).

Narrative and Personality Theory

Such insights as Riessman's have also occurred to researchers in the field of trait psychology. Thorne (1989) who investigated context-specific attributes and patterns of behaviour reached a remarkably similar conclusion. She observed that, when talking about their own behaviour and attributes, participants preferred to report conditional descriptions of their behaviour (i.e. "When x, I am …") While people are fully capable describe themselves in terms of non-conditional traits when asked to do so, this is not how they make sense of their own behaviour when left to their own devices:

> Thorne underscores the richness and complexity of persons' conditional statements about themselves and their lives. She shows that when people talk about who they are they do not speak in expressly dispositional terms. Instead, complexly contingent self-attributions appear in an inherently episodic and narrative framework. This is not because respondents lack the clarity of thought needed to dissect their lives into noncontingent dispositional units…Rather, individuals cannot express the *coherence* of their personality – to themselves and others – in noncontingent, dispositional terms. Coherence emerges in the particular episodes and contingent stories that the subject presents in order to convey his or her own phenomenal experience (McAdams, 1992, p345-6)

McAdams later presented a framework for conceptualising personality in narrative terms (McAdams, 1995), using the concept of life stories. He proposed an analysis based on 7 features: *Narrative Tone*, *Imagery*, *Theme*, *Ideological Self*, *Nuclear Episodes*, *Images* and *Endings*. This thought-provoking approach is rooted in McAdams' contention that life-stories are primarily a means of integrating information about the self. I would argue that this neglects the interactive component of story-telling. Life-stories occur within the context of a listener to whom the narrator presents a view of themselves. It is this performance of identity that I have sought to investigate in the current research.

Halliday (1973) proposed a division of narrative function (summarised in **Table 11.**) that recognises the relational aspects of narrative description.

Table 11. Halliday's (1973) functions of narrative.

Function	**Description**
Ideational	The ideational function refers to the meaning conveyed by the words used. The description of events.
Interpersonal	The interpersonal roles that are engendered in the telling of a story. For instance, in telling their stories and answering questions, participants enact a different role in this research to that of the researcher. These differing roles are expressed in the way that each speaks to the other.
Textual	Textual functions relate to the aims and intent of narratives as discerned through the mode of expression. For example, a patient's discussion with a doctor is not only a description of their symptoms, but also a request for help.

Narrative Identity Analysis

Narrative research encompasses a range of approaches, employing both quantitative and qualitative methods. Qualitative narrative approaches are

characterised by the use of large segments of text to showcase narratives, consideration of the way meaning is conveyed through structural and non-verbal features of language, and the drawing of comparisons between individual participants' stories (Riessman, 2000). Within this study, I have focussed particularly on narratives dealing with identity and presentation of participants' selves.

Due to limitations of space, it is impossible to present interviews in their entirety. The quotations offered here are offered as supportive examples but cannot incorporate the whole context within which they were produced. As a partial remedy for this, extended extracts from conversations with participants are included in **Appendix 1**. These provide a flavour of the conversational context in which interviewee's statements were made.

In stark contrast to McAdams' (1992) criticism of the FFA, Cromby's (2003) synthesis of constructionism and neuroscience explicitly deals with distinct levels of analysis (or grammars as Cromby refers to them). With the addition of identity and conformity, a further level can be described. These processes can be hypothesised to have arisen due to selection of the ability to follow social rules. For a species as dependent on others as humans are, such an ability is crucial.

Crossley (2000) described a broad method for using narrative analysis as a means of self-discovery (creating personal narratives), by recruiting another person as an interviewer:

Step 1 – Reading and familiarising

Step 2 – Identifying important concepts to look for

Step 3 – Identifying narrative tone

Step 4 – Identifying "imagery" and "themes"

Step 5 – Weaving together a story

This method seems more apposite to the current research then other methods, such as those proposed by Viney and Bousfield (1991) or Burnell, Hunt and Coleman (2006). These narrative analysis methods take a more quantitative (though not naively so) view of narratives, using structural features as a way of measuring aspects of psychological functioning.

In so far as it presents information in coherent and sequential fashion, the creation of new narratives is a fundamental part of research. However, for the current research, the aim was not explicitly the formation of new narratives, but the exploration of participants' narratives. This was one departure from Crossley's method. The second was that a particular set of narratives was being looked for (those relating to identity), rather than those that were the most important to interviewees.

Measures

Copies of both measures used in this project are contained in **Appendix 3**.

FFA measures

Ideally, I would have used the most recent version of the NEO-PI (Costa & McCrae, 1985) as the FFA measure, since it is this tool that has helped to popularise the FFA. However, at 240 items, this questionnaire would not be suitable for use with large numbers of participants and multiple administrations.

A shortened version of the assessment, the NEO-Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI; Costa & McCrae, 1992) is available. However, at 60 items, I felt that this was still too long for online administration, or for completion prior to an interview that might last for more than an hour.

I therefore chose to use the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI; Gosling, Swann & Rentfrow, 2003), which, as the name suggests, comprises ten items, two for each factor. Each item is a seven-point Likert scale that asks respondents to rate the extent to which they agree or disagree with a statement of similarity to a characteristic (positive and negative phrasings of the personality factors).

The TIPI was designed as a very brief measure of the FFA to personality based on the work of Burisch (1997). Burisch challenged the Spearman-Brown Formula which asserts that longer tests are more reliable. He used multiple sets of data to determine whether questionnaires could be improved by the omission of questions, finding that after a certain length, measures' validity began to fall, which Burisch explains partly as resulting from redundant items.

This does highlight the difficulties of testing and the assumption that tests sample reality rather than creating their own truths. Burisch's approach is interesting and refutes the idea that longer tests are automatically more reliable, but it does expose the extent to which test construction is based on untested assumptions. For instance that respondents' only consideration when completing questionnaires is the accuracy of their answers (something refuted by the distortion of psychometric scores used for personnel selection; Rosse et al. 1998).

Burisch's methodology does not address (and perhaps even masks) the relationship between test-length and respondent engagement that is potentially one of the most important confounds for a measure. For an online questionnaire requiring repeated administration, this is particularly important.

The TIPI has previously been used in online research projects (Back et al., 2010). I felt that the TIPI represented the optimum compromise between practical and theoretical considerations.

Measures of Homesickness

Van-Tilburg, Vingerhoets and van Heck (1996) in their review of the homesickness literature, compared two different tools, the Dundee Relocation Inventory (DRI; Fisher, 1989) and the Homesickness Decision Tree (HDT; Eurelings-Bontekoe, Vingerhoets, & Fontijn, 1994). They also mentioned an unnamed tool aimed at detecting individuals prone to developing homesickness (Eurelings-Bontekoe, Verschuur, Koudstaal, Van der Sar & Duijsens, 1995), but this was rejected on the grounds that it was designed as a personality measure rather than to detect distress caused by a transition.

The HDT is a nine-item test, investigating symptoms of depression and thoughts about home. Its authors established the validity of the measure through comparison with the clinical judgements made of conscripted soldiers, and van Tilburg et al. (1996) reported that it has been found to be useful in a variety of different situations, though its reliability had not been assessed (and has not in the intervening period). I chose instead to use the DRI, which was designed specifically for use with university students, and whose author had attempted to demonstrate reliability and validity.

Items were generated through analysis of definitions of homesickness provided by university and boarding school students. Individual items (all yes-no questions) were administered to 326 randomly selected first-year students at Scottish universities (completion rate: 79%). The responses were then subjected to factor analysis to produce four factors: *general adaptation*, *home*, *satisfaction* and *social*. Items were then selected to load onto these factors. The questionnaire was then revised to include a "sometimes" option, which helped to differentiate the homesick from the non-homesick.

A sample of 34 students previously assessed as not homesick obtained a mean score of 5.3 (S.D. = 1.1), compared to 17.5 (S.D. = 1.1) for the homesick group (N = 51). This difference was significant to $p<0.001$ (Fisher, 1989).

The idea of test-retest reliability is somewhat problematic for a syndrome that might be expected to fluctuate. However, Fisher reported test-retest reliability for non-homesick students of 0.71 and 0.81 at two weeks and six months respectively (compared with 0.59 and 0.21 for homesick students across the same period).

An attempt was made to validate the construct of homesickness measured by the DRI, using independent raters (teachers) from a boarding school. The correlation coefficient was 0.40 (p<0.02). Validation is problematic in that there is no agreed diagnostic category for homesickness to be rated against.

Extended Study

This section details a quantitative analysis aimed at testing the hypothesis that distress accompanying a transition to university life would be associated with a greater degree of change on FFA personality measures.

Method

Aims and Hypotheses

The main research question posed by this study was “Is acclimatisation to university, as measured by scores on the DRI, associated with changes on TIPI scores?”

The hypothesis put forward was that participants obtaining higher DRI scores would show greater change in their scores on the TIPI.

Design

This study utilised a single-subject A-B-C design, where A represents the baseline condition of unfamiliarity with university life, B and C represent increasing familiarity through the passage of time (five and twelve-week gaps respectively). For the sake of convenience, the time-points are

referred to hereafter as T1 (approximately six weeks after the start of term), T2 (six weeks after T1) and T3 (eight weeks after T2, because of exams).

Ethics

Ethical consent for the entire study (both the main study and the extended section) was obtained from the research ethics committee of the Institute of Work, Health and Organisations, at the University of Nottingham.

Participants

The only inclusion criterion was that participants should be first-year students. The only exclusion criterion was an inability to understand English well enough to respond to the questionnaires.

Participants were recruited from first-year students at a university in the east-midlands. After ethical approval for the study had been granted by the university, I sent out an e-mail through the faculties of various departments, outlining the research (through an attachment containing the **participant information letter** – see **Appendix 5**) and inviting participants. Potential participants were asked to complete two online questionnaires, and to provide an e-mail address if they were willing to be contacted to complete the questionnaires on two further occasions, or to be interviewed three times about their experiences at university. I also handed out paper copies of the questionnaires after an undergraduate psychology lecture and returned the following week to collect them.

All participants were asked to provide an e-mail contact if that they would be willing to be contacted to repeat the questionnaires on two further occasions. These e-mail addresses were then used to send out reminders for the second and third administrations at six and eight week intervals[7]. E-mail addresses were also used to marry each participant's data across the three time-points.

[7] The second interval was longer than planned so as not to clash with participants examinations.

At each time-point, a draw was held involving all respondents who had supplied an e-mail address. The person whose number was selected by a random number generator received £20. Reminders about the draw were sent out with e-mails at T2 and T3.

A sample size calculation was carried out using GPower 3.1.0 (Erdfelder, Faul & Buchner, 1996) to determine the sample size needed. The suggested sample size required for 0.8 power (p <0.05), based on a repeated measures MANOVA with three repetitions, was 32.

Extended Results

Participants

58 students completed both questionnaires at T1, of whom 40 were female and 18 male (this reflected the gender make-up of the psychology undergraduate course from which most participants were drawn), with an approximate mean of 18.6 years. 40 people responded at T2 (26 female, 14 male) and approximate mean age was 18.7 years. At T3, 34 people responded (22 female, 11 male) and the approximate mean age was 18.79 years. Age-range at all time-points was 18-25 years. No significant effects were seen for age or gender.

Assessment of normality

Scores for the DRI. The TIPI and Difference Scores (T1-T2 and T2-T3) were assessed for normality. As the sample size was only greater than fifty at T1, the Shapiro-Wilk was used in preference to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. None of the scales was normally distributed across all three time points. Because comparisons were to be made between all time-points, non-parametric calculations were used.

Table 12. shows the mean DRI and TIPI scores achieved by the entire sample at T1-T3.

Table 12. Mean values for DRI and TIPI scales (T1 – T3)

		T1 (N = 58)		T2 (N = 40)		T3 (N = 34)	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
DRI		14.05	7.359	12.77	6.930	10.74	7.569
TIPI	Extraversion	9.00	3.055	7.98	3.182	8.18	3.614
	Agreeableness	9.47	2.400	9.78	2.057	9.50	2.192
	Conscientiousness	10.26	2.750	10.55	2.501	10.50	2.526
	Emotional Stability	9.12	2.721	9.27	3.021	9.44	3.007
	Openness to Experience	10.21	2.191	9.65	1.955	9.88	1.701

Three within-subjects, repeated measures multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) were conducted in order to ascertain whether any significant relationships existed between scores on the DRI and FFA scores. The five personality domains were used as the dependent variables, with DRI score as the independent variable.

Preliminary analyses were performed to check for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and multicollinearity, with no major violations noted. However, no differences reached the $p < 0.05$ level, indicating that there were no significant relationship between DRI and TIPI scores.

Gosling, Swann and Rentfrow (2003) gave test-retest reliability scores for the TIPI scales after a six week interval. The equivalent correlations between scores at T1-T3 were calculated for these data, to allow comparison (**Table 13.**). The resulting Spearman's rho scores were used to calculate Reliable Change Index (RCI) Scores for the main study.

This was done using an adapted Leeds Reliable Change Index Calculator (Agostinis, Morley, & Dowzer, 2008). RCIs were calculated for each TIPI scale at T1-T2, T2-T3 and T1-T3 (**Table 14.**).

Table 13. Correlations between scores (T1- T3)

Scale (scores in brackets indicate test-retest scores as given by Gosling, Swann and Rentfrow (2003)	**Correlation (Spearman's *rho)***		
	T1 – T2	**T1 – T3**	**T2 – T3**
DRI	**0.767**	**0.759**	**0.900**
Extraversion (0.77)	**0.804**	**0.810***	**0.846**
Agreeableness (0.71)	**0.563**	**0.579**	**0.679***
Conscientiousness (0.76)	**0.730**	**0.621**	**0.588**
Emotional Stability (0.70)	0.288[a]	**0.350**[b]	**0.672**
Openness to Experience (0.62)	**0.568**	**0.634***	**0.483**[c]

2-tailed significance for all results <0.001, except where stated. [a] Significance = 0.072. [b] Significance = 0.042. [c] Significance = 0.004

Table 14. Reliability of Change Index Scores for interviewed participants

	Reliability of Change Index Scores (+ve or –ve)				
	Extraversion	**Agreeableness**	**Conscientiousness**	**Emotional Stability**	**Openness to Experience**
T1 – T2	4.15	4.85	3.98	5.16*	4.10
T2 – T3	3.63	4.16	4.91	3.50	4.48
T1 – T3	4.08	4.76	4.71	4.93	3.77

*Score calculated using Spearman's *rho* with *p>0.05*

For both the DRI and TIPI, two difference scores were calculated to between T1 and T2 (D1) and T2 and T3 (D2). These scores were an indicator of how much the scores of individual participants had changed. Correlations were run for the difference scores for homesickness and each of the personality factors at the two time points. As the difference scores were not normally distributed, Spearman's rho was used. To correct for multiple testing, a Bonferroni correction was made, shifting the level of probability required to denote significance to 0.005. None of the results reached this level of significance, with only one correlation (Difference in Homesickness from T1-T2 with Difference in Agreeableness T1-T2) reaching the 0.05 level of significance. These results are shown in **Table 15.** and **Table 16.**

Table 15. Correlations between DRI and TIPI scales (T1-T2)

Correlation with change in DRI score from T1-T2	**Correlation Coefficient** **Spearman's rho**	**2-tailed significance (N=40)**
Extraversion (difference T1 –T2)	0.085	0.600
Agreeableness (difference T1 –T2)	-0.368	.019
Conscientiousness (difference T1 –T2)	-0.013	0.936
Emotional Stability (difference T1 –T2)	0.053	0.744
Openness to Experience (difference T1 –T2)	-0.243	0.131

Table 16. Correlations between DRI and TIPI scales (T2-T3)

Correlation with change in DRI score from T2-T3	**Correlation Coefficient** **Spearman's rho**	**2-tailed significance (N=33)**
Extraversion (difference T2 –T3)	-0.193	0.282
Agreeableness (difference T2 –T3)	0.271	0.128
Conscientiousness (difference T2 –T3)	-0.079	0.662
Emotional Stability (difference T2 –T3)	-0.239	0.181
Openness to Experience (difference T2 –T3)	-0.122	0.498

The TIPI scores of twelve participants showed change beyond the level expected from measurement error. **Table 17.** Shows the number of participants whose scores showed change significant at p <0.05 for each scale.

Table 17. Participants showing significant change (p <0.05) on TIPI

TIPI Domain	Number of participants with scores showing significant change
Extroversion	0
Agreeableness	2
Conscientiousness	4
Emotional Stability	5
Openness to Experience	3

Extended Discussion

The results of the extended analysis did not support the hypothesis that homesickness (as measured by DRI score) would be associated with change in TIPI scores. One possible reason for why can be found in the results of the main study. One thing that was clear from those results was that changes to how participants saw themselves were experienced as both positive (e.g. Bradley) and negative (e.g. Lizzie). This would suggest that homesickness was a poor choice of variable through which to look for variations in TIPI scores.

These results did show that more than a fifth of the participants experienced significant change on at least one TIPI scale in a relatively brief time. This supports the idea that the personality trajectories suggested by McCrae et al. (2000) are in fact due to commonalities in people's experience. Such commonalities might include the transition to adulthood or having children which were found to be associated with "personality change" by Neyer and Lehnart (2007).

An alternative explanation for these findings is that they represent a brief adjustment to new circumstances, similar to the trauma reaction posited by Lockenhoff et al. (2009). The lack of baseline measures means that it is impossible to know whether any changes are change from previous presentation or reversion back to the original profile. Research incorporating longer periods and extending to either side of a major environmental shift could reveal much.

Implications for the Concept of Homesickness.

The findings of this study are broadly supportive of elements of Fisher's multi-causal theory, but with significant caveats. Little evidence was found to support the idea of a discrete disease entity related to geographical transitions, or that such moves are intrinsically distressing. The concept of homesickness was recognisable to participants, but not necessarily useful, and there are reasons to suspect its meaning has evolved a great deal.

British society has changed a great deal since 1989, notably through advances in communication technology. The ubiquity of mobile telephones and computer-based communications[8], and increased access to transport means that maintaining relationships at a distance is now far more achievable. If the understanding of homesickness presented here is correct, it should be less problematic amongst university students in rich countries, who have access to such amenities[9].

It is therefore interesting to note that the initial mean DRI score (of all participants) was closer to the score of the clinical sample in Fisher's original study. This could be interpreted as revealing a high prevalence for homesickness amongst the sample, but given that only three of the five highest scorers agreed that they were homesick, this conclusion seems premature.

One answer is that the maintenance of relationships from home acts as a barrier to engagement with the university environment and the formation of identities specific to that location. This is in line with Fisher's (1989) hypothesis, except that, because students are able to retain desirable self-concepts, no distress accompanies the change.

An alternative explanation is suggested by remembering that answers to psychometrics are a way of performing desired identities. In 1989, when communication was less straightforward, students may have been less willing to be seen as oriented towards their homes, because this would imply that they did not exert as much control over their situation as they might like.

[8] Every participant interviewed for this study reported using Skype as a means of keeping in touch with their loved ones, and one participant contacted friends in the Middle-East several times a day

[9] This does not mean that remaining contact is equivalent to maintaining valued identities, but that doing so is made more feasible.

Implications for Theories of Subjectivity and Individual Difference

The idiographic approach to assessment used here bears some similarities to that of Personal Construct Psychotherapy (PCP; Kelly, 1970). Both deal with alternate ways of seeing the self that exert varying influence over individuals' behaviour according to differences in salience. However, key differences exist with regard to the polar nature of PCP constructs, and the way they are arranged.

For instance, where a PCP construct might be homesick vs. normal, in narrative terms "homesick" and "normal" would each constitute a separate identity. The performance of these identities is not fixed according to a hierarchy of constructs as in PCP, but determined by environmental contingencies.

One effect of seeing the performance of identities as adaptive is that individuals are less likely to be pathologised. Where a PCP formulation of Lizzie and Vivian's homesickness might describe them as trapped by an implicative dilemma (Feixas, Geldschlager & Neimeyer, 2002), the identity formulation sees their homesickness as a positive strategy that helps maintain a valued identity.

Another difference between identity narratives and PCP constructs is that identity narratives are explicitly socially-constructed, thereby avoiding the potential pitfall of failing to consider cultural factors.

A weakness of the current analysis relative to a PCP formulation is that the identity formulation is more difficult to confirm through conversations with participants. The view of human experience that underpins the formulations offered here does not expect that individuals will necessarily be aware of the reasons for their behaviour. Asking participants to describe what happens does not simply elicit the desired information, but generates a new set of identity performances with a new relationship context. From the perspective adopted here, it should be noted that this is equally true for all other forms of assessment. That such method explicitly considers such factors is to its credit.

Limitations of the Current Research

One issue with this research was that very little control was exercised over the administration of the measures. It was impossible to verify whether online questionnaires were completed honestly or even by the individuals to whom they were sent. An analysis evaluating any differences between the responses collected in different ways would have gone some way to remedying this.

Similarly, factors such as participants' subject area could have been included in the analyses, though the fact that the vast majority of participants were psychology undergraduates meant that significant results would have been unlikely. The possibility that psychology graduates might have an interest and familiarity with psychometrics should not be ignored, as this may have had some bearing upon findings.

Finally, the use of an abbreviated questionnaire, though practical in terms of reducing participant attrition, may also have reduced the likelihood of observing significant results. Longer questionnaires may have been more likely to detect change, but at a cost of reduced numbers of participants.

Accommodation and Practical Concerns

This section comprises a brief summary of their statements about accommodation. These comments were included in light of Fisher's (1989) comments regarding anecdotal evidence concerning particular rooms being associated with homesickness. While not directly relevant to the research questions asked here, these extracts do nevertheless reflect issues central to the experiences of first-year students, and may offer some of the most practical ways of preventing distress.

Several participants spoke of practical matters that made a difference to them. Both Vivian and Fahimah spoke about not liking the food in halls and

both were able to resolve this in different ways. Vivian went to her friend's flat to cook, while Fahimah found restaurants serving food she liked.

Other issues relating to accommodation were less amenable. Amy told me that she felt her positive experiences could have been very different:

> Amy: I think, almost in a way, um like small things here could've completely changed my experience and could have you know made me more homesick than what these things show.
>
> I: Can you give me an example of something that could have changed your experience?
>
> A: Like, if I'd been in accommodation with people that I didn't get on with, which could have easily happened if I was put on a corridor or somewhere with people that, 'cos' there's a corridor in my hall which is just smokers and a lot of them don't come out of their room and don't socialise with each other, and if I'd been put in that situation, I might not have enjoyed it as much, it's almost luck as much as anything else, as well as how you deal with the situation.
>
> I: So if you were in charge of the university's accommodation, can you think of anything that might help to improve people's experience?
>
> A: It's quite difficult, because it almost just depends on who you're put with and the people who end up there, but even something quite small like the layouts, because where I live, I live on a corridor with about twenty people, which is fine, there's a division and a kitchen in the middle that makes it quite close-knit, whereas in the main accommodation in my hall, there's a continuous corridor that goes around corners, so you're not going to have that same close-knit area, and so something like that can actually have an impact if you're someone that needs that social support when you get there and aren't as willing to go and knock on people's doors. So you end up with a very different experience being in the middle of the corridor to being at the end.

Lizzie raised another issue, relating to being on a different campus to others on the same course as her, though she denied it making a significant difference to her:

> Lizzie: I mean it's not so much that I wouldn't go out with them but because they're all over at [Main Campus] and I'm at [New Campus] I think it's difficult to meet up and I wouldn't want to get lost because I don't go out very often (inaudible) a lot of it's just me being too lazy I think (laughs) erm yeah so I think in some respects I might miss out. I don't- I don't really feel like I miss out, but they might think I do. Even though when they're talking about it I think "Oh I should have gone" Actually when it comes round to it next time and they've asked me if I want to go and I'll be like "I'm okay" and then I'll be tucked up in bed and they're all out. I'm like "I'd much rather be in bed" (laughs)

Jane, whose self-catered accommodation was some distance from the main campus, did feel she had missed out on some chances to meet other people and enjoy her first week at university:

> I: You mentioned that you didn't enjoy Freshers' week. Is there anything that the university could have done to improve things?
>
> J: Well there were nights that I would have enjoyed, like the things on campus, the alternative nights, but there was no transport for [self-catering accommodation], so I would have had to pay for a taxi there and back and I hadn't met people who wanted to share taxis and stuff
>
> I: And I suppose those are the opportunities for meeting those people?
>
> J: Yeah
>
> I: What were the alternative nights?
>
> J: Well there was a hypnosis thing that we did go to, so that was good. I think there was an acoustic night, which would have been good, I didn't go to. Um I can't remember, I think there was almost one every

> night but I can't really remember, there might have been a film night as well
>
> I: So, a practical thing could have made quite a big difference?
>
> J: Yeah, 'cos' even if it was just a bus there. I think to the clubs they were getting buses there and then taxis back, so even that would be much much better.

A final issue that linked the experiences of Fahimah, Lizzie and Jane was their perception of not fitting in with what the drinking culture amongst the students. While this has been partially discussed in relation to desirable identities, it is worth mentioning here as a practical matter that impacted upon their enjoyment of university.

Practical Considerations

One way of improving student experiences suggested by participants' accounts might be to provide basic cooking facilities in catered accommodation. Having a kitchen shared between a large number of students would be a relatively inexpensive way for students to be able to occasionally eat food different to that provided by halls. Care might need to be taken to ensure that such facilities did not become monopolised by a small group of students.

When constructing accommodation, efforts to include communal areas and avoid "dead end" corridors where students might feel themselves shut away from others could also improve matters.

All participants in this study possessed communications equipment allowing them to make internet calls and keep in touch with family members. As this might not be the case for all students, communal facilities allowing such calls to be made from university computers would ensure that this was possible for everyone.

While there are obviously cost implications of making the type of adjustments suggested here, universities could evaluate the financial

viability by comparison with the tuition and accommodation fees lost through students leaving courses.

Reflexivity

The purpose of this reflexivity section is to illustrate the subjective perspective from which I write, thereby seeking to reveal some of the assumptions, attitudes and prejudices that have informed this paper.

Based on the ideas outlined within this thesis, it seems apposite to recognise that this thesis constitutes a performance of several desired identities, influenced by particular social contexts, through the action of economic and ideological power.

Firstly, the thesis fulfils a requirement of a clinical psychology programme serving as a gateway to a career in clinical psychology. In a society in which money acts as the most visible medium of power, the role of a clinical psychologist is validated through the wages available to members of the profession.

Additionally, a doctoral-level qualification in an academic discipline is an indicator of intellectual ability, while working for the National Health Service in a helping profession signifies caring. These roles are appealing to me due to the values of the culture in which I have grown up.

A positive framing of psychology's position relative to psychiatry (and medicine in general) might be that it offers a more critical, thoughtful and nuanced approach. It may then be notable that, as the son of a former medic, I would choose to align myself with those elements of clinical psychology that exemplify those desired qualities. My choice of topic for this thesis is consistent with that identity. This is, in effect, the exercise of ideological power, enacted through identification.

Cleverness, caring and thoughtfulness are not qualities that reside in me. They are a desired feature of my interaction with social environments, through which I construct an idea of who I am and how I should behave in certain situations which reward those qualities. In other contexts, these, along with the other factors that inform my constructs of self, vary in importance and elicit a different performance.

Given this project's focus on situational factors, it would be remiss of me not to also describe the circumstances that led to the current research. My initial idea had been to critique the assessment of personality by using the methods used here with a clinical population before and after they participated in therapy. When this project failed due to recruitment issues, the current project was suggested through a conversation with Mark Gresswell. The difficulties experienced previously influenced made a non-clinical population and the use of brief measures very attractive.

I came to this project with no special interest in "homesickness", or even a belief that it exists as a homogeneous entity. Rather, my views are informed by social-constructionist perspectives. I believe that language has a tendency to reify concepts, emphasising some features at the expense of others. This can be seen to have such effects as the locating of problems within individuals through psychiatric diagnosis, which has the effect of obscuring contexts and inequalities of power.

This has clear implications for my attitude towards such concepts as "personality" and "homesickness". The former, I would argue, has taken on significance within psychology out of all proportion with its conceptual clarity. Homesickness, meanwhile, has been used to denote wholly disparate and dissimilar experiences, linked only by superficial similarities. To me, the lack of research attention to the topic is a consequence of this. The influence of both these lay concepts is nevertheless undeniable. Wanting to understand why this might be helped to shape my thinking.

While conducting interviews, I was struck by how similar some of the interviews felt to therapeutic sessions. Several of the participants reported finding the process useful and enjoyable. This led me to think about the fact that conversations with me allowed interviewees to enact positive identities. This made me consider the role of this process in therapy and how I can enhance the process.

Listening to my interviews whilst transcribing revealed many areas where my own questioning style could be improved. There were far more

examples of leading questions than I would have liked, and several occasions when I was overly tentative. I made an effort to improve this for later interviews, but there is still plenty of room for improvement. Recording my own practice is one way in which I hope to achieve this.

Transcription also revealed to me the way that many speakers self-correct as they speak, without this being noticeable to listeners, who perceive a coherent whole. This mirrors the process by which narratives are created, selecting only the most pertinent material and discarding extraneous information. With some participants, word-for-word transcription was a difficult task, as their rapid speech and constant revision of sentences meant that I could only listen to a short chunk of speech before having to stop and type, so as not to unintentionally edit what they had said. Yet, while these participants were speaking to me, or even when I listen to the recordings in full, I did not get a sense of a broken narrative, which demonstrates to me that, as listeners, we edit automatically. This illustrates the degree to which listening is an active process of meaning construction, subject to all the biases that this implies.

The process of analysis and later the selection quotes for the results section helped me to appreciate the importance of context. Brief statements that appeared meaningless when viewed in isolation were of clear importance within a given narrative that was apparent to both speakers in the conversation. While the format of this thesis allowed me to attach extended sections of the interviews in an appendix, I would be very interested in finding a way of allowing participants to offer unexpurgated accounts, perhaps through the use of audio or video technology. However, while I was pleased with the narrative approach, I would hesitate to combine it with a quantitative approach again, simply because any paper produced would be of too great a size to submit to a journal. I did feel that the journal paper ended up too short to allow adequate space for either of the methodologies used. In future, I would be minded to use the narrative analysis by itself.

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Appendices

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Appendix 1 – Extended Narrative Extracts

Long extracts from participant statements are presented here in temporal order, to give some sense of narratives as they emerged through the interviews. Participants were asked about what information they consented to being used, meaning that less material was available for some participants.

Lizzie

L: Uhm, I was born in Wolverhampton and was there for six months. So not very long. And then I spent, um, five or six years in um Oxford two years in Exeter, seven years in Bristol a year in Australia, another six months in Bristol and then moved to the Wirral.

I: OK. You moved around quite a lot then?

L: Yeah, I, I've seen the world a little bit (laughs)

I: Um, has that been good preparation for moving to university?

L: (laughs) You'd think it would be, wouldn't you? I don't know. I um I was terrified of coming

I: Really?

L: Everyone always said "You'll do really well" My parents kept telling me that I always did really well, settled in really quickly And, looking back, I did As a child, kind of going to a new place didn't really faze me that much. Now if I tried somewhere like going to Australia, I'd just blow, 'cos' it's like, massive. But no, I was really excited to go, and made loads of friends, so it was fine. So maybe it did help me a bit.

I: When you went to Australia, was that with your family, or-

L: Yeah, yeah. My dad's work took us out there for a year.

I: And has it always been with your family that you've travelled?

L: Yeah, yeah So that's good as well. I think since I've been here I've realised how important they are to me as well. Uhm, yeah. (laughs)

I: OK. How have you found life at university so far compared to your expectations?

L: It's tricky. I don't know, I don't. I didn't have great expectations Like I said, I really wasn't looking forward to it. I was terrified, Uhm. So-o the fact that I'm happy here, just has been great, uhm. I was expecting to be like crying every night and missing my family and my friends. So yeah, no, it's been good (laughs).

I: OK. What in particular has been enjoyable?

L: Uhm I really love the course. So obviously the learning, the learning's been fun, um and I guess getting to know different people The Wirral is really, I've realised since I've been here, really kind of, White British (I: OK) so meeting people from all over the world and getting to know them, all about their cultures, and different ethnicities and religions and stuff has been really, really good actually. Um, and that wasn't something I was expecting when I moved, so that's been really good.

I: OK. What were you expecting?

L: Uuuh. I don't know. Uhhm. I honestly don't. I was expecting not, not to fit in. Not to find people that I got on with, um, to feel pressurised to do stuff that I didn't necessarily want to do. Um, I'm not a big party goer. So, like, people pressurising me to go out all the time and stuff. Uhm, I'm a Christian and I was really scared that I'd get like judged and a bit discriminated against because of that, but that's been fine as well…

I: Outside of university, who are the most important people to you?

L: Uuhm, My friends and family I've realised since I've been here how important my family are to me. Uhm yeah. How, and how much they miss me as well, 'cos' I knew I'd miss them a lot, but I didn't think that I'd be noticed, that yeah they all miss me a lot, which is nice to know in some respects, Uhm, and also my friends, uhm everyone always said to me "(inaudible) will stay with you for your life, you won't really know that many people from your home when you move away, but actually if I had a problem now, I think I'd still go to my home friends before my university friends. Obviously, I've not been here very long, um But no, I've, I'm really close to my friends at home. And there's like, a massive group of us as well

I: OK

L: Which, I don't know if that helps or not, so I know a couple of people really well, but there's a lot of people that I know well and miss.

I: How big a group are you talking about?

L: Uuhm , Well, when I, I'm going home this weekend actually, my mum said I could have some people round for uh for some food, and I have invited fifteen, and that's kind of like cutting the list short, by about half probably (laughs). Um, it's difficult because, you invite some people and then that means you've got to invite others and others and others and others and not just like a small knit group

I: And when you say home, do you mean the Wirral, rather than-

L: Yes. No, yeah, Wirral's home.

I: Do you have contact with friends from any of the other places that you've lived?

L: I did, a lot. I've got one good friend in Bristol, who, who I haven't spoken to in a while, but I'd still be able to ring her up and we'd be able to talk and instantly about anything. I kept in touch with some friends from Australia for a bit, but not so much anymore. Um, and then yeah, no, a couple of friends from Bristol, but none from Exeter or Oxford.

I: OK And, you said you're going back next week, but how much contact have you had with people otherwise?

L: Uhm, I had one friend come and stay with me for a weekend. Uhm, and I the first week I spoke to my mum everyday either ringing her or skype-ing her for like half an hour or an hour or something. Uuhm, and there's a couple of people that if they're on Skype and they're free I'll ring them. Um

I: Who are those people?

L: Err, my really good friend who people always mistake us for sisters. She's the one who came to stay. I've got two friends from church that I really get on with. Um, so if either of them are on- One of them's at Lincoln and is visiting me for Christmas- No, no my birthday. Uhm and there's one of my brother's friends that I get on with really well and text him quite a lot as well.

I: OK.

L: And there's people that I'll text if they text me and we can chat for a couple of days

I: It sounds like you've got quite a lot of uh

L: Quite a lot of links and stuff yeah…

I: You said before that you've been surprised by how much people have missed you

L: Yeah

I: Um, how have they let you know that they've missed you?

L: Errr, (laughing) I didn't realise it until really recently. I'm going home this weekend and my brother asked me what time I was getting back. Um and I said "I'll get into [localtown] at half-five" and he's like "Are we not picking you up from [Rivercity]?" I said "No, mum didn't want to" He

said “I’m coming. I’m stealing the car and gonna come and get you. Uhm, So yeah, and the fact that people have maintained as much contact as I have with them shows me that they haven’t uhm. Every time I ring up and like say hello to them on Skype, they’re always there and say hi, whatever they’re doing and come and speak. Uhm. My dad’s not one for saying “I miss you”, but he’s said it a couple of times since I’ve been here, so (laughs) yeah.

I: Um, can you tell me what you miss about home?

L: (laughs) I wish I could Um. Singing weirdly. Knowing that I can, yes, making as much noise as I want in my house and no-one banging on the doors and telling me to shut up (laughs)

I: Has that happened here?

L: Not yet, because I’ve kept quiet (laughing) Um, yeah, I think just being myself, because I got to know so many people so much at home. I was quite involved in my youth group and was really kind of confident about who I was when I was at home, so people just knew that I was- knew me for who I a. Whereas I think here, people don’t quite know me in the same way. Um, so I’m really looking forward to just going home and being completely myself, um, and people not taking a step back and thinking “Who are you?” Uhm, yeah, um, and just feeling, feeling totally myself at home and being able to totally chill out and not worry about what other people around me are thinking. Um, ‘cos’ even if it’s just my group of friends, I think they probably know me quite well, but if you’re sitting in the atrium with three hundred people, if you were to do something a bit crazy, they’d all judge you as well.

I: You talked about one of the reasons that you wanted to come to university being to, to find out who you are,

L: Mm

I: Do you think that's something that you've done, because you talk about er, being able to be yourself and be who you really are, or is that something that you think is something that will be an on-going process.

L: I think it's definitely going to be an on-going process. I think I've learnt a lot about who I am at home from being away from home if that makes sense. So I've learned a lot about who I am by maybe not being who I am (laughs) completely, being here, um And yeah, being being with new people and seeing how they react to me has been really interesting as well, because obviously at home, they've just they've grown up with me so who I am is just who I am, whereas here people are saying "Ooh!" and then noticing different parts to my personality that people at home just knew. And then they pick up on that, so so I'm really obvious- I'm really aware of what, what people are thinking of me and therefore my own most obvious personality traits or phrases that I say a lot they're all saying that I say them a lot, whereas I don't even notice when I say them at home. Um yeah.

I: Um What do you understand by the term homesick?

L: (laughs) Um, I don't know, (laughs), crying into your pillow because you miss home so much? (laughs) I've only done that once, so it's fine. I guess I just- having a longing when I first got here I was, I was miserable 'cos' I wasn't at home, and I felt really lonely, and I didn't feel like I fitted in and I didn't feel like I'd ever belong here, and that people around me seemed to have made best friends really really quickly and I still didn't think I knew anyone really at all. Um And I knew that everyone at home was there and all talking to one another and I was just out of the loop and um yeah, just feeling, just feeling really unsettled in somewhere where other people are settled where you want to be (laughs)

I: And how long did that last?

L: Uhm, the first week was really really tough, the second week went a lot quicker, but was still quite difficult, and then I remember thinking in

the third week “this is going to be ok” and since then, I’ve been- I’ve had occasional days, um, like little blips where I thought “still, still don’t feel right her” but I think it’s an on-going process, It’s gonna take some time and I don’t think it’s the same for everybody, but, um I’m okay with that.

I: Do you think that you’ve changed as a person since you’ve been here?

L: (hesitantly) Y-es. Yeah, I think so. My accent’s changed (laughs). More southern, which is good. Um, I think the northerners had started converting me when I was up there, but it’s definitely, definitely back to how, down south now, even though we’re in the midlands. Anyway, um, Yeah, yeah, no I think I have. Um, the Wirral’s quite sheltered. In that I was surrounded by a group of people that didn’t swear, didn’t smoke and like that. So moving down here and meeting new people like that, um. People are really picking on the fact that I don’t swear and that’s different for them, and so it’s made me more of- aware of the fact that, now I can’t swear (laughs) if I’m surrounded by people that do, um, and yeah I think just meeting different people who have different ideas about things has made me think about things, so more aware of my principles, values and things. Uhm and being in charge of what I want to do all the time, and not having to not thinking oh what mum and dad think about this because they might find out because there’s probably no way that they would. So making sure that I’m the one that’s in control of everything that I do and making sure that I don’t do anything that I regret ‘cos’ there’s no-one to pull me back

I: Um, do you think that your personality’s changed at all since you’ve been here?

L: Uuuhm No I don’t think so. Not, not massively maybe a couple of things but no I think I’ve yeah I think I’ve always been one of those people that’s just really confident weirdly about who I am so, and I don’t really feel like I need to answer to anybody about who I am

Obviously there's things I want to change about myself um but um I can work on that on my own I don't need anyone to tell me, so (laughs) yeah, no, I'm quite confident in who I am, so obviously there's things I want to change but people, other people's opinions of me don't tend to change …

I: OK

L: That sounds really bad (laughs)

I: But you um you said um that other people's opinions don't matter to you all that much, but um, earlier on when you were talking, you mentioned that it's very different being here from being with a group of your friends and acting like yourself

L: It's true, it's true. I think, I think they don't matter as much as I don't- If my friends were to say something negative about something that I considered integral to my personality I think I'd rather try and remove myself from those people rather than change who I am Ahh, in theory. In practice I don't know (laughs)…

interesting actually. Especially having been here, um yeah, I think I learnt a lot about my, I'm quite extrovert. And the girl opposite me's very quiet and reserved. Err, I think, I know that I like to be kind of, in with the action and part of conversation and (dramatically) the centre of attention (laughs), and I knew that before, but I see it a lot more now. And yeah I think as far as organisation and being calm and controlled and stuff, that's that's something that at home, in my school, everyone was organised and stuff, so coming here and not being, just being as organised as everybody else at home, I've realised that I am actually organised. Um, but yeah, I've got less involved in stuff like the open to new experiences thing. I've been less involved in new stuff than I thought I would be. Uh, I've joined like ice-skating society (laughs) um, but no, I'm not. I've not really thrown myself into anything, which I did at home, a lot, I was quite involved in

my youth group and I was House Captain at school which um I think is surprising actually, I've um yeah. At my old school everyone knew who I was because I was House captain. Um, I knew a lot of people in different years and things. And so I'm quite I put myself in a leadership role very easily, so. So the fact that I've not really done anything like that surprises me really. yeah…

L: Uuhm Um, Well, the whole time I was at home, I made myself not settle in I didn't unpack all my stuff from my sleeping- from my suitcase 'cos' I knew I knew it was only temporary it was only going to be for a weekend and I didn't want to settle back into home So um I was quite good about that. And then when I got back I got back really late 'cos' I got the last bus and train home um back here, so I got in about one or something, then my friends had made a big sign for my door saying "welcome back" So it was really nice actually um 'cos' I didn't think they cared that much (laughs) so that was nice yeah um it's been fine since but again I'm really looking forward to going home for Christmas

I: Has it been easier or harder to cope since coming back?

L: Just as easy, maybe a bit easier. It's nice to know my family haven't drastically changed since I've been away, they're pretty much the same.

I: Is that something that had worried you?

L: A little bit, maybe. The fact that uh obviously they'd have to adapt 'cos' I'm not there anymore, but that they'd start doing stuff that was really really strange to me and alien and that I didn't approve of (laughs)

I: Can you give me an example?

L: Er Well they've got a er not a lodger, but they've got a girl staying with them. Did I tell you that?

I: (shakes head)

L: Uh Okay. Our church needed somewhere for this girl to stay pretty much for this term so she she arrived a couple of days after I left and she's leaving the day after I get back um so I don't know in the back of my mind I thought they might be getting a replacement for me (laughs) This girl's just gonna replace me but er no it was fine and erm I think I was worried my brothers might just kind of take my my part 'cos' I've got I think I've got quite a well-formed niche in my family um no but it's good It's- I don't know. They've coped without me, so it's not like a gaping hole where I've been but yeah it's nice to know that they won't replace me

I: Okay. Um last time you talked about going from a situation where you were- not head girl, was it House Captain?

L: Mmhmm (noise taken to signal assent)

I: One thing that struck me is that there's some social status there. How have you found the transition to university in terms of being very much the-

L: Little fish?

I: Yeah

L: Yeah. Yeah that has been hard actually because I think it's very suited to my personality to be a leader and recognised and I'm quite bossy so that works really well as well (laughs) So yeah the whole little fish big pond thing was one of the things I was really worried about as well because I was rather recognised at home and school and everyone knew who I was um I really loved feeling loved by you know school and stuff. I got an award for services to the school and all the teachers knew who I were and knew I was responsible and trusted me to do stuff and I really loved being in that position being able to represent the school at open days and stuff um, whereas here when I came no-one knew who I was, no-one knew who anyone was and um

that was hard and I didn't like the fact that um I don't know I was just one of those "freshers" and then had like big ideas about being a similar kind of thing here, but it's not really worked out that way um I think my- the way people perceive me here like I halls or in my course, is very different to the way I was perceived at home in school Or at church In halls I'm one of the quiet ones uh because I'm not a big party-goer or anything like that, so I didn't go for anything like JCR president or social sec or anything 'cos' I think that's quite a- you're seen as social if you go out all the time

I: Okay. It's a particular type of sociability

L: Yeah, it's not yeah um so even though I see myself as quite a friendly and outgoing person, I think when you say that you are sociable here, it means that you are going out sociable, not so yeah I think my yeah my idea about myself within a group has changed, like within a larger group in my hall, but it's not bothered me as much as I thought it would at all. I'm quite happy with with the role I've taken on here. If I have. Um that's fine. Now I guess I can see in the future that there might be something else I could do, maybe not the same as house captain, but more something on a smaller level or something um yeah

I: Is it similar to your experience of starting school?

L: Yeah I guess so, although when I started my school I was um I started my my last secondary school half a term before the end of year seven, so I was still not just one of the year sevens I was "that new girl" and that was quite a regular thing throughout my childhood 'cos' we moved around a lot

I: Hmm, so being a little bit different is something that you enjoyed?

L: Yeah, I think so. I've noticed that about myself actually, like um I do like being slightly different from people I don't like just being one of the crowd, which isn't always a good thing I don't think because yeah

I: Have you found a way to stand out from the crowd at university?

L: Uhh I think that's why I'm so loud and brash (laughs)

I: But you described yourself as being quite quiet

L: Yes. Within my friendship groups I'm really loud and actually one of them said to me that when I went away it was really weird, like the whole group dynamic changed 'cos' they didn't have anybody that's like me (laughs) but yeah no within halls I'm quieter, but um I think weirdly enough I'm now the girl that doesn't swear that's I really feel like that's something they that's my box (laughs) I've been put in and I've noticed my friends swear less as well, which is nice I guess. And they pull themselves up too, which is funny

I: Because you've said things to them or just-

L: I occasionally say like if they swear I'm like "bother" instead. And the phrases I say instead of swearing they find hilarious as well so I don't know if that helps or makes it more light-hearted.

I: I won't ask

L: Flip me! Or Bother! Bum! (giggles) A beautiful array of (laughs) yeah

I: Have you found a similar way that you can express the bossy side of your character?

L: Er, yeah. It was my friend's birthday this weekend and we were pretending to forget and then planned a big surprise and I kind of felt my whole leadership thing coming out then. We've got there's two of us that are the girls in the group and we plan, and the two boys whose birthday it wasn't um it was just really nice to be able to tell them what to do (laughs) they 're pretty useless anyway so they needed instruction but I did I did really even though it was really stressful I really kind of thrived off the whole being able to plan stuff

I: Is that different from your usual interaction with them?

L: Uuuuh yeah. Yeah I think so. W-ell I think it just maybe brought out the way we normally work erm to an obvious to a more obvious level. It It's always this friend and I who've kind of texted everybody like "it's time for dinner now, let's go" or or made plans and stuff for weekends or whatever, so… I guess it was more obvious this weekend

I: So erm last time I asked you about being yourself at university because you'd said that you didn't feel like you could be yourself yet. How do you feel now?

L: I think rather than being myself I've just I dunno I'm- I act- I know that I'm different with friends at home than to friends here and I think I presumed that I was more myself at home I guess just 'cos' I've been there longer and this is a more normal experience I think instead that I've noticed different parts of myself whilst I'm here and I still catch myself noticing parts of my personality that I don't really like, like that seem to have come out whilst I've been here um like wanting to be the centre of attention I've really noticed that since I've been here, that I do like to be different and if I'm not, I'll find a way that I can be

I: And you see that as a negative thing?

L: I don't like it about myself. Sometimes it's okay, but then sometimes I'll go too far in wanting to be different and actually it's okay to just be the same as everybody else (laughs) and then yeah so then being at home, I think I still feel more comfortable being around my family obviously. I've got a friend coming this weekend and I'm really excited about her coming because I've I think I am fully myself with her. I get on really well with her and I've spent the whole summer with her um so that that's gonna be really really good um I'm a bit worried about like them meeting her and her meeting my friends here and how that'll work

I: What are you worried about?

L: Umm, I think I'm really aware that my friends here are quite different to my friends at home or in my mind they are, maybe 'cos' I

act so differently with them than with my friends at home I might find that actually they're really similar and they get on. I had a friend round before for a weekend and they got on fine…

L: Erm. I spoke to- actually I spoke to my parents yesterday (inaudible) erm, but it's not a regular thing like in the first week I was Skype-ing my mum every day erm I still text quite a lot, but I've always done that so

I: How many texts would you say you-

L: Well, actually I know this because we looked at it yesterday (laughs) Erm I think about sixty texts a day that's quite a lot isn't it? Yes, it's quite a lot. Yeah uhm, yeah I got my 'phone fixed last last Friday I got it back and I've had a thousand four hundred texts since then

I: That does sound like quite a lot yeah

L: Yeah just a little bit. A little bit embarrassing really, but yeah yeah, we- I text quite a lot, um but I, the amount of time, or the number of times I speak to people has gone down since we last spoke

I: Okay. Are there people whom you have started to contact whom you didn't contact before?

L: Yeah I uh have made much better use of writing letters now. I dunno, it's something I've always, always, always, always wanted to start doing 'cos' I love getting letters even more so now because we all go to the post together and it's always nice when one of us gets a letter. Um, so I've taken to like waking up early at weekends, and 'cos' we don't have brunch served until half-twelve or something there's always a really annoying time when you don't want to work, so I'll sit in bed and write letters. So I've written to my god-parents, which I've never done, and other family friends that would really love to hear about how uni's going and who have children in the year below me – I talk to them about uni things…

L: No, well, in my head I do, but not outwardly 'cos' they all do really well (laughs) they all get ninety odd percent in all their coursework, so I don't. I- I always aim for as high as I can get, but I think the fact that they also do really well drives me to do even better (laughs) Uhm yeah, one of my friends who does maths just got ninety-nine percent for her coursework that she handed in and my other friend got ninety-five in his, so they're all really good and at one point I said, "is it just – is it everyone on your course that does that well or is it just you guys? Have I picked all the wrong friends" Um, so I don't really know how other people do in their- 'cos' I don't speak to anyone, but of my close friends they're all really bright

I: How does that compare to your friends from the Wirral?

L: Um they were obviously- yeah they were obviously really intelligent, but I didn't feel as inferior to them I don't know actually. Here, because we're all doing different subjects it's really difficult to compare 'cos' obviously people have chosen degrees which they are good at and like so I don't um I went to a grammar school which I realise was quite um a good school. It was a very good school, um I knew it was a good school, but I didn't realise how much of a good school, I think having spoken to a number of people whose schools weren't as good as mine. Everyone there was driven to do really well anyway, so my marks were always- maybe above average but not incredible um and three A's at A-level was by no way the best at all. Um so I- I used to compare myself to those-them as well, and so it drove me to do really well. But if- I think I knew them a lot better 'cos' I'd grown up with them from kind of year eight I always knew that they were all really clever and I knew their strengths and weaknesses whereas here I don't really know anything about them, or what they're doing.

I: What about people doing the same subjects as you?

L: Erm, yeah, I guess I do. It's really different 'cos' I only really see them during lectures and maybe over lunch so the same kind of thing applies. Erm when I went to go and get my essay I went with another girl and I really didn't want to get a worse mark than her. We got the same in the end, which was really nice um, so that, that's fine. But yeah no, I do compare myself and I do I would be disappointed if I got a lower mark than somebody I thought I should have got a higher mark than even if they turned out to be more intelligent than me, because I don't know, I think I'm quite competitive and driven to do well, again that's maybe not such a good thing.

I: Has the group of friends you've got at university changed at all since last time I spoke to you?

L: Um, no. There's um, there's like my core group of five, and-

I: Tell me more about them

L: Two of them do computer science, there's two girls and three boys. Two of the boys do computer science, one does maths and the other girl does maths and yeah one of the computer scientists' birthday was yesterday um yeah it's nice. We're quite, we are quite different, and I think that difference is maybe why I'm not the same person I am at home, whereas at home I think that all of my friends kind of fall into the same kind of category and even if they're not the same, they still fit in there somehow, whereas here they're all, they're all quite different um yeah. And then, we've got a couple of people that live in and around our halls that occasionally join us um. The guy who does maths, he's got a friend in the hall opposite who sometimes joins us as well, a friend from home, um so within our weird non, non-popular um - I did inverted commas, for the sake of the tape - (laughs) um within our like the non-going out group, we're quite well-known and central to that. There's a couple of people that kind of hop on and off the group and might join in when we're doing something um and then within my course the-ey they're all really lovely, there's me and one other girl and we do all the same subjects and all the same modules within

those subjects, so we will like go to lectures together and make sure we're sitting next to one another and then there's about ten of us that all do natural sciences, but different bits within that and we'll all sit together for stuff as well. Um I think in some ways I do miss out 'cos' I don't go out with them in the evenings and things

I: Are you the only person that doesn't go out?

L: I think so. Yeah, I mean, I mean it's not so much that I wouldn't go out with them but because they're all over at uni park and I'm at Jubilee I think it's difficult to meet up and I wouldn't want to get lost because I don't go out very often (inaudible) a lot of it's just me being too lazy I think (laughs) erm yeah so I think in some respects I might miss out. I don't- I don't really feel like I miss out, but they might think I do. Even though when they're talking about it I think "Oh I should have gone" Actually when it comes round to it next time and they've asked me if I want to go and I'll be like "I'm okay" and then I'll be tucked up in bed and they're all out. I'm like "I'd much rather be in bed" (laughs)

I: you talked about being part of a non-popular group, would you say that that's a big change from your life before university?

L: No Even though I was well known, I was still not I was well-known within the school, you know throughout the different years and things 'cos' I had kind of cross year roles in that I was house captain and form tutor for a group of year-sevens and things, um, but I think that in every school there's always people that are classed in a popular crowd and there's normally fifty of them or something ridiculous erm and I think within our year everyone will have known them, I mean everyone knew me in our year as well, just 'cos' I was house captain or whatever, and we all knew each other by the end erm but I think I think by the time we get to university everyone prioritises work, but there are some people who prioritise work a lot more than others erm and I guess that's what distinguishes those that are in the popular crowd and those that aren't.

I: That they didn't prioritise work as much as you did?

L: Erm, maybe yeah, or maybe they just- I think just the fact that they choose to do different stuff within like their their free time. Mm, People here will go out. I mean I was horrified when I heard someone ask if they were going out tonight, it's Monday night! Um but yeah, and I think that (inaudible people together, but in society's eyes that makes them popular people. That's- I don't know, maybe that's just me, but I yeah um Even if, even if people within that group were really kind of just introvert and not very, but if they're in the group they're still still popular. I don't know why (laughs)

I: Um and erm, I guess one of the other things you talked about last time was the feeling that your personality might have changed, or that different parts of your personality might have emerged at university. When you completed the questionnaire today, did you find it any different?

L: I don't know. I remember thinking "Ooh, I wonder what I put last time?" I can't remember what I put last time so I don't know, but I think it probably has changed erm, yeah

I: Do you think that reflects a change in you , or maybe a change in the way you see the questionnaire?

L: Yeah, a change in the way I view the questionnaire, I think a change in the way that I've matured as I've been here in that um I'm not as dependent as I was on home. In some ways I'm, I still can't quite get my head around the fact that I'm here. Being like a university student seems like a really grown-up thing to be, and this term has, since the first couple of weeks when it really dragged, it's just flown by. The fact that we're going home in two weeks I can't get my head around at all.

I: What do you see yourself as then, if not a student?

L: I don't know, I don't know. Just someone that's not at home and isn't in school. Yeah, if someone asked me, it'd take me a couple of

minutes to be like “Uh university, yeah, I’m a university student, yeah” And maybe it’s because I don’t fit into that stereotype of one of the ones that’s out in town, uh I don’t know, but when I stop and think about it, it is still a novel thing for me um and like so, I don’t think that I’ve grown up in that I don’t think I’m any less attached to home than I was. I think I’m just more comfortable here, even though I don’t feel like I belong here (laughs)

I: Where would you say you belong?

L: At home. Yeah. With my family.

I: You talked about the stereotype of students. Do you see those people who fit the stereotype as more grown up than you?

L: Yeah, ‘cos’- well I don’t know, ‘cos’ in my head I’m still quite, maybe not immature- Naïve! And unworldly wise. I’ve realised since I’ve been here the Wirral is quite sheltered and so coming here has been, it’s been a massive learning curve I think. I’ve not really come into contact with anything new, but I’ve heard about it and seen it yeah, in some ways I feel like an old woman more in some ways to them. I wouldn’t say more mature, just more elderly (laughs) ‘cos’ that- ‘cos’ I don’t really see myself enjoying it as much as they do, I still enjoy going out, but not as um as much as they do in that I couldn’t do it every night for two weeks and (laughs) be alive at the end. Yeah, but I do feel more like a child in compare- having said I feel more like an old woman, now I’m saying I feel like a child in comparison to them ‘cos’ they seem more worldly wise than me in that sense.

I: So either way, it seems like you don’t fit into the same age bracket as them?

L: Yeah um yeah, no I don’t I don’t think

I: Okay

L: I don’t really know (laughs) I’m lost. Lost and confused (laughing)…

L: Um, I don't know I do feel more settled here now uh I still wouldn't call it home I think that the fact that I've got like a stable friendship group and we've got like a routine um and I'm comfortable with them has really helped. Probably the fact that I'm going home soon as well, might be comforting (laughs) It's my birthday this weekend. I think yeah, the routine thing and the fact that I'm more settled here um and I think at the beginning of the year I found it really daunting and scary and I didn't like the fact that I was gonna be here for three years. That really scared me uh because I just saw myself being miserable for three years (laughs) and- and I couldn't bear it all, and I think since then I've manned up (laughs) and- and just got on with, and I think, like my mum said "You do that well anyway" You've- I think I've just found a way to be myself in a different way than at home and that's really helped, being with- with a group of people I'm comfortable with and being comfortable with them in who I am Uh and I think instead of comparing them constantly to my friends at home, enjoying them for the different stuff that they bring to the new relationships I have as well uh and it was the same when I was trying to find a church and stuff I was always comparing the churches here to the ones at home and that was really hard 'cos' the church I was in was really good. When I stopped doing that and started looking at like the um pros and cons of the new ones I was seeing it was a lot easier…

. Having said that I like the routine here, not having a routine at home is nice as well. Not having to wait until other people want dinner or go down to dinner when other people want to even though I guess we do that as a family as well, but um it's a bit different I think and when I'm in a bad mood at home I don't mind if my family know about it um 'cos' I know they won't like me any less at the end of the day

I: But it's something that you don't let people know about here?

L: It's something that I'd be less inclined to, and I'd feel bad about doing here because at home I can just sit in my room and sulk, whereas here if I did that uh I wouldn't want people to have a negative idea of me or they'd done something to offend me

I: Is that the same with your friends from back home?

L: Uh I dunno, I think because I've known all of them for so long the ones who would have thought of me negatively or abandoned me would've done by now and I remember once playing a board game with them and getting -'cos' I'm really competitive- getting angry, and genuine ager and they were all they all just kind of left me to it and I'm really embarrassed by that now and I've said to them all "I'm really sorry about that time I got really angry" (laughing)

I: How old were you?

L: (still laughing) um really recently, I think it was the summer. It was just- it was horrendous, but I- it's a really competitive game and I was really close to winning and then they all ganged up on me and beat me and I just got really angry and it was horrible. To this day I hate myself for it (laughs) Yeah I mean, and if I'd have done that here I'd have- I don't know how they would have reacted my friends here, but my friends at home kind of put up with it and I think they were a little bit taken aback 'cos' I- it was ugly in me, but none of them uh they might think a little bit less of me, but they've not really spoken about it much since, just move on and forget about it

I: So there is a side to yourself that you're wary of showing to people just yet?

L: I think that's the case- for some sides of myself to anybody – I think everybody's got some sides of themselves that they don't want anybody to see, but yeah I don't think my friends here are aware of my vicious competitiveness

I: Do you think that'll change with time?

L: Probably, probably, uh I don't know I'm horrible to play Articulate with 'cos' I'm really competitive with that and we've not got it here which is good, but we've got it at home and there's no way I'm bringing it um but I think also my friends here see different- because they see different sides of my personality anyway, it's a little bit different to at home, but I'm probably more likely to show my n- my negative side to people at home, whereas here I'd keep it bottled up um or or hidden away from them because I don't know maybe they don't know me well enough or maybe I don't know them well enough um could be they might not know how to react to it

I: And finally, are there any sides to you that you think have emerged for the first time since you've been at university?

L: Ummm I've said before that I've become really aware of the fact that I always have to be centre of attention so-

I: So that's something that wasn't the case before?

L: I think at home I just was. That was my role (laughs) so I uh didn't have to push myself into that position, whereas here 'cos' none of my friends I don't know maybe it's because none of my friends like like that role so I'm very obviously that person and then when I'm not I don't like it uh which is not really a nice personality trait to have revealed to you I'll work on it. By next- by next time I'll be brilliant

I: Just as long as you're not too quiet

L: (laughs) not too quiet for the recorder. Erm yeah probably, I mean none like apart from that one that I can definitely put my finger on, just that I'm a different part of myself here, and now that you make me think about it that is it's quite a major thing. Maybe even more than the last time I spoke to you. I think I'm growing up in the new different me. Rather than steadily changing to be more like home I think I'm more growing away from my other- my old self and I imagine probably at some point they'll just meet and then I'll be one. One nice whole person (laughs)

I: Do you feel split at the moment?

L: Not so- No. I wouldn't say I felt split, but I do notice kind of uh I don't know actually, but I wouldn't say I was split definitely different to home but I don't- like no nothing as drastic as "people at home would be shocked to see me and wouldn't recognise me or anything like that um and nothing the same at home I think people here would probably be more surprised to see me at home because I don't think they realise how loud one person can be (laughs) I'm going to a pantomime with my friend on Saturday for my birthday 'cos' 'cos' 'cos' I'm the kind of person that loves pantomime and I- I didn't want any of my friends here to come 'cos' I didn't want them to be embarrassed by me and I think they would be…

I: And since you've been back have you had any recurrence of the homesick feelings?

L: No, not at all, um which was really nice as well. I think um a lot of it had to do with me working out that even though I'm here, I can still keep pretty good contact with people at home and they've not all changed and they are the same people, which I think I was worried about, not on the surface and I didn't realise I was worried about it, but when I went back and was just the same and people still treated me just the same that was really nice, and I realised that when I got back, so

I: Last time we spoke, you talked about developing a new sense of yourself at university. It sounds as though one of the things that has reassured you is that that's on top of the old you which is still there

L: Yeah maybe like the fact that I'd kind of changed a little bit here and had to, not change myself, but the fact that different parts of me were showing, I was wondering if people would react to that at home, but I think I just slipped straight back into the person I left behind, obviously

with a bit more life experience and hopefully some knowledge of chemistry and stuff (laughs)…

I: And I think you told me that a friend of yours was coming from home, um

L: Yes. For my birthday. Just before my birthday. She did and she stayed the weekend. That was- um ‘cause I’d already had one friend to stay almost- quite soon after I arrived

I: You said you were more worried about this friend coming to stay

L: The second friend? Yeah and rightly so, having had that weekend now. No, I don’t know what it was, I think the first friend, she’s just really easy to get along with I don’t think she’d find- I can’t see her not getting on with anybody, which is fine um the second one um yeah like and there are times- like I should have seen it coming, ‘cos’ there are times when I find her really frustrating and she’s one of my best friends so, it’s not that my friends didn’t like her or anything, it’s just that I was very aware that they didn’t get along as well as they had with the first friend um also it was my birthday as well, so that was a bit added in, so it wasn’t like a normal weekend, it was all sort of about me. It was all about me and I didn’t know whether to be my uni me or my home me, ‘cos’ I had my friend from home there as well, actually, like I wasn’t looking forward to celebrating my birthday without my family and the fact that she was there was really good for me I think

I: How did you- How did you settle that- because you said you weren’t sure whether to be the home you or the uni you, how did you-

L: Umm I’m not sure, nothing I can pick out. My friend from home said that I act differently- has noticed that I act differently with uni friends, so I presume I didn’t be all just home (Lizzie) she noticed a difference in me

I: What was that?

L: I couldn't tell you (laughs) I've no idea um I think people here have got a very different sense of humour um which might be quite a lot to do with it um we're aways kind of laughing at each other and stuff which is really nice, and we do that at home a lot, but um it's definitely different, the jokes that we make and things um I do still feel that the relationships I have with people are more strained than at home possibly because they're newer, so I've not known them for long- as long. Maybe not so much strained, but still a bit awkward or not kind of fully fledged

I: You talked last time about having some sides of yourself that you'd be very reluctant to show to people, that people at home had experienced, such as getting angry-

L: (Emphatically) Yes! Yeah um we're getting a house, hopefully by the end of the week, so that's a massive step, and I'm a bit anxious about that as well, 'cos' I'm thinking "I've got to spend a whole year with people they're probably gonna see my nasty side, and when I get stressed out I get really ratty with people and I just (shudders) I'm not looking forward to it

I: Do you think that other people will have the same anxieties as you?

L: I don't know they all seem really chilled about it uh I know the other friend because there's four guys and me and one other girl. I know that her and I are a bit anxious about it and I wonder if that's 'cos' we're girls um and boys are just really chilled and don't care um but no I can't really see them um having the same problems. I think like it's become apparent to me, especially within the si- 'cos in the six of us, there's kind of a me and this other girl and one other guy are quite close within the six um and from us three, they were both really keen to come back after Christmas and they'd both be texting me saying they were really bored and they couldn't wait to be back um and I was like "Why don't you go meet up with your friends and stuff?" They were like "Well, I've met up with them enough now- I've seen them enough" So I get the feeling that they don't have relationships at home

like I do um so they might be really content with the friendships that we've got here now whereas for me like because I've got the ideals- what I think are ideal and friendships that are really really strong and have been through a lot together and stuff and um these new awkward friendships aren't like um my ideal situation for housemates at the moment. We've still got a term to sort it out like the amount of distance we've come from September to now is huge so I've no doubt that that's going to happen again and I'm sure it's going to be fine but there's that anxiety there that I wish I was living with people at home instead (laughs)

I: So because you haven't known these people for as long, they can't be as ideal for you to live with as people from home?

L: Yeah, definitely. And my parents, well my dad particularly is always telling me "You'll meet all your best friends at university" and for me that's really difficult to grasp because my friends at home are so great and, at the moment, so much better than my uni friends that I'm like "Well I don't want to have to sacrifice those for the new people" But then he's funny because he maintains that you can only have one or two main friends and the rest of them just fall away by the wayside, so (laughs) I think we're very different in the way that we maintain friendships and stuff anyway

I: So what's true for him might not be true for you?

L: Exactly

I: Do you get a sense that there's a difference in the way that you see yourself with your friends here and your friends at home, and do you have preference for one or the other?

L: Yeah definitely. Here, I'm very much aware and I don't know if it's a right assumption to make about myself or not, but I'm not the most intelligent within our group and actually possibly the least um and that's not hard for me 'cos' it's not something that- I know because my younger brother's massively intelligent and stuff, it's not been my thing

ever to be the clever one, so that's not a problem, but also they're all really mathsy and I'm really not, that's not my strong point at all um and actually before last week that didn't bother me at all I just- I knew it was a funny thing that (Lizzie) can't do maths and it was always really cool and I could get to a sum quicker than somebody else but then someone said last week, and I got- it really hurt my feelings and it's the first time I've been hurt by anyone here and I think it was just 'cos' I was really tired and I had a 'cos' I had exams and was getting stressed out for no reason but of the six of us one does history and the rest of us kind of do science-y maths subjects and she said "I can see why-" 'cos the history people had said "I can't do maths, like it's either something that you can do or you can't", and I said "Yeah, no, I totally agree" and she said something like "Yeah, I can understand why you can't do maths 'cos you're a history- 'cos' you do history and it's an arts subject and stuff, but I just can't get my head around how someone like (Lizzie) who's meant- supposed to be a scientist or something can't do maths" and I was like (fake sobs) and I went really quiet and I think people noticed and I felt really bad and I thought "I'm probably just being really over-sensitive" but it'd never bothered me that I couldn't do maths before. Since then if it's ever- if there's ever come up into the conversation again, I would've normally said something like "Oof, well I can't do maths anyway" but now I have not mentioned it and I'm really set on trying to like improve my maths 'cos' I know it's really bad and I'll probably need it, so in the back of my mind there's always been "Okay, You've got to work on this" but now I feel like it's I don't know. I don't know what it was but it really hurt my feelings for a couple of hours…

L: Yeah. I was feeling really bad. Definitely the first two weeks of uni, I really struggled and I was really homesick and then yeah no it has got better. I think um going home again and coming back hasn't so much made me homesick again as realise um how lucky I am in that I've got such great things going on at home and and the fact that they're all

the same and they were so happy to have me back has made me feel better about being away um and the fact that- I've been ringing my parents talking about houses and stuff and the other day I was talking to my dad and he was like "so when is it that you're home for the weekend? It's the first of March isn't it?" I was like "Dad, I've only been here for a week, so…" So, the fact that they still all look forward to having me home and stuff and that I'm still kind of included in the family and discussions at home and stuff even though I'm not there is really nice, but no, I would say that I'm a lot better now. Probably still pretty bad in comparison to most people um but I didn't really expect anything else from myself um I knew I was going to find it really hard and actually (laughs) even though it was miserable, I coped a lot better than I thought I was going to. I envisaged myself crying myself to sleep every night and having a massive breakdown almost every other day and really not just coping very well with it at all. And I didn't at all, so that was good.

I: What do you think has helped?

L: Mmm, I'm not sure. I think the fact that I- like weirdly- I found friends here and that was one of the massive things that I was worried about, and having spoken to people they can't understand that 'cos' I'm always harping on about people at home and they're like "It sounds like you've got hundreds of friends at home, why would you worry about making friends here?" And I was like- It's just one of those things, I need people around me um just not not to be with me all the time, just that they're there and I can talk to them and stuff and the fact that people- that I've got a good number of people at home that I can- who are still happy to call me if I need to talk about anything or to text and reply to my texts and stuff. It's not like as soon as I moved out of the Wirral they all cut contact with me and that was it um so yeah

Bradley

I: And, how have you fund life at university so far, compared to your expectations?

B: Well, it's a lot different from back home. Student life, needless to say. See I was pretty quiet before, before I came here. That's definitely changed.

I: Really?

B: Yeah

I: Tell me more about that?

B: Well, I didn't drink before I came here. At all. But I've started drinking and I didn't really go out either, but I've gone out a lot. I'm going out tonight, so. I didn't think that would ever happen, but it did.

I: That was something you weren't expecting?

B: No, not at all.

I: What were you expecting?

B: I didn't know what I was expecting, but I didn't expect that I would change so much, as I did I always thought that I couldn't change

I: And it sounds like that's been quite a positive change.

B: Yeah. I enjoy it for sure.

I: Has there been anything else that's been enjoyable about being away from home?

B: Well I live alone, with my mum, at home and we didn't get on very well towards the time I was leaving. And leaving and getting a break has made our relationship better, so that's definitely a good thing.

I: When you say that before you left you didn't get on, how long are talking?

B: A year or so, or six months…

B: Er, well, my friend group at home, were kinda the nerd group, so we'd play a lot of games and stuff. And I still talk to them, but- Well, obviously I haven't seen them. I haven't been back home yet. But I'm still looking forward to seeing them. I still talk to them all very often. Everyone's looking forward to seeing me.

I: How often do you speak to them?

B: Erm, every few days. I'll talk to them all.

I: On the 'phone.

B: Yeah- well not, I don't 'phone them. I'll text them and stuff (6 minutes 44 seconds)

I: And, um, you'd said that your friends back home were a nerd group. How does that compare to your friends at university? Are they the same type of people or different?

B: Nope, not at all. Everyone- it's far different. Everyone, well. My flat's kind of like the party type, bar a few

I: Which is why you've been surprised at how easy it's been for you to-

B: Yeah, (inaudible)

I: What about other people at university? You mentioned your mum. Sorry, not at university, uh, at home.

B: That's- I don't get along with any of my family apart from her and I've only got that one main friend group I do know quite a lot of other people, but that's where I would spend my time…

I: You mentioned last time that you have a recorder like this one

B: Yeah

I: Is that because you have dyslexia

B: Yeah- well, ADHD

I: How have the university been supporting you in that?

B: They've given me the- they've lent me that. They've let me borrow that and I've got meetings with a tutor kind of thing. She helps me out. She's been trying to contact my doctor back home and get like more information about my ADHD so I can apply for disabled students' allowance which would help me a lot more, but that's I'm trying to think of the right word – tedious, it's really tedious. You know how it is trying to get in touch with doctors yeah but that yeah I'm happy with the help I'm getting here. In the first week I had a helper who guided me around like all the registration and stuff H probably got some credit for that 'cos' he took time out of his first week to help me with mine

I: It was another first year student?

B: No it was a second-year student

I: How does that compare to the support you've had back home?

B: I had no support back home at all. I was really surprised at what help I could get here to be honest.

I: And um how did you find out that you had ADHD

B: I was diagnosed when I was like six by my doctor because I was just too- having too much energy and becoming aggressive and stuff when I was younger, so I went to see a doctor I'm not sure, but it might be because I was suspended from primary school that that happened, but I'm not entirely sure

I: And despite that you never received much help?

B: No apart from the medication. I do take regular medication but that's about it

I: And how have you found the work at university?

B: Good for the most part. I can't do proper work without the medication. I can't focus but I've been a lot more motivated since I got here considering like I was a standard teenager I didn't do any work but now that's totally changed. I'm far more motivated. It's really good, I'm pretty happy with it.

I: You say you can't work without medication. Are there times when you don't take it?

B: Well I take my medication when I have to do work, so before a lecture and if I have an essay to do and stuff but I don't take it at weekends unless I'm going to the library. But if I don't take it I can't focus.

I: You said you didn't work as much as a teenager. How did you find school generally?

B: I thought it was okay, I still- I did fine I got good grades but I didn't put in as much work as I have done now just wider reading and stuff you know I never did that I would never have dreamt of doing that. Now I do it all the time. It's pretty good.

I: And uh how does that compare to people around you?

B: Here

I: Mm, well here and at home as well

B: Well back home it was the same idea, a lot of people around me didn't work as hard, but there's one guy in my flat who works just as hard, he's in the library all the time like me and that- I think that's helped to motivate me. We go down together and as long as I know he's working that keeps me motivated to keep working, which is good. It's definitely good

I: And you had said that the people at your flat are pretty sociable and tend to go out a lot

B: Yeah, well, not too much but yeah

I: does that cause any conflict with you working hard?

B: No if- It's not too much but it's enough so that I don't get sick of staying in. If I need to work I'll work. It doesn't put me off too much which is in contrast to back home – if someone asked me to do something fun I would do it, but now if I've got work I'll do that first

I: How have you found that balance now?

B: I like it. I'm really happy that I can do it. It's really surprising I never thought I'd be able to do it. Like I mentioned last time

I: So did you not think that the subject would be as interesting to you as it is?

B: Well not just that I didn't think that I would have the motivation to do wider reading as much as I have but yeah the course has definitely interested me.

I: The other thing I wanted to ask about from last time- I don't know a lot about [Homecity] or [Homeland], but I'm guessing that there's a lot more cultural and ethnic diversity at the university than in [Homeland]?

B: Absolutely. I thought you were gonna say that. There's absolutely no diversity back home at all. When I came to London about two years ago, I was just shocked by the diversity, it's just incredible. There's none of that in [Homecity], it's just white people, you know there's a few minorities which is a contrast to here and I really like that. It's yeah definitely pleased with that. Don't think I would have seen that if I'd have gone to Queens back home

I: And have you ever experienced any form of racism

B: Yeah a lot. I used to- from when I was like five onwards until was like sixteen when I moved to a nicer area of [Homecity] yeah I basically got it every day. I grew up in a really bad part but that hasn't happened here, which is in contrast to back home

I: Were you surprised y that?

B: The change?

I: Mm

B: I was surprised by just the diversity when I left yeah I just I couldn't believe it. I'd assumed that the whole UK was the same. It's obviously not at all.

I: And when was it that you went to London?

B: Two years ago

I: So not long ago then?

B: No, which is why I was surprised. I didn't leave [Homecity] and thought the whole UK was the same because I'd never experienced it…

B: I've made a lot of new friends on my course. I'm actually a course rep now, so I get to meet up- I get to meet a lot more people, so I know quite a lot more people from my course. I know virtually everyone in my halls which is always a good thing – it surprises my friends 'cos' they're always like "Ah, you know everybody" That's a good thing.

I: What are your responsibilities as course rep?

B: I have to obviously represent my course for the first years. Any complaints suggestions they have, they have to be forwarded so stuff can be done about it. And I have to inform everyone on my course about the stuff that's going on within the student's union, so it's like a feedback survey to improve the quality of the course through feedback and stuff like that

I: Is that something that you would have done before?

B: Maybe. This time I was kind of determined to do it before I came here I probably would have done it if asked. Back home I wouldn't have been as determined to get such a role.

I: Have you had any similar kind of role at school?

B: No actually no proper role of responsibility

I: And you say it's not necessarily something you would have sought out before. What was it that made you want to do that?

B: I don't know. I mean in the run up to university, everyone suggested you should get involved in everything, so I did and I wanted to do it. I figured it would force me to meet new people, which is always a good thing and the responsibility's a good thing for me to have to learn I figured

I: Why's that?

B: Just it's a life skill. If you- You know if you can't be responsible then you're limiting yourself I've found

I: Is it something you've ever had an issue with before?

B: Responsibility? Well I don't know. I haven't really been in such a position before? I don't know.

I: You mentioned earlier that, as a teenager, you- if somebody suggested something fun, you'd go off and do that

B: Yeah, yeah, actually that has changed. Responsibility. I'm definitely more responsible in that regard. As I said, I put work first.

I: What is it that you're looking forward to doing at home?

B: I'm just looking forward to seeing everyone again. Like, used to to see people every day from back home and I haven't seen them in three months now. Looking forward to that.

I: Where would you say that you belong now?

B: Probably here. I like my position here, as opposed to my position back home, you know, being more responsible, working harder, stuff like that.

I: It sounds like you don't have much responsibility for looking after yourself at home.

B: Well, I didn't. Like I said last time, I think university's changed me a lot more than I thought it would Yeah uh I might have that role if I go back. I don't know, but as of yet I don't have that sort of position. So I would say I belong here…

I: So just to start with, how was Christmas and New Year?

B: Very good. Do you remember we discussed about my mum? Us not getting on well? We got on excellently over Christmas, which was really good. I 'phone her a lot more often now. Everything went well. I had a great time and I was happy in my house for the first time in ages. Definitely good

I: So things were different even when you went back?

B: Yeah. Things kept getting better. Like it was better while I was here and then it got a lot better when I got back. Definitely good

I: What was the difference?

B: We just got on a lot better like. Just we were really really bad at one point. To the point where I would get not unhappy, but I wouldn't be happy to see her, wouldn't be happy to talk to her, get annoyed if I saw her name on my 'phone, it got so bad at one point, but now it's the way it should be, we get on well, get on like a family. I enjoy speaking to her, enjoy spending time with her, and enjoy 'phoning her

I: Has anything changed in the way that you are with your mum when you're at home?

B: Since Christmas? Yeah I look forward to going home now as to what I did before. I started to kinda want to go back, just before I did, but now yeah I look forward to going back in March

I: I guess I meant in terms of the way that you are with her, so the roles that you have. Have those changed or are they still the same?

B: Yeah. I'm more helpful now. A little bit more helpful. So now I'll do the dishes even though I hate it. I don't complain if she asks me to do stuff, like I used to

I: Why is that? What's-

B: I don't know. I just feel a lot happier with her. I think the break was necessary and she she got off my back 'cos she was on my back a lot before, but that's changed she's given me the independence that I need and clearly I appreciated that…

I: I don't know whether you know or not. The reason you were asked to be interviewed for this study is that, one of the things that I'm looking at is homesickness, and this questionnaire is a measure of homesickness, and you were one of the lowest scorers for homesickness when people originally filled out the questionnaires. And just looking at what you've filled out today, although your score is still very low, if anything-

B: It's got higher. Yeah definitely.

I: Does that reflect the experience that you've had then?

B: Yeah. I would never say that I'm homesick, but I definitely, yeah I definitely look forward to going home as compared to a few months ago, which was blatantly I didn't want to go home, glad I was away, didn't want to see anyone

I: And how would you describe your journey arriving in [UniversityCity]?

B: The first time? I was just so excited. It was just really exciting for me. It was the first time I had proper independence, which I enjoy, meeting new people and just starting a completely new life, like completely new life, that was really good for me

I: There's a slight difference between your situation and most people's in that, for you to go home isn't-

B: Easy?

I: Yeah. Do you think that that makes a difference to you?

B: I think it might do. I think it's a good difference though, because I don't see too much of my mum, which would probably which could be a problem, it wouldn't necessarily be, but it might be, so I think it was a good thing. We both enjoy more when I'm back because it's less, it's more scarce.

I: And, last time, I asked you about where you belonged. Would you still say here, or-

B: Yeah, yeah absolutely I still- yeah this is my place, sure not home…

B: There's this one girl I do like, but I don't know

I: Is that at university or-

B: Yeah at university. I never really liked that many people back home. I can't even say why, but it's very clear to me that I like someone here and I can't explain why, can't explain the difference

I: Is this someone you met fairly early on?

B: Yeah. She's on my course. I met her towards the start of the year

I: And do you think that her being around has affected the way that you feel about being in [UniversityCity]?

B: I think so. Like she's one of the people that I look forward to seeing, so without a doubt she definitely makes it better, 'cos I enjoy being with her, but it hasn't changed me, yeah it's definitely impacted, but not that much as it could have

I: And what about the- You were going to be some kind of student rep for the course?

B: Yeah. A course rep for psychology

I: And have you started again with that?

B: Yeah already (laughs) we had to – there was a test, there was like a thing people filled out to see if they knew who we were. Which kind of worried me 'cos not everyone knows who I am a lot of people do and I was just okay we've had to sort that out make sure everyone knew, do that and everyone's asking stuff like where do go to get our exam results, so I have to make sure I know that

I: Do you value being known by everyone?

B: Sorry? Oh yeah. I reckon that's probably one of the reasons I wanted to do it. I do like being I like- I like being social, not so much enjoy attention, but I enjoy always having someone to talk to

I: And when you were in Northern Ireland, was that more difficult to achieve?

B: Yeah I think it was. I felt- I feel more equal here. I just feel like a student here, as opposed to back home, I was one of maybe two or three black people in my year of like a hundred and eighty boys. I just- I didn't feel quite as in as I do here

I: It doesn't feel like that's an issue here?

B: Not at all. It's never even come into my head before now. Which is always a good thing.

Vivian

I: How has life at university compared to your expectations of being here?

V: Um well, it's quite how I expected it to be I actually expected to do more work. That's why- I expected to have fun as much as I'm having fun. Yeah, and I expected lectures to be quite hard.

I: And have they been hard?

V: Not too much. Probably because we're just going over what I've already done so yeah

I: What's been enjoyable about being at university?

V: Oh, um, freshers' week was enjoyable

I: What was good about that?

V: Um, just making friends and bonding. And then the whole halls experience. Everyone's just close together

I: Have you found it easy to make friends here?

V: Yeah, quite easy.

I: What's been unpleasant about university?

V: Unpleasant? Um The fact that I can't eat my home food (laughs)

I: How is the food in halls?

V: It's not what I'm used to.

I: What are you used to?

V: I'm used to eating healthily and, and mostly Italian cuisine

I: What's the Halls food like?

V: It's um I dunno, it's just not what I'm used to

I: Is there anything that's been unpleasant?

V: No, no. It's alright. Everything's good…

I: You told me about getting on with people at halls and making friends. Tell me about the people who are important to you at university?

V: People who are important to me? It's mostly the people from my corridor that I'm really friends with. Like we're always together for dinner, and when we go out, we're all together. We look after each other

I: And how many of you are there?

V: Um, it's around ten.

I: Tell me about those people.

V: In what way about them?

I: About your relationships with those people. Are you different with those people than you are with your friends from London?

V: Well, um, it depends, because there are some Londoners which we have more things in common. So, it's quite similar to my friends back in London, but then there's others like, it's northerners, which are, you know it's quite different. So they're quite different to what I'm used to

I: How are the northerners different?

V: They're just- their language is different, their accents, their norms are different, I guess, like just… (trails off)…

V: Um, I speak to my mum often. Like, when I have nothing to do I just call her. We stay on the ‘phone for a long time. My brother, sometimes we text and my sister she’s just six, so I just get to speak to her on the ‘phone.

I: What about your cousins?

V: Um, Oh, well my closest cousins are in [Homecountry], so, yeah I often Skype them, like at night when I, when I’m in my room and I do speak to them a lot and my friends from back there as well

I: How many- Do you keep in touch with a lot of people from [Homecountry]?

V: Yeah.

I: How many?

V: Well, um, my cousins, there’s two, and I have like- the tightest people, like are about ten. And then, obviously I have more friends, but I don’t keep in too much contact with them…

And how have you coped when you’ve been homesick?

V: Just um speak to my parents, Skype them, just talk to them…

Mm Is there anything that you do if you’re particularly missing um the food that you would eat at home?

V: I sometimes would um go to my friend who’s self-catered and just cook at there have a little dinner

I: And how often do you do that?

V: Not very often

I: Every week? Every other week?

V: Yeah, every other week I’d say…

And how have you coped when you've been homesick?

V: Just um speak to my parents, Skype them, just talk to them…

I tend to leave my work to the last week sort of, but we don't get much to do anyway, it's not really stressful

I: You're on the psychology course?

V: Yeah

I: Have you always found work quite easy?

V: I get stressed Yeah, because I always tend to procrastinate

I: How did you used to get on with work at school?

V: I used to get on well and when it came to revision times before exams, then I would try to cram everything get really stressed

I: Did you tend to do well at school?

V: Yeah averagely

I: Okay and did you put in a lot of work at school?

V: Yeah I always did yeah

I: Mm how much compared to other people?

V: About the same as other people. I think I was average, more than some and less than others

I: And what about at university? Do you feel any different here?

V: I tend not to compare myself to others, because that'll just put me down. I know there's people do so much work compared to me so I just tend to do what I think I should

I: And that's enough to get by?

V: Yeah

I: Is the standard of your work here something that's important to you?

V: Yeah definitely

I: What other things are important to you while you're at university

V: Apart from work, I think it's the social life, having friends and being able to feel comfortable yeah

I: And is that something that you feel now?

V: Yeah, yeah. I do feel more comfortable compared to when I first came

I: And what's made the difference?

V: Probably getting to know people a bit better, 'cos' it's been another like two weeks, no- a month has it been?

I: Uh yeah

V: Yeah, so…

(*as Vivian is completing measures*) I: Don't worry about the stuff at the bottom. Can I just ask because you were just asking about there not being a "no" rather than a never, which question were you looking at?

V: Erm, I think it was "I wake up wishing that I were at home" oh no, no sorry "I can't stop thinking of home"

I: Okay, so there are some times when you can't stop thinking of home?

V: Nah, sometimes I do think of home, but not constantly, Like I cannot stop thinking of home

I: Alright, well, I'll probably ask you a bit more about the questionnaires in a couple of minutes. Did you have a good Christmas and New Year?

V: Yeah, 'cos I was with family.

I: What did you do while you were home?

V: Yeah, it was good yeah. I had family come over from [Homecountry], so I went around London with them.

I: And when you went back, did you go back to the same role as you'd had before you left?

V: Just the same, yeah. As if I didn't go…

I: I don't know whether you know or not, one of the reasons for you being asked to be interviewed was that I'm looking at the way people adjust to university. This questionnaire is a measure of homesickness, and you were one of the highest scorers the first time people filled them out. Do you think that that agrees with your experience?

V: Yeah I felt homesick, because I'm really close to my family, so it was a bit I don't know, so it was a bit strange to move, but I like keep in touch with them, I didn't regret coming here or wanting to go back all the time, I just kept in contact with them, as I keep doing now, but I'm fine

I: I guess you've experienced some changes with your family moving from [Homecountry] to England. So do you feel that you've had to rely on them more than if you'd stayed in the same place your whole life?

V: Yeah that's right yeah

I: Do you think it's difficult for other people?

V: To move to university?

I: Yeah

V: Well, I suppose it depends on their relationship wit- to their family and friends there ‘cos I know lots of people who don’t miss home and who don’t have that much contact with their parents and don’t mind it

I: And you think that they don’t have the same kind of relationship that you do?

V: probably different upbringing as well

I: What is it about your upbringing that-

V: Erm I don’t know I was always taught to keep in touch and not make people worry…

I: You’re used to calling and making people know you’re okay?

V: Yeah

I: Do you think that you’ve changed in the time that you’ve been at university?

V: Yeah. ‘Cos it’s not something that you do every day moving to university, so I think obviously I’ve changed, but it’s a positive change

I: What kind of changes have there been?

V: Well I’ve become more responsible and more independent

I: This other questionnaire looks at the way we see ourselves. Do you think that those changes will be reflected in the way you answered this?

V: Yeah

I: Is there anything particular on there that you might have answered differently

V: This one “I see myself as reserved or quiet” I would probably have said agree strongly or more when I first moved to university because obviously I didn’t know much people to share things with

I: So you still see yourself as reserved, but less so?

V: Yeah

I: Do you think that the sense of independence you talked about is picked up anywhere on that questionnaire?

V: Not really no.

I: Do you think it was visible to your family and friends or-

V: I just went back to being old me

I: Okay, so that sense of independence is still there, but-

V: It only comes out when I’m alone mostly

I: In new situations?

V: Yeah

Fahimah

F: I did three years of medicine back home, and then I had harassment for two years and, because my studies are very important to me, um I chose to leave medicine because my grades were getting affected and I felt like I wasn’t giving it a hundred percent. So I changed fields, and this is something I’m really interested in, I’m doing psychology and cognitive neuroscience, so I did that instead.

I: And where is home?

F: [Homeland], and there- do you want to know what happened?

I: Tell me as much as you’re comfortable with.

F: OK. Um, it was harassment. He was stalking me and he wouldn't stop and the college wouldn't do anything for me there and they refused to co-operate because they felt that it would look bad on the image of the university, so I- Because I didn't get any support from them I refused to continue in an environment that wasn't like a healthy environment for me

I: So part of your reason for coming to [UniversityCity] has been to get away from that situation?

F: It's like a fresh start

I: Does it feel as though you've been forced out?

F: Forced out? I don't know about that, but I feel like, over here, they care more about the students. If I have any problems I can just speak with my tutor and like um when when I was trying to get into this university there was this whole thing about discrimination and disabilities and things like that. They look after you and your needs and everything, and they put the students first. And, I'm a hundred percent sure that, what happened to me back home, if it happened here, they would be taking more um like preventative measures. They would have put an end to it. So that's why I feel safer here actually…

F: Over here you have to start all over again, I don't feel like doing that and you have to do like- and being an international student, it's very difficult to get into medicine. It's much easier if you're local or European Union. So, and you have to do the- what's it called? The GMAT? I think it's called. Or is it the PLAB? It's one of those standardised tests for medicine. No, I don't feel like studying for something like that.

I: You've mentioned that you've come from [Homeland]. Is that where you've lived your whole life?

F: Yeah, I'm born and raised, I'm [from Homeland], my parents are both [from Homeland].

I: How have you found life in [UniversityCity] so far?

F: Well, the people are very friendly. They're nice, but it's a different culture from what I'm used to. Here it's like it's, it's centred around drinking. Like it's a- Like they have a very positive attitude about drinking and that's how people socialise. But back home it's frowned upon, like it's religiously and culturally wrong and so, it's been a bit of an adjustment, because people here feel that I'm antisocial because I don't go out to clubs or pubs or anything

I: That must be very difficult.

F: Yeah, because my idea of- Like back home if we wanted to have fun, we'd go to a cafe or a restaurant, or we'd go to the movies. We don't really- we have clubs, nightclubs, but they're all- nobody ever goes there. Like only- because I come from a respected, like well-known family. So, you can't like culturally, you'd be looked down upon, because it's not an activity that you're supposed to do.

I: and do you have any friends here with whom you could go to the cinema, or restaurants and cafes.

F: A few, but just a little bit, like two or three, that's it.

I: Was this something you expected, or was it a surprise to come here and find this.

F: Oh no, I was well aware of the different cultures, obviously

I: Has there been anything enjoyable about-

F: The weather. It's amazing.

I: Really?

F: I love the weather. Because, back home it's like 45 degrees and it's really humid and it never rains and it's always sunny and my hair is

always awful because of the humidity. It gets really frizzy. But over here, like, I do different things… [*in Homeland*] You can't really do anything. You only have, as I mentioned, you only have two or three activities – movies, where you sit down and eat popcorn; restaurants, where you sit down and eat; and cafes, where you sit down, eat and, you just sit down and eat! That's all you ever do, because, like over here you can walk or, the trees are nice, it's like really green. So it looks lovely.

I: Are you looking forward to the winter too?

F: Everyone's like "You like it now. Just wait till the ice comes and you slip everywhere" (laughs)

I: Well, I guess you'll be able to tell me about it at a later interview.

F: But the people are very nice. They're very friendly. Because, a lot of people were telling me, they said "because you're Arab, you're gonna come here and they'll treat you really badly. They're gonna throw racial slurs at you and stuff" But that hasn't happened. I don't think anyone really cares that I'm Arab or anything. They just looking whatever.

I: Has there been anything that's been unpleasant apart-

F: Yes. There has been one unpleasant episode. Okay, I was walking back- um I went out to a restaurant. We took the bus, but there were road-works and stuff. He couldn't drop us at the usual stop. He dropped us at the next stop, a bit further away. So we had to like walk a really long distance. On our way back, there was a boy and he was in the car with his friends and he rolled down his windows and he said something very, very rude Do you want me to say what it was?

I: Uh, yeah

F: But it has like swearwords

I: that's fine

F: Okay, so he rolled down his windows, like I feel bad swearing in front of you – I can't

I: It's up to you. It won't hurt me at all.

F: Okay. So he was like "Can I ask you a fucking question, darling?" And then I thought it was like an English thing to swear, so I didn't really think anything. I didn't think much of it. I thought he was really he was like- what did I say? A question? No that wasn't true. He said "Can I ask for some fucking directions, darling?" okay. I was like "pardon" and then he said "Can I have some directions?" and then I said "Where do you wanna go?" and he said "Can I lick your pussy?" Then I was like I just turned and walked away 'cos' that's the first time anything like that has ever happened to me and I found it very, very rude and uh yeah

I: Were you frightened?

F: Frightened, no. just pissed off. Like really annoyed. It wasn't physical, but it's still like verbal abuse or something

I: Well yeah

F: It was very mean.

I: And I guess having effectively fled from sexual harassment-

F: (laughs) yeah, so I was just really annoyed, because I've been here for- like I haven't been here a long time…

I: And uh because you started another course, are you older than most of the other students?

F: Oh yeah. Yeah today we were doing an experiment and they said, you know the lab practicals stuff like that, so they said "you have to put your age" so we collected all the information and I was the only one

who was twenty-one Ooooh stab, you know (mimes stabbing motion in own chest. laughs)

I: You don't like being the oldest?

F: Yeah, it's not a nice feeling. Not because I feel old. Actually, I do feel old, because all- they're fresh out of high school. They still have a high school mentality – who's dating who, "Oh my god, that girl. Did you see what she was wearing?" "No, I don't care. Shut up!" (laughs) and they have like, this very blasé attitude. They don't really care about their studies. And I was helping, I was speaking with a few girls and they were like "University's just like a gigantic party to me" So all they ever do- Like, all they ever do is just go out to parties, that's it.

I: does it feel like you're the only one who's taking things seriously?

F: Sometimes. Sometimes that's how it feels like. Because, so far, most of the people I've been speaking with, all they ever talk about is "when's the next party? What are we doing next?"

I: Is that true of the girl who's your friend?

F: Oh no. She doesn't um She doesn't party or anything. So, when we go out we just walk around town or go to the movies. Stuff like that. Or we take walks around the campus.

I: And you said that there's somebody else that you're close to as well?

F: Uhm, yes, yes. See the first girl I told you about she's twenty. This other girl she's nineteen. It's almost the same thing we do. Again, we don't party or anything. We just walk around.

I: and are they from um British backgrounds?

F: Um no. they're not British. Don't get me wrong, the British are nice people. They call me anti-social (laughs). Like when we talk, they're like "You're so funny, you should come out with us next time" They're like "Yeah come. We're gonna have fun. We're going to go to this club

and blah blah blah" And I'm just like "I really don't wanna seem rude or anything, but it's just not something that I'd like to do" Like it's just something I would never ever do

I: Have you ever invited them out to go with you?

F: No, I wouldn't- I never did that.

I: Is it something that you would prefer not to do?

F: Um, to be honest. I feel like it's something that they wouldn't want to do. Because, their idea again their idea of socialising is very different to mine. Like if I told them, "Let's go and do something" I feel like it's not something that they'd be interested in. Not because I don't want to like spend time with them or anything. I just feel like it's something that they wouldn't want to do.

I: apart from the girl who you get on well with, how do you find the other people you live with?

F: Well my neighbours are really nice and three of them are really nice. They're from my floor, and every time we see each other, we speak. We have conversations and stuff. But do we go out? No we don't go out. Like we talk, and at dinner. We have dinner sometimes together and that sort of thing. And downstairs, there's like two, I think, two who are really nice. Again, we just talk a lot, and just hang out- Not really hang out. We don't go anywhere together, but like we- and then if we walk we cross paths, we just stop and talk and then we just walk together. That sort of stuff, but like we don't go out together. So I don't really consider them friends, just friendly acquaintances.

I: you said that these are the nice people. Is there anyone who's unpleasant?

F: Unpleasant? Well other than that incident with the car I told you when we were walking back, I don't think they were students. I think they were just like random people, because, I don't think students would ever do that. But unpleasant people, no. I wouldn't say so…

F: No, but while I was reading it, I was like “Oh, I’m so sad, I’m so pathetic. What am I doing?” Not filling out the questionnaire, but I was really thinking about this “I see myself as extroverted” or like enthusiastic. I know what an extrovert is, but I was like “Over here, I’m completely different than how I was back home” so yeah.

I: tell me more about that about how you’re different

F: I had a lot more friends back home, a lot more. And I don’t really have that many here. And to be honest, I know it should bother me, but it doesn’t. Not so much. I just miss my friends back home. But the fact that I don’t have a bunch of like a gang of friends here doesn’t bother me. It’s fine. But if this was back home, if I was back home and I didn’t have any friends or anything, I would be let me use some of these adjectives let’s see- emotionally unstable, yes.

I: It matters less here whether you have friends here?

F: Yes

I: Why do you think that might be?

F: I’m only here for three years. It’s not that big a deal if I make like bosom buddies or not. Like I’m not unfriendly with other people, but I won’t do the same activities. I think I feel that if I did party and go clubbing and stuff like that I would probably fit in better, and if I was younger I’d probably fit in better. Like when I was fresh out of high school, eighteen or nineteen, it would be really easy to make friends.

I: It sounds like fitting in is not that important to you here.

F: Well not since- I’ve only been here like five weeks. Maybe in a couple of months I’d be like “Oh, I’m so lonely” or something. Does that make sense?

I: You feel it’s too soon to-

F: To judge, probably Again, like I'm not unfriendly, like when I see my neighbours we chat, we have a few laughs and stuff like that, but they keep asking me, they don't force me. Nobody here has forced me to do anything. "Like how come you don't want to go out? Why won't you go out" They feel like it's insulting to them and I don't mean to insult them. But the reason that I don't drink or go clubbing or anything, is that I come from a family of alcoholics, so I just keep it out. I don't drink at all. And I think I have a very addictive personality and even around that environment I'd be tempted. And I might not be able to stop. But I can't tell them that. They'd think I was a weirdo.

I: Do you think that they would think you were odd if you told them that?...

F: I just avoid it. Like there was a girl who was asking me to go to, it's like a charity event, they go to clubs and they dress up and they collect money, it's called Rag Raid. Have you heard of it?

I: No.

F: It's like a whole bunch of students. They dress up in like stupid outfits, they go on a bus, they go and collect money and they get drunk. Basically, I told her like "No, I'm not, I'm just not into that" and she got a bit offended. But I didn't mean to offend her or anything. The way I said it was "Oh no. thank you, but I'm not really into the whole clubbing scene" and she got really offended.

I: And again, are there students you've found who don't drink?

F: Yeah there's like an Arab society, so. Well, I need to make this clear. I don't have a problem with people drinking, I just don't want to go drinking with them, even back home. I don't look down on people who drink or anything. But I feel like over here, they think that I'm snotty or have a holier-than-thou attitude or something.

I: You said that you felt that you answered some questions differently because you're here.

F: Yeah, because back home I was an extrovert, I was enthusiastic, I was never quarrelsome- no, I just can't be bothered to be. Um, dependable, self-disciplined is almost the same. Now anxious, easily upset- Now, see I had depression and anxiety. When I was depressed, I was a mess. There was a very, very dark period.

I: You said that you've felt better since being here?

F: a little bit. It's improved. I'm not saying that I'm completely recovered you know, but it's improved a lot. At least I'm off the medications. Open to new experiences complex better not answer that (laughs) over here I am very quiet. I don't really jump in I keep to myself over here

I: Is that different to how you would be in [Homeland]?

F: In [Homeland], if I see my friend talking to someone who I don't even know, I just go and talk with them it's fine. But over here, I don't really know, I'd just smile, but I wouldn't start a conversation or anything.

I: You wouldn't be confident to go and talk to them?

F: It's not confidence. It's- You see the stalker, he was a friend. Then he got possessive and things like that. Now I'm more cautious about who I speak with.

I: you're a little more wary then, of interacting with others?

F: Yeah…

F: I did and then the police told me to notify the college. And when I did the college were like "You dragged the name of the college all the way to the police"

I: It was as if you'd done something wrong

F: Yes. It's all my fault that I got stalked. You know, he threatened to rape me, that was my fault as well, yeah.

I: So coming here has been different?

F: Yeah, because when I came here, I spoke with my tutor. When you register they ask if you have disabilities and depression is there, but I didn't want to be discriminated against, so I put that I don't have any disabilities. But then I didn't want- I felt like I was being deceitful, so I went to my tutor and I told him and he said "don't worry about it" and then he told me to go and see a counsellor and I did and she (inaudible) what would have happened if that had happened at this university. They take things a lot more seriously over here. They would, like should something happen to one of the students over here, they would do anything in their power, everything in their power to protect them…

I: So, just to start with. How have things been since the last time I saw you?

F: It's alright. Like I uh met some more people from my course and stuff, and we uh we actually decided we're going to move in together that we're going to get a house together, so we're actually going what do you call it? House-hunting? This Friday, which I think is too soon

I: It does seem a little early

F: Yeah, but one of the girls is like very keen, she's like "We have to go, because all the good ones will be gone" So I was like "Okay, fine, whatever"

I: That sounds quite positive.

F: Yeah

I: I think that last time I spoke to you, you said that there were some things that you liked about being in the UK, but you seemed to be on your own quite a lot of the time. Is this a group of people that you're closer to?

F: Yeah. We're six people we always hang out together all the time we sit next to each other in classes we text and we go out and stuff, yeah

I: These are all people on the same course as you?

F: Yeah and I have, like now I have friends in my residence hall. There's a group of people that I sit with, like we have dinner together and we visit and stuff. I got a Christmas card, which is the first time that something like that has ever happened to me 'cos' we don't do Christmas back home, so, yeah…

F: I have a friend who invited me to go to- like first they were going to go to a bar then they were going to go to a club and I said that I don't really want to do that and he kept nagging he's like "please, please come, it's different, something you would like" and then I said I don't feel like it, it's not something I really want to do and we're still friends, like he didn't take offence or anything about it

I: How do you find the workload at university?

F: I feel like I'm not doing anything. I feel like it's nothing compared to what I used to do before

I: And uh is that quite a negative thing?

F: I like having something to do, like I'd prefer to take more modules if possible, but but that's not allowed

I: And are you allowed to do things like extra reading around subjects?

F: Yeah I do that sometimes, but there's only so much extra reading you can do without- like why, why would I do even more than what's required. Like they have suggested reading and I do that. And then I don't know I just wish that I had more work to do

I: And do other people who are on your course feel the same way?

F: No. They feel like it's too much like "Oh it's a lot of work" Like they don't understand and um I help them with their lab reports and I help them with their essays.

I: Do you think that it's a difference between [Homeland] and the UK or between the course and what you used to do before?

F: I used to do medicine before, so the course is- not because, not because of UK and [Homeland], yeah. Like I'm used to going back home and reviewing immediately what I took the same day. They don't do that, they're like "Okay let's go out" I'm like "No, I have to study first"

I: And has that been reflected in the marks that you get for coursework?

F: Um my coursework, like my first coursework I got a B and my first essay I got a B as well, and when I compared my grades to my friends' and like my other classmates' they all got like Ds and Cs. I don't know, I think it's because I'm older and more focussed, because when you're younger it doesn't matter to you "Oh it's my first year, I'm here just to settle in to have fun a little bit, 'cos' it doesn't really count towards your degree, right" So maybe that's why they're not paying as much attention or they don't really care as much or..

F: I wish I never went back to be honest, I wanted to stay here. But I'm staying in a house next year, so hopefully, it'll be easier just to stay in the house, 'cos I already like I already planned my finances for this year, and I didn't put into account that I want to stay here, so that's- it's uh…

I: It's difficult to change plans that have been made?

F: Yeah

I: So how have you found coming back?

F: Such a relief. It was such a relief to come back here. It was like, I was like “Oh thank goodness” Even though it’s really cold, and I think it snowed yesterday. I don’t know I was walking today and I saw frost? I think it’s called. On the grass?

I: Yeah. Is that the first time that you’ve seen frost?

F: Yeah. And I was just- It’s a good thing I’m back here…

F: Yeah. So it was my friend’s birthday last week and we went. We went out to dinner, and then we sat and we talked and we walked around, we went back to her house ‘cos she’s English so she has a house, so we went back to her house and she got ready and then my other friend got ready ‘cos they were going to go clubbing. They went clubbing, I went back home. Like that’s it. They know that I don’t go clubbing, so they didn’t pressure me or anything, they didn’t try to like make me feel bad about not wanting to go so

I: So it sounds like that’s become easier in some ways

F: Yeah, they understand and like she didn’t say she’s like “If you don’t drink it’s not fun. If you just stand around and everyone else is drunk and you’re the only one who’s sober, it won’t be fun for you anyway. You won’t be missing out on anything” So she’s trying to make me feel better. Like “okay thanks”

I: And how about the food as well?

F: Oh my god uh (sighs) something I think me and like the English people, we can both agree that the food is horrible even the English kids they’re like “The food is so terrible, the food is so bad” (laughs)

I: So that’s more about the university food than English food then?

F: No, it’s not just like English food, no. My other friend who’s English, but lives on campus, she says “I don’t get this obsession with potatoes” Every day you have to have potatoes, either boiled, fried or

like curly fries. I did adapt to the blandness I started using more condiments on my food, just like ketchup and gravy and oh my goodness

I: I don't know whether you know this, but one of the reasons why you were asked to be interviewed was because I'm looking at the way that people adjust to life at university and when the first batch of questionnaires were completed, you were one of the highest scorers on the homesickness questionnaire

F: I wasn't homesick though

I: Well, that's one of the things that was quite interesting to me, because one of the things I'm looking at is the way that people's experience of questionnaires can be very different from the expectations of the people who design them. I don't know what today's score will show, but even the last time you were here, your score was still quite high. So I'm interested in hearing how your experience differs from that, because, although you've talked about things that you haven't enjoyed, I wouldn't have described you as homesick from our interviews. I wonder if you can tell me your version of events?

F: Um I'm not homesick, I really don't even want to go back. It's just different. It's just a different culture, a different way of living, and um um I don't really understand, so like what's wrong? Is there something like wrong with my scores?

I: No, no. It's not a problem with the scores. I guess-

F: I forget people's names because- I don't want to sound racist, but I'm used to telling the difference between Arab faces, but it's difficult for me to distinguish non-Arabs.

I: That makes sense.

F: So now I just like "Hey, you" It's not because I'm homesick or having trouble adjusting. Like if you took one English boy from here and put

him back where I'm from, I could tell him yeah, because he's the only English-looking boy, but here everyone is English, so it's a lot harder.

I: Although I am interested in your reasons for giving particular answers on the questionnaires, what I'm more interested in is your experiences while you've been here.

F: Okay. I don't feel like I made a mistake by coming here. I'm very happy that I left (origin) and came someplace new, and it's kind of like a new start a new beginning I'll admit it was difficult at first getting used to the people the way of life um…

I: When we first spoke you talked about telling your friends from home that you weren't really interested in making friends here. So what's changed?

F: If you just don't think about it it happens naturally I guess. If you don't try too hard, like "Okay, today I'm gonna make a friend" or you know, it just sorta happens

I: So before, it wasn't that you didn't want to make friends, but-

F: I was just focussing on saying to myself "It's not important if you have friends, like if you just keep thinking about" God, I sound like a hippy (laughs) "Like don't focus on it, you're here to study and you'll see someone else and you'll have the same interests or whatever and you'll get along. That sort of thing

I: So it has always been important to you to know other people and to have people that you can talk to

F: Yeah Yeah I think it's important to have someone to talk to because I don't think it's good if you just keep everything bottled up inside

Kelly

I: Okay. And what about your decision to come to [UniversityCity] in particular?

K: Erm, It's. first of all because it's a good university and then because I liked the course on the open day and, but it er the course I wanted to do there was er it did it with cognitive neuroscience which a lot of other places didn't do and I really wanted to do that and then. Also 'cos' it's only an hour and a half away from home, so um like I can go back to home a lot, but it's just far enough away to be away from home as well…

I: Er and can you tell me about people at university who are important to you?

K: Who're important to me?

I: Yeah

K: Er. Well I've been asked to share a house with some girls in my building, so probably, I'd say, but probably as important, there's a girl at [UniversityCity], that goes to [UniversityCity] Uni that lives opposite me and has been my friend since very very young. So, I know I can ring her if like I wanted to (laughs)

I: Is that the person you contacted on your first day?

K: Er no, I didn't see her till the next day. The person I contacted on my first day wasn't in my cor- she was at school with me

I: Did you know both of them were coming to [UniversityCity] university?

K: The girl that I've known since I was young is in the year above, so she's in her second year already, but I, I did know that the other girl was coming to university as well

I: Okay um and has it made it easier them being here?

K: Well I haven't really seen them that much but I do know that they are there if I wanted to see them. It made it easier on the first day but (laughs)

I: And you said uh what about the people you'll be sharing a house with? What are your relationships like with them?

K: Erm, I'm really close to two of them. And then there's two other girls that they seem really really nice, but I'm still getting to know them

I: And what about people on your course?

K: Yeah I've met- we've got a group of group of girls that all walk down to the lectures together means that I met one of them randomly on the first night and then we just all kind of met and then walked together

I: Has there been anybody at university who you've struggled to get on with?

K: Um I haven't struggled to get on with anyone, but one of my housemates little things grind on me, but she's a lovely girl so I've not struggled to get on with her, it's just little things

I: Er do you mind telling me what kind of things?

K: Er, like saying please and thank you. I like it when people say please and thank you and she doesn't say it very often so it grinds on me, but it's not like, like I don't like her because of it, it's just…

I: (inaudible)

K: Yes (laughs)

I: And what about people from back home. It sounds like you've maintained quite a lot of contact by going home quite regularly. How often do you see, er or keep in contact with people from [Homecity]?

K: Erm, well my boyfriend's in [Homecity], so I see him once or twice a week and I text him every day and we Skype quite a lot And then, my best friends that have gone to uni um they've got a reading week this week, so when I went back for work I went and saw them all as well but that was the first time I'd seen them since I'd been back…

I: Is there anything you miss about home?

K: Erm, my dog and just being able to like drive and see people rather than having to arrange and say "I'll see you next week, or in two weeks' time" or whatever. Er Er I can't really think. There are things that I miss, but I can't put my finger on them Er, I think if I could come to uni, but still stay at home I wouldn't do it, but I…

I: Why is that?

K: Because I wouldn't have the independence

I: Okay. Do you think that being at university has changed you at all?

K: No

I: Okay. How do you think being independent what is it that that gives you?

K: Erm. Well before, people would always make fun of me that I didn't have any common sense and I couldn't cook for myself and I couldn't clean and then now when they come into my room it's really clean and it's hovered and, because I hoover quite a lot and I cook and things like that and they'll say "Oh you can take care of yourself" which I think maybe people underestimated me a bit before

I: So who would have done that before?

K: Er, everyone

I: All your friends and family?

K: Yeah

I: Okay. What do you understand by the term homesick?

K: Umm really really missing home and feeling sick when you think about it and um wanting to cry and like, just wanting to be at home rather than here

I: And have you felt homesick at all in the time that you've been at university?

K: Erm, the first day, I felt sick, but then I've been kept so busy I haven't thought about it. And then, when I go, it's like when I go home each week for work I get a top-up of home again and then enough to last me till the next week and then get another top-up…

K: Yeah, At home the the teachers like loved you and like um friends always thought that you were more academic and more intelligent and then here it's very intimidating because everyone's intelligent and everyone is like, no-one's stupid, you know everyone got exactly the same levels as you on your course or better and it's very intimidating to think

I: Does that make you think any differently about yourself?

K: Um it makes me feel like I have to work harder because other people might be naturally intelligent and whereas at home, I was always told I was naturally intelligent, I feel like I have to work very hard to get where I am, so that must mean that I'm not as naturally intelligent as everyone else that like for example, when we're doing a lab report, I'll stay up till two in the morning and make it while it's still fresh in my head, making sure I've got like everything as well as I can do it and then touch it up later, whereas other people leave to the day before and then they might panic but, but at the end of it they might get exactly the same grade as me because they obviously whatever they did at school got them here exactly the same as me

I: And do you talk about the marks that you get with other people?

K: Mmm, it's come up occasionally, but no-one's really brought up their A' levels 'cos' everyone just assumes everyone's got the same.

I: Do you remember the questionnaires that you filled out?

K: Er yeah, I think it was a while ago that I did it though (laughs) Oh yeah, I remember this I think

I: Can you tell me how you found filling that out?

K: Erm, I don't think I I'm not very good at um seeing myself as others see me but for example with the common sense I would say I have a lot of common sense but other people wouldn't at all (laughs)

I: Okay. So you think your view of yourself is different to the view that other people have?

K: Yeah?

I: How do you know that?

K: They've told me (laughs)

I: So um like you said about other people seeing you as disorganised and maybe not able to look after yourself

K: Erm they see me as organised, but, but not, just not. They see me as organised in terms of they know that I'll (1 work really really hard and make sure I get everything academically, but then in terms of just everyday life eating (laughing and cleaning they probably wouldn't think I was good as I think I am…

I: So maintaining a strong connection with [Homecity] and people there is quite important for you?

K: Yeah, it is really important to me, yeah.

I: Okay and is there any other way that you've done that? Apart from going back home?

K: Um, Skype and text messaging and calling (laughs)

I: And what about your life in [UniversityCity]? Do you have a lot of friends here?

K: Yeah, I would say I have a life here as well as a life in [Homecity]

I: Do the two conflict at all?

K: Err I'd say at the minute that they work quite well together 'cos' I've got the balance. Hopefully it'll still work well next year, but there'll be more work next year, so it might conflict a bit more, I might have to sacrifice some of my life in [Homecity]…

I: I don't know if you're aware of the reason that you were asked to be part of this study, but this questionnaire, which is about homesickness,- you were one of the highest scorers-

K: Really?

I: Yes. And just looking at the answers you've filled out, I'd guess that your score is still quite high. I was just wondering how that fit with your experience of coming to university?

K: I didn't think I would be the highest, not like. I thought I was alright. No I don't feel really that homesick. I miss home, but I don't crave it every single day. I like being here as well

I: When we spoke before, you talked about having a top-up of home and then coming back. That's possible because you live only a short distance away from [UniversityCity], do you think that that would be possible if you were at university somewhere further away?

K: I don't think I would have wanted to go further away

I: What about after you finish university? What do you see yourself doing?

K: Um I'd like to do a masters, but I'd probably do either either a masters here or at [Homecity] if I'm still living in [Homecity], but I'd want to do a part-time one so I could work at the same time

I: You said "if" you were still living in [Homecity], what would change that? Why would you see yourself moving away from [Homecity]?

K: I don't know. If I fancied living somewhere else.

I: Because it seems like you have some quite strong connections to [Homecity], with your mum, your boyfriend and your job all being there. Are there other things in [Homecity] that keep you going back there?

K: Erm Probably just the familiarity of the place, I don't know

I: Would it have been different at all if your boyfriend had been living in [UniversityCity]?

K: Probably yes

I: Would you say that he's one of the main factors that would keep you going back to [Homecity]?

K: Probably yes

I: How long have the two of you been going out?

K: Probably about two years

I: Quite a long time then. Erm you said that you were surprised that you were one of the more homesick people. It sounds as though you were aware of being at least a little homesick?

K: Yeah, but everyone has a bit of homesickness when they experience some kind of change or moving away from home. I know I don't like change, that's probably because I don't like change with

anything, so moving away from home is a big change (laughs) so maybe that's partly it.

I: You say you don't like change. Where else has that been an issue for you?

K: Oh anything from like a haircut to erm I can't really put my finger on it, but I know I don't like things changing. I don't find it difficult I just don't like it (laughs)

I: How do you think that you'll cope when things change in the second year?

K: Slightly less change so (laughs) It's just moving into a house with people that I know and a house that I've seen and I know where it is…

K: Oh that's only 'cos sometimes when like I know towards the end of the- like just before Christmas I'd done everything and I'd done all my work, done as much as I possibly could and I didn't have any kind of entertainment. I was just sat in my room on Skype thinking "I want to be home now but I've got lectures" So that's when you're sat in your room thinking "I could be home" 'cos sometimes you don't want to go bother other people if they've got work to do (laughs)

She sees university from a functional perspective – I'm here to do something – when she isn't doing that thing, she'd rather be at home

I: And at those times, your thoughts turn to home rather than anywhere else?

K: Yeah

I: Alright. What about the other questionnaire. One of the things that I'm interested in is whether people feel they've changed while at university-

K: No

I: So I wonder whether you think the scores that you've given to this questionnaire would have changed at all? I should point out that I don't know whether they have or not

K: (laughs) They probably have a little, but not in terms of agree or disagree, only like from moderately to a little

I: Which do you think might have changed?

K: Erm self-disciplined and dependable I probably agree now more than I did. Anxious and easily upset, probably agree because I worry all the time Er no I don't think so

I: You say that you don't think that you've changed, but some of the answers that you've given might have. Do you think you've learnt more about yourself?

K: Erm I don't really know maybe it's with the self-discipline probably and the anxious one probably other than that I don't think I've learnt more about myself.

I: And those were the scores you said might have changed?

K: Yeah, but not because I've changed, just because I've realised it more

I: And what has helped you realise those things?

K: Erm because with the self-disciplined, people think that I'm crazy staying up till the times that I do, doing a lab report or doing an essay and because they wouldn't do that, but and also I'd say I'm pretty dependable because like if I say I'm going to be somewhere I'll be there and I've realised a lot of a lot of people aren't always like that erm and with the anxious and easily upset, well people tell me that I worry all the time. And I do worry all the time unnecessarily over things just like immediately I'll get a bit irrational and then I'll look back on it about ten seconds later and I'll be like "Oh I shouldn't have acted like that"

I: It sounds like one way that you've found these things out is through people telling you?

K: Yeah

I: okay, so how come people here have told you those things-

K: Oh no, people at home have told me that I'm anxious as well, but I've noticed it more lately because I've been annoyed with myself for being anxious so they must get really annoyed with me for being anxious all the time and making other people feel on edge

I: What about the self-discipline?

K: I think I said before that I have to work a bit harder than other people because I'm not that naturally clever, as the other people here I have to work a bit harder but it pays off I think

I: I think I probably asked you before, but how have you remarks compared to other people's?

K: They've been higher than some people that I've spoken to but then some people will do it the night before and get an A.

Amy

I: Okay. How long have you wanted to follow a career in Law?

A: Erm Law in general, I have wanted to do for quite a long time. Mainly because of the different skills, the opportunity, the career. I would say the past two or three years. It was something that was as I was at school, erm and I was being introduced to different types of degrees and careers available to me that Law was something that I recognised as being extremely interesting and having a variety of options, so I think it was always something that I was going to do, and that allowed me to do the research into different universities, where it can lead to and how much work was involved and so on

I: Okay. Has anyone else been involved in your decision about where to go?

A: My parents were to a degree, but it was mainly an independent choice because I think it's something that's so fundamental to my my life that it was most important that I was happy with where I was going and what I was studying. They did have erm a slight influence in that they'd put their opinions in, but ultimately it was up to me. Just as long as it was financially viable and I was you know practically viable then I was ultimately up to me if I decided to go and where I decided to go and what I wanted to study

I: Okay. You talked about independence being a factor in your decision. Is that something that you didn't really have at home?

A: I did have an element of independence at home, just generally, but also because I took a gap year in which I started working in London and I erm used to leave the house very early and get home very late, and during that day I was essentially on my own travelling around London working in different environments um, but I think from the point of view of just living on my own, erm and having to organise everything, washing and all the practical things that you kind of, when you're at home the family unit you know or helps shares the responsibilities, now it's completely on me to do everything so that's definitely something that, I wouldn't say I lacked independence at home, but I think it's, I've gained a lot more independence from coming here, which I think is a good thing…

I: Okay. And how has university met your expectations so far?

A: I honestly think it exceeded my expectations, because I was quite influenced by my friends' experiences at university and one of my closest friends hasn't had a good experience and that did affect how I thought of university before coming here, but I think I made the right- I honestly made the right choice um certain aspects in the sense of not

missing home and enjoying the course, enjoying the independence I think it actually exceeded what I thought I would get out of university. Or it has so far anyway Um the only thing that it didn't quite live up to my expectations was um the workload, because I honestly thought that there would be more than there was. Where there is a lot, I honestly thought that it would be a lot more than it is at the moment

I: So it's maybe less demanding-

A: Yes. There's some very specific things that weren't quite what I expected, but on a general scale it's lived up to the expectations of what I thought I would get from university

I: So what were the fears that you had um based on your friend's experience?

A: Um fears that I wouldn't find people that I connected with really easily or that I could get on with really easily, that I wouldn't like the environment because she didn't like the city, she's not at [Universitycity], but she didn't like the um town or city, I'm not sure what it's classed as, that she's based in, and she didn't like the social life or the clubs available and all of the combination of those things I thought were really important anyway to a person's ex- like enjoying university. And so when she was telling, feeding that back to me, I was concerned that [Universitycity] would be the same, but I did have a friend here who assured me that it wasn't. Erm, so I was, I did have some influences from different friends but I think it's such a personal experience and what you put into university and can determine what you get out of it and so perhaps it was from her point of view she didn't put in enough to get out what she wanted, whereas I would hope that I've- or I think based on my thoughts of, you know what university is at, I think I've put in enough to get out enjoyment, so.

I: And, er did you have other choices about where to go to university?

A: I did, but this wasn't my first choice but erm I applied to, erm I applied to five universities. Two I was rejected from and three I got

offers from and the three I got offers this was the best one for my course and uh, the one I liked the most when I came to the open day. I think that that was a big factor as well in deciding

I: Where would your first choice have been?

A: Erm, Cambridge so it was a fifty-f- well no, more like a ninety-ten (laughs) chance of getting in, but I mean looking back on it now, from the experiences of people I know who are at Cambridge or Oxford the very top er universities, it is very very stressful, so I think, because I did want a balance between work and socialising perhaps the right path for me to come to a university that wasn't quite so demanding in terms of academic achievement…

I: Okay. Has there been anything unpleasant about your time at university?

A: No, I don't think so. I don't think that there has been anything in particular. There was I think the first week there were kind of moments where you were trying to find your feet or the homesick I think that's the only thing that was unpleasant was homesickness, but I seem to have- that passed through really quickly for me, especially for me because of the pressures of work and then socialising you don't almost have very much time to think about home

I: So how long did that last?

A: Erm I probably got homesick one or two times in the first week, but the feeling would only last, like for five minutes. And it was normally triggered by something, so for example, if I, if my parents had sent me a letter or sent me an e-mail, or a 'phone call, then that would make me think about home and then I would perhaps miss certain elements of it, but it passed over very quickly which I think was a sign that it wasn't something that was prioritised in my mind. And it hasn't been since then (laughs)

I: And what do you understand by the term homesick?

A: Just missing, or certain elements of what you're used to. Your familiar environment of home, but I think as well it for me I don't think homesickness was just about missing your home, where you physically live, it's about missing the whole environment and your friends and just atmosphere of being at home, but for me it was certain elements of it. Certain elements I didn't miss, but just not even particular people, but just being around my family, being around my friends, that's what I missed, but I think I've almost recreated that in what I got from being around people at home, now I get from being around people here and so I've kind of replaced that with what my friends here and so I don't get homesick anymore.

I: It sounds like that was quite a quick process?

A: It- I found it a very quick process I think, I think there's, I have heard of quite a few people who are finding it quite difficult still. And I think it's to do with how you adjust, and how much you relied on people at home. Whereas that's, like, going back to the gap year, where my reliance on on my family decreased quite significantly, and so it wasn't essential that they were there all the time or doing things for me, and so for me it was quite a quick process, because I was already more on the route to becoming more independent, whereas, drawing distinctions with other people's experiences that I've spoken to, for them, they relied so much on their family, coming here was quite a big shock and so homesickness was a lot more featured in their experience…

A: Definitely, because although I haven't forgotten about my friends at home, when I'm talking to people here, it's the same sort of level of getting to know what they're doing, or what's happening in their day as it would be at home. Or maybe it's not that they've replaced them, it's just that because I'm in a separate environment, it's kind of taken on

another level above the one at home, so when I do keep in contact with people at home, I now keep in contact with people here, so it's almost two spheres of people.

I: Do the two different groups of people make a difference to the way you see yourself?

A: Hmm, that's an interesting question. Erm I yeah, I think that when you're at home, this isn't very easy because the people that I'm with I've known for a very long time and they've grown up in exactly the same- we went to the same school, we all lived in the same area, we know the same places, the same people, whereas here, because they're from completely different backgrounds and almost different cultures, it's quite interesting how even just different towns can have quite varied views, language not language as in a completely different language, but slang words and things are so completely different you do almost look a bit more internally at what you are like compared to them, because you can draw that distinction, because when you're at home, everyone's so similar that it's a lot more difficult to see how you are as a person to other people and so when I come here I've definitely been able to draw that parallel, but in terms of just I don't think that I would look that differently on me, because I think I'm the same but just in a different environment…

A: Erm, I found it quite easy? I think some of them you perhaps have to think about what exactly you would determine what the words were and also because sometimes, for example, where it says "critical, quarrelsome" in some environments where I may be critical, or quarrelsome, but there are others where I wouldn't be, so you kind of have to be really general about what you're- what you're going to say and what environment you're thinking about

I: Which environments would you be critical and quarrelsome in?

A: Erm critical in terms of performance in work, but I wouldn't be critical if I was, or quarrelsome, if I was in my hall with my friends, I wouldn't be critical of people, I wouldn't be quarrelsome, but I think in a more professional work-based environment, I wold be a lot more critical of my work from an independent point of view to try and perform my best, and quarrelsome, if I didn't feel people were respecting my position- my decisions working in groupwork or something like that. So it's something where I do have elements of this, but only in certain circumstances.

I: So how did you resolve that when you were answering these?

A: I think I just tried to take the middle ground and think "What environment am I in more?" um and where is it more important whether I'm critical or quarrelsome? So I thought, when you're around your friends, generally people don't tend to be critical, because the whole point of friendship is not really to be critical, so I did go more towards the more profession- work-based one, and also because work takes up most of my time, I think that that's how I can really decide if I do have those personalities. But of course, I did think about when I'm not like that, generally I just thought about what I'm doing most of the time "Am I critical? Am I quarrelsome?" and then decided on that basis…

A: I haven't actually had any marks back yet. That seems quite unusual but erm, because there's so many of us, we- they're currently marking some work of ours which I should get back next week, but they're not official assessed work, so I may not get marks for it, um my first official mark will be in January so as it's kind of uneasy in a way because you have no indication of what level you're performing at because we haven't actually got any marks back

I: Do you have any indication of how other people are finding the work?

A: How other people are? Uh yeah I talk to a lot of other people about it and some of them have had their work back already the work that I'll be getting back next week and some of them have been given marks and they saying they're pleased or unhappy and backing it up with what they got um so I definitely get a good indication just generally from my own friends, but I don't really know how the whole year group is working

I: So from your friends who have had marks back, do you have any idea of how well you would do in your year? Or how you would do amongst your friends?

A: Um no I don't get a good indication because I feel like I've got nothing substantial to see what I've done. I'm just working on presumption of how I think I've performed in relation to them and because I've seen their marks, but haven't actually seen their essays, so all I can really gauge about how I'm doing is when I'm in tutorials and seminars when there's actually discussion like what my ideas are like compared to theirs erm and I think I would be working at least the same level as everyone else I don't think I feel like I'm behind everyone when we discuss stuff I do understand what they're saying and put my ideas forward I think we're about the same level at the moment

I: And is that something that you would expect from your experiences at school?

A: Erm Hmm, I went to a school that was selective, so there were definitely a lot of high achievers there erm so I remember being in an environment where we- some of us worked at the same level, near the top end, but I think coming here because you need quite high entry requirements, three A's, erm it's a lot more level, although we're going to see discrepancies when- as we go into the course, we're all on the same level. You've got no-one who's disparagingly less able to cope erm at the beginning but that might change when we actually get into the hard stuff though

I: You said that the workload is going up – did that surprise you?

A: No. I expected it because the beginning was quite- getting us introduced to the topic, some of the modules are quite basic, you know the underlying features of of the topics, now we're going into real detail, they want us to fully understand it by setting us these essays and problem questions, so I'm not surprised, but it's just being able to adjust to that that's the difficulty…

I: Okay. And are you still getting daily phone calls from your mum?

A: Only to wake me up in the morning (laughs) but other than that I think I was trying – I was thinking about this because I was distinguishing between like she 'phones me in the morning to wake me up and to check that everything's fine and that 'cos' she like to know what I'm doing that day erm but that's almost like a two, three minute conversation so I wouldn't class it as really talking to her. On the other side, when I have a proper conversation with her, normally once a week, but that's become less regularly, I tend to use it more I don't set aside time to 'phone home really I use it more as when I need something or need some information and then it normally turns into a longer 'phone call, because I've found that planning 'phone calls is not always the best thing to do, because I did start off planning Skype as well with friends, but I found that quite difficult because when I had a last minute change of plan or they did and when I went to dinner at a different time or I needed to get some cash out it was- it was just difficult to keep – it was just easier to be more spontaneous about it, so for example one of my friends from home when she's free she just calls me and then to see if I'm available and then I just call her and then if she's not free she's not free and we both accept that

I: Okay. You said that the conversations with your mum are normally when you need something, is that needing something in a very practical sense or is there kind of an emotional side to that as well?

A: Normally a practical sense, so for example I recently broke my camera, which has been sent off for repair and they decided they needed the receipt so I had to 'phone home, but I think in a c- a couple of times recently an emotional sense because I had a bad experience on a night out and so I really wanted to speak to someone speak to my mum to get her opinion on it because although you've got your friends here who I spoke to it about erm there's that whole recognising your mum as the adult and she knows best almost and so that was definitely- perhaps recently a bit more emotional, normally just for practical reasons…

A: Just little things I mean we've – normal- what I would class as normal um sisterly arguments you know about going out or clothes or something so nothing that was really particular, but I just noticed it was more frequent and I think when I was talking to um a friend of mine about this we sort of came to the conclusion that it was probably because you you- I've adjusted and she's adjusted to being apart and her being the only child now in the house and me being independent and it was almost like for that whole month at home which is quite a long time we were almost living on top of each other and we haven't been used to that so that caused clashes in a way because I've been used to being more free and so had she 'cos' she was the only one in the house who you know gets taken places and everything revolves around her now that I've gone, so…

A: I think so. I mean I just really wanted to come back and there was nothing that I did- If I'm being brutally honest when I went back over Christmas it wasn't as enjoyable as I thought it would be. That can be exams and things made that – it was more very structured around um around revising erm at the same time I- I find coming here is so much better for me to do what I want and have that independence that I miss them but I don't feel homesick that's kind of the bit of the

difference for me, I don't miss home, I just miss speaking to them as much not to the point that I miss the set-up of home…

I: Okay. One of the things I haven't really asked about, but is still something that can make a big difference to people's experience of moving away from home is romantic relationships erm did coming to university mean a change in erm those kind of relationships for you?

A: Erm Slightly, because er I was sort of in a relationship but not, because I didn't actually want to be, so, if anything, coming to university for me was ideal at that point in time because it almost was the reason that I could finish what I wanted to finish at home, um but coming here I think, if anything, I've been a lot more cautious because you have to get to know people a lot more, they're not people you've known for a while like at home, so you learn not to rush into things. So you see a general attitude at university where people don't want any relationships and so it's a lot more sort of carefree, and I think for me that I'm quite cautious of that because although a lot of people have that attitude of just having fun, just enjoying the time here and not getting tied down because it is the few years of your life that you're independent and you've got less worries but at the same time I'm quite cautious because that attitude can lead to you know getting hurt and things like that so I'm a lot more cautious here about any relationship like that, but I think I wasn't tied down with anyone at home, I mean if I had been and that might have made a difference because a lot of people seemed to either finish their relationships when they got to university or find it very difficult to stay in relationships and I was really intrigued by that because a lot of my- a lot of people I know broke up with people and that almost mirrored what happened to me, but in a way it was better for me because I wanted it to go that way

I: For you the breakup was almost an opportunity

A: Mm and university kind of gave me that, which is different to how a lot of other people work, because university's what tears people apart rather than what gives you the opportunity to actually break it

Jane

I: To start with, what were you hoping to gain by coming to university?

J: Erm, well, a degree, a good degree so hopefully I can go on- I actually want to do clinical psychology at the minute, so yeah

I: Anything else?

J: Get to know more people At school, I wasn't really social with people. There wasn't very many people that I really wanted to talk to so

I: Why was that?

J: Erm at [Homecity]

I: Why was it that you didn't want to be social with people there?

J: Err, I don't know. Well, the people that I was with were not really intellectual and preferred to go out partying and drinking

I: And how have you found people at university

J: Erm a lot's pretty much the same, but then I have found a small group who are ok

I: Has that been disappointing?

J: A little bit (laughs) yeah

I: How have you coped with that?

J: I think okay, 'cos' I have found a small group on my course where we can just like talk and they're not really super loud and (laughs) aggressive and stuff, so, yeah…

I: And you said that one good thing has been having a bit of distance between you and your family?

J: Yeah (laughs)

I: Who's in your family?

J: Well, in my house I live with my mum and dad, and my sister's like down the road with her boyfriend and his family

I: She's older than you?

J: Yeah, she's five years older

I: It doesn't sound like you're close to your family?

J: Not really (laughs)

I: and how much contact have you had with them since you've been here?

J: Quite a lot. A lot of texting and Facebook messaging, but I think they realise that I don't really like talking on the 'phone, so they won't ring, so yeah

I: Is that just with them that you don't like talking on the 'phone, or with everybody?

J: With everyone (laughs)

I: Was there anyone you were close to in [Homecity]?

J: My psychology teacher was really nice and I got on with her quite well and I had a couple of close friends, but nothing like no huge group or anything.

I: Last time we spoke, you told me that there were a few things about life at [Universitycity] that were not as you might have wanted. I wondered how have things been since then?

J: Erm well I feel like I'm doing more work now, so and feeling more motivated about that so that's good

I: How has that come about?

J: I don't know really I think last time we met I didn't have any lab reports for psychology, now I've got like every other week so, bit of pressure there, but it it's ok it's not too bad.

I: Is pressure something that you respond well to?

J: Well I put a lot of pressure on myself most of the time so I think I can cope with it?

I: When you say that you put a lot of pressure on yourself- why's that?

J: I don't know I just always want to do better than most people (laughs) so

I: And do you get the sense that you're doing that at the moment?

J: Erm well my essay was really good I got A minus in that so a low first, I was happy with that, my lab report's more two one at the minute so I wanna get that up (laughs) bit of a perfectionist

I: Is that something that's- that was true when you did you're A levels

J: Yeah, I've been like that for as long a s I can remember, so

I: And where would you have placed yourself in your secondary school and you're A-level courses?

J: Um very much near the top really (laughs) so

I: And it sounds like that's something that's quite important to you?

J: Yeah (laughs)

I: And when we last met, did you have a sense of where you were in the year, or has that only become apparent more recently?

J: I think getting back my essay was very much like “Ooh I am doing okay” like so yeah

I: So it sounds like there’s a bit of reassurance about where you are?

J: Yeah

I: And another thing you talked about last time was your family and you said that you hadn’t always got on well with your family

J: Oh yeah (laughs)

I: Tell me some more about that

J: Erm well I don’t know I do get on with them, but we’re not a family to sit around and talk about how we feel and how we think about things, so yeah we just get along, but don’t really talk much

I: There’s no specific arguments or disagreements?

J: No, not really, no…

J: Oh um we’re still in our little tight group, so yeah I, I think last time I was a bit unsure about accommodation next year and things, but we’ve come up with four of us who are willing to share so that’s a bit of a weight off shoulders, so

I: And what are the backgrounds of the people who you’re looking to share with?

J: Quite a lot like me, I think, one’s from the midlands and two from further south

I: Are they all people from your course?

J: Yeah

I: But they're not in self-catering accommodation?

J: One of them's in [Campus] (inaudible) but the other two are on campus, so yeah

I: Does that make it hard to keep in contact with them?

J: Yeah. We've not actually done anything together outside of lectures at the minute, but we're trying to organise to see something at the new theatre tomorrow, hopefully (laughs)

I: What are you going to see?

J: Midsummer Night's Dream I don't really like Shakespeare, but it's an alright story so (laughs)…

I: And last time you said you were going home quite frequently didn't you?

J: Yeah

I: How frequently have you been back since then?

J: About once every two weeks

I: What is it that you get out of going back?

J: Get to see the cats (laughs) erm well mum's started baking because she's kind of like "I want to be one of those mums that can bake" so I get little sweet treats out of it as well (laughs) yeah

I: Mm. And you'd said last time that it's nice to have somebody cook for you. Is there anything else at all that you get out of going back?

J: Erm well I like spending time with my family for the first few hours (laughs) so seeing them is a bit of a positive

I: Okay. And you talked about the cats last time as well

J: Yeah (laughs)

I: Were they your cats?

J: Well we have five, so it's a bit of a crazy house with the cats erm two of them prefer me to other people, so yeah although one of them did scratch me last time (laughs) I say they prefer me (laughs)

I: Would you see them as your cats?

J: Yeah I think so. Not that I buy their food or anything (laughs)

I: And why is it that you belong at university?

J: I think just because there are more people here that – well I was going to say that believe the same things, but it's not really believe the same- have the same outlook, on like education and things like that so

I: And you think that in the population at large there would be fewer people who have the same values?

J: I don't know

I: the reason I ask is because you've described the other students at the university as not really sharing the same values as you

J: I think I don't know the ones I've met and spoken to- I think they value more the partying side and everything but I think the proportion of people valuing the same things as me is larger here than back at home still even if it's not a majority it's still higher than (laughs)

I: Okay, so it's a-

J: A progression

I: a sliding scale rather than an absolute difference. And in the same way, looking at the other questionnaire, do you think there are any differences in how you felt now compared to a few weeks back?

J: I think I feel more settled now and I've become closer to my friends, so I can speak to them more but I don't know

I: Okay. And apart from being able to talk to your friends, what is it that's helped you become more settled?

J: Er I think mainly talking to my friends mainly I don't know, maybe like getting to know my way around campus and things feels like "I need to go to this place. Yep I'll just go straight there" before it was like "Where am I?"

I: So more familiar with your surroundings. And are you still enjoying the university campus?

J: I still think it's really nice, even though it's colder and wetter…

I: I'm not sure how much you know or guessed about the reasons you were invited to be interviewed for the study, but one of the things I'm interested in is how people adjust to university. This questionnaire is a measure of homesickness, and you were one of the highest scorers when the questionnaires were initially filled out.

J: Oh right!

I: From the times when we've spoken, that wouldn't have been my guess as to what you would have said yourself

J: I don't know, I don't think that I'm homesick

I: Part of my interest is critiquing measures like this and the fact that they don't always reflect the experience of people who fill them out, because it's not always clear why people answer in a particular way, so really what I'd like to know is what your experience of being at university and settling in has been like

J: Um, I don't know really. I mean I enjoy it here, because I'm surrounded here by people who are more into work than I'm used to, so the same values I suppose I don't know

I: Was there anything that you found difficult when you arrived at university?

J: I think Freshers' week was a bit hell, 'cos I don't go out to pubs and whatever, so I was a bit like, sat in the flat, silence you know. That wasn't great.

I: And did things improve straightaway or gradually?

J: I don't know, I think gradually once I'd fit into our um little group of psychology friends, and I've found a few more people across the accommodation who are more "let's go and drink tea" than "let's go out and dance" or whatever, so.

I: How long would you say that took?

J: I don't know. Not masses of time really.

I: Um the first time that we spoke um it didn't sound like you knew a lot of people, but then last time we spoke you had a group of friends that were more established and seemed a lot more settled in. Do you have any ideas about what that process was?

J: Um I don't know I suppose it was just getting to know more the people that I had spoken to 'cos at the beginning it was "We know each other, we'll hang out" whereas now we actually like each other and know quite a lot about each other.

Appendix 2 – Rationale for Journal Choice

I chose to submit my journal article to the *personality processes and individual differences* section of *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. I based this decision on the journal's focus on personality theory, which I have attempted to critique in this study. I also considered submitting to a publication specialising in critical psychology, or narrative methodologies, but chose the journal with the highest impact factor.

Guidelines for contributing authors can be accessed from: http://www.apa.org/pubs/authors/instructions.aspx

Based on these guidelines, I chose to write my journal paper in the third person, as this was most appropriate to the traditions of the subject area.

The authors for the Journal Paper would be:

Vikas Nair – University of Nottingham

Mark Gresswell – University of Lincoln

Appendix 3 – Paper Questionnaire

Side 1 of the Paper Questionnaire given out at undergraduate lectures

The Ten-Item Personality Inventory (Gosling,Rentfrow & Swann (2003) is designed as a very quick personality measure.

Here are a number of personality traits that may or may not apply to you.
Please place a cross next to each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement. You should rate the extent to which the pair of traits applies to you, even if one characteristic applies more strongly than the other.

	Disagree strongly	Disagree moderately	Disagree a little	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree a little	Agree moderately	Agree strongly
I see myself as: Extraverted, enthusiastic							
I see myself as: Critical, quarrelsome							
I see myself as: Dependable, self-disciplined							
I see myself as: Anxious, easily upset							
I see myself as: Open to new experiences, complex							
I see myself as: Reserved, quiet							
I see myself as: Sympathetic, warm							
I see myself as: Disorganized, careless							
I see myself as: Calm, emotionally stable							
I see myself as: Conventional, uncreative							

2. The following questionnaire is the Dundee Relocation Inventory (p139. Fisher, 1989) and is designed to assess adjustment to novel situations. Please read each of the following statements and place a cross next to the answer that best describes how you have felt recently. Do not think for too long about any one statement and please respond to every item.

	never	sometimes	always
I forget people's names.			
When I do a job, I do it well.			
I feel able to cope here.			
I miss home.			
I feel optimistic about life here.			
I miss having someone close to talk to.			
I feel happy here.			
I miss my family.			
I feel fulfilled here.			
I feel unloved here.			
I feel unsettled here.			
When I have problems, I contact my family.			
I feel excited about work here.			
I feel needed here.			
I feel uneasy here.			
I would like to go home more often than I do.			
I regret having moved here.			
There are people here in whom I can confide.			
I feel secure here.			
I cannot stop thinking of home.			
I feel very satisfied here.			
I have many friends here.			
I feel threatened here.			
I wake up wishing that I were home.			
I made a mistake moving here.			
I feel lonely here.			

3. We would like to repeat these measures in five and ten weeks' time, in return for entry into a prize draw (for a £20 voucher). Please leave your details below if you would be happy to be contacted for this.

We would also like to interview participants about their experience of beginning university, in exchange for cash. If you would be happy to be contacted for this, please leave your details below.

I would be happy to be contacted to be interviewed for this study ☐
I would be happy to be contacted to repeat these questionnaires ☐
I do not wish to be contacted again about this study ☐

Contact e-mail: _____

Telephone number: _____

4. How old are you? _____

5. How do you describe your gender? _____

References

Fisher, S. (1989). Homesickness, cognition & health. London. Erlbaum

Gosling, S.D., Rentfrow, P.J. & Swann, W.B. (2003). A very brief measure of the Big-Five personality domains. Journal of Research in Personality, 37, 504-528.

Appendix 4 – Confirmation of Ethical Approval for Study

Institute of Work, Health & Organisations
http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/iwho

The University of Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

Vik Nair

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12/10/2011

Dear Vik

I-WHO Ethics Committee Review

Thank you for submitting your proposal on "New place, new person? Understanding adjustment to university life through narrative". This proposal has now been reviewed by I-WHO's Ethics Committee to the extent that it is described in your submission.

I am happy to tell you that the Committee has found no problems with your proposal. If there are any significant changes or developments in the methods, treatment of data or debriefing of participants, then you are obliged to seek further ethical approval for these changes.

We would remind all researchers of their ethical responsibilities to research participants. The Codes of Practice setting out these responsibilities have been published by the British Psychological Society. If you have any concerns whatsoever during the conduct of your research then you should consult those Codes of Practice and contact the Ethics Committee.

You should also take note of issues relating to safety. Some information can be found in the Safety Office pages of the University web site. Particularly relevant may be:

The *Safety Handbook*, which deal with working away from the University.
http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/safety/
Safety circulars: Fieldwork P5/99A on
http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/safety/publications/circulars/fieldwk.html
Overseas travel/work P4/97A on http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/safety/publications/circulars/overseas.html
Risk assessment on http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/safety/publications/circulars/risk-assessment.html

Responsibility for compliance with the University Data Protection Policy and Guidance lies with all researchers.

Ethics Committee approval does not alter, replace or remove those responsibilities, nor does it certify that they have been met.

We would remind all researchers of their responsibilities:

- to provide feedback to participants and participant organisations whenever appropriate, and
- to publish research for which ethical approval is given in appropriate academic and professional journals.

Yours sincerely

Professor Nadina Lincoln
Chair IWHO Ethics Committee

Appendix 5 – Participant Information Letter

Participant Information Sheet
(Final version 1.1: 15/09/2011)

Title of Study: New place, new person? Understanding adjustment to university life through narrative

Name of Researcher: [redacted]

Thank you for agreeing to be contacted regarding this study. Before you decide whether or not to participate, I would like you to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. If you are interested in participating, I will go through the information sheet with you and answer any questions you have. Talk to others about the study if you wish. Ask if there is anything that is not clear.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study aims to explore the experiences of students adjusting to life at university.

Why have I been invited?

You are being invited to take part because you are a first-year student.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you do decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. This would not affect your legal rights.

What will happen to me if I take part?

- If you contact me to find out more about this study, I will contact you at a convenient time (if you prefer to be contacted through e-mail, please let me know) to explain the study further, answer any questions you have and then, if you're still interested, arrange a meeting at the university.
- At this meeting, I will confirm that you understand your rights and ask you to sign a consent form. The consent form will allow me to use data you provide for the study. I will then ask you some questions about your experience of university. I will then arrange for two further meetings at intervals of approximately five weeks. The whole process will take approximately an hour to ninety minutes.
- I will contact you shortly before the agreed meeting times to confirm that you are still willing to participate. If you are the interview process will be repeated.
- If you would like to receive feedback about the study, I will send out a letter summarising the findings.

Expenses and payments

Everyone who completes an interview will be given £10 for their participation in the study. Everyone who completes the online measures will be entered into a prize draw for a £20 voucher. Travel expenses will be offered for any visits incurred as a result of participation.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

I will be asking about your experience adjusting to life at university. If talking about this is distressing, you may become upset.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The information we get from this study will help to understand how people cope when they are placed in novel situations. This could help make the adjustment to university a more pleasurable experience for future students.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should ask to speak to the Principal Investigator ([redacted]) who will do their best to answer your questions (contact details below). If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, please contact Professor Nadina Lincoln. Contact details for [redacted] and [redacted] are at the bottom of this letter.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential

We will follow ethical and legal practice and all information about you will be handled in confidence.

If you join the study, some parts of the data collected for the study will be looked at by authorised people to check that the study is being carried out correctly. All will have a duty of confidentiality to you as a research participant and we will do our best to meet this duty.

All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept **strictly confidential**, stored in a secure and locked office, and on a password protected database. Any information about you will have your name and address removed (anonymised) and a unique code will be used so that you cannot be recognised from it. The only circumstances under which information given in confidence would be disclosed would be if there were fears for your safety or the safety of others.

Your personal data (e-mail address, telephone number) will be kept for four weeks after the end of the study so that we are able to contact you about the findings of the study if you wish. Please advise the researchers if you would like a summary of the findings. All other data (research data) will be kept securely for 7 years. After this time your data will be disposed of securely. During this time all precautions will be taken by all those

involved to maintain your confidentiality, only members of the research team will have access to your personal data.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and without your legal rights being affected. Information that has already been collected may still be used in the project analysis.

What will happen to the results of the research study

The results will form my thesis for the Trent Doctorate in Clinical Psychology programme. I will also try to write a journal article based on the findings and publicise them in a peer-reviewed journal. No participants will be identified in any publication or report.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is being organised by the University of Nottingham and is being funded through the Trent Doctorate in Clinical Psychology programme.

Who has reviewed the study?

The study has been reviewed by the University of Nottingham and the University of Lincoln's research ethics panels.

Further information and contact details

Principal Investigator: [redacted]
Tel: [redacted]
e-mail: [redacted]

Chief Investigator : [redacted]
Tel : [redacted]
e-mail : [redacted]

Appendix 6

The University of Nottingham

UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN

CONSENT FORM
(Final version 1.0: 12/09/2011)

Title of Study: New place, new person? Understanding adjustment to university life through narrative

Name of Researcher: [redacted]

Name of Participant

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet version number .....dated..... for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and without my medical care or legal rights being affected. I understand that should I withdraw then the information collected so far cannot be erased and that this information may still be used in the project analysis. ☐

3. I understand that relevant sections of my data collected in the study may be looked at by authorised individuals from the University of Nottingham, the University of Lincoln, the research group and regulatory authorities where it is relevant to my taking part in this study. I give permission for these individuals to have access to these records and to collect, store, analyse and publish information obtained from my participation in this study. I understand that my personal details will be kept confidential (except in the events of serious concerns about safety). ☐

4. I understand that the interview will be recorded and that anonymous direct quotes from the interview may be used in the study reports. ☐

5. I agree to the principal researcher contacting me to request an interview in the event that I decide to leave university before the study ends. ☐

6. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
Name of Person taking consent	Date	Signature

2 copies: 1 for participant, 1 for the project notes

For more information, please contact [redacted]
e-mail: [redacted]

Appendix 7 – Participant Feedback Sheet

The University of Nottingham

UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN

Participant Feedback Sheet

Title of Study: New place, new person? Understanding adjustment to university life through narrative

Dear ,

Thank you for participating in my study. The study looked at the use of measures designed to assess personality. One question asked was whether scores people obtained on these measures would change as they adjusted to university. This was tested by using a measure of homesickness and evaluating the relationship between changes in both across time.

The results showed that some participants' scores did change significantly over time, but this was not correlated significantly with the measure of homesickness.

Interviews with participants were analysed for narratives concerned with identity. The purpose of this was to try to understand how participants would make sense of any changes in scores on the psychometric tests, and to see whether the method would be a useful method for understanding experiences.

The analysis did offer a useful framework from which to understand subjective experiences. Participants' views of themselves often differed from the scores obtained on the test of homesickness. His highlighted the extent to which such tests offer an incomplete description of lived experience.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact me using the details below.

Many thanks

[redacted]

lwvn1@nottingham.ac.uk

[redacted]

Appendix 8 – Interview Schedule

Study Interview protocol

- What is it you hope to gain from university? Was it your choice alone to come?
- Where have you come to university from? (omit at second interview)
- How have you found life at university so far compared to your expectations? What has been enjoyable? Has anything been unpleasant? Have you ever been away from home for long before?
- Which people at university are most important to you?
- Who are the most important people to you outside university? How much contact have you had with them since you've been here?
- Do you miss anything about (home)?
- What do you understand by the term "homesick"? Have you been homesick since you've been at university? (If so) How have you coped?
- How many times have you been ill since you've been at university? Is this unusual for you?

Questions to add for second interview: Tell me how you've adjusted to the change of being at university