The 'rough diamonds', or 'valuable gems' in this chapter are first generation students at an English Higher Education Institution. The study, on which this chapter draws, tracked students as they negotiated their entry to a satellite university campus called, 'The Centre'. The study analysed their experience of moving into and taking up a university place, looking at how they engaged, in their first semester with undergraduate study. The focus of the research was their experiences of becoming a student at The Centre and their transition to/and at The Centre. The students' experience of this transition demonstrates a complex interplay between the processes of becoming, being and achieving as a higher education student, forming their own cultural and social identity. Whilst the transitions and adjustments vary between individuals, all students experience some level of challenge in their first semester. Financial, motivational, social and emotional issues can all affect academic success (Pritchard & Wilson 2003).

There has been little *qualitative* research on transition to and integration into university among young undergraduates (Biggs, 2012) and still less on the lived experiences of new first-generation students under 25 (Thomas, 2002). Whilst the first year experience has been addressed by a number of scholars writing in English (e.g. Kuh et al 2008; Upcraft et al, 2005, (Yorke & Longden, 2008; Adnett, 2006; Davies & Elias, 2003), Krause & Coates, 2008; Pargetter, 2000), (Zepke & Leach, 2007), much of this research focuses on the students' problems or challenges, such as being 'at-risk' (Tinto, 1993) or having a low income (Rhodes et al, 2004). It is arguable that this focus constructs a deficit model and compounds stereotypical assumptions about certain groups of students.

Transition

Transition is broadly defined as: 'Any event or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions and roles' (Goodman et al, 2006:33). Boundaries and critical incidents are significant in transitions, and can lead to a re-evaluation of one's position (Flanagan, 1954). Van Gennep (1909/1960: 38) states that 'students can be suspended between one place (home) and another (university), which can result in an "in-between-ness" a betwixt space which in turn creates this lack of belonging or sense of placelessness'. Transitions can be disruptive, or they can be quiet and insidious; some students will perceive them negatively while others view them as a challenging opportunity. The experience involves a complex and dynamic process of negotiation, discovery, and re-discovery, or even a 'renegotiation' of the self (Mercer, 2007: 21).

Understanding the way that transitions can influence students' perceptions of themselves can provide us with 'a benchmark of the developing process and a starting point for establishing knowledge deficits' (Foskett & Hemsley Brown, 2002: 158). In this study, participants experienced changes to their relationships with family and friends, their day-to-day activities and routines, and their assumptions about higher education. Lowe and Cook (2003: 63) found that 'about one-third of the cohort appear to expect teaching styles associated with school'. This could be viewed as self-evident. However, the advancement of cognitive ability and thinking is frequently manifested as a spiral sequence of learning followed by developmental unlearning or modification of prior learning to make way for the next stage of development.

Development into the next phase of transition (and belonging) can only occur in relation to previous learning. Higher education transitions involve a range of social practices where

students learn how to 'do' transitions from within particular settings, the way that transitions are framed and understood in particular institutional settings is important. Social and cultural contexts will produce different conceptions of what counts as a 'normal', 'expected', and 'good' transition. The aim of the study was to explore the transition of students who were first generation undergraduate university entrants and how they perceived their first semester experiences, as they negotiate study (settle into higher education) at a campus site.

Context of the Study

This research draws on data collected at one English higher education institution (The Centre) over one semester in 2011. The Centre opened in 2006 as a satellite campus of an existing Higher Education institution, with a view to encouraging participation in an area identified by the HE funding council as a 'cold spot' with low numbers of degree places and low HE participation (HEFCE, 2006). Students may study a full degree BA/BSc (3 years full time) or a Foundation Degree (2 years full time) which is equivalent to two-thirds of a full degree. By 2011 there were 25 programmes and 650 students, with over 60 academic and support staff. The case study captured the experiences of a single group of 50 first generation students. In May 2010 the government proposed trebling tuition fees; thus this cohort, as well as studying in a non-traditional HE context at The Centre, were also part of the rush to begin their studies before the fees went up. The student's transition took place in a context of radical change in HE and in wider society.

Transition to 'The Centre'

By entering higher education, the students attempted to become that fraction of their class with similar socioeconomic backgrounds, who began to experience the transformative potential of university study; to see and think in new ways, and attend and engage with The

Centre. Taking on what could be considered as a predominately 'middle-class' perspective or persona they strove to succeed and felt comfortable at the Centre.

During a student's process of self-development, and negotiating entry to new communities and discourses, uncertainty, both academic and emotional, can emerge, especially when individuals find themselves within a process that can be simultaneously positive and negative, a 'betwixt space'(Palmer et al. 2009). Van Gennep (1909/1960: 38) states that 'students can be suspended between one place (*home*) and another (*university*), which can result in an "in-between-ness" a betwixt space which in turn creates this lack of belonging or sense of placelessness'.

This uncertainty is significant in transition and can lead to a process of re-evaluation of one position (Flanagan, 1954) as a lack of preparedness can also make university transition a struggle (Leathwood & O'Connell, 2003; Reay, Ball & David, 2002) due to a complex set of factors that are characterised in terms of class, disability, ethnicity and gender (Reay, 2002; Reay et al., 2002), a lack of confidence in personal abilities, and due to a range of institutional difficulties (Leathwood & O'Connell, 2003, Piggott & Houghton, 2007).

This chapter views transition as the movement, the passage of change from one role to another, as in the early weeks of university the students experienced disjuncture between their expectations held prior to commencing university and the experience they encountered. These phases are characterised as experiencing conflict with their new role and anxieties with their ability to manage the academic demands and expectations imposed.

Methodology

Procedure and Participants

To develop a clear and holistic picture of the first year students' experiences of higher education, 50 individual 1-hour open-ended interviews were undertaken within the first 8 weeks of their course. The students were aged 18–20 and from NS-SEC groups 4-7[i] .To ensure confidentially the names of the participants were changed but they retained their gender. A sample of the participant's responses has been used to illustrate the methodology and findings. External factors such as the environment, family, or school and how these affected their decision to study at The Centre were also explored. Table 1, below, presents the key demographic data of the participants.

Table 1: Key Demographic Data of the Participants

Foundation Degree		Degree BSc/BA	
23		22	
Male		**Female**	
15		35	
White British	**White Other**	**Afro/Caribbean**	**Not stated**
42	1	3	4

These were grouped as academic achievement, social achievement, personal development and setting into HE (Figure 1).

The Phenomenological approach and formation of variations (categories)

After completing the interview process phenomenographic analysis of the transcripts took place to develop a set of meaning statements taken from the participant's responses. The phenomenographic method of considering all the interviews as one account was used, to develop a clear and holistic picture of the students' experiences of higher education:

Responses were taken from the individual transcripts and pooled, shifting attention from the individual to the meanings expressed by the group as a whole (Marton, 1988).

'Meaning statements' (Marton, 1988) were grouped to form the first tentative categories of description according to the features and characteristics they had in common, occurring to variations regarding transition (see Figure 1). The overarching category (outcome space) consists of four variations (categories), namely the students' perception of achievement (high or low) regarding their Achieving Aims in HE, transition to HE, involving oneself in HE.

Considering the students' accounts as a collective product allowed the identification of aspects relevant to a phenomenon ('transition' through achievement) and to construct an outcome space that illustrates the structure of the qualitative variation in how transition was experienced. Higher education transitions involve social practices, through which transitions take place. What counts as 'normal', expected, and 'good' transitions may vary, and relate to the social and cultural contexts of their production.

Students tended to describe emotional responses through description of feelings regarding their experiences. Positive emotional responses include feeling satisfied or proud, while negative emotional responses include feeling bored or frustrated. The terms 'easy' and 'difficult' were used when discussing feelings and emotions regarding events that had occurred or were occurring. Easy and difficult were related to both positive feelings and negative. 'Easy' generally indicated a feeling of satisfaction as something however small had been accomplished especially if it was felt that no other progress had been made.

When analysing the data, the respondent's emotional statements were considered, as 1 of 4 variations of achievement. Penny stated '*I did everything in school. So it was quite easy in the first few weeks.* Her words were used to describe that felt she had not been challenged enough which led to negative feelings. Similarly, the word 'difficult' was frequently used by respondents to describe experiences that generated negative feelings. Simon discussed that '*you find a way to trying to solve the issue. But there seems no way out …*' It also related to being challenged in a stimulating way, this was perceived positively in terms of making the transition. Suzie said that still '*has a lot of things to do. But I can do some on my own. So I am quite happy*'. As well as describing positive and negative emotional responses, some students were neutral in their description/discussion about their feelings and emotions when discussing incidents.

Students described feelings related to experiences as different rather than classifying them as good or bad. These responses could be described as cognitive responses; and illustrated emotions expressed as positive or negative feelings, such as happy or sad. When neutral responses were made, such as 'OK', these were categorised as neutral feelings at a mid-point between stronger positive and negative emotional responses.

Findings and Discussion

This study considered how first generation students at the campus perceived their first semester experiences. The following section of the chapter examines the findings that resulted from the phenomenological approach and the students learning journey through the variations of achievement categories outlined in Figure 1. The 4 categories: Academic, Social, Personal and Settling into HE are discussed below.

Figure 1. Variations of achievement within the student's accounts (in categories)

Insert Figure 1 here

Variation One: Academic Achievement

The effect of prior academic background was not limited to knowledge level of a chosen subject. It also extended to the teaching and learning practices that the students were accustomed to. Some students came with a sound knowledge of the subject area of their degree, while others had not studied the subject before and this resulted in different levels of academic challenge. Compared to the latter, the former group was more likely to feel that the first few weeks study at The Centre had been easy to cope with:

'I find it quite easy to keep up because all my lectures so far I have covered lots previously in my 'A' levels'. (Helen)

Besides previous knowledge about the chosen subject, the difference in teaching and learning style between university and previous academic experience also led to challenges:

'In comparison to the levels of education in school and college, it's being a big leap especially responsibility, organisation. It has made me more self-reliant than I probably was before when I was at college'. (Vince)

A student's prior academic background had an effect on how they engaged became with university life and how they dealt with difficulties. 'Achievements' could be differentiated in student's perception of themselves by level as well as type, Elizabeth and Carrie both discussed their sense of academic achievement:

'If I do a draft of an essay or report and get good feedback from a lecturer, I'll class that as the high grade I could get when I submit it. But if I cannot get anyone to give me feedback or if I just get a 'that's OK' I think that well that will get a low grade. Because, I don't know, because it's the unknown, isn't it?' (Elizabeth)

'I am sort of aiming for …I am saying I am on average because I am aiming for B and C grades this semester. So I am just saying if I hit that mark, I have done a medium, I've a moderate success. Whereas if I go above it, I have achieved something more by the end of this semester, I mean it will an accident'. (Carrie)

A student's sense of achievement was affected by how involved they were in university life and adapting to develop their sense of being an undergraduate. Development into the next phase of transition can only occur in relation to previous learning. Students seek to define new learning (and new methods of learning) by measuring them against prior learning experiences. Previous ways of working and of understanding were an inevitable point of reference. In the collective account, academic teaching was seen as a critical element of success, it influenced transition and the student's involvement in university life. This was presented from two perspectives, the impact of effective teaching and the impact of ineffective teaching. Mia stated that:

'Some lecturers are really, really good. But you get some that just read out the slides, it makes you think why am I here I can get these off Moodle (VLE) *and read them myself. I hate it as I have often had to sort out a lot before coming to the lecture and then, it is just a waste of time and money.'*

Effective teaching offered academic guidance to refer to and help assimilate knowledge more efficiently. Teaching was seen as effective when it was detailed, informative and stimulating and consequently, aided engagement and eased transition. In contrast, academic teaching was ineffective when there was a lack of interaction or a dictated lecture. It provided no further information to what had been achieved through self-study, this decreased the instrumental value of lectures. It generated negative feelings, which affected involvement as it did not encourage engagement, as is illustrated by Carla:

> '*Yes, they were obviously not very sure of themselves, which means the information is not getting passed along properly. I mean he gives us all the information, but he is not expanding on it much. He is just literally reading it off the screen. It is difficult when you have not got enough information. The more information you have, the easier it is*'.

Variation Two: Social Achievement

All the variations of involvement at The Centre were based on the students' sense of achievement and how they were adapting to university. These were emotional responses, which occurred as a consequence of, and/or as a potential start of, students' interpersonal and intrapersonal interactions on their way to fulfilling their personal goals at university. Social achievement was important to their sense of belonging and feeling supported in their transition. Many students reported having a wide variety of social networks, including new and old friends, siblings and parents. During difficult times, they received emotional support from friends and family at home. Interpersonal relationships were identified as an influential factor assisting the transition process, which affects all the three levels of involvement; attending, being engaged and dealing with self-identified difficulties.

Students who found something or someone worthwhile to connect with at The Centre were more likely to engage in their educational objectives. Making friends and developing

relationships with people was an important part of the student experience. Some had arrived at The Centre not knowing anyone, while others accompanied friends from school or college. Many stressed the importance of making friends as part of succeeding and staying on their course, as illustrated by Carole who felt that '*The more I failed to achieve small things such as making friends, the worse I felt about actually staying on at university*.' For Bev, it was an opportunity to meet people whom she could relate to:

> '*I am a lot more social in university then I ever was at home because I am finding more people I have more interest, in common with. And you don't have to be around people that you don't want to be around and that's basically it ; I can tell I'll be friends with forever with some of my group, I think I fit in here better than I ever did at school*'.

The influence of interpersonal relationship can take positive and negative forms. This is illustrated by Nadia:

> '*Well, I sat I talked to them,* (a student advisor) *you know umm. And they don't get angry if I said something wrong or do anything that. They were just smiling. As long as they understand what I try to say, that was the important thing. Then I feel more comfortable and then I started to talk much more*'.

The influence of interpersonal relationships and the importance of socialising with fellow students at The Centre were both key to feeling a '*real student*', as highlighted by Anita:

> '*I think that it is important to find something social, get a social life to cope with the study*'.

Although the students did not explicitly define positive or negative relationships, they clearly identified the benefits of being in relationships which were friendly and supportive. Feeling confident and making friends helped promote a successful transition, friendly and supportive relationships made them feel comfortable in their new role and environment. Entry to higher education meant that the respondents deviated from their expected trajectory and were now hopeful of upward social mobility. Verity, felt that although it had not been an easy transition, studying at The Centre had changed her life:

> *'I just think it is the best thing I could have done …I have had …. Coming to university was the best decision. I think I would have been a lot more of a mess, in all sorts of trouble if I was here.'*

Variation Three: Personal Development

This considered how the students experienced and used a variety of support mechanisms. These support mechanisms were broadly from two levels: the structural and the interpersonal. Structural level support was generated from the institutional structure and is embodied by course structure, institutional facilities, resources, academic support services, and activities, e.g. induction, freshers'[ii] week.

Will described his anxiety around accessing support staff:

> *'I haven't actually used* (study skills support). *I am too scared to actually use them. I have issues with people thinking that I am not up to it. It is a bit silly, and of course, they're going to be nothing but fine. I know this, but I do worry about that, very much'.*

An initial concern about how the degree was structured, influence on students' time distribution in their daily life. The intensive course structure of the Foundation degree prohibited students from socialising with students on other degrees. This had a negative impact on their social lives as they only had friends on their degree programme. It also reinforced the sense of doing a degree as '*like going to work*' with the reward being the qualification at the end. This was a view that Tom and others held:

> *'We are not really into going out much because it is a really hard degree and you have to get your head down and do a lot of work. It is being at work; it is harder than being at work. You have to work every day.'*

When dealing with the self-identified difficulties, the availability of information resources enabled them to employ efficient strategies and cope with difficulties. The Centre has a number of staff employed to support students:

> *'Student support is very, very helpful. I can say student support services are very, very important. Without them and their help, I do not think you can manage. It is good, sometimes you can just turn up and see someone, sometimes you have to book a time. I wouldn't have survived until the October half term here without them'.* (Andrew)

Some student's personal development benefited from the academic support services and activities provided by The Centre. The induction activities were a valuable opportunity to know more about their course programme, fellow students and The Centre.

> *'Yeah, induction week….. well, I made some great friends on other courses; I see them here and in town. They have been a real help in making me feel that I belong here, they are just like me'.* (Viv)

Asking for help, information, and/or support was one of the most commonly used coping strategies and functions most effectively when dealing with self-identified difficulties.

> '*In the first week, there was always some help around, always some student ambassadors, staff or some tutors. So there was always someone to ask. If I have any questions, I could ask at once instead of thinking about who should I ask. It was really good as I felt that I could get used to this'.* (Mike)

Being aware of the range of interpersonal support available made students feel safe and positive about their university experiences as it enriched their repertoire of coping strategies.

> *'But now seems you can go and search for help because they are always available to help you. Now I am coping and I am ok'.* (Maxine).

Inadequate or ineffective interpersonal support resulted in coping strategies failing. Ineffective interpersonal support (from academic and support staff) made some students feel reluctant to seek external assistance or consider such support as a strategy, decreasing their repertoire of coping strategies. Knowing they had the support and encouragement was reassuring, students described having a network of support outside university consisting of parents, teachers, friends and siblings. This provided a solid base on which to move to university and develop further supportive relationships.

Building new supportive relationships is significant; as Walsh, Larsen & Parry (2009: 419) found, when faced with personal issues, university students 'principally relied on the peers on their course and to a lesser degree on family and friends'. Dealing with 'self-identified difficulties' refers to the process by which students dealt with obstacles that may have prevented them from fulfilling their complete transition and participation. This occurred when the transition was not a smooth journey and they realised that the events/problems (housing, family, friends, etc.) during the first semester had affected them. The ability to manage self-identified difficulties normally generated the highest level of emotional response (feeling frustrated or feeling proud). Students identified a variety of specific problems or difficulties due to the challenging nature of higher education and a diversity of personal circumstances. Some expected to be taught differently from the methods they actually experienced. Coping strategies depended on their interpretation of the problematic situation, the complexity of the problems at hand, the availability of coping resources. Strategies fell into two broad categories which both aided the student's personal development, being self-reliant and seeking external assistance.

Being self-reliant included strategies such as adjusting oneself to new or changing situations and self-reflection. The majority of the time the students were not able to solve problems themselves and on these occasions seeking external assistance, e.g. asking and collaborating with fellow students, became a necessity. Zena discussed how she had become more self-reliant: *'But now I have learned that I need to change myself and adjust myself. And be more open and try not to be shy'*. After using strategies to deal with a self-identified problem, students evaluated not only whether the problem had been solved to their satisfaction, but also the effectiveness of the approach they adopted.

When problems were solved successfully, students were more likely to feel pleased, satisfied and proud. However, if problems were not solved successfully, students were either left with a sense of underachievement or returned to the problem-solving activity. Carla felt that, '*I was a bit lost with… I couldn't find my personal tutor and I couldn't find out my timetable and I didn't know like So I was a bit scared for the first few weeks. Because I didn't know what to do and where to go and…*' The difficulties identified were individualised and a variety of coping strategies were adopted. Successfully coping with difficult situations was also subject to a series of influential factors; academic assistance, resources available, external pressures, habits and traits.

Being confident encouraged good communication with fellow students, which further enriched the student's repertoire of coping strategies. However, those who were naturally shy and quiet had difficulty with the social aspects of university life. Lucy said that:.

> '*I need to try and make friends. I don't know, getting involved a lot more. Because I am a shy person. It's really hard for me to talk to people; I want people to come to me. I am not comfortable talking to people first*'.

Many of the students felt that most of their initial reactions to an event or situation were based on their personal habits/traits. When a lecturer asked Donna why she did not carry out self-reflection by writing down possible solutions when experiencing a difficult situation in a seminar, Donna replied that:

'I don't know. Because it does not come into my head to do that, to write down what I am finding hard. If you think about it in your head instead of writing it down. Maybe writing it down is maybe one of the ways forward'.

Variation Four: Settling into Higher Education

So far this chapter has discussed one aspect of the study's aim regarding the transition of students who were first generation undergraduate university entrants and how they perceived their first semester experiences,   This variation will discuss how they negotiated study (settle into higher education) at a campus site   Students discussed their experiences, both positive and negative, in attempting to understand their roles and place at university. The point of transition was a time when they were most vulnerable, coping with personal, social and academic changes in their lives. As students engaged more frequently with The Centre (attending and being engaged) they gained greater knowledge and skills that helped their sense of belonging and creation of a student identity. Figure 2 below presents a model, which illustrates the students' experiences of adapting to studying in HE at The Centre. This process of being and becoming a university student, was related to a self-motivated, self-regulated and self-evaluated reflexive process, a process which was both facilitated and inhibited by institutional and external factors.

Figure 2. Being involved in university life

Insert figure Two here

Attending and being engaged required students to become more involved with university life, in a similar manner to an employee being involved with their colleagues and organisation. Students needed to physically and/or psychologically take part in HE-related activities (social interactions) which prepared and enabled them to fulfil their higher education aims/goals. The students who used coping strategies (discussed below) became more involved and

developed a sense of belonging in HE socially and academically. This was achieved through being active agents, by being engaged and identifying difficulties and finding solutions to emerging (self-identified) difficulties or concerns.

Neutral feelings normally arose when discussing situations viewed as a natural part of their experience, such as feeling confused when noticing differences in teaching between school/college and The Centre; it was assumed that university would be different. Some of the neutral responses corresponded with affective investment, which refers to the intensity of an individual's emotional input and can range from low (associated with a neutral response to situations) such as *'I don't know what it should be like'*, to high (associated with stronger positive or negative emotional responses).

Accordingly, the emotional response can be viewed as moving along two affective continuums, from neutral to positive and from neutral to negative. A lower level affective investment (involvement in HE) was just attending The Centre; solving self-identified difficulties had a higher level of affective investment (involvement) and generated stronger positive (David) or negative feelings (Liz).

> *'At the start, it was really, really, awkward. It was really weird to come to university. Because it's a different environment. It's not … I don't know…It's just really different. You are on your own. You have to make friends because you don't know anybody'.* (Kara)

> *'I was really afraid about the lectures, and I think I am ok now with these. I still have a lot of things to do. But I can do on my own. And I had my first assessment two weeks*

ago (just before half term)*, it was such a high I was so happy and my mom was so proud of me because I got good feedback. I was not just happy, I felt hey now I am a proper student'.* (David)

'I found the first few weeks very stressful. Because all they have given us to work from is a booklet (workbook). *Nothing is really explained we just have to get on with it. We work through the booklet, sometimes I'm with someone else but often I have to try and work it out on my own. The only way you can really know how to learn the information in the booklet is to keep going through the booklet. You have to keep going through the booklet. Because there is not much help that they actually give, when I have asked I am just told it is in the booklet'.* (Liz).

The students moved through a process of acclimatisation, building on particular capacities e.g. time management, to enable them to learn and succeed. These capacities helped to build robust undergraduate identities (a sense of belonging), which allowed them to exercise agency in their learning. However, as they did so, they carried with them varying degrees of risk and had to negotiate the disjuncture between expectation and reality in their experiences.

Conclusion

This study explored the active meaning-making processes that lead first generation students to gain a sense of belonging and becoming as a university student. This presents a novel alternative to the prevalent deficit model in the relevant research, which tends to treat all students as passive bearers of diverse levels of readiness for undergraduate study. This chapter offers an alternative to assumptions about why first generation students fail to progress in their studies or leave after their first semester.

Through being engaged with The Centre, the students in this study assimilated new knowledge, communicated with staff, made friends with fellow students and started to 'become a university student'. However, being engaged did not automatically take place subsequent to attending, it occurred only when they began to engage with university life. Those students who felt disengaged found it hard to concentrate and learn or felt attending lectures, seminars, etc. was pointless. This generated unpleasant and negative feelings regarding studying, though it did not necessarily lead to them being absent from all activities (missing some lectures, seminars, social activities).

The increasing level of academic and social challenge meant that attending and being engaged did not guarantee a problem-free involvement. To make a successful transition a student, they also needed to deal with any self-identified difficulties. The ability to respond to and overcome self-identified difficulties was an important and integrated part of their involvement and ultimately the transition process.

Given the similarity of institutional experience of the students in this study, it is both their personal aims and their level of involvement, which explain the variations in their transition experiences and their being and becoming a university student. The preoccupation in the literature with students who fail in some way has led to a lack of research into those who succeed. Transition is not a linear process and universities need to consider that first generation students' experiences can incorporate points of tension and confusion, points for reflection, and points that may be disjointed.

The testimonies provided by respondents related their reflections upon their experiences of being first generation students although it is not claimed that these reflections are representative of all such students since it is a relatively small-scale study focused on one institution. Undergraduate experience policy, design and practice needs to prioritise students' success and satisfaction to aid successful transition. This raises the question of what success and achievement mean. For the students in this study the meaning of achievement did not necessarily equate to completion or high academic grades. A more general sense of achievement, academic, social, and personal that contribute to a sense of belonging and to resilience could be used as a valuable reference point for undergraduate experience policy, design and practice based on students' experiences.

A student's ability to deal with self-identified difficulties was a crucial part of achieving a successful transition, and this highlights the significance of building self-reflection into the first semester and first year curriculum design. The current focus on influencing students' satisfaction, by improving institutional provision or emphasising students' own personalities as predictive factors in their retention (and so successful transition) is misguided as it relies upon institutional rather than student led drivers. It thereby overlooks the effect of the students' actual behaviour and control ability on their HE experience, which is evident when reviewing theories of planned behaviour.

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[i] The National Statistics Socioeconomic Classification Analytic Classes. UK Government policy initiatives are based upon data produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), which categorises individuals based on employment: occupation type and employment status. Groups 4-7 constitute students whose parents' employment backgrounds fall in to 'small employers and own account workers (4)', 'lower supervisory and technical occupations (5)', 'semi-routine occupations (6)' and 'routine occupations (7)'. These typically correlate with a working-class background.

[ii] A week at the beginning of a university year, usually with a programme of events intended to welcome new first-year students