**EQUITY AND HIGHER EDUCATION ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY SERIES**

**RETENTION AND BELONGING**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Citation</th>
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<td>Asmar, C.; Page, S.; &amp; Radloff, A. (2015). Exploring anomalies in Indigenous student engagement: findings from a national Australian survey of undergraduates, <em>Higher Education Research &amp; Development</em>, 34(1): 15-29.</td>
<td><strong>Context:</strong> Set in context of increasing indigenous participation in higher education but addresses concerns about retention, attrition and completion. Indigenous students = still under-represented: “These issues, therefore, demand systematic and serious investigation, including a willingness to re-examine some longheld assumptions regarding the presumed link between engagement and success” (p.16). Literature suggests Indigenous students = more likely to have financial pressure, conflict between family and studies, discrimination and mis-expectations. Indigenous students = more likely to withdraw. <strong>Aim:</strong> To explore links between engagement (location of study/ mode of study/ relationships) and persistence. Engagement in studies = considered a proxy for likelihood to persist (therefore, with indigenous attrition rates high, hypothesis = indigenous engagement is lower). <strong>Methodology:</strong> Draws on 2009 AUSSE survey (30 participating universities) = responses from 25,795 (77% online responses; 23% paper); 2480 Indigenous students invited; 526 responded + written comments from 355 students. Matched sample approach to compare with a similarly-composed non-Indigenous students (see Table 1, p.18). <strong>Findings:</strong> Demographic profiles: Indigenous students = more likely to be female, low SES, older, FinF and come from provincial/ remote Australia (but survey shows 2/3 = metro address, presumably because of university attendance). Only 68% = studying on campus (compared to 83% of non-Indigenous). However, AUSSE also shows that 75% of Indigenous respondents = not low SES and 44% are not FinF. Student engagement = broadly the same for both Indigenous and non-indigenous students. Indigenous students = more likely to blend learning with workplace experience (p.20) and are more likely to engage in paid work outside of studies – Indigenous students are more likely to have worked before starting university and therefore choose courses based on profession/ current employment. Relationships with staff: Indigenous students = more likely to discuss grades, ideas and work with teachers (not clear from data if these teachers are also Indigenous). No...</td>
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significant differences between Indigenous/ non-indigenous student-student relationships. Reasons for attrition = more likely with these students:

- students whose circumstances qualify them for financial assistance
- students who are studying externally or at a distance
- students from a provincial or remote area
- students with a disability
- older students and
- male students (p.23)

Authors also argue that attrition = more likely among students enrolled in Indigenous-specific programs. Financial reasons are most common, followed by academic reasons. Indigenous students with a disability = more likely to consider dropping out. Indigenous students who have seriously considered departing their institution report lower levels of institutional support (p.25)

Core argument: Indigenous students engage in similar way to non-indigenous but attrition rates are still higher. More nuanced understanding of who indigenous students are = needed. Authors make distinction (but problematise the crudeness of the binary) between younger school leavers and older students. They argue that older indigenous students “tend to share demographic characteristics associated with greater likelihood of withdrawal – characteristics such as poor health, financial insecurity, family obligations and not being full-time on campus” (p.26). However, written comments on AUSSE suggest same group = enthusiastic and highly engaged – meaning that ‘life gets in the way’ for this group. Younger students, in contrast, “may well be simply getting on with the job of learning – and succeeding” (p.26). This distinction = also connected to whether students are in indigenous-specific programs or mixed ‘mainstream’ classes. Little is known about impact of indigenous centres for supporting indigenous students (appears positive from data but more research needed). “We propose that much more needs to be known about who the Indigenous students are, with whom they interact, why they may leave and how they may be utilising Indigenous centres” (p.28)


Context: Situates the paper and research in context of differences between Indigenous and non-indigenous Australians – noting higher levels of health concerns, lower life expectancy, more cases of domestic violence, lower rates of participation in school/ school success. Scopes literature relating to participation of Indigenous students in higher education – points to a small and sketchy body of literature at the time. Point to no research that explored differences between first and second generation indigenous students in higher
Aim: To reveal the success factors for retention of first year special entry Aboriginal students at an Australian metropolitan university.

Theoretical frame:
Methodology: Grounded theory/longitudinal study of 12 Indigenous non-traditional entry Year 1 students from 2006 intake (most not FinF = 9/12; equal f and m; self-selected; 9 = 18-19 years old/ 3 = 23-24). In-depth interviews conducted with participants x 3 over one year regarding “impacts of schooling, teaching and learning, life experience, career aspirations, relationships and racial identity on academic success” (p.135)

Findings: No clear academic distinction between Indigenous and non-indigenous students (except for special entry). Data categorised into: belonging, future plans, identity, personal recognition, and finances. Support and belonging = most significant, also career goals and personal achievement showing strongly. Identity = important theme.

Prior life experience = relatively little bearing on academic performance = similar learning and life issues to non-Indigenous students. Most did not have a strong connection to their Indigeneity, but wanted to find out more; also factors related to this (for example, friendships and support from Indigenous centre, also and AIME mentoring at school because of Indigeneity) = significant on students’ experiences and ‘success’.

Authors found that private schools = “pipeline (in)to university” (8/12 had attended private schools on indigenous scholarships). Students adopted both indigenous and non-indigenous world perspectives and displayed robust resilience in the face of challenging family and educational experiences.

Authors discuss the significance of the Indigenous centre, noting “further tertiary sector investment in these units is fundamental to enhancing student progress and retention. However such resources are often not forthcoming. Most non-indigenous faculty do not visit indigenous academic spaces, maintaining academic and cultural divides” (p.149).

Barriers: “Students identified three main barriers to academic success: difficulty writing essays and managing time, poor communication about resources available to them including support programs, and, not knowing what was needed to succeed in their first year” (p.151).

Authors offer a model for pathways of indigenous student special entry access to a metropolitan university (see p.155). Model shows how most students from study had clear career goal prior to entering higher education, they had close relationships with the Indigenous centre and friends, participated in lots of ECAs.
and were enthusiastic.

**Core argument:** Spaces of recognition and belonging = key: “a key positive factor to retention to be provision of an indigenous study and support unit on campus, which provided a safe counter space for indigenous students only. Here students became part of the indigenous family” (p.156).


**Context:** UK higher education context: pre/ post-1992 universities (first year computing modules) in context of increased student diversity. ESRC/ TLRP-funded project

**Aim:** To examine conditions of (dis)engagement in/from learning; to consider “what might be done to increase and widen academic engagement in the computing classroom” (abstract)

**Theoretical frame:** Uses different conceptual lenses: habitus (Bourdieu), approaches to learning (Prosser & Trigwell) and theories of knowing (Belenky et al.). Frame engagement around ‘deep’ learning and disengagement around ‘surface’ learning

Deliberately resists binary labels of traditional/ non-traditional students.

**Methodology:** Employed “range of mostly qualitative methods”: interviews and focus group meetings, observations of lessons with video-stimulated review, document collection. Wider project focused on subject areas that attract diverse learners (computing, nursing, social work, business, biology). This paper focuses on computing only in 2 different universities.

**Findings:** There are many periods/ moments in which students are not academically engaged because their diverse needs are not met.

Describes differences in learning spaces and class size, and similarities in content and level.

Main reasons for disengagement:
- Variation in students’ prior knowledge ranged well above and below that assumed by tutors.
- Students’ opportunities to think through problems collaboratively or independently were curtailed.
- Students’ different interests, backgrounds and motivations were not known, ignored and/ or not valued.
- The dominant culture of the classroom is unwelcoming or alienating to some (female) students (p.199).

**Staying quiet:** Students generally did not offer answers in either large or small class environments (unwilling to speak out) – curriculum and pedagogies = not addressing diversity in student body (and different kinds of qualifications students use to gain access). Students don’t want to expose lack of knowledge/ be humiliated. Tutor B started from assumption that students knew nothing or little, but then failed to extend more knowledgeable/confident students. Students described feeling more confident in peer groups.
### Getting stuck:
Students spoke of enjoying ‘playing around’ (aka a problem-solving approach) in own time but seemed very dependent on tutors when stuck in class – short analysis of tutor talk shows that in one situation, tutor took over and showed student what to do.

### No connection:
Engagement = related to students’ reasons for choosing computing course (to get a job but with little connection to life outside the course/uni).

### Gender (for computing): offer example of ‘Ana’ who is marginalised by male peers and male tutor

### Core argument:
There are several reasons for disengagement. There is no one-size fits all approach to addressing/responding to diversity. They “call on academic leaders and developers to play a part in creating a climate of trust and openness in which staff and managers can express and debate their ideas and beliefs respectfully, make pedagogical and curricula improvements unhampered by unwieldy bureaucracy, and challenge policies, practices and discourses that inhibit the creation of inclusive learning environments” (p.200).

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**AUS**

| Context: | NCSEHE-funded research that examines the retention and success of students with disabilities (SwD) in higher education |
| Aim: | “to explore the relationship between supports and university adjustment for students with disability, and their retention and success” (p.ix). |
| Theoretical frame: | |
| Methodology: | Mixed-methods: examined data (2007-2013) from Higher Education Student Data Collection for: number of students with disability, type and disclosed need for support. Disability categories = hearing, learning, mobility, visual, medical and other [note: nothing explicit about mental illness]. Student data was also analysed regarding retention and success. Universities (Table A and B) categorized according to performance (high, medium, inconsistent, low). Three institutions from each category invited to participate in interviews on policy and practice to provision of adjustments for SwD. Desktop audit also conducted: “to provide an overview of policy, practice and institutional culture in relation to disability across the institutions” (p.ix) in 2015. |
| Findings: | • Percentage of commencing and enrolled SwD increased over 2007-2013 but no real changes in types of disabilities (3.67 – 5.04%) |
| | • Smaller universities (10k-30k students) have larger proportion of SwD |
| | • Students with medical disability = most common; hearing issues = least reported |
SwD = slightly lower success rate
Students with learning disability = retained at higher rate than other disabilities
SwD + support = retained at consistently lower rate
Differences between institutions in terms of policy and practice = at level of maturity of inclusive policy/practices
Some institutions do not have current Disability Action Plan (DAP)
Few institutions involve students in development of policy
Disability support services = generally located in central support and generally shared throughout the institution = “indicating the move from a medical model to an inclusion model” (p.xi)
Factors that improve retention and performance
Recruitment via external linkages (schools/disability networks)
Collaborative approaches (internal + external stakeholders)

Recommendations
Nationally consistent approach to categorizing students needed
Changes to policy and practice needed nationally, including: whole-of-institution inclusive framework built of concept of universal design, flexibility and current policy, offer financial resources to create suitable responses, integrate disability support with mainstream support, employ specialist disability support staff, regular monitoring of student outcomes, develop formalized learning action plans. Also “Consider students with disability from the perspective of the student lifecycle model, including recruitment and outreach strategies, and career transition strategies” (p.xiii).

Core argument: “students with disability are retained at consistently lower rates and have lower success rates than the total student population, suggesting that higher education institutions need to do more to redress this situation” (p.45)

More research needed on better methods of disclosure, how to better support students with mental health issues and autism and more training for staff needed (academic and non-academic)


Context: Focuses on connections between retention and sense of belonging in context of diversified/massified HE system. Insights gathered from retention initiatives in Year 1 Business Management course/students in UK university (from HEFCE/PHF/Thomas ‘What Works’ project). Interventions = “encouraged active learning linked to personal development plans and employability through use of an online learning resource to capture student reflection on their learning development” (p.2) in ‘Developing Academic
Students were required to create a webpage and record reflections of their experiences and learning linked to ten milestones related to academic and social achievements, for example, settling in, socialising, team skills development, assignments and presentations for which students received feedback from lecturers and tutors” (p.4). Also = blog, additional group activities, formal group assignments and ‘Studentfolio’

**Aim:**

**Theoretical frame:** Wenger’s social theory of learning/ community of practice. Draw’s on Liz Thomas’ definition of belonging in HE

**Methodology:** appreciative inquiry (Bushe, 2007) = participants discuss problems and suggest positive change (discovery, dream, design). Conducted focus groups

**Findings:** Belonging to course: online communication and group work facilitated sense of belonging; in particular Studentfolio considered to facilitate feelings of encouragement and inclusion (p.6). Students formed own support-groups (Facebook). Authors consider impact of team learning on CoP theory.

Engagement with learning together: “meaning was grounded in the actions and the significance of the actions in relation to the encompassing activity” (p.8)

**Core argument:** Communities of Practice are important for fostering belonging and improving retention. Study identifies three areas of importance: 1) curricula and teaching exchange + peer-to-peer exchange = enhance student CoP (and need to be responsive to diversifying student body); 2) push message that students belong via retention initiatives, curricula, teaching (both extra and curricular); 3) institution should acknowledge range of CoPs (e.g. Facebook) and integrate into institutional practices

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**Context:** Attrition/ retention of nursing and midwifery students. Attrition is particular concern because of impact on future workforce of nurses and midwives. Cites Tinto’s work on retention (1975) and other work (e.g. Liz Thomas’ work). Examines literature relating to experiences of students who are educationally disadvantaged

**Aim:** “to explore student motivations, experiences and support requirements during their first year to determine the efficacy of institutional retention initiatives” (abstract). Other aims = “Collect reflections from students about their motivations for joining the nursing and midwifery professions. Determine what type of support available in first year had helped make nursing and midwifery students feel part of their programme
Agree on improvements that could be made to support students during the challenges faced in their first year of university study” (p.872-3)

**Theoretical frame:**

**Methodology:** Qualitative study in large Scottish university with ‘a reputation for widening participation’ (73% = FinF; 25% of students in School of Health and Life Sciences = experience multiple deprivations). Focus groups conducted to ‘capture authentic student voice’ (p.873). Pilot focus groups (n=57) with Year 1 students in May 2011. Data collected in two phases: Sep 2011 (n=44; 6 focus groups) and Jan 2012 (n=22; 3 focus groups). 42 participants = female. Analysis = grounded theory (thematic analysis)

**Findings:**

Phase 1 focus group data: motivation for enrolling = largely due to reputation of course (reputation passed via friends, family, college staff + observations from open days) + keen to get clinical experience/ placement. Biggest challenges with transition = due to logistical issues – accessing VLE/ timetables. Most negative expectations = not met.

Role models = important for inspiring and motivating students – particularly lecturing staff and other students

Phase 2 focus group data: Expectations = largely met (positive) or unmet (negative)

Juggling multiple/ competing demands = challenging

Academic staff = still significant for providing support.

Independent learning = challenging

**Core argument:** Three major sources of support: role models (inspiration for profession), staff and peers.

Students’ expectations = significant for retention


**Aim:** To add to the evidence base – to help build a stronger platform for research and evaluation

**Context:** Critical Interventions Framework (CIF) was designed “to assist in advancing equity in higher education” (p.5). Report includes – summary of patterns of access and participation post-Bradley Review, literature review, typology of equity initiatives (CIF), summary of plausibility and evidence base for initiatives in CIF, broad summary of national patterns of equity initiatives (analysis of HEPPP reports) against CIF.

**Access/Participation since Bradley Review:** uncapping system (demand-driven system) “may have been the single most significant factor in the rising numbers of students from equity target groups who have been admitted to higher education” (p.5), but rise in numbers = “across the board”, meaning that proportional representation has not changed. **HEPPP** funding has allowed “institutions, often working in partnerships, to influence particular key points in the student ‘life cycle’ to encourage more students from equity target
groups to, among other things, consider higher education to be a possibility for them, to build academic attainment and to be more fully conversant with the opportunities available to them” (p.6).

**Key issues**

Student share (1.0 = parity):
- low SES = 0.62
- indigenous = 0.55
- remote = 0.39

High levels of differentiation between institutions (% of low SES)

Assumptions that changing student profile = drop in quality/retention. Retention/success is generally the same (96% of domestic students overall) but this is not the case for indigenous (85% retention; 81% success) or remote students (91% retention; 94% success).

**CIF typology** (Fig. 1.1): 1) plausibility or theoretical case for types of equity initiatives based on timing and method; 2) available evidence on effectiveness; 3) analysis of HEPPP reports

Typology “derived from widespread assumptions about potential barriers or inhibitors for low SES students rather than a comprehensive empirical conception of the terrain, for none exists” (p.9). Literature suggests there are 5 broad periods in a student’s life cycle: a) prior to seeking access, b) at point of selection/admissions, c) during transition, d) during studies, e) post-completion period of finding work.

Outreach is core of initiatives for aspiration-raising but there is little effectiveness. Literature points to school performance/low SES so there is “an argument for implementing early initiatives aimed at improving students’ academic achievement and year 12 retention rates; scholarships/financial support are important but cost might not be the only barrier to participation. Literature strongly supports idea that transition/orientation initiatives are valuable. Evidence suggests that low SES students less likely to make use of support services – better/more extensive support services doesn’t necessarily increase retention.

**Prior to starting HE** – discussion of Year 12 (p.15); aspirations (p.16); VET-HE (p.17)

**Selection/Amissions** – scholarships and grants (p.18-9)

**During transition** – transition/transition programs (p.19-20)

**During studies** – effective factors in successful completion for low SES, childcare, mature age, not seeking/using support services p.21-2
Methodology: Draws on gov’t (DIIRSRTE) data to examine % representation. Two methods use for determining low SES: postcode and census collection districts (CD measure) = see page 31-2. Examined 38 HEPPP reports for 2011.

Findings: Data analysis shows that population parity was still far off in 2011 (disability = 5.07 std pop v. 10.6% Aus pop; indigenous = 1.38 std pop v. 2.5% Aus pop; NESB = 3.1 std pop v. 3.8% Aus pop; WINTA = 17.47 std pop v. 50.6% Aus pop; low SES = 16.76 std pop v. 25% Aus pop; Regional = 18.63 std pop v. 29% Aus pop; Remote = 0.91 std pop v. 2.3% Aus pop). Students from equity groups “are almost as likely to successfully complete their studies as any other student” (p.25) – but see lower retention and success rates of indigenous students and attrition rates of remote students, especially in Year 1. Chapter 4: CIF and evidence/plausibility table.

Chapter 5: Distribution of HEPPP against CIF. 49.3% of HEPPP = pre-entry initiatives; 34.5% on post-entry and 16.2% on costs associated with management of equity programs. Highest % of HEPPP funding spent on provision of student services, scholarships and later-year outreach to schools. Lowest % was spent on marketing, school curriculum enhancement and adult ed outreach.


Keywords: access; higher education; measuring quality; quality; retention; widening participation

Context: Looks at three proxies of educational quality (prior academic achievement), attrition/retention and progression rates to explore idea that accelerating access (as a result of uncapping places/the demand driven system) leads to ‘lower quality’. Examines student data from 2006-2011 (particularly 2010-2011)

*regarding NESB* NESB status = greater predictor [in Foster 2012] than international student status in terms of performing/controlling for selection into courses, “suggesting that literacy rather than cultural conditioning was a greater issue” (p.613)

Aim: To assess the extent to which concerns regarding higher education quality can be informed by the data.

Methodology: Statistical analysis of student data sets

Findings:

Prior educational attainment: with DDS, more students “with lower (not low) academic grades gain access” (p.614), but so are more students with higher ATARs (because more competitive courses grew as well: “When access to supply was accelerated, universities first addressed the demand from ‘elite’ students... and only then moved to make offers of places to others”, p.615). Also, more mature-age students entering HE

Attrition: with growing number of entrants, would expect attrition to increase but in many universities attrition rates dropped. Pre-DDS, Aus HE “was already tolerating institutional attrition variances of over 450%” (from 4.69% - 27.70% in 2008; 5.16% – 27.26% in 2011) – all p.616.
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<th><strong>Core argument:</strong></th>
<th>It would “not be correct to say that accelerated access universally leads to lower quality inputs” (p.615). There is “no evidence that admission processes are over-selecting students unprepared for university studies” (p.620). Focus on metrics reduces access/quality to attention to “minor statistical shifts in scores”; meaning that the question of what is quality “is overlooked” (p.621). “This ultimately devalues higher education institutions themselves, as it suggests their role is primarily one of certifying the prior educational achievement of the students rather than value-adding in meaningful ways” (p.621).</th>
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<td><strong>Rubin, M. &amp; Wright, C. (2015). Age differences explain social class differences in students’ friendship at university: implications for transition and retention, <em>Higher Education</em>, 70: 427-439.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Context:</strong> Based on idea that social integration = important for emotional and informational support at university, which helps students transition into higher education. Making friends is particularly important = Thomas (2012) suggests making friends at welcome lunch increases likelihood of retention and leads to “better learning, cognitive growth, critical thinking, personal and moral development, confidence, academic self-efficacy, and academic performance” (p.428). Works from limited research (including Rubin, 2012) that working class students have fewer friends <strong>Aim:</strong> Test of hypothesis that working class students have fewer friends and this is because lower SES students tend to be older than mid-SES <strong>Theoretical frame:</strong> <strong>Methodology:</strong> Quantitative: survey research at UON with 376 first year Psychology UG students (81% f; 19% m), with mean age of 22. Three scales of friendship used in survey design: Relevance of Friends to Identity scale, Openness to Friendships scale, and New Friends Concern scale <strong>Findings:</strong> Clear evidence of social class differences in friendship at university: “working-class students reported having fewer identity-relevant friends and regarded the friends that they did have as being less relevant to their identity” (p.434) and less open/ less concerned about making friends. Age = salient factor but not more or less important than other (untested) factors – see Rubin 2012. <strong>Core argument:</strong> Age should be taken into account when designing transition and retention activities: “A key implication of the present research is that arrangements for on-campus accommodation should take into account students’ social class, age, and concomitant family commitments” (p.436; italics in original); universities should invest in accommodation for families to encourage students to live on campus.</td>
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<td><strong>Stewart, A. &amp; Abbott-Chapman, J. (2011). Remote Island Students’ Post-Compulsory Retention: Emplacement and Displacement as Factors Influencing Educational Context:</strong> Explores students’ experiences of transitions to later-years schooling and post-school futures in the particular (‘specialness’) context of remote islander inhabitants who attend school on the island until Year 10 and then have to migrate to mainland for Year 11 and 12. Paper focuses on “place attachment”. Discusses</td>
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**Persistence or Discontinuation, Journal of Research in Rural Education, 26(6): 1-17.**

AUS

**Keywords:** Australia, rural, islanders, school, transitions, challenges, equity, postschool futures, aspirations, experiences, ethnographic, longitudinal

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<th>Aim:</th>
<th>To examine “social, cultural and locational factors which result in low post-compulsory retention rates of remote island students” (abstract) and also to explore perceptions of and aspirations for post-school futures, relating to senses of identity and belonging in context of migrating from rural to urban environments</th>
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<td>Theoretical frame:</td>
<td>Works from notion of place as a social construct connected to cultural values and social capital that also acknowledges emotional connections (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) to the land. Authors note [similar to Roberts &amp; Green, 2013] the deficit positioning of rurality against metropolitan norms. Similarly, authors note the importance of ‘place conscious education’ that “recognizes spatial as well as cultural diversity in education and challenges the locational homogenization associated with economic globalization” (p.2), but without romanticizing rural places and the challenges that people face.</td>
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<td>Methodology:</td>
<td>Longitudinal ethnographic research (mixed methods) using grounded theory. Study followed group of Year 10 students from a small island off Tasmania to Year 11 in secondary school on the mainland. One third of participants = Indigenous. Research site = ‘very remote’, where trend of ‘out-migration’ is local concern and which represents a physical and psychological journey (need to fly to mainland); also issues with internet/communication reception = isolated and remoteness.</td>
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<td>Research design:</td>
<td>Stewart = teacher of 25 years on the island (see page 5 for explicit unpacking of her positionality). Research set around Year 9 ‘work studies’ module and project around aspirations/experience of island life. Stewart’s observation = students with high aspirations and achievement did not always complete Year 11 or 12. All 16 students (9 girls, 7 boys; all NESB) took part in subsequent interviews in Year 10 prior to leaving and then in Year 11 after moving. Questions included topics such as education and employment aspirations, what they thought they would be doing and where, the following year, in five years time and in 10 years time.</td>
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<td>Findings:</td>
<td>Data identified “socio-spatial ambiguities experienced” (p.1) and factors that influenced students’ transitions into later years of high school and factors that contributed to persist or disengage: “Attachment to the island as their home place and the emplacement of their cultural ties to family and community contrasted with the displacement experienced in the urban environment” (p.1). This sense of community and attachment = more for Indigenous students. Tracking students over three years showed strong continuation from Year 9 – 10 (100%) but discontinuation happening in Year 11 (8 completed Year 11; 7 completed Year 12) – lower academic achievers more likely to</td>
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return home without completing (but acknowledgement that moving away to attempt Year 11 = an achievement in itself). Where students stayed on the mainland = significant.

Data from Year 10 (interview 1)
5 students thought they would progress to VET or university and 3 wanted to join the military. Only 3 thought they would return to the island. Students expressed vague (and sometimes unrealistic) = “relationships, marriage and family, but more often they imagined being able to own and drive cars, have money, drink alcohol and to enjoy a “good lifestyle” (p.7).

Academic transition viewed as less challenging than practical challenges of moving – students feared being ‘dispossessed’ of place and identity and anxieties about practicalities of living away from home and managing a budget

Data from Year 11 (interview 2)
Most were feeling good about their studies (minority finding it tough). Students exploring new opportunities and “the demands of academic study did not in themselves create pressure to discontinue” (p.8), rather the issues were located in the size of campus and complexity of course offerings. Students = supported by teachers and Home/School Liaison Officers (but not always + lack of familiarity with teachers = challenging). Students found punctuality difficult and they got lost often + fear of crowds. Accommodation = problematic (not like home), as was difficulty in finding part-time work and homesickness/ place-sickness (missing way of life) was common: “The highs and lows of place attachment and detachment made settling-in a very slow process. It also contributed to feelings of losing social competence and concern that teachers might see them as not coping” (p.9).

Authors offers dualities:
- Location and displacement
- Freedom and lack of freedom
- Fear and lack of fear
- Familiarity and lack of familiarity
- Support and lack of support
- Mastery and lack of mastery

Home and college = created ‘hybridities of place and identity’

Core argument: “The island students’ experiences of the educational transition process, and their subsequent academic outcomes, emerged as closely linked to their attachment and sense of belonging to place and
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<tr>
<th><strong>Thomas, K. (2015). Rethinking belonging through Bourdieu, diaspora and the spatial, Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning, 17(1): 37-48.</strong></th>
<th>Community in both the sending and receiving places, and to their experiences of location and dislocation” (p.1). Whole of institution approach needed to help compensate for challenges faced by students who need to migrate to study, particularly for school age children (suggestions made in last section of paper). Rural and metropolitan education should not be “regarded as separate and unequal but as interconnected and of equal value, and resourced by governments as such” (p.12)</th>
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<td><strong>Context:</strong> Draws on her doctoral work on retention strategies for part-time, mature learners in UK HE. <strong>Aim:</strong> Offers reconceptualization of notion of ‘belonging’ based on three sets of theories: Bourdieu’s toolkit (habitus, capital, field), Brah’s notion of diaspora and Massey’s notion of space/place = working from multiple theoretical territories helps to capture more complexities and according to Abes (2009) is “theoretical borderlands” <strong>Theoretical frame:</strong> Bourdieu’s theoretical toolkit helps to position belonging as a relational concept (drawing on habitus, field and capital) but “it risks homogenising internally diverse social groups and is limited in its articulation of belonging and not belonging as a lived experience” (p.42). Brah’s notion of diaspora = interpretive frame for analysing cultural, political, economic aspects of migration – relational positioning shapes “lived experience of a locality” (Brah, 1996: 189) and explore intersections between home and displacement (e.g. how do students feel about new environment of HE away from ‘home’ spaces?) Massey’s space/place = geographies of belonging. Space is “product of social relations shaped by power” (p.45) – space is temporal (space-time), signifies networks of social relationships and understandings. Places are “particular constellation of social relations” (Massey, 1997) and a “meeting up of histories, a multiplicity of trajectories” (Massey 2005:59). Space-place permit view of ‘activity spaces’ which have their own geographies of power. HEIs are ‘extroverted places’ – own institutional geographies of power create dominant narratives/ identity positions which are relational and imbued with/shaped by power relations <strong>Core argument:</strong> Thomas argues that from exploring experiences of p/t mature age learners, arguments are formed that challenge the dominant positioning of ‘belonging as a retention strategy’ because this analysis illustrates that the dominant view jars with diversity and complexity of their experiences.</td>
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<th><strong>Wilcox, P.; Winn, S. &amp; Fybie-Gauld, M. (2005). ‘It was nothing to do with the university, it was just the people’: the role of social support in the first-year experience of</strong></th>
<th>Context: UK higher education and first year student retention. Looks at role of ‘social support’. Concerns regarding retention driven by government intention to address drop out rates (financial consequences) and anxieties about quality of learning, Cites research and commonly held understanding that two drivers of</th>
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attrition = lack of preparedness and misalignment between choice of course/ institution and student (see Ozga and Sukhnandan, 1998). Scopes literature on social integration - starting with health literature – connections between social integration and wellbeing/ health, moving on to psychological accounts. Authors note there is little sociological explanation. Furthermore, most attention = paid to students’ experiences of academic domain, rather than the wider social milieu

**Aim:** To offer analysis of academic and social integration of students post-entry into Year 1, with particular focus on social support; to explore the experiences of a group of first-year students to try to capture their social development over time, and how social integration (or lack of) influenced drop out

**Methodology:** Qualitative study of students in Applied Social Science at University of Brighton = 22 students who completed Year 1 and 12 students who dropped out. Students were mostly female, white and under 21 years old. Interviews conducted with students (face-to-face with current students; telephone interviews with drop out students). Students asked to narrate experiences at different times (first day, first week, typical week)

**Findings:** Deciding to drop out = complex and multifaceted decision made over time, and was a serious decision for all students. Only one student who dropped out said it was because he chose the wrong course. Major themes in reasons for dropping out = 1) social; 2) independent learning; 3) material reasons. Detail of reasons = difficulty in making friends, accommodation, studying independently, mismatch with expectations, unhappy with subject/ course, no connection with tutor, location of campus, friends had withdrawn, finances (and others; see p.712).

Making compatible friends = authors relate to idea that student = becoming: new identity/ sense of belonging, which involves negotiation between past, present [and future]. Feeling lonely/ homesick = common – emotional support from home (family and friends) = important ‘buffer’ = leading to ‘transitional [liminal] phase – where students are anxious to make friends and connections. As students settle in, they develop friendships and ‘home’ becomes less necessary for support. Later, it becomes more important to make ‘good’ friends. Data suggests living arrangements (living in halls of residence) = significant to this (both positive and negative impacts). Students relationship with staff, particularly personal tutors = important

**Core argument:** Students’ anxieties about making friends = important aspect of students’ transitions and more consideration needs to be given to this (e.g., by accommodation designers, by institutions).