LIFE
IN LOCKDOWN

A narrative project exploring the lived experiences of students at the University of York during the first national lockdown

The University of York Students' Union

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Authors & Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

In Spring 2020, the University of York Students' Union (YUSU) launched the 'Life in Lockdown' project, using personal narratives and storytelling to identify the complexities of students' lived experiences during the first Covid-19 lockdown.

Funded by the University of York via their access and participation plan (APP), the project aimed to engage particularly with students identifying as BAME, working class and/or disabled. Once all the students' stories had been collected, YUSU used remaining funding to hire three PhD students to support the analysis. Of the 103 students who signed up for the project, 43 shared their experiences using a range of mediums, including written narratives, combinations of text and images, artwork, photovoice and personalised video stories. The research aimed to understand the impact of lockdown on students' everyday lives, their experiences of learning and teaching, and their sense of identity within much altered living and learning environments.

This research was done with a view to shining a light on unseen struggles, challenges and experiences – particularly for BAME, working class and disabled students – and also to inform and improve future approaches to student engagement, learning and teaching and access and participation. Throughout the course of the project, we also became increasingly aware of the implications – for future research and practice – of using narrative methods to explore students' lives.

Summary of Key Themes

Everyday life and students' 'new normal'

Students' everyday life stories were characterised by apathy and lack of purpose in mundane activities. Students struggled to keep up with their university workload and, as a result, feelings of disappointment surged in relation to their student performance.

The uncertainty that students faced translated into the ways in which they imagined the immediate future of their university life. Most participants reported feelings of nostalgia about the social events they were going to miss out on because of Covid-19. This was felt most intensely in relation to end of year celebrations and graduations, which were represented as key moments in students' lives.

Disabled students in particular, questioned how their future life and career was going to be affected by missed opportunities during lockdown. Uncertainties caused by the global pandemic affected not only students' everyday lives, but also their sense of worth and their anxiety about the future.

Identity struggles during lockdown

Students' definitions and experiences of themselves as students and learners – their student identities – were disrupted in complex ways during lockdown as their daily activities, living environments, economic conditions, and/or relationships changed.

Being away from their usual learning environment made students more critical about their accomplishments and learning strategies during lockdown. They grappled with being a student in a domestic setting, often feeling like they were suppressing aspects of their student identities, particularly in relation to learning and social opportunities.

While domestic places were represented as sites of struggle for students during lockdown, they were

Summary of Key Themes

also framed as supportive and secure. Students' lockdown experiences revealed the important relationship between the spaces and places students inhabit and their student identities: the ways in which they see themselves and embody being a student.

Transitioning to online learning, teaching and assessment

Students linked their motivation struggles – their disconnection – to what they saw as a deficit in sociality within virtual classrooms, which impacted their capacities to self-regulate.

Key decisions taken by the University on assessments during the lockdown had profound impacts on students' engagement and learning – e.g. first year students reported struggles with motivation due to their summatives being changed to formatives. Moreover, whilst the introduction of the Safety Net policy was framed as reassuring, it was also linked to a lack of assessment motivation.

On the other hand, students articulated experiences of deep learning and engagement in relation to open book/24 hour exams.

The shift to remote teaching and learning reinforced existing modes of disadvantage, as well as creating new forms of exclusion. Students' learning during lockdown was even more deeply entangled in their lives and impacted by the time they had, the spaces they used to learn, their access to resources such as wifi/laptops and family pressures.

The value of narrative methodologies

Narrative methodologies allow a greater space for participants' agency to influence the research, as well as to have more creative instances of self-reckoning and introspection.

Involving students' creatively in research about their lives produced a certain type of data, which allowed us as researchers to grapple with issues

Summary of Key Themes

of identity and highly personalised experiences of everyday life and learning and teaching. In giving students the freedom to use diverse and multimedia – e.g. video, poetry, photovoice etc – we found that we were able explore students' perceptions, emotions and values through what they represented and also how they represented them.

Recommendations

1. Student Engagement

Key recommendation - Listening to student stories, systematically, should be a priority:

Future research and interventions should respond to the dynamic and contextual nature of student engagement, which can be unique to each individual student and influenced by social, economic, cultural and 'lifeload' factors.

Developing students' sense of being (a student) and their consciousness of themselves in the world, should be a key focus for future engagement, belonging and community building work. There is a particular need for the University and the student unions to work together to create spaces where students can 'become', through the development of multiple identities as students, community members and active citizens.

A focus on the relationship between student identity development and place, will have implications for colleagues working within access and participation, learning and teaching and also those working in student accommodation.

Greater use of qualitative, narrative, longitudinal and participatory approaches will better enable us to focus on the processual experiences of engagement, as well as on the journeys of students from specific backgrounds.

2. Access and Participation: accessibility and student-centred teaching

Key recommendation - A renewed focus on accessibility is crucial. The University should explore ways of embedding student-centred approaches to course design and student support, in light of Covid-19:

We must foreground the idea that engagement with the University – courses, resources, staff and activities – will always be impacted if students do not have effective and equitable access to it.

Recommendations

We must develop clear mechanisms for systematically identifying and responding to students' diverse access needs, paying closer attention to their social, cultural and material experiences.

The University's financial support systems should take account of how learners are studying and participating and be agile enough to support students' changing material needs. This means continuing to fund resources such as laptops and wifi – post Covid – for all students in need.

Courses should not be rigidly focused on synchronous, didactic and face-to-face delivery. They should offer flexibility to meet diverse student needs.

The University should promote and support the use of student-centred course design and pedagogies, which think carefully about what students actually have to do to learn; addressing learners' cognitive and social needs and situating learning within contexts that are meaningful to students.

Social spaces and activities that facilitate student-student and student-staff connections should be central to pedagogical design.

Enabling students to play an active role in setting and modifying tasks, co-producing learning tools and resources will support engagement and self-regulation.

3. Assessment

Key recommendation - In light of Covid-19, the University should prioritise assessment strategies that are authentic, life-relevant, flexible and enable students to develop and demonstrate skills as well as knowledge.

Course leaders should prioritise finding ways to articulate, clearly and intentionally, why students are doing a topic, task or assessment.

Recommendations

The University should take particular inspiration from Brown and Sambell's (2020) recommendations for assessment in a post Covid world. They advocate for assessment strategies that:

1. Are authentic, life-relevant tasks that foster self-regulation and place as much emphasis on process as on outcome,

2. Clearly contribute to the student learning journey, by enabling them to develop and demonstrate skills and capabilities as well as knowledge,

3. Do not use unseen, synchronous and isolated assessments as the default methodology,

4. Provide choice for students to undertake assessments when they feel ready, rather than on single set dates, allowing self-paced progress.

Continuous project-based assessment models could drive engagement and motivation in the aftermath of Covid-19.

Positive experiences of open book exams during lockdown suggest a need to focus on designing assignments that promote the application/ explanation rather than the recollection of information.

4. Narrative and storytelling methodologies

Key recommendation – Future research looking at students' lived experiences – particularly through the lenses of widening participation and inclusive practice – should consider how the development of authorship and agency via narrative and storytelling methodologies, could amplify hidden or marginalised voices at York.

Enabling students to reflect on their lived experiences of HE and share their personal stories, whilst also giving them total control of how they do

Recommendations

this, is potentially transformative.

The emotive and self-reflective content we found highlights the potential for narrative and storytelling methodologies to reveal the overlaps between students' personal lives and the relations of power that play out in HE contexts.

These methodologies may be used as part of 'transition pedagogies' (Austen et al, 2020) or to evaluate teaching, support or student experience interventions.

Introduction

In March 2020, the UK government announced a first national lockdown. The restrictions put in place to contain the spread of the Covid-19 virus impacted the lives of all UK residents, including students. The overarching aim of this study was to understand how students' lives at the University of York had been affected during this time. To explore the rich complexities of students' lived experiences during lockdown, we enabled students to share their experiences via personal narratives or stories, which they controlled and developed using a medium(s) of their choosing. For these reasons, our project was developed around the following research aims:

- To understand the ways in which students' everyday life practices and learning experiences changed during the first national lockdown;

- To explore how students made sense of their identities, emotions, aspirations and place attachments during the first lockdown.

- To investigate unseen struggles, challenges and experiences - particularly for BAME, working class and disabled students - identifying both the diverse impacts of the University's policy approaches during lockdown and implications for access, participation and inclusion.

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To realise these aims, the research addressed the following questions:

- How did lockdown shift and impact students' 'everyday' life and learning experiences?

- How did lockdown influence and re-construct students' emotions, identities and sense of belonging with(in) the places they stayed in or returned to?

- How did students respond and react to the University's decisions and policy approaches during lockdown.

- How did students make sense of their lives in lockdown through storytelling practices?

Introduction

Our research explores students' experiences of everyday life and learning engagement during the first lockdown - particularly those who self-identify as working class, BAME, and/or disabled. This investigation is limited to the first national lockdown in England, between late March and June 2020. The purpose of targeting these particular groups of students is twofold. First, there is a growing scholarly interest in 'lived' student experiences and identity development processes in higher education. However, research on the lived experiences of working-class, BAME and disabled students remains limited across UK universities [1], as these groups continue to be less represented and marginalised (Reay et al., 2010; Jenkins and Grayestock, 2013; Stewart and Ivala, 2017; Crozier et al., 2018) within Higher Education. Within this context, we focus on the 'lived' and learning experiences of these target groups during the first national lockdown. We are particularly focused on revealing the unseen struggles, challenges and successes experienced by working-class, BAME and disabled students, at a uniquely challenging time for HE students at York and beyond.

Secondly, the participation of diverse students in higher education shapes and informs institutional policies and functions (Morgan, 2013). Through the development of recent Access and Participation Plans (2019-2020 and 2020-21 to 2024-25) and practices, the University of York has increasingly recognised the importance of involving less represented students in policy development across the institution. This increased commitment to systematically involving students from less represented backgrounds - in decisions that impact them the most - enhances the capacity of the University to identify practical and institutional improvements for student access, retention and success. To support this co-production approach, the University of York works collaboratively with its Students' Union (YUSU) and has provided funding for a number of student and union-led activities, including this research project. Both the University

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and YUSU felt it was important to explore the everyday and unseen dynamics of 'life in lockdown' – particularly for students who identify as working class, BAME and disabled.

The report is organised around four main analysis sections: representations of everyday life; identity struggles; students' learning and teaching engagement; and the importance of narrative research in studying students' experiences. After a brief discussion of the [background literature](#) relating to these separate yet connected areas, the methodology provides a description of our research strategies. To capture the complexities of students' experiences during the first national lockdown, a qualitative approach was used in this study. In particular, rapid qualitative methods and narrative analysis were chosen as the most effective methods to collect and analyse data. We acknowledge that the small scale of our research limits its generalizability, both within the University of York and across the Sector. However, we

believe qualitative research of this nature enables a richness of understanding that illuminates the complexity of students' experiences during lockdown.

The first section discusses the impact of the first national lockdown on students' everyday life experiences. The students' stories are characterised by feelings of apathy and lack of motivation in relation to mundane activities. Students' inability to maintain a predetermined routine impacts not only their actual academic performance, but also their perceived performance. The stories suggest an increased sense of dissatisfaction with performance during lockdown, which in turn impacts on students' sense of wellbeing.

The second section focuses on students' identity struggles during lockdown. A key change in students' lives brought about Covid-19 restrictions was their living arrangements. Most of the stories

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include a description of students' changed living environment and the consequent adjustments required. This section explores how the storytellers represented the critical relationship between place and student identity. It is through everyday practices and living places that students construct and reconstruct their identities. In this context, our findings suggest that students' sense and practice of 'being' a HE student was disrupted in diverse ways during lockdown, as they adjusted to learning and living away from campus, predominantly back in their family homes. This section also explores the interplay between place, student identity and other forms of socio-cultural identity, namely, BAME, working class and disabled.

In chapter 3, we discuss students' engagement with remote learning during the lockdown. Students report struggles with motivation and periods of disconnection, both inside and outside the virtual classroom. Our findings suggest that students' engagement and learning has been severely impacted during the pandemic. Students' motivation and capacity to connect to and access their learning has been influenced by their diverse experiences of online teaching, changed learning environments and the sociomaterial contexts in which they live and learn. We found that lockdown reinforced existing modes of disadvantage and also created new forms of exclusion.

The fourth section discusses the implications of using narrative methodologies when researching students' lived experiences. BAME, disabled and working class students are not only underrepresented in Higher Education, but are also understudied. We highlight that in our research, students' own accounts are not peripheral to the knowledge we are producing on this topic, they are at the very core of it. Hence, in this section we explain the potentialities of using narrative methodologies as a tool to understand the lived experiences of BAME, working class and disabled students. In this sense, we believe narrative

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methodologies allow for a greater space for participants' agency to influence the research process and consequently, help researchers gather a deeper and fuller understanding of students' experiences.

We end the report by summarising the key themes and findings that emerged from the students' lockdown narratives. We also highlight key implications for practice and future research and make a number of recommendations relating to student engagement; access and participation; teaching, learning and assessment; and the use of narrative methodologies in student experience research. These recommendations are principally aimed at the University of York, but will hopefully carry value across the HE Sector.

[1] *Whilst the overall participation of working class, disabled and BAME students in higher education is increasing, these groups remain under-represented within UK universities (Austen et al., 2018; Austen, 2020). Access data from the University of York's current Access and Participation Plan (APP: 2020-21 - 2024-25) allowed us to assess the current situation at York, albeit with data from 2017-2018, due to time lags inherent in sectoral data provided by the Office for Students (OfS). Aggregated data showed that 15.2% of students at York disclosed a disability in 2017-2018. More detailed analysis showed a mixed picture with good performance in respect of students with a cognitive and learning disability, students with mental health difficulties and students with social and communication difficulties, but below sector access levels for multiple impaired students and students with sensory, medical and physical impairments. Moreover, in 2017-18, the percentage of York's students from areas with the lowest participation in higher education (POLAR4 Q1 and Q2, which are measures of socio-economic status), was 20%. Aggregated data for BAME students in 2017-18 showed an access rate of 14%. However, there is a general trend of an increase in the ethnic diversity of the student population at the University of York, which has continued to improve over the last couple of years.*

Significant Literature

To offer context for the 'Life in Lockdown' project, we bring together in this brief literature review, points that are made in the largely separate bodies of literature on everyday lives, the relationship between identity and place, student engagement, and storytelling methodologies.

Everyday life

A multitude of academic disciplines have approached the study of everyday life, from anthropology to sociology, geography and philosophy (Pink, 2012). Interest in the subject rests on the immense opportunities for enhancing our understanding of society, in general, and the lived experiences of individuals, in particular.

To use Plummer's words, 'our everyday life drips with stories of how people live and love, work and play, hate and die' (2013: 506). Some scholars have argued that the study of everyday life has been overlooked by cultural theory and it is only in recent times that researchers have started carrying out projects specifically on this topic (Highmore, 2002; Moran, 2005; Kalekin-Fishman, 2013). Others – including Pink (2012) and Back (2015) – have argued that ethnomethodological researchers have been focusing on everyday life activities for over a century.

Regardless, in recent years everyday life has been at the forefront of much sociological and anthropological research. Moran (2005) argues that in a global economy, mundane activities have been interconnected with a number of integrated technologies and complex infrastructures. As such, multiple anxieties about the management of risk have intersected with everyday life activities. Moran specifically positions these anxieties as the result of the cultural climate in the early 2000s, characterised by threats and fears of terrorism.

Twenty years on, we believe something similar could be argued about the current global pandemic. 'If the everyday is that which is most

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familiar and most recognisable, then what happens when that world is disturbed and disrupted by the unfamiliar'? (Highmore, 2002: 2, emphasis in the original).

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the study of mundane activities has revealed a number of anxieties concerning uncertain times. It is by investigating narratives about everyday life that we can bring to light the series of anxieties and uncertainties that characterise the current social climate.

Our interest in students' stories of everyday life rests on the assumption that through the study of mundane activities, it is possible to create a link between individuals' life experiences and social transformations (Back, 2015). Hence, 'we can see the reality of, and potential for, historical change in the most ordinary phenomena' (Moran, 2005: 164). To date, the literature produced on the Covid-19 pandemic and its intersection with everyday life

is still in its infancy. However, several studies have already identified implications concerning the global pandemic and how it affected the everyday life experiences of individuals, in general, and students, in particular.

Emiliani et al. (2020) found that in describing their lockdown experiences, participants of their study created narratives in which staying at home was depicted as a collective experience characterised by feelings of emptiness and loss. The suspension of normality is the defining trait of these stories.

Other scholars have investigated the extent to which the use of technology has been detrimental to individuals – and young individuals, in particular – during the first national lockdown (Drouin et al., 2020; Wheaton et al., 2020).

Social media usage has been linked to increased levels of anxieties and a powerful tool to spread misinformation (Cinelli et al., 2020; Zarocostas,

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2020). However, the literature on the subject is far from conclusive and further research is necessary to investigate the connections between everyday life and the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in terms of disruption to students' everyday lives and the associated impacts on their identities and capacity to engage effectively with their learning.

Identity and place

Smith et al. (2014) suggest that being a higher education student is a significant marker of belonging, where 'studenthood' is performed through attachments to places, groups, classrooms, homes and social spaces. Likewise, Holton and Riley (2016, p.625) argue that being a higher education student represents a process of interaction with places, where students learn to construct, adapt and manage their student identities'. The relationship between student identities and place has recently become a popular topic across social sciences, particularly focusing on students' identity development,

engagement, and achievement in higher education. (Chatterton, 1999; Walsh, 2006; Chow & Healey, 2008; Smith et al., 2014).

The relationship between place and student identities is understood in a variety of ways. Some scholars explore the accumulative nature of student identities in the context of places and place attachments. They mainly focus on how spaces in which students interact can impact on their identity negotiations (Fincher & Shaw, 2009), and how students' social and cultural identity, social activities, friendship networks and learning environments are fundamental elements to understanding students' identities (Chatterton, 1999; Brooks, 2003; Reay et al.,2010).

These studies suggest the places students occupy play a fundamental role in the formation of their social, cultural and learner identities, and in turn, help to shape students' university experiences. Others emphasise the importance of student

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accommodation in student identity development. They aim to understand the purpose of building student accommodation (Smith & Hubbard, 2014), discuss the physical nature of student accommodation (Fincher & Shaw, 2009) and explore how student accommodation reconstructs students' identities (Holton and Riley; 2016).

The linking of student identity and place opens up debates about the ways in which place and place connections inform and shape students' identity development, expression and performance (Blunt & Varley, 2004; Morrison, 2013). While the nexus between student identity and place has become an increasingly significant area of focus, there is little written about how other socio-cultural factors and crises influence and transform these relationships.

Our research contributes to discussions about the relationship between place and student identities by highlighting the impact of the first national lockdown on students' identity management and negotiations, which in turn interplays with students' capacities to engage with their learning during the pandemic.

Student engagement

Students' experiences in higher education have been severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 'pivot' has led to disruptive and rapid changes in learning and teaching, instigating what has been described as an 'enforced online migration' to emergency remote teaching (Watermeyer et al. 2020, 9).

This enforced migration has impacted students' wellbeing, forced changes to the spaces and places in which they learn, and restricted access to activities and facilities. Within higher education literature and practice, these complex challenges have triggered a preoccupation with questions pertaining to how universities engage students, foster community and develop a sense of

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belonging in online and blended learning contexts (Gravett & Ajjawi, 2021; Rapanta et al, 2020).

Moreover, the pandemic has forced researchers, educators and universities, across the world, to reflect specifically on how to design and deliver online learning, teaching and assessment (Rapanta et al, 2020 – see also Tang et al, 2020, Brown and Sambell, 2020 (on assessment) that effectively engages students, cognitively and emotionally.

Thus, an important area of literature relied upon in this research was the theory and practice of student engagement. Student engagement is widely theorised and researched and is recognised as having an important influence on achievement and learning in higher education (Kahu 2013 – also see Leach & Kepke, 2011). Owing to the multidimensional nature of students' learning experiences during lockdown, Kahu and Nelson's (2018) concept of the 'educational interface' was particularly illuminating for this research. The

educational interface, which is a refined version of Kahu's (2013) conceptual framework of student engagement, acted as both an explanatory tool and as a framework that helped locate, explore and analyse the complex micro-contexts of students' engagement during the lockdown.

According to Kahu and Nelson (2018), the interface is a dynamic place where students live and learn in higher education; formed by the interplay between their background, skills and motivations, and also the institutional and wider context (p. 64).

At the heart of the interface is students' engagement – their emotional, cognitive and behavioural connection to their study (Kahu et al, 2017: 56). The interaction between structural, individual and wider social factors is particularly important within the context of Covid-19, where lockdowns have forced major changes in the delivery, organisation and experiences of education at all levels.

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This socio-cultural and psychosocial understanding of student engagement enables and necessitates multilayered explorations of students' experiences of engagement – e.g. in connection to their learning environments (Schunk and Zimmerman, 2007; Velayutham & Aldridge, 2012) and their socio-material worlds (Flynn et al., 2018; Gravett & Ajjawi, 2021), as well as their everyday lives and the places they attach to and interact with. Our study follows scholars such as Kahu & Nelson (2018) in linking student engagement research and theory to the retention and success of less represented students.

Hence, the 'educational interface' model encourages us to look at the specific mechanisms – material, socio-cultural, structural – that impact students' motivation, confidence and learning capacities. It also highlights the importance of thinking carefully about how we effectively study and identify students' complex and deeply personal experiences of engagement.

Narrative Analysis and Storytelling

It is broadly agreed that narrative-based methods work better when the research strategies and analysis are adapted to the collected data (Franzosi, 1998; Esin, 2011), allowing researchers to observe a wider scope of possible topics and themes present in the data. Based on this premise – and depending on the objectives of the research – it would be possible to identify collective narratives, influenced by common cultural contexts, (Esin, 2011), such as a global pandemic. This idea is particularly illuminating when we think about doing research against the backdrop of Covid-19.

Although we are starting from a traditional and well accepted definition of what a story is, mainly influenced by thinking influenced by Russian formalism (Propp, 1958; Todorov, 1970; Labov, Toolan, in Franzosi, 1998), the multimedia nature of the data collected for 'Life in Lockdown' has forced us to expand the characteristics of this definition, incorporating notions from media studies and

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Marshall McLuhan's foundational theories about media (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967; Levinson, 1999).

While the formalist approach deconstructs the narrative device between story/fabula, text/discourse and narration/narrating, which facilitates an analysis focused on the content, particularly in the case of written works, a more McLuhanian approach considers the medium as a fundamental part of the message, or even the message itself.

This approach acknowledges that in more abstract and/or visual storytelling practices, the content is accessible through the analysis of the medium. The combination of these two approaches allows us to group heterogenous data into one analytical scope, which focuses on the content or fabula, whether this is written, visual, audio-visual or a combination of these.

Methodology

This project enabled students to express themselves freely and creatively through the development of personal narratives and sharing of lived experiences, during the first national lockdown. Rapid Qualitative Method (RQM) and Digital Storytelling (DST) methods were employed as research approaches to collect rich empirical data related to our research aims and questions.

Owing to its potential to provide insightful information relating to rapid changes in the lives of HE students during the first national lockdown, we used the rapid qualitative method (RQM). RQM has been employed since 2003 as an alternative methodological approach to conduct social research during local and global crises, and to provide knowledge that can be 'timely and actionable' (Faye et al., 2015; cf. McNall and Foster-Fishman, 2007; Beebe, 2014; Martineau, 2015; Abramowitz et al., 2015; Johnson & Vindrola-Podros; 2017; Sams et al., 2017; Vindrola- Padros et al., 2020).

Considering the timeliness and immediacy of the Covid-19 pandemic, RQM allowed us to capture students' experiences in real-time, providing useful insights into their reactions and the meanings they represented during the particular context of the first lockdown.

Employing RQM helped us with two significant aspects. Firstly, RQM encouraged us to understand how students' everyday and learning experiences were altered during the first lockdown, and how they (re)built meaningful relationships with learning environments, spaces and communities.

Second, RQM helped us capture students' lived experiences, struggles and perceptions as they happened, which can reveal the unseen interplay between social class, disability and ethnic background and students' lifeloads and learning experiences.

Methodology

Likewise, Digital Storytelling (DST) helped us collect qualitative data in real-time. DST effectively enabled us to collect student stories at a time when physical contact between researcher and participants was impossible and digital interaction was the mainstay of our interactions.

DST is a process of personal story development where storytellers retell and share ideas based on certain life experiences (McLellan, 2006; Nilsson, 2008; Clarke & Adam, 2010; Davis, 2011; Grant & Bolin, 2016; Austen et al., 2018; Austen, 2020). We encouraged students to share their lockdown experiences and perspectives, and provided emotional and practical support to help them negotiate their identities, stories and emotions.

DST empowers students to control their own story and reinforces the value of foregrounding students' individual voices, which reveal the emotional and temporally dependent experiences of being a student (Jenkins and Grayestock, 2014; Hopkins & Ryan; 2014; Hamshire et al., 2017). DST matched our project aims in helping us understand students' developing personal narratives during the first national lockdown, the interplay between student engagement and the University's responses to Covid-19 in this period, and the impact of lockdown on processes of identity negotiation.

We specifically targeted students who self-identify as working class, BAME, and/or disabled. We aimed to explore the impact of the first national lockdown on these students, in particular, and amplify voices and experiences often marginalised in universities and higher education research.

Considering the emotional and agential dimensions of DST, we hoped to explore and amplify the complex experiences of students from these less represented groups – particularly how they negotiated their identities and engagement during the first Covid-19 lockdown. The use of a mixed qualitative methodological approach –

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RQM and DST- enabled us to collect empirical, authentic data in the form of student experiences and voices. We obtained qualitative data via digital stories from students that displayed their developing personal narratives. These stories consisted of digital narratives, combinations of text and images, photovoice and personalised video stories.

The participants

We recruited forty-one students from a diverse range of backgrounds. During the recruitment stage students were given the opportunity to self-identify their social class, ethnic background and disabilities via an expression of interest form.

During the data analysis phase we re-determined the data on self-identifying working-class, BAME and disabled students. Twenty-five students identified in one or more of these target groups. Of this twenty-five: four students identified only as working-class; six identified only as disabled;

two identified only as BAME; three identified as working-class and disabled; six as working-class and BAME; three as disabled and BAME; and one student identified as working-class, disabled and BAME. Twenty-seven students are under 21 years old; twelve students are between the ages of 21-30; one is between the ages of 31-40; one is between the ages of 51-60, and one student declined to give their age. (See Appendix I for the participants' profile.)

Data collection process

With Covid-19 impacting YUSU's capacity to use our Access and Participation funding as initially intended, 'Life in Lockdown' was envisioned as a way of directing this money towards understanding the impact of Covid and lockdown on students' everyday lives, learning and teaching experiences – with a particular focus on working class, BAME and disabled students. This focus drove us to collect qualitative digital data, which was generated as multimodal storytelling.

Methodology

- **Promotion**

  The project was promoted to students across the University via YUSU's all-student email and social media platforms. Stakeholders from academic departments and professional service staff also promoted the opportunity to their cohorts. At this stage, we provided a participant information sheet (Appendix II), including details of what the project was about and framing it as an opportunity for students to share their 'story' of Covid-19, particularly in relation to online learning, teaching and assessments and their everyday lives. One of the core purposes of the project was to inform the University's thinking about access and participation and identify differential student outcomes and experiences, in the wake of Covid-19. In the promotion, we emphasised that the project was particularly interested in hearing from students who identify as working class, BAME and/or disabled.

Students were asked to fill out an Expression of Interest Form (Appendix III), which was also used to collect demographic information to monitor the diversity of those signing up and ensure that enough students from the target groups were interested. Students were encouraged to consider the benefits of getting involved, including the payments attached to participating, namely, £20 for a single submission, £30 for two pieces (e.g., comparative pieces) and £40 for a series of more than two stories. Subsequently, 280 students expressed interest in the project.

- **Support and comfort: 'How to' workshop**

  After approaching potential participants, we invited interested students to attend (or view in their own time) a 'how-to' workshop' to learn more about the project and ask questions. Students were introduced to specific storytelling methods during the workshop – e.g. digital storytelling and photovoice – and given practical tips and prompt questions on how

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to go about developing their narratives. The questions included: 'how have you experienced online learning and teaching'; 'what difficulties have you faced'; 'what are your hopes, desires and feelings for the summer'. The workshop – and supporting 'how to' guide – emphasised the value of storytelling to students, (as a student voice research tool) locating them as the experts and giving them the power to author their own stories in their own words.

- **Consent and Confidentiality: Use of the data**
  In the final phase of recruitment, consent was sought from students and they were asked to confirm what they planned to submit – e.g., a single written submission – so a cost could be allocated to their submission. Although 104 participants were initially willing to participate in the project, 43 students confirmed their story plans. This finalised the sample size as 43 storytellers. The YUSU Student Voice & Insight Manager stayed in touch with each storyteller via email and agreed on personalised

submission dates.

Given the aims of this research it was important to gain the storyteller's consent to use their stories to build knowledge. Moreover, as YUSU collected the data to work with the University to understand student experiences during the first lockdown and enhance institutional practice, we asked for consent to share the data with the University. The participants were asked for their consent at two different stages of the project. Firstly, consent was sought from participants via a Consent Form (Appendix IV), which contained information about the risks and costs associated with the project. We informed participants that we would process and use their data in accordance with the University of York Students' Union (YUSU) 'Privacy Policy, with access restricted to the YUSU Student Voice Team via a password–protected Google folder. Secondly, we went back to the students (via an Express Consent Email: Appendix, V) to ask if they would consent to their stories being

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published on the YUSU website. We guaranteed that participants' stories would not be published without their express consent. The participants were asked if they wanted their story to be published anonymously or alongside their first name. Participants who shared photographs or videos were also made aware that it would not be possible to guarantee their anonymity if their story was published on the YUSU website.

Data analysis

The empirical data was collected through a digital storytelling method that included written pieces, photovoice, photo collage, drawings, videos and multimedia stories. We adopted both thematic and narrative approaches to produce in-depth empirical analysis.

Our thematic approach developed in three stages. Firstly, researchers encoded and explained the data. We read the digital narratives, examined the

photovoice submissions and watched the video stories to identify themes and sub-themes.

Secondly, we developed initial codes and focused codes to capture hidden patterns and shared experiences emerging from the stories (Liamputtong, 2009; Guest et al., 2012; Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

The final stage involved re-examining the focused codes and selecting themes for analysis. In this stage, we identified the themes, sub-themes and common patterns appearing in the data (Vaismoradi, 2016; Nowal, 2017; Cormack, 2018; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). This thematic approach allowed us to make sense of and organise related themes and details (Guest et al., 2011), and develop the analytical framework to understand the issues and struggles faced by York students during the first national lockdown.

Likewise, a narrative approach was chosen as the

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most appropriate method to gather a deep and rich understanding of the experiences of BAME, working-class and disabled students during lockdown.

The data analysed through this method is more than just the mere narration of a list of events; but rather, it allowed us to gain knowledge of the interpretive devices through which participating students represented themselves, both to themselves and to others (Lawler, 2002: 214).

The uniqueness of this research method relies on its capability to position the subjects studied at the forefront of the knowledge-production process. Hence, our aim as researchers was to investigate the complexities of lockdown experiences for all the student storytellers - shining a particular light on the dynamics represented as significant by BAME, disabled and working-class students.We purposefully wanted our findings to be informed by the lived experiences of these individuals.

The theoretical standpoint guiding this research is based upon the assumption that identities are always multiple. We purposefully refer to 'identities' as plural throughout the report and also that they are necessarily socially constructed (Lawler, 2002).

Through the development of their stories our participants have tried to make sense of their experiences. A key theoretical assumption was that individuals give meaning to their lives, their identities, and themselves through the stories they tell (Moen, 2006).

Through storytelling, we construct the social world as well as our identities: 'all of us come to be who we are (however ephemeral, multiple, and changing) by being located or locating ourselves (usually unconsciously) in social narratives rarely of our own making' (Somers, 1994: 606). Narrativity therefore has a double potential: it allows us to make sense of lockdown experiences, but also provides useful insights in terms of identity

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formation and struggles, particularly for BAME, disabled and working-class students.

Our methodology can be characterised on the one hand as humanist, taking into account the personal experiences and the adaptive behaviours students used during lockdown. On the other hand, we manifested a constructivist perspective, which enabled us to observe not only the units individually, but also as a collective, helping us understand the creation of meaning across the collection of stories.

Limitations of the Project

As with other qualitative research, this project comprises limitations in terms of methodological choices, data collections process, the sample and themes analysed. Based on our findings, we recognise two significant areas of focus for future studies at York and across the HE Sector.

Firstly, we aimed to capture particular insights into the lived experiences of students identifying within either (or all) of three target less represented communities: BAME, working class and disabled.

The collection of qualitative digital data – generated as multimodal storytelling – and the focus on these target groups enabled us to identify rich personal narratives and highlight some of the ways in which students' experiences during lockdown were influenced by their sociocultural backgrounds. This approach also enabled us to contribute an empirical foundation for studies of less represented students in universities.

In practice, the approach of targeting three specific groups also presented limitations and raised questions about the utility of 'less represented' or 'underrepresented student' as a concept in research and practice. Although we highlighted separate themes and experiences relating to individuals and the individual target groups, we also acknowledge the tendency to

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frame certain experiences under the collective construct: 'less represented students'. Whilst there is value in acknowledging that certain groups of students continue to be less represented in HE, there is also a risk of grouping distinct communities, experiences and voices in research and practice.

Future research in this space may want to make methodological and theoretical choices that foreground the experiences of individual students – their challenges, struggles, successes – but address the specificities of individual communities more deliberately.

The challenge then is how to explore the complexity of students' experiences, whilst also acknowledging diversity within groups and the intersectionality of their lives. Moreover, many less represented groups were not approached as part of the research (LGTB+, migrants, diasporic students, mature students, students with families, etc.). We also acknowledge that future studies

should consider the composition of a main research team prior to commencement of the study, in order to address limitations and consider other theoretical and methodological approaches.

Secondly, this research was grounded in qualitative methodologies, which aimed to explore students' lockdown experiences.

To collect insightful empirical data, we collected students' stories (the data) within a particular time-frame, namely, the first national lockdown. During the data analysis process, we queried the extent to which students' experiences have changed in the second and third national lockdowns – e.g. what was different in terms of learning, what were the overlaps etc.

We invite future research to explore students' post-lockdown experiences, and to pay close attention to how students' learning experiences are influenced by the interplay between decisions

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made by the University, their living and learning environments, their sociocultural backgrounds and the changing social and political context.

CHAPTER 1:

Representations of everyday life and the "new normal"

The study of everyday life has a twofold meaning in this study. On one hand, we wanted to gather knowledge about the multiple ways in which the lives of students have been disrupted by the first national lockdown and therefore our intent was to collect information about how their routine had changed during these times. On the other hand, researching everyday life serves as a tool to analyse social events, creating complex abstractions and ultimately understanding social structures. In other words, the study of everyday life provides concrete examples of social inequalities, power dynamics, identity formation and civilising processes (Sztompka, 2008). Not only do episodes of everyday life allow us to understand the experiences of students in lockdown, but more broadly, they provide us with concrete examples of the inequalities that some students are facing during these times.

Lack of purpose and anxieties around being productive

Everyday life is characterised by a general lack of purpose in mundane activities. Most participants reported feelings of lethargy and apathy in relation to their routine:

> After an hour studying, I venture downstairs for breakfast. I sit with my empty breakfast bowl a long time after I've finished eating. Either mindlessly scrolling through Instagram on my phone or some days I sit just staring into space. Hating the monotony of it all. Finding the motivation to go back to my room, the same room I've spent 99% of my time in for the last few months, is incredibly hard. (A.J.)

Similarly, F.N. started to struggle to keep up with their routine soon after lockdown restrictions were set in place:

> Not more than a few days into the lockdown I was already starting to lose motivation to work. I started to think and reflect on all that lay ahead and decided that I needed to find some motivation to carry on and keep myself occupied. I know what it is like to feel lost without direction and I knew that I did not want that to happen again.

This sense of apathy and lethargy often relates to the participants' university workload and their student performance, in general. Students who reported a lack of purpose in relation to their everyday life associated this lack of motivation with the new teaching environment. To use their own words, "it was hard doing uni without all the stuff that comes with that" (O.W.). The data suggests that in the initial stage of lockdown, students found it difficult to keep up with their university workload because the social aspect of learning had been significantly affected. The complex experiences of online teaching and learning will be further discussed in another part of this report, however it is important to note in relation to everyday life, that students' capacity to keep up with their university workload was highly affected by online teaching.

Due to their struggles to keep themselves motivated to do university work, most students reported feelings of distress and dissatisfaction

Lack of purpose and anxieties around being productive

in relation to their academic performance. Even though the literature on the impact of Covid-19 on student performance is still in its infancy, some studies have found that learning outcomes as measured by exam results were only marginally impacted by the new lockdown restrictions and the consequent online teaching environment (Finnegan, 2021; Clark et al., 2020).

However, research also suggests that students' perceptions of their performance and achievements has been impacted by Covid-19. Finnegan argues that "although the achievement of learning outcomes as demonstrated by exam results show no notable difference, the findings suggest that the student perception on the achievement of learning outcomes varied between online and F2F delivery" (2021: 16).

In other words, although the research around Covid-19 and assessment outcomes is inconclusive, it has been suggested a link between online teaching and student's perceived performance during lockdown. Our findings are in line with this body of work. In fact, the students who took part in this study expressed anxieties around being productive and their inability to maintain a predetermined schedule.

As an attempt to exercise control over their lives, students expressed the desire to structure their routine. The creation of plans to guide their everyday life's activities is depicted with positive tones:

> *Now, while I'm not the best at executing plans, I absolutely adore making them. Planning my week, planning my day, planning (and hosting) events with friends. It's extremely satisfying to work towards something, even if it doesn't always go to plan. The reason why this week was a good week was because I finally had a routine in my week that I enjoyed, challenged me and gave me something to work towards. (H.K.)*

Lack of purpose and anxieties around being productive

When students are able to follow through with their plans, they feel satisfied with themselves:

> *Despite the fact it's been difficult to create a routine, for the most part my time in lockdown has been positive – especially now I've built up my routine. I've been able to work on my mental health and build up coping mechanisms which I hope to use in bigger situations after lockdown. I'm putting exercise into my routine and hope to maintain this on top of my natural amount of walking and cycling. (K.M.)*

However, when they fail to keep up with their plans, feelings of discouragement and dissatisfaction start to appear:

> *Over the next few months life passes like a dream, the days blend into one. Wake up at nine, eat breakfast, do some revision, walk the dog in the local park for the daily outdoor venture, do some exercise mid-afternoon and then focus on my craft projects. Except I didn't manage to keep to my exercise routine and would go two weeks without rigid exercise, then a few days of being motivated enough to do it every day, and then doing about every 4 days, also not revising very rigidly, procrastinating by watching YT videos with my textbook*

open and only managing to do 4 questions. **Why am I like this** *(B.L., emphasis in the original)*

Data suggests that students tried to structure their everyday life in order to exercise a level of control over their lives in a time of uncertainty. Our findings echo Emiliani et al. (2020)'s study on the experiences of daily life at the time of Covid-19 in Italy. The women who took part in their study manifested the desire to create new patterns and routines in their lives as an attempt to create a new normality: "The breaking of what is taken for granted involves the implementation of anchoring processes, in the sense of the SR [Social Representation] theory, with the aim of making the unfamiliar familiar. That is, making sense of what is disturbing" (2020: 17).

The data that we collected for this study suggests that the students' perceived performance during the first national lockdown was developed around a cycle constituted by three steps: lack of motivation, creation of a daily routine, and (non)

Lack of purpose and anxieties around being productive

fulfillment of said routine (See Figure 1). When the attempt at following a schedule or a new routine regime is successful, students feel positive about themselves, but when their plans fall through, they experience feelings of disappointment and dissatisfaction not only in relation to their student performance, but - more broadly - they feel disappointed about themselves at large. This suggests that students' well-being during Covid-19 is highly influenced by their capability to structure their everyday activities and execute a pre-established daily routine.

Lack of motivation

(Non)fulfillment of a daily routine

Creation of a daily routine

Figure 1: Cycle of students' perceived performance during the first national lockdown

The role of communication and technology during lockdown

A second relevant finding in the context of students' everyday life during lockdown is represented by the use of technology. During lockdown, technology had become an important part of their lives not only because their teaching had been moved online, but also because it represented a way through which they kept in touch with the outside world. As such, technology was perceived as positive because it allowed them to keep in touch with distant loved ones:

> Another experience I have had is using 'Zoom' to talk to friends and family. Using this resource has strengthened my friendships through our weekly quiz nights, giving us time to bond and have a laugh in a time of uncertainty. (O.W.)

However, in some stories technology – social media, in particular – is also the repository of anxiety and surveillance. H.M., for example, narrates a story in which she is afraid that her colleagues will notice her change of location at a time when travel was not permitted. She says:

> I was scared that people would notice that my setting had changed from the previous week's Zoom catch up. I was scared to post on my socials in case people recognised where I was. I even stopped using Strava because I knew the run maps would give me away. My return to York was necessary to me – for the completion of my dissertation and for my mental health – but from a casual snap of the Minster on my Instagram story I knew that people would judge me to be a selfish rule-breaker who can't just stay home. (H.M.)

The following extract captures the complexities in dealing with technology during lockdown. If on one hand technology allows them to feel connected to the outside world, it is also a vehicle through which fears are spread:

> Once again group chats blow up with questions, I feel overwhelmed by the number of people speaking in the English group chat but I also can't seem to tear myself away in case I miss any important information. (E.B.)

In the use of technology, the lines between gathering information and sharing panic are blurred (See Figure 2). In most stories, participants

The role of communication and technology during lockdown

discuss how news reports functioned as a staple of their routine:

> *Gradually as days go by, it became an afternoon ritual every day around 5:00 pm we would wait to see what the government had to say regarding the Coronavirus and the hope that lockdown would be lifted (S.C.)*

> *The next few days were a surreal blur, with government coronavirus updates becoming a regular part of my daily routine, not to mention the constant refreshing of the 'coronavirus updates' webpage on my phone, watching the confirmed cases rapidly tick up. (M.S.)*

The word "infodemic" has been created to define the dangers of misinformation that spread during disease outbreaks (Zarocostas, 2020). Cinelli et al. (2020) have studied how social media platforms - particularly Gab, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and Reddit - have provided an unprecedented amount of content in relation to Covid-19. Social media became the repository of information as well as a powerful vehicle of misinformation. In this sense, studies have shown how fake news spread faster and wider than fact-based news (Vosoughi et al., 2018). Social media profoundly impacted the ways in which news and information about Covid-19 were shared and as such, there was an unprecedented risk that the information which got shared were inaccurate. But also, there was a risk that the relentless sharing of information (and misinformation) about Covid-19 could spread panic other than knowledge.

Whilst technology was used by our participants as means to keep in touch with friends, family and society at large, it was also perceived as a cause of tension. In fact, some students decided to refrain from checking their devices in order to avoid the stress that this situation might have induced:

> *I didn't watch the announcement that started the initial 3 weeks of lockdown. I knew it was coming but watching the newspapers and everyone on social media trying to predict when and for how long we'd be in lockdown was unbearable. My relationship with the news has completely changed during lockdown. At university I was*

The role of communication and technology during lockdown

an active member of student media with ideas of going into journalism but watching the death tolls, the constant stories of misery and confusion has caused me to want nothing to do with what was one of my favourite aspects of university. (E.H.)

Throughout lockdown I increasingly ignored the outside world. It was so easy to do, and made me so much happier. I didn't read the news, watch the news or listen to the news. I never saw anyone except my family and rarely went on my phone. Life was simple. I had the hills and the river, and time to go running, cycling, walking, swimming, without seeing a soul. (F.S.)

The data suggests that students felt ambivalent about the role of communication and technology during lockdown. Some of them used it to stay connected with their distant loved ones and as a form of recreational activity, but the majority of them also reported feelings of stress and tension around being constantly subjected to the spread of Covid-19 fears, either through group chats or news reports. Even though further research is needed in order to establish a connection between rising levels of anxieties during Covid-19

and the use of social media and other types of communication technologies, some studies have indicated that since the beginning of social distancing, students – particularly teenagers – have been negatively affected by the increased use of social media usage (Drouin et al., 2020).

Wheaton et al. (2020) conducted a study about emotional responses during the Covid-19 pandemic. They investigated whether individuals with greater susceptibility to emotion contagion would experience more distress during the lockdown. Their results suggest that there might be a correlation between social media use and an increased degree of anxiety around Covid-19. Previous research about past pandemics has already highlighted the positive association between consuming media reports and anxiety (Xie et al., 2011; Tausczik et al., 2012). However, the fact that social media use might be a predictor of high levels of anxiety should not diminish the positive role that social media might have had on our participants. For example, Clark et al. (2018)

The role of communication and technology during lockdown

have highlighted how social media use can foster belonging and encourage social connection. This suggests that social media can both have a positive and negative impact on students' mental health. Thus, further research is needed in order to fully assess the extent of social media's impact on students' wellbeing.

FOMO, doubts, and uncertainties about the future

FOMO stands for Fear of Missing Out, i.e. the "pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent" (Przybylski et al., 2013: 1841). In recent years, scholars have addressed the impact that social media has had on the development of FOMO among young adults. While for some it is possible to establish a direct correlation between social media use and increased FOMO (Przybylski et al., 2013; Beyens et al., 2016; Oberst et al., 2017), other scholars have argued that individuals are likely to experience FOMO independently of social media and that social media is just one of many ways in which people become aware of opportunities on which they are missing out (Milyavskaya et al., 2018). Regardless of the role played by social media, FOMO seems a rather fitting lens through which to analyse the narratives of students during the first national lockdown, as it specifically refers to "missing out on experiences that others are having" (Milyavskaya et al., 2018: 726, emphasis in the original). Most students complained about the

experiences that other students before them had had and that they will be missing out on because of Covid-19 restrictions:

> One after another, more of those final moments were pulled from beneath my feet: Roses, Summer Term teaching, shifts at work, Summer Ball, Colours Ball, end of year meals, training, and the hardest hit of them all, graduation. These symbolic celebrations and pinnacle moments of accomplishment had all been stripped away. Of course, I know that these seem incredibly superficial compared to a global health crisis, but it just felt so unfair to be the only year group in recent history who didn't get to dress up, cross the stage, shake a hand and collect our degree in front of proud friends and family. (H.M.)

The narratives of students during the first national lockdown are characterised by a sense of nostalgia about things that never happened. Students express feelings of regret in relation to all those experiences that had been taken away from them, including the Roses tournament, summer ball, graduation and all the plans that they had

FOMO, doubts, and uncertainties about the future

made for the months to come:

> I won't lie I was devastated, at the prospect of having summer term ripped away from me. In my head I thought that the following term would have the best; sunny weather, still first year so less pressure, and the closest I'd been to my friends yet. I was upset that I hadn't got a proper goodbye to my friends and I didn't know when I was next going to see them. (R.H.)

Beyond short term missed opportunities, most students also discussed the long term effects that lockdown was going to have on their career and future life. The data suggests that participants manifested anxieties in relation to their future perspectives:

> I woke one day with level 3 anxiety like a rock in my chest that was getting bigger with every breath I took. Today's self critical thought was I'm not doing enough with my life. Do a management course like most people. Will get a job at a decent company like everyone else afterwards. Was doing nothing in lockdown after partying in 1st year like most people. My life felt meaningless and I was getting suffocated with

conflicting thoughts. Part of me wanted to let myself off the hook and know I'd make it somehow. (S.G.)

The stories of most students reveal a degree of uncertainty about one's future and feelings of unsettlement in relation to both current and future situations. However, these uncertainties disproportionately affected disabled students. The following extracts highlight how some of our disabled participants' mental and physical health deteriorated during the first national lockdown:

> The panic leading up to the days before my departure were ruled by my own anxiety. I suffer from an anxiety disorder, and this environment was leaving me helpless. All of my usual mental health coping mechanisms were suddenly gone, and I felt myself feeling set back. How was I meant to focus on my mental health when more important things are going on? How am I meant to look after myself, alone? Since starting University I felt fiercely independent, and now I felt panicked. Self-sufficiency was no longer fun. I felt my world closing in, with the situation escalating all around me. Finally: I was faced with a decision: Do I go home? Or do I stay in England? So much panic, uncertainty and no time to

FOMO, doubts, and uncertainties about the future

think. Ultimately: I did nothing. By the time I could take a minute to work it out – to think – borders were shut, all of my options were taken away from me. (S.G.)

I have noticed I've been stimming (something autistic people tend to do that involves repetitive behaviour such as biting, fiddling or humming) a lot more than usual. Social stressors are influencing me much more, my anxiety is much higher and I've had more bad days than usual. (K.M.)

Previous research has highlighted the existence of digital inequalities among disabled students. In particular, Plichta (2018) suggested that students with a disability have less access to the tools needed to get access to online teaching. Overall, people with disabilities are better off when their routine is maintained and this applies to education settings as well. In their study about the impact of Covid-19 on disabled students, Meleo-Erwin et al. (2020) argued that university students with cognitive and learning disabilities struggled to adapt to online teaching. As Kuper et al. (2020) have suggested, "Preventative measures, like

social distancing or self-isolation, are often more challenging for disabled people. As an example, self-isolation is impossible if one relies on carers in daily life" (Kuper et al., 2020: 3). This suggests that rather than creating new problems, lockdown exacerbated already existing social inequalities.

Not only Covid-19 highlighted some of the disparities that disabled students were already facing. Some of the language used in risk discourses and prevention campaigns has been deemed controversial because of its ableist undertone. For example, the slogan used in the UK "Stay home. Save lives" has been found problematic because for a significant proportion of disabled individuals staying at home is a default (Goggin and Ellis, 2020). Moreover, social distancing and good hygiene practices are not always an option for people with disabilities (Goggin and Ellis, 2020). The aspect that some of our disabled students struggled the most is linked to the language deployed in describing risk infection and

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Covid-19 safety measures:

From studies, day-to-day life and media, this should have been no shock. There was prior evidence in our treatment and our invisibility. However, I genuinely hadn't felt so the disparity being so stark and unapologetic before. The "general population" felt reassured by our risk of at worst Death, because they felt they were so different from us and inevitably they can only have found reassurance in that if on some level (conscious or subconsciously) they believed our lives mattered less. When they spoke of herd immunity what they really meant was survival of the ableist. (L.K.)

In her story, LK highlights how frustrated and disheartened she was by the language used to address risk of infection and Covid-19 death rates. As disabled scholars have already highlighted, disability discourses are often constructed from an ableist point of view which evaluates the quality of life of a disabled person without having any knowledge of disability (Goggin and Ellis, 2020). In particular, at the height of the pandemic, there were concerns about how medical rationing protocols were going to affect disabled individuals (Bagenstos, 2020). Healthcare professionals were advised to "prioritise those who had the best chance of recovery in the event of a mass outbreak" (Chen and MacNamara, 2020: 511):

If resources are scarce as is the case with ventilators and people with disability are not considered to have a good quality of life or that their life expectancy is lower, they will not receive access to the ventilator even if they need it more than a nondisabled person presenting with the same disease. (Goggin and Ellis, 2020: 169)

For these reasons, some of our disabled students experienced an additional layer of stress and anxiety compared to their non-disabled peers during lockdown. While non-disabled students were concerned about missed opportunities, our disabled participants had to deal with the additional fear of risking to not be placed as a priority in times of need and ultimately, they had to endure ableist undertones throughout Covid-19 risk prevention campaigns.

FOMO, doubts, and uncertainties about the future

It is not our intent in this report to debate health policies and strategies deployed to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic. However, what is relevant in the context of our discussion is to highlight the climate of fear and uncertainty that some of our disabled students experienced during the first national lockdown. In other words, the narratives of some of our participants need to be framed within a wider social context in order to make sense of their emotional world.

The "new normal" and positive aspects of lockdown

So far in this section we've discussed how students' representations of everyday life are characterised by disruption, uncertainties and anxieties around both their present and future life. However, it is important to notice that at some point in their narratives, most students also included a reference to the positive aspects of lockdown, including the pursuit of hobbies and the time spent in nature:

I think Covid might have had one positive impact on me! Today was gorgeous. With such an awful winter (granted that comes with living in the North but I didn't think it would be that bad!) a bit of sunshine and 23 degrees was incredible. I lay in the garden and read a book (something I have always wanted to do but never really found the time to). I felt particularly grateful to have open space and my family around me. It made me aware of the fact that it is unlikely I will ever have this much time on my hands so I shouldn't take it for granted! (A.S.)

Most students wrote three separate narratives discussing their lockdown experiences. While the first of their stories is characterised by uncertainty and the abruptness that Covid-19 brought into their lives, from the second story onwards students started to describe their everyday experiences with hopefulness. After an initial state of disarray caused by the disruption of their routine, most students discussed a subsequent stage in lockdown where they learned how to cope with restrictions. Students termed this new phase the "new normal":

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A new normal has emerged. Zoom calls with friends fill the void of everyday living together. Conversations don't flow well, becoming more like a cacophony of sound. Everyone talking over each other in our eagerness to reconnect. But the roar of the sound drowns out the intimacy. It's not the same. (L.P.)

The sense of normality that develops after students have adjusted to Covid-19 restrictions is at times depicted as positive:

The sudden yearning for my family has me reaching out more than usual. A zoom call with distant cousins I had only heard of but never met, a shared family photo album on our iPhones. I feel connected to my family more than when I lived with them. I find myself sending recipes back and forth with my aunt and spending real time investigating father's day presents (which are consistently sourced last minute). Never before had I video called my immediate family, and now we find ourselves asking: why hadn't we done this before? This is the best! I feel grateful for these changes, and in a weird way – I feel grateful for the situation Covid-19 has put me in. Had I gone home, I would have felt much the same in the way of anxiety, and would have missed England. Had I gone home, I wouldn't have had to cross these bridges to feel close again. (S.T.)

I truly believe that this pandemic and all of the things that I have gone through in the past few months, have taught me about myself and how to live a better life. I know so many people have also felt this period of change and used it to reevaluate their lives in so many different ways. (M.C.)

Highlighting the main character's capability to overcome struggles and adjust to difficult situations is a recurring narrative device (Pals, 2006; Mattingly, 1998; McAdams et al., 2001). Some scholars – including Pals (2006) and Baerger and McAdams (1999) – have argued that an individual's wellbeing is associated with the capacity to construct a coherent story about difficult experiences. The term "coherent positive resolution" refers to the ability of a narrator to escape the grips of a negative event and it allows the story to move forward (Pals, 2006). That is not to say that the specific difficult circumstances in a person's life are resolved – some events never get completely resolved and this is particularly poignant in the context of the current and ongoing global

FOMO, doubts, and uncertainties about the future

pandemic but rather, by using a coherent positive resolution the narrator creates a closure in the story in order to make sense of what is happening in their life and consequently move forward with their story.

In our study, lockdown restrictions brought disruption and uncertainties into the participants' lives: "The loss of one's everyday life means the suspension of what was taken for granted" (Emiliani et al., 2020: 16). This means that our students had to consciously rethink and reorganise their lives in order to exercise a level of control over their emotions and concerns about the future. By adding coherent positive resolutions to their stories, students are indirectly foregrounding both the turmoil that Covid-19 has caused and their desire to reorganize their lives after this disruption. This suggests that despite the array of difficulties they endured during the first national lockdown, students were capable of a high degree of resilience.
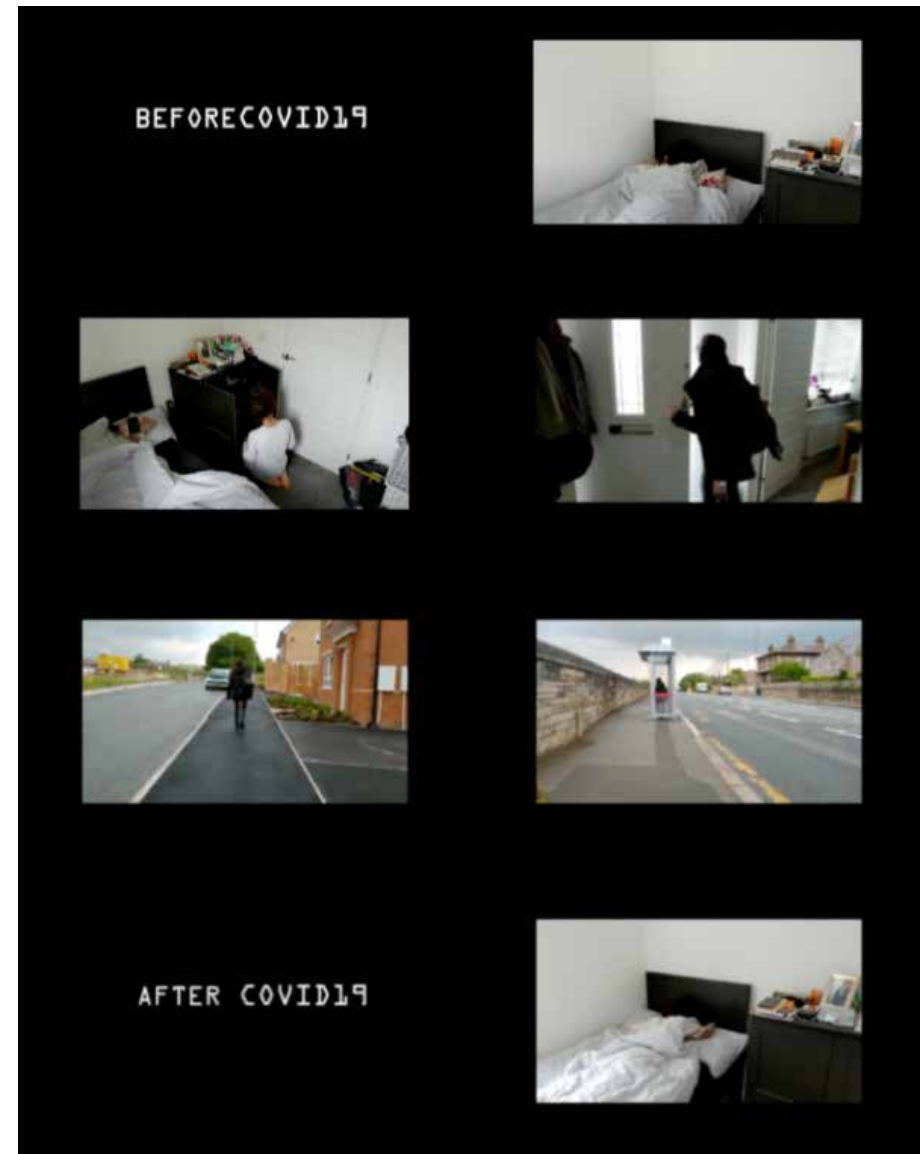
FOMO, doubts, and uncertainties about the future
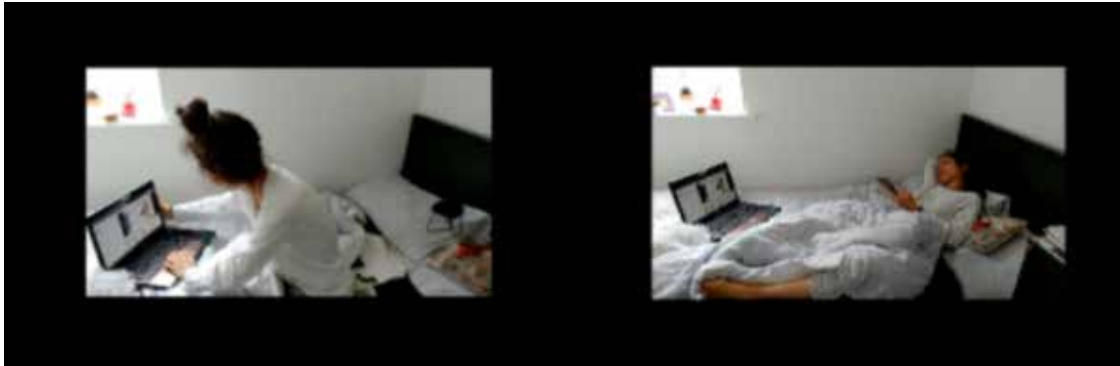
Figure 3 Video captures from My Video 2 1), submitted by A. N. The video represents the changes that happened in the student's morning routine since Covid-19.

We did our discussion through online discussion boards and I enjoyed the work we did. But I did struggle with it a bit and I can't say I engaged with it anywhere near as much as I probably should have. I struggled with finding motivation in general, and for me routine and structure is really important because it gets me up and out. (J.C.)

Figure 3 Video captures and transcription from Life in Lockdown, submitted by J. C. The frames represent the lack of engagement with online teaching.

FOMO, doubts, and uncertainties about the future

I've also spent a lot of time sleeping though and sitting on my phone and doing nothing. And some days I've hated myself for not doing anything. Despite all this time I've had, I often feel I've done very little with it and that can get to me. However, recently I started picking up a better routine again by exercising a lot more and committing to that. There is still a lot more I could be doing and the time does seem to be slipping away. (J. C.)

Figure 3 Video captures and transcription from Life in Lockdown, submitted by J. C. The frames represent the lack of motivation during lockdown and the importance of keeping up with a predetermined schedule.
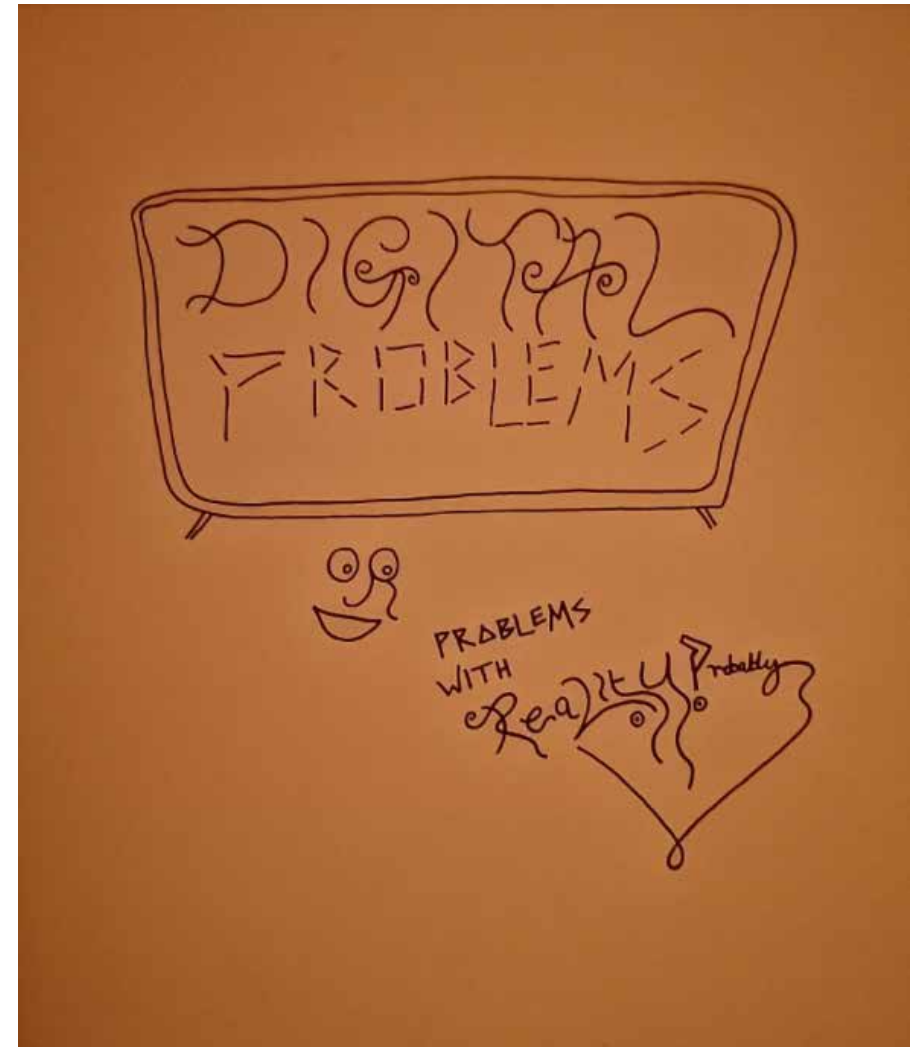

Figure 4 Untitled drawing, submitted by S. R.

CHAPTER 2:

Identity Struggles: Students' identity formation, place and first national lockdown

Being a higher education student during the coronavirus pandemic has involved the negotiation of students' identities through shifting practices, feelings and attachments to place, people, community and learning environments. This section explores the ways in which participants adapted to and managed their student identities, influenced by the places they returned to or stayed during the first national lockdown.

For many students, the first national lockdown was complicated and involved experiences that challenged their identities, characterised by negotiations of emotions, daily practices and connections with others and places. Our data shows that such negotiation processes require identity formation (Wilcox et al., 2005; Allen-

Collinson, 2009), as our students developed strategies to transform ways of being and living as students during the first-national lockdown. Allen-Collinson (2009) and Henkel (2010) suggest identities within higher education represent continuous construction and reconstruction processes. They argue that students work on their student identities in relation to their social, cultural and academic experiences and backgrounds. Thus, identity negotiations involve combining and developing behaviours, attitudes, memories, and experiences of being a student within families, homes, university and academic life. Our conceptualisation of student identity derives from theoretical understandings of identities as reflexive self-representations and interconnections between students and the social world (McAdams, 1993; Stone, 2006).

CHAPTER 2:

Throughout this project, we were particularly interested in exploring the intersectionality of students' identities, to understand how students negotiated and developed different aspects of their identities during the first-national lockdown. The students' stories raised interesting questions about relationships between places and student identities and the ways in which students balanced and managed their academic, social and cultural identities within the family home, during lockdown.

Many of our participants changed their living places or moved back to their family home during the first national lockdown. These changes were depicted as prominent factors in the challenges and disruptions students experienced in relation to their learning. This section explores how places in which students returned or stayed during the lockdown had complex impacts on their sense of 'being a student'- characterised by negative and positive self-perceptions. The first section reveals how participants described a range of struggles, challenges, and opportunities in relation

to returning and staying within the family home during the first national lockdown. We particularly focus on how participants construct and manage their student identities through their descriptions of challenges within the family home. The changing living place not only meant adjusting to a new environment for participants in this research, it also involved the negotiation of their social and cultural identities. Indeed, the changing living place encourages some participants to build and re-build their identities during lockdown. In this sense, the section explores participants' critical expectations of how students' lives should be lived and how students should behave within their living places. Participants evaluated new conditions and situations formed by re-adjusting to or admitting family routine and traditions. Their narratives suggest that student accommodation plays a significant role in students' social, cultural, and learner identities and activities. Finally, this section explores how students negotiated their personal spaces, privacy and independence within their lockdown living places.

Meanings of returning and staying at 'home' during the lockdown

We start by discussing more common experiences related to place and student identities shared by many participants in this study: meanings of returning and staying at home during the lockdown.

Increasingly, scholarly discussions about 'home' are defining it as a changeable, complex and diverse concept. Mallet (2004: 62), for example, describes 'home' as 'a) place(s), (a) space(s), feeling (s), practices, and/or an active state of being in the world'. For Blunt and Dowling (2006), the meaning of home is strongly related to identity, daily routines, experiences and belonging with particular spaces. They indicate that home may be identified as a place that combines a range of social, domestic, intimate, close or isolated practices (Blunt, 2005; Blunt & Dowling, 2006). We use 'home' here as a multifaceted concept that indicates physical residential places (family home or student accommodation) and a space that represents a range of experiences and feelings. Commonly, 'home' indicates a place that involves students' lived experiences and practices in their family homes during the first national lockdown. Thus, home and family home are used interchangeably throughout.

During the first national lockdown, the majority of participants were required or willing to switch their living environments/places. Many of them left their student accommodation or shared homes, and returned to their family places. This transition between places brings significant changes in students' learner, social and domestic identities (Blunt, 2005; Reay, et al., 2010). Moreover, the transition illuminates the complex power dynamics embedded in the home that can challenge, evolve, and suppress students' particular practices and social relations. The majority of participants revealingly start with rich accounts of the meaning of returning and staying at the family home. Their narratives highlight that returning and staying in the family home during the lockdown

Meanings of returning and staying at 'home' during the lockdown

had both positive and negative consequences for negotiations of their student identities. Their experiences shine an important light on how student identities can be reconstructed through social and daily activities, attachments and learning practices within living places.

For example, J. M. and V. A.'s narratives represent the family home as providing a safe and familiar comfort zone:

> It would be impossible not to admit being in an academic environment has an impact on a student's motivation. This does not only refer to having a study desk in your room and a modern library, no. ... at home, time seems to be all over the place; days are amalgamated together and therefore we become less willing to do things as there's always a tomorrow. (J. M.)

> The home is so comfortable and familiar that work inevitably 'invades' the space; thus, I feel no motivation to do something so...unwelcome. Being at home makes me feel like I'm entitled to the whole day off, and I can't seem to shake that untruth off; I can't accept that I'm simply swapping my work environment, as opposed to having been 'furloughed' from University work. (V. A.)

J. M. and V. A. allude to the challenges of 'being a student' within the family environment, connecting them to their domestic identities and lived experiences. They commonly emphasise how family places can make them pause certain units of their student identities.

S. D. and J.C. suggest it is challenging to manage and build a sense of student identity within this comfort zone. Their discussions speak to the impact of lockdown on student identity continuity and the importance of place for their social and learning identities.

> II'm also saying all this while lucky enough to have a quiet, spacious home environment. I have no excuse to be so unproductive? I want to look at motivation, productivity, and whether I'm being too harsh on myself. ... Working at home promises greatness, but needs its faults ironing out. I want to make it efficient and productive while retaining its mental health, financial and environmental benefits. (S. D.)

Meanings of returning and staying at 'home' during the lockdown

Figure 5: The view of student's bedroom

Figure 6: Recreating sense of home

...But again, motivation has been extremely lacking. After all, it is getting pretty depressing being stuck in the rather small bedroom all day reading. So, how I am being done all this time... I have also spent a lot of time sleeping, though, and sitting on my phone and doing nothing. Some days I hated myself for not doing anything. Despite all these times I had, I often felt doing very little with it, and that can get to me. (J.C.)

Meanings of returning and staying at 'home' during the lockdown

For these participants, finding motivation and being proactive students are the main challenges. Their narratives indicate the influences the family environment had on their perceived achievement and learning engagement during lockdown. In this sense, participants' narratives elucidate Kahu (2013) and Paulsen et al. (2020) discussions on the role of place in student engagement. They suggest that environmental support, collaborative learning, and active interaction with the learning environment can strengthen and improve students' learning and engagement and achievement. Participants' descriptions suggest that their engagement and learning strategies are embedded within their pre-covid learning environments. Hence, being away from their usual learning environment makes them critical about their accomplishments and learning during the lockdown. Additionally, while participants negotiate their living activities as a student, their narratives reveal important details on how the University, as a 'place', plays a significant role in their identity continuity. Interestingly, the narratives suggest that students carry their

social, cultural and learner identities, developed through their university experiences, into the family home. During the first lockdown participants were often required to reconstruct their student identities in relation to a different place, which had different meanings and associations to them. More importantly, their identity negotiations in the family home highlight how the University as place represents interwoven meanings that offer opportunities to learn to manage, construct and transform their student identities and experiences (Brooks, 2003; Fincher & Shaw, 2009).

Similarly, S. C. acknowledges the changes and struggles of returning and staying within the family home during the first lockdown. S. C.'s description of living with family supports the view of the home as a space that limits certain learning and social experiences associated with being a student, which brings anxiety. However, their narrative also provides a unique account of how students' cultural identity can interplay with their student identity management and negotiation processes:

Meanings of returning and staying at 'home' during the lockdown

...Having a fairly large family is not uncommon in Asian households so having all my siblings come back and live under one roof for an unknown long length of time was going to be a roller coaster ride. This meant in our household, everyone would have their personal space reduced and the TV will constantly be on South Asian TV shows...great! However, the upsides to lockdown were at least family entertainment will be 24/7 and there is always someone to talk to. My main concerns were thinking about how this was going to impact my studies. The only problems I faced during my exams were either being shouted out (which is normal in a BAME household– well mine is anyways!) to come down and eat or when my siblings were bored and wanted to chat, they would often waltz in and disturb me where I would have to reiterate, I am busy. Also, my dad would tend to sit on the sofa in our study and play his WhatsApp videos really loud, completely oblivious to the fact I was trying to work, where I would have to remind him where his only response would be to 'slightly' lower the volume. (S. C.)

S.C. alludes to family traditions and practices that involve collective family activities, intimacy and closeness (Blunt, 2005). For her, these family dynamics – which she links to her South Asian background – meant re-adjusting her individual spaces, practices and everyday choices. For S.C., family and living with family create a belonging with a place and people. These two elements were important for many of our student storytellers and eased feelings of anxiety and fear of loneliness during the first lockdown. However, these family dynamics also intensified the tension between domestic (collectivist) self and student (individual) self. S.C.'s description of living with family highlights the process of reconstructing student identity and practices during lockdown. S.C. 's narrative reveals the unique ways in which living with family and in the family home can inform and shape students' identities and experiences of learning. Hence, it is important to acknowledge and understand the diverse ways in which experiences of being a student in their immediate community – influenced by family dynamics, culture, space and resources – can differ from those of the learning environments (Richardson, 2008; Newbold et al., 2011).

Meanings of returning and staying at 'home' during the lockdown

Home represents a range of experiences and feelings for students in this study. Their reflections about 'home' during lockdown demonstrate how students negotiate their student identities and belonging based on their lived experiences within specific places (Walsh, 2006). Although their narratives reflected shared, common struggles during lockdown, some students' descriptions of their family home reveal how tools, resources and people in places can be a barrier to students' learning, engagement and activities (Carvalho & Yeoman, 2018). For several participants, their learning struggles were connected to the availability of resources within their family homes. These narratives reveal the important relationship between social circumstances and students' capacity to access the University and engage effectively. Here, C.G., V. A. and M.D. explain how their lockdown struggles were influenced by limited resources:

I simply was not in an environment [family home] that helped me work. I did not have room to work. I could not concentrate in my room because I did not have a desk as I did at University, and there was nowhere to really escape to either. But, once I identified that the environment that I was in was the reason for my procrastination, I took over the dining table. I made it into my "study area" to dedicate this area to studying, interviews and video calls. The only problem was that whenever I was on a video call, my family always wanted to eat. (C. G.)

Teaching moved to the digital walls. Seminars to the digital walls. For me, my experience was not a great start as the internet was an issue for me. Moreover, no, not because I am BAME and cannot afford it, but because the signals in my area were down. Unable to complete assignments to the highest level as being a born leader and elder sibling has its challenges. (V. A.)

Now this working from home involves a lot of Zoom calls, emails, phone calls and other things involving the internet connection. This ended up taking up even more time from my studies as I could access even less from the internet, and on some occasions, my Dad would have to take my laptop entirely as he would not work, and he would use mine. Now, I do not mind; the laptop itself was a secondhand gift from my Dad, and he is also a key worker, so he gets the priority with the internet and the devices. But it did and still does impede my studies.

Meanings of returning and staying at 'home' during the lockdown

Unfortunately, in these unprecedented times, all we can do is compromise. (M. D.)

C. G., V. A. and M. D. identify themselves as working-class students. After returning to their family home for lockdown, their social and cultural circumstances seemingly played increasingly crucial roles in their perceived and material capacities to engage in their learning. They represent the family home as presenting practical barriers to the creation of a suitable environment for learning. As C.G. explains, not having an individual room, desk and required materials were barriers to her learning and engagement. C.G. thinks this environment influenced her motivations and capacity to adjust to new ways of learning required during the lockdown. Similarly, V. A. and M. D. highlights how online learning was challenging during the first lockdown. Indeed, the Covid-19 pandemic has changed the settings and aspects of education around the world. During the first lockdown, most of the UK's higher education institutions moved the vast majority of teaching

and learning activities online. Although their main aim was to maintain education and learning consistency during a crisis period, the emergency transition to remote delivery has thrown up important questions about the quality of student learning and the digital pedagogical approaches used by educators. Thus, as the emergency transition was predominantly focused on a fixed idea of what could be delivered (what could be taught), it often failed to consider the impact of space, place, time and practical resources, particularly in relation to underrepresented students' capacity to access online teaching (Wan et al., 2020).

Considering some of the narratives from less represented students in this research, including BAME, working-class and disabled students, online learning did not always represent 'just-in-time' learning (Hall, 2000) and successful learning and engagement (Park & Bonk, 2007). Due to insufficient access and availability of the internet in

Meanings of returning and staying at 'home' during the lockdown

their family homes, for some students, the transition to online learning curtailed their capacity to engage effectively in their studies. Their narratives indicate that students' entanglement with their socio-economic circumstances and socio-material contexts (Gravett & Ajjawi, 2021), intensified during the lockdown, reinforcing modes of exclusion and presenting barriers to learning and belonging.

Significantly, these narratives provide a critical projector of inclusive education in higher education. Slee (2011) argues that inclusive education concerns the recognition of educational exclusion and provides learning environments where all students can participate, contribute, and learn. For our participants, their learning and engagement was mediated by their economic resources and capacity to effectively access online learning tools. Where lack of access to learning resources was a factor in the home environment, students' learning engagement was impacted. Indeed, the emergency transition to learning and

teaching did not create an environment where the needs of all less represented students could be met effectively.

While participants represented changes in their student identities during lockdown, the family home is not always represented as a site of struggle. The family home was also depicted as a safe space, which provides mental health support, financial benefits, improved relationships with family members and helps students cope with loneliness and isolation during lockdown. S.D., R.A. and other students reveal how family members provided support and a sense of security during lockdown:

> Working at home promises greatness, but needs its faults ironing out. I want to make it efficient and productive while retaining its mental health, financial and environmental benefits...The 'freer' home-working environment has certainly produced mental health benefits: I do not have to act up' to anything, or anyone. This has felt most evident in this term's Content Development module for my course; when it was outlined via video conference, I was relieved to hear it would take

Meanings of returning and staying at 'home' during the lockdown

place off-campus. (S. D.)

The main benefits of lockdown after a busy academic year have been improving relationships with family members, and in the last few weeks, seeing my school friends much more than I have done since last summer. ... I have been given a chance to appreciate the comforts and people back at home in North London. ... I also think that living in a house with others will be beneficial. (R. A.)

Returning and living within the family home significantly impacts the student identity development process. However, for S.D. and R.A. the family home provides ways for students to establish a sense of security and belonging. These narratives also acknowledge that the family home can provide a sense of groupness, which involves associated feelings of support, commonality and freedom. Financial and emotional support and security from family eased these students' (re)adjustment to the family home during lockdown. Although students reflected on obstacles to the practise of their student identities, the support from the family environment helped many

participants develop a range of attachments to cope with the disruption of everyday life in the first lockdown.

Overall, the narratives highlighted that home represents diverse meanings, experiences and practices for students. While they described their everyday life practices within the family home, they also revealed new strategies and states that led them to be critical about their goals, achievements and learning engagements (Wenger, 2010). Students in this study negotiated their identities, routines and behaviours within the shared [family] environment (Kenyon, 1999). They often made comparisons between their family home and student home. As such, our findings connect to Kenyon's argument on students' identity and forms of place attachments. Kenyon argues that students' experiences within the family home and student home always inform and shape each other. Indeed, we found that our participants brought their established students' identity and negotiated

Meanings of returning and staying at 'home' during the lockdown

the differences in experiences, motivations and meanings of being students in the family home. The data explicitly suggests the importance of place attachments in student identity development. It also provides a critical framework on how student identities can be reconstructed through social and daily activities, attachments and learning practices within living places.

Doing home: Domesticity and student identities

Our participants' reflections on their lives in lockdown suggest that places are significant concepts for student identity development and learning engagement (Ahn & Davis, 2020). The majority of participants returned to the family home or stayed with a family member. They were required to sustain their educational activities and learning practices from a distance. However, maintaining their educational activities from a distance (at the family home) brought a range of challenges related to living space, life attitudes, identity and personal interest. Moreover, home as a sense of place represents diverse social, spatial, daily practices and experiences (Blunt, 2005). In many of the narratives, the family home constructs domesticity through mutual living spaces, shared life satisfaction, a sense of timetabling and transformation of everyday routine as effective relationships between family members. These narratives raise questions about how constructed domesticity or everyday routines, in the family home, impacted participants' educational practices and learning engagement during lockdown. C.G. and E.R. reflected on these tensions:

> *Re-adjusting to home was strange. The freedom and liberties that I had enjoyed at University were taken away from me both by the pandemic and simply by coming home and having to adhere to my family's schedule again. (C. G.)*

> *… being at home also means I do have to work around a different schedule to normal, and I have lost a lot of the independence which I had become accustomed to. I have very much struggled to remain motivated through the exam period, due to the safety net and the fact that all the exams are an open book. (E. R.)*

The Covid-19 pandemic came with various restrictions. For our students, 'stay at home' meant changes in social and personal everyday practices. In a way, it represented the creation of a mutual living agreement for the majority of participants. However, this process came with struggles and adaptation issues. For some of the students, sharing mutual space with family members required common everyday practices,

Doing home: Domesticity and student identities

which helped maintain connection, intimacy and support in the household. Certainly, their domestic practices and interactions with people and mutual spaces helped them re-build their identities through the structure of everyday life, during lockdown (Tolia-Kelly, 2004; Ahmed, 2006). A common domestic experience explored by most of the participants was the following of family timetabling. Indeed, the family home consists of embedded routines and daily practises. These routines and practices are enacted through effective relationships and interactions among family members, and they turn into practice while each member participates. Hence, the family schedule is an effective tool to create mutual living space and shared life satisfaction. However, this mutual timetable challenged students in their learning activities during lockdown. Whilst participants reflected on actively 'practicing the home' through daily routines and mutual living spaces, they also highlighted how these everyday experiences reduced personal spaces, social

practices and learning activities. In other words, students' daily routines and mutual living spaces influenced and challenged their' individual living practices, namely, having the space and time to socialise and learn.

M.D.'s daily domestic experiences brought an interesting parallel account in relation to the impact of domesticity on educational practices and how 'place' continuously transforms domestic and student identities.

The first things that really hit home were the major things. My whole schedule was changed; I was no longer allowed to do what I wanted when I wanted, as I had to compromise for the sake of the household. This involved stopping studying to do chores around the house. My nocturnal study schedule had to be stopped entirely, even when I work best at early hours in the morning. There were a lot of arguments about me not doing things according to house rules, doing chores wrong, being too slow, being too antisocial with the family etc. This all took a lot of getting used to, and to be truthful, I was angry. I was truly grateful that I had another home to go back to rent-free, rather than pay for a room at

Doing home: Domesticity and student identities

York I no longer used. But this came at a cost. A lot of the freedoms I had taken for granted at University had been taken away, I was in my parent's house now, so I had to play by their rules. (M. D.)

Living at the family home restructured M.D.'s own living attitudes, personal space, timetable, and student identity. Her everyday practices involved specific family values, relationships and family culture. For M.D., family indicates certain rules, which build a mutual living space, daily activities and connection with family members. However, she emphasised the considerable difference between her family routines and her own established routines. Embracing and re-adjusting to her family's routines posed a challenge in relation to M.D.'s learning activities. She explains that she experienced difficulties in upholding her previous routine and the texture of her 'individual' everyday life. She had to leave behind her student life rules when she left her student room, which had become home. Such transitions led to some distressing feelings for M.D.. This narrative highlights that

students do not always create connection and attachment with home through the feeling of security, comfort and mutuality (Mallett, 2004; Gorman-Murray, 2008; Morgan, 2011, 2019). In her case, mutuality and 'comfort' become possible with daily routines and practices. These domestic practices construct the norm of time in the family home, including studying hours, eating hours, shopping and chore hours and hours for personal interests. Like a number of our participants, M.D experienced difficulties maintaining her student life, including behaviours, attitudes and experiences established whilst living at university. While they practiced new routines during the lockdown, they also endeavoured to layer their own identities. In this sense, the family home becomes a place where students embody a range of everyday practices and identities involved in student and non-student lives.

Overall, the stories suggest there was a significant shift in students' everyday experiences

Doing home: Domesticity and student identities

and practices during the first lockdown. Their participation in the family home reframed their social, cultural and student identities. This process speaks to the complexity of place attachments. All participants recognised the family home as a space that preserves collectivity and different levels of cohabitation. Participants' experiences suggested that such collectivity and constructed domesticity complicate the relationship with the family home as a student. For them, enacting domestic identities help them to build mutual space and connection with family members. However, they struggle to adapt their student identities within this collectivist space. Thus, home does not always represent a place where private and public identity become situated, as Gorman–Murray (2008) discussed. For our participants, the family home presents a space where they frame their own everyday routine, sense of timetabling and relationships with others. During the first lockdown, mutual living space and 'doing home' therefore challenged the continuity of students'

identities. Most importantly, this reminds us how university accommodation plays a significant role in developing students' public, private, cultural, social and educational identities.

Privacy and personal space: Management of self-identity

The majority of our participants explained that staying within their family home required them to reduce their personalised space, switch their everyday practices and reform their social connections with others. Indeed, meeting such expectations within the family home made them reimagine their personal space and privacy. Their narratives suggest that reducing or even losing personal space and privacy within the family home, brought laborious challenges to their intellectual development and learning engagement. Hence, the concepts of personal space and privacy provide empirical tools to understand both students' well-being and the management of self-identity during the lockdown.

S. M. and S. C. reflected how losing personal space negatively impacted their wellbeing during the first lockdown.

> ... I felt I had no space in the house actually to do the work and everything – no matter how small – was such a distraction for me at that point. This made me feel really self-absorbed because I was not paying any thought to the students struggling with exams that actually counted towards their final degree mark full stop. (S. M.)

> When sleeping the night before my first exam, I had a large amount of butterflies fluttering in my stomach. I was worried because I had to complete a 24-hour exam in an environment where I have little or no personal space and needed to be focused. I spoke to my family, and we arranged an area where I could complete my studies; however, I was still anxious. (S. C.)

S.M. and S.C. highlight that having personal space is an important element for maintaining their learning activities. The lack of personal space at the family home made them feel unsettled and disassociated with routine practices. These unsettled feelings influenced their connection to their family home and impacted their capacity to engage in their learning and assessments. Lacking individualised spaces and reduced educational motivation negatively impacted students' well-being and increased their anxiety. As S.M. and S.C. allude to, performing student identities within an

Privacy and personal space: Management of self-identity

inconvenient space has raised their anxiety, stress, feeling of worthlessness, quality of life and life satisfaction (Teniell et al., 2020). Their experiences speak to discussions about the relationship between socio-economic capital and students' well-being and learning satisfaction (Bye et al., 2020; Meagher & Cheadle, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic has shifted many aspects of students' everyday life. It has limited, for some students, access to forms of material capital often enjoyed at university, such as physical personal space. These struggles have had a considerable impact on students' life satisfaction, well-being and capacity to engage in their learning and social activities.

These lockdown narratives reveal how institutional habitus and individual's habitus are interwoven in students' identities in higher education (cf. McDonough, 1997; Bourdieu, 1999; Reay, 2004; Reay et al., 2010). Chiefly, stories also revealed that students' social and learning experiences could be constituted by students' cultural identity, groups, and social class. Acknowledging students 'individual habitus' is fundamental because it provides the empirical framework for understanding how students' material cultures and resources impacted their academic and learning practices during lockdown. We will build on this discussion in the following chapter, specifically the section entitled: 'Unequal resources during the lockdown: Sociomateriality of engagement'.

Alongside well-being and anxiety, having limited personal space and privacy also influences students' capacities to manage their self-identity development.

I know that moving home removed my independence and ability to freely go about my life without any kind of parental responsibility weighing over me, which is a common feeling that was shared with my peers. … thought being alone in York would make me feel incredibly lonely, but I felt so liberated. (K. M.)

My family home is in the middle of nowhere, quite small-

Privacy and personal space: Management of self-identity

so there is no privacy- and I have to go back to the bedroom I have had to share with my 18-year-old sister since we were born... So the family home is now my new reality... it can get fairly hectic. But most of all, privacy is 0. Having a room all to myself is a dream now...Needless to say, for someone who was just getting comfortable around their newfound independence, I was not so happy about this. (M. D.)

Figure 7, 8: Students' identities as an accumulative process.

Through this period of lockdown, I have learnt a lot about myself. Everything has been stripped away, and I have been faced with myself, and I actually think it has been quite beneficial in that way, despite being very hard sometimes... I am worried about the next academic year. How much of the teaching will be online? I am worried about my social life because that is a massive part of the University experience for me. I hope I still get to perform the drama... I hope I still go rugby and netball. I hope my dream of going into the performance is not lost and made a lot harder due to the covid. You can drive yourself crazy thinking about all this stuff. But I am trying to take one day at a time... (J.C.)

Privacy and personal space: Management of self-identity

As illuminated in the quotes and photographs above, the majority of our participants alluded to the benefits of university experiences in relation to their identity development. For example, being independent, focusing on self-concepts that involve academic achievement, course choice, and subject interest (cf. Trautwein & Möller, 2016). For them, the family home does not provide stable conditions to maintain and enhance the self-confidence, efficacy and development in their student identities. It also impacts their aspirations for educational improvements. Such experiences therefore pose a range of behavioural and psychological challenges. Like M.D. explains, her new living conditions remove her independence and strength from her life, considerably affecting her state of happiness. Similarly, J.C. highlights the important role of extracurricular activities in her identity development. For her, university experiences should harmonise intellectual, cultural and social developments. However, living within the family home during the first lockdown interrupted the accumulative nature of her student identity. These lockdown narratives raise important questions about how social factors, including living environment, economic conditions and relationships with people, interplay and influence the development of student identities.

CHAPTER 3:

Student Representations of the impact of lockdown on engagement with learning and teaching

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Students were given a brief/a set of prompt questions which encouraged them to reflect on their experiences of learning and teaching, amongst other features of their life in lockdown. Specifically, they were asked 'how they experienced online learning and teaching' and 'what their experiences of online assessments were'. Students were also asked to reflect on what difficulties they faced during lockdown and many of the stories framed reflections about learning and teaching through this lens.

CHAPTER 3:

The student stories covered a wide range of topics in relation to learning and teaching. Students reflected on practical issues during lockdown, the enforced changes to their learning environments, struggles with motivation and routines, and on their experiences of online teaching sessions and assessments. Three broad learning and teaching themes were identified from these;

1. Transitioning to online teaching: negotiating the cognitive, behavioural and emotional dimensions of learner engagement during lockdown

2. Contingent capacities for learning: negotiating intrinsic and extrinsic factors during lockdown

3. Negotiating transitions and a sense of loss – lost experiences and lost learning

The student narratives revealed the ways in which students navigated a multiplicity of psychosocial, institutional and environmental factors during the lockdown. Students implicitly depicted the ways

in which the interaction between these factors impacted engagement with their learning and teaching. Owing to the multidimensional nature of the students' learning experiences during lockdown, Kahu and Nelson's (2018) concept of the 'educational interface' was particularly illuminating for this analysis. The educational interface, which is a refined version of Kahu's (2013) conceptual framework of student engagement, acted as both an explanatory tool and as a framework that helped locate, explore and analyse the complex micro-contexts of students' engagement during the lockdown.

According to Kahu and Nelson (2018: 64), the interface is a dynamic 'place where students live and learn in higher education'; formed by the interplay between their background, skills and motivations, and also the institutional and wider context. At the heart of the interface is the students' engagement – their emotional, cognitive and behavioural connection to their study (Kahu et al, 2017: 56). This focus on the interaction between structural, individual and wider context factors

seems particularly important during the Covid-19 era, where a global disaster has forced major changes in the delivery, organisation and experiences of education at all levels.

Moreover, the strength of Kahu and Nelson's education interface is the importance placed on four psychosocial constructs that influence student engagement and which result from the interactions between institutional and student characteristics. The four psychosocial constructs are: 'academic self-efficacy, the student's perception of their capabilities for the task at hand; emotions, resulting from the student's appraisal of their situation; belonging, the connection students feel to the institution, discipline and people; and finally, well-being, stemming in part from lifeload and stress' (Kahu and Nelson, 2018: 64).

Significantly, the student narratives reflect how, within lockdown learning conditions, the relationship between student, institution and student engagement is mediated in diverse and complex ways via one or more of these four psychosocial constructs.

Transitioning to online teaching and learning: negotiating the cognitive, behavioural and emotional dimensions of learner engagement during lockdown

In response to the University's pivot to online teaching and remote learning during the first national lockdown, the student stories focused heavily on comparing these experiences to the more traditional experiences of face-to-face teaching. A key element in this theme was a kind of nostalgia for the social aspect of teaching and learning, that face-to-face contact, which was represented as lacking during lockdown. The students implicitly and explicitly linked this new online teaching environment to their sense of belonging and motivation during the lockdown.

Students reflected on physical 'rooms', 'face-to-face discussions' and 'meeting and seeing people', as key drivers of engagement with teaching :

> *The course was being conducted through online discussion boards, which were a good idea, though I personally really value face-to-face discussions in seminars, therefore feeling like I could not engage as fully as usual. (R.A.)*

Other students alluded to a sense of disconnect and being unable to properly interact with people during online teaching.

> *It's the fact that I can see them, but I can't really see them. What about her facial expressions; the incline of his chin; the way she twirls her hair around her finger when she's nervous? I can't pick up these clues anymore. I can't really see them, not when they're reduced to a collection of moving pixels...........So, how do we speak? We don't. Not really. (H.J.)*

Such reflections suggest the high value placed by these students on interpersonal attachments in relation to learning. This is supported by student engagement researchers such as Leach and Kepke (2011), who argue that active learning in groups, peer relationships, social skills and use of active and collaborative learning engages learners (see also Ahlfeldt et al., 2005; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). Moreover, the use of affective language when linking social connections to

Transitioning to online teaching and learning: negotiating the cognitive, behavioural and emotional dimensions of learner engagement during lockdown

engagement reveals the interplay between belonging (connecting with people), emotion and motivation. This aligns with Kahu et al's (2017: 56) assertion that 'emotions have powerful effects on student engagement', particularly where the positive feelings attached to social interactions trigger positive 'situational interest', which in turn influences positive learning engagement. These quotes suggest that during the first lockdown, the lack of interpersonal attachments within the online teaching environment negatively impacted students' enjoyment and therefore their capacity to engage fully.

Whilst the majority of students represented online teaching as a barrier to positive emotional engagement, a much smaller number described it as 'democratising' and a 'level playing field'.

I've felt able to occasionally make contributions because it's so 'democratised', like a level playing field where I don't have to be outgoing to get into the conversation, and my past lack of initiative doesn't disadvantage me too much. (S.D.)

These more positive reflections framed the online teaching space as an enabler of emotional engagement – e.g. for students who feel uncomfortable contributing in traditional face-to-face seminars. This narrative correlates with a finding from Walker and Koralesky's (2021: 6) recent study, where 'students admitted they felt less nervous about asking questions or making comments using the chat box, compared to the in-person classroom setting'. One student also framed online teaching as a physical enabler for disabled students unable to consistently attend face-to-face teaching sessions.

Another key element of this theme was the representation of complex negotiations of motivation and learning engagement, in relation to the online teaching and learning environment.

Transitioning to online teaching and learning: negotiating the cognitive, behavioural and emotional dimensions of learner engagement during lockdown

Many of the narratives articulated difficulties in adapting to online teaching during lockdown – with many focusing in particular on how a lack of motivation and interest impacted their capacity to self-regulate engagement.

> However, I still never seemed to adapt to the virtual learning space and teaching online. I felt so switched off even though the laptop was fully on. I just could not seem to engage in anything my lecturers or seminar tutors were telling me, never mind the reading I had to do with whatever self-motivation still lingered. (S.M.)

Students represented feelings of disconnect from their learning – e.g. being switched off, questioning their interest, not being fully engaged and even feeling 'uneducated'.

> Seminars were definitely more challenging. Due to poor internet, my classes of 10-12 students dropped to as low as 3 for one module which made discussions really stinted with large pauses. Smaller groups should have forced me to work harder but as webcams weren't used, it was incredibly difficult not to just pull my phone out during the discussion pauses. (E.H.)

The quotes above reveal student perceptions of how lockdown learning conditions – e.g. emergency remote teaching, feeling disconnected from people and learning, and stilted communication due to poor wifi and low participation – interacted with academic self-efficacy and the behavioural dimension of student engagement. Within these students' educational interfaces – as with many of our participants – the lack of connectedness within the online teaching space triggered a lack of belief in their capacity to learn in this changed environment, which in turn caused a lack of motivation, distraction and a perceived drop in engagement. These experiences align with Kahu and Nelson's (2018) perspective that academic self-efficacy influences student motivation through its impact on persistence, goal setting and the use of self-regulatory strategies.

Transitioning to online teaching and learning: negotiating the cognitive, behavioural and emotional dimensions of learner engagement during lockdown

Student reflections on motivation and engagement revealed that lockdown conditions and the transition to online teaching and learning intersected with students' academic self-efficacy in diverse ways. For example, some students also manifested positive experiences and outcomes:

> It allowed me to consolidate my learning but also provide me with a project I could focus on whilst in lockdown. I really loved the idea of spending time on one lecture by thoroughly re-watching them to allow me to fill in any missing notes I may have, and then crossing it off when it has been completed. This personally took a long time to do but I am glad I stuck with it as it allowed me to achieve my best potential. (S.C.)

> Ironically, in an environment where my participation is dependent on the click of a button, I've learned to show up when things get hard. Learned to reach out; to listen; to talk. It's harder that way; it's happier. (H.J.)

Through their depictions of overcoming the challenges of online teaching and learning – e.g. 'showing up when it gets hard' and 'sticking with it' – these students reflected how their belief in their ability to adapt to this new way of working enabled them to adopt self-regulatory strategies, such as setting the goal of rewatching lectures and filling in missing notes. These positive reflections also speak to the potential of flipped and/or blended learning design, which enables students to access lecture material asynchronously and at a pace that is right for them.

Mediated capacities for learning: negotiating intrinsic and extrinsic factors during lockdown

Negotiating their capacity to engage and learn during the lockdown was important to students. Many of the student narratives explored and represented the diverse and complex impacts of lockdown on their capacity to engage in their learning. Capacity to engage in learning during lockdown was represented as being mediated via intrinsic and extrinsic factors – e.g. adaptation to different learning environments; self-regulated motivation; structural university policies such as the 'safety net' and online assessment modes; and resources. The students' reflections on learning during lockdown illuminate Kahu and Nelson's (2018) idea that student engagement occurs where students live and learn, in an 'educational interface'. Students intimately the unique alchemy of factors that contributed to their engagement during the first lockdown.

Spatially defined motivation: adapting to new learning environments.

Changing spaces and learning environments was consistently linked, by students, to their capacity to engage in their learning. The narratives reflected the dynamic interplay between students and their learning environments during lockdown. Students highlighted struggles with motivation at home, focusing in particular on their perceptions of the family home as being less conducive to learning than university. They also highlighted overcoming physical barriers to learning, such as access to quiet space.

Given that many students – particularly home students – were forced to return to their family homes during the first lockdown in 2020, it was not a surprise that many of the narratives focused on comparing the University learning environment with their family homes. Space mattered for the students in terms of their perceptions of learning engagement. A recurring theme was the depiction of the University as a motivating environment

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contrasted with the family home space, which was often associated with a lack of productivity.

> *Covid has made me realise how important having a structure to my day really is. I am missing the structure of university which made me a lot more productive than I am now. I think being at home, having no pressure to complete essays and no burning deadlines has had a negative impact and I now feel unmotivated. I hope this will change as my essay is due in 2 days! (A.S)*

Whilst the University space was perceived as providing structure, motivation in the form of social relationships, and a sense of accountability for engaging, the family home was linked with a lack of routine, physical barriers to learning (desk space, privacy etc) and struggles with procrastination and accountability. The quotes above suggest students' perceived capacity to motivate themselves during lockdown was impacted by the interplay between their negative perceptions of their home learning environments and changes to

their sense of control (routine) over their learning and to its purpose.

Schunk and Zimmerman (2007) argue that a students' social and physical environment can influence their emotions, thoughts and behaviours. Moreover, Velayutham & Aldridge (2012: 509) contend that there is a 'consensus that student perceptions of their learning environment account for appreciable variance in learning outcomes'. In many of the students' stories, we see the reciprocal interaction between changes to lived environments (less space, living at home etc), perceptions of the family home as a challenging learning environment, and students' capacity to motivate themselves effectively. Whilst much learning environment research has focused on the classroom, our research suggests the importance of understanding how students' spatial environments, particularly away from campus, can influence both their motivation and self-regulation. Our findings

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support Gravett and Ajjawi (2021) contention that belonging and engagement in higher education should not be understood as a fixed and individual process, but rather in relation to time and space, which is deeply relational, contextual and experiential. **We agree with Gravett and Ajjawi (2021: 6) that within these complex current times, such an understanding of engagement may 'generate deeper understandings of students' situated experiences within higher education'.**

Students manifested the challenges of finding motivation in their new learning environments. They alluded to grappling with perceptions of the family home space as a non-productive learning environment:

> *'Why do I feel like I'm entitled to the whole day off at home' and 'the home is so comfortable and familiar that work inevitably 'invades' the space'. (S.D)*

They also described negotiating and overcoming physical barriers to learning engagement:

> *But, once I identified that the environment that I was in was the reason for my procrastination, I took over the dining table and made it into my "study area" so that I could dedicate this area to studying. (C.G)*

This quote speaks to the importance of understanding student engagement as occurring within a psychosocial space, within which environmental and personal factors combine to influence students' learning actions. A number of our students alluded to a kind of reflexive deliberation, where they considered themselves in relation to a certain social and environmental context (Kahn et al, 2017) and then took intentional steps to adapt. Whilst many of the students talked about the constraints of learning in their family homes, their reflexivity was explicit in finding ways to engage in their learning by appropriating new spaces or creating a new routine at home. Of

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course, the narratives also conveyed that students' capacity to be reflexive was varied, personal and mediated through the sociomaterial settings they were operating in.

Unequal resources during lockdown: the sociomateriality of engagement

Material resources were also represented as being a key influence on students' capacity to engage in their learning. Students such as M.D. shared examples of poor wifi connections, sharing laptops with parents and work spaces that were not conducive to effective learning.

> 'My Dad is a key worker, and so has to work from his office some days, but now it's gradually transitioned to more work at home. Now this working from home involves a lot of Zoom calls, emails, phone calls and other things involving the internet connection. This ended up taking up even more time from my studies as I could access even less from the internet, and on some occasions

> my Dad would have to take my laptop entirely as his wouldn't work and he'd use mine. Now this I don't mind, the laptop itself was a second hand gift from my Dad, and he's also a key worker, so he gets the priority with the internet and the devices. But it did and still does impede my studies. (M.D.)

Students' focus on their material worlds during lockdown highlights the value in thinking about student engagement as situated and sociomaterial. Hence, education does not occur in a vacuum, it is spatially configured and entangled with the material world and where 'place and the material qualities of things matter' (Flynn et al., 2018 – in Gravett & Ajjawi, 2021: 7). Some students struggled more than others to engage in learning within their material worlds. Whilst some narratives touched upon these equity struggles implicitly – e.g. via comments about sharing spaces with siblings – several students directly highlighted issues of disadvantage and equity in relation to learning during the lockdown:

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'I must say though, it really is not that inclusive to assume everyone has the facilities to engage in online working, it is a privileged perspective to guess that everyone has working internet, a free and quiet work space, or just a fully-functioning laptop at all. (S.M.)

The quote above encapsulates the idea that lockdown conditions, Covid-19 and the transition to emergency remote teaching has reinforced the usual lines of disadvantage in higher education. Hence, in order to belong and engage in the University, effectively and equitably, 'students need to be able to access it remotely' (Gravett & Ajjawi, 2021: 8). Certain student narratives also suggest that Covid-19 and the lockdown has created new modes of disadvantage and exclusion:

'I also have faced some barriers. Due to growing financial uncertainty, my family and I have struggled to maintain food costs and other household bills. As money has been tight for my family, we have been strictly budgeting to ensure other costs can be upheld. Having this burden has been stressful for us all......(O.W.)

It seems important that we use Covid-19 and the emergency transition to online teaching as an opportunity for deeper reflections on how 'life'– family responsibilities, material resources and financial pressures – becomes entangled with learning and impacts students in inequitable ways. Moreover, we should move away from notions that online learning can happen anywhere, anytime, and that students' capacity to learn/engage is singularly understood in the context of the teaching provided and meeting the 'learning outcomes' of the course.

Assessment: interplay between curriculum decisions, motivation and perceptions of learning depth

As the majority of the narratives illustrated chronological journeys through the first lockdown period in 2020, it was unsurprising to find that assessments and assessment decisions were

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represented as key moments for students. A variety of emotions and experiences were expressed in relation to assessments, both within individual narratives and across the participant group. Students linked assessment and assessment decisions to motivation, provided vivid descriptions of online exams and reflected on the quality of their learning in relation to assessments taken during lockdown.

Many students linked their lack of motivation to complete assessments during lockdown, with specific assessment policy decisions taken by the University. For example, first year students expressed the challenge of motivating themselves when all their assessments were changed to formatives and they were automatically passed for the first year.

The other big issue with motivation stemmed from the lack of accountability. I am a first year student and all my exams and assessments were cancelled. I can

not lie, I was very relieved. However, without the panic and extrinsic motivation from exams and assessments, a small part of my brain questioned if doing online university work was worth it. "You're automatically passed first year, so what's the point?", is a thought that often came into my head. (J.M.)

The analysis supports the idea that student engagement occurs in the 'psychosocial space at the intersection of student and institution' (Kahu et al, 2017: 63). In this case, students' reflected on how the institutional decision to change assessments from summatives and formatives, in light of Covid–19, limited their motivation and therefore their capacity to engage during lockdown. As found in other studies, when students believe what they are doing is important to their studies, they are more engaged in class (Kahu et al, 2017). Linked to this, another key pathway to 'situational interest' and to engagement in learning is 'moderate levels of anxiety, which are motivating and can trigger students to work harder' (Kahu et al, 2017: 61). The

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language used in some of the stories – e.g. lack of accountability and lack of compulsory exams – implies there was less anxiety for some students and they struggled to frame the work as important.

The importance of relevance to students, in relation to formative assessments in particular, highlights that the institution and teaching staff need to find ways of articulating why students are doing a topic, task or assessment – beyond simply a grade outcome. 'Why is this theory important to practice? Is this foundational knowledge that will be built on later'? (Kahu et al, 2017: 63-64).

Students (predominantly second or third years) also linked their lack of motivation with the University's decision to implement a 'Safety Net' policy for 2019-2020, which meant that students could take assessments without fear of achieving a worse overall mark. Whilst the consensus of expression throughout the narratives was that the

'Safety Net' was extremely welcomed, providing reassurance and comfort during a difficult time, it was also depicted as a barrier to motivation – e.g. 'an excuse not to revise'.

The importance students placed on meaningful and impactful assessments for their motivation and feeling like a student, was illuminated by one final year student:

> '.....writing my dissertation was a weird kind of comfort. It gave me something to structure my day with, a reason for getting out of bed, a handle on my identity as a student'. (H.M.)

This quote also highlights the importance of wellbeing in relation to motivation and supports the idea that pathways to learning engagement interact and overlap (Kahu et al, 2020) across time and space. Wellbeing during lockdown inevitably appeared in the foreground and background of many of the narratives, with a number of students

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linking it directly to their capacity to engage with their studies and assessments:

> *Overall, I would say lockdown definitely made studying a lot harder. Motivation was harder to find, depression spirals were more frequent, and I couldn't motivate myself to get outside for some fresh air for days. I would not want to go through an already extremely tough exam period through lockdown ever again! (A.J.)*

The second image concerns my underactive thyroid. This was perhaps the most difficult to visually convey— the symptoms include fatigue, poor concentration, and weight gain. These are all things that many of us have experienced during lockdown, with the combination of monotonous isolation day-to-day and the ever-changing news cycle. Finishing my degree has been very difficult because of the fatigue and poor concentration, and I wanted to depict the distraction, worry, and exhaustion which has exacerbated many of my usual symptoms. (S.B.)

S.B.'s evocative painting and description captures the interplay between students' strained physical and emotional wellbeing and their capacity (perceived and actual) to regulate their learning and complete assessments, during lockdown. Sarah's story draws particular attention to the impact of the pandemic on disabled students, namely, the added challenge of learning and completing assessments whilst existing conditions are exacerbated by the life in lockdown.

Mediated capacities for learning: negotiating intrinsic and extrinsic factors during lockdown

The practical challenges of doing exams online (and at home) and over a much longer period than traditional exams, also featured heavily across the narratives. Students conveyed strong emotional reactions to doing their final exams at home and described feeling frustrated about the unique distractions and interruptions they experienced whilst taking exams in their family home:

> *The only problems I faced during my exams was either being shouted out (which is normal in a BAME household– well mine is anyways!) to come down and eat or when my siblings were bored and wanted to chat, they would often waltz in and disturb me where I would have to reiterate, I am busy! (S.C.)*

However, there was also discernible positivity about the University's decision to introduce open book online assessments during lockdown. A number of students linked this assessment method/approach to increased motivation, increased engagement and deeper learning.

This approach was described as encouraging harder work, more organization, the application of knowledge and moving away from cramming information.

> *Never did I think I would be sitting my university exams in my room, on my laptop, in my own time. This presented both challenges and opportunities. Rather than cramming countless information and producing revision flash cards, I did not have to worry about my memory turning into that of a goldfish during my exam! Instead at times I was left feeling really assured knowing that the exams were now open book. All the information would be presented in front of me. I simply had to apply it. (J.U.)*

This illustrates the link between assessment choice/design and students' cognitive engagement in deep and active learning. Students' positive reflections on open book exams during lockdown may speak to the value of using them more widely across the University in the future. Students who reflected on open book exams clearly associated better cognitive engagement/deeper learning

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with assessments that promote a holistic interest in, and understanding of the subject area, rather than approaches typified by rote memorization and "brute force" learning (Entwhistle & Peterson, 2004).

The pain of enforced endings: disruptions to university rites and rituals

Another significant theme represented across the student narratives was a sense of loss over key rituals and events that mark the end of their student journeys (or years).

Final year students, in particular, reflected on feeling a sense of loss over 'traditional' endings to their university experiences – e.g. doing a final exam, celebrating finishing with friends and graduation, which were disrupted due to the Covid-19 lockdown. A number of students used the word anticlimactic to encapsulate their feelings:

I loved to complain about getting up earlier for seminars and the queue at Nisa and the smell of Lowther and the stress of exams but now that I am without them, I miss them deeply. I never thought I would sit in my boyfriend's bedroom in his family home doing a 24-hour exam, crying because I should be in an exam hall. But there I was, doing my last ever university exam before becoming a graduate, not surrounded by my friends but in an empty room with the TV on in the background, how anticlimactic. I remember very clearly my last exam of the year for 2019, as I was finishing my second year at

York. I remember my exam being in the late afternoon, so my friends came over beforehand and we got ready for the night out we would undoubtedly have afterwards. (L.A.)

The students' emotional reflections on lost endings – feeling 'numb', 'anticlimatic' – really speaks to the importance of ritual endings and markers of transition in higher education. As suggested by Genevieve Bell (2021), there is value in turning to Anthropology and the concept of 'rites of passage' to understand how the disruptions of Covid-19 have been experienced by people across the world. This approach seems particularly useful for understanding the experiences of higher education students.

The classical work of Arnold Van Gennep (1909–1960): 'Rites of Passage', identifies the presence of community centered rites of passage to mark important life transitions in nearly all cultures (Blumenkrantz & Goldstein, 2014). He argued that rites of passage all contain an underlying

The pain of enforced endings: disruptions to university rites and rituals

sequence of three stages: separation, transition (liminality) and incorporation (Blumenkrantz & Goldstein, 2014:). The higher education journey is a critical process of transition – from childhood to adulthood, from secondary education to higher education, from dependent to independent etc. The concept of liminality is particularly important in the context of the higher education journey, as it is characterised by anthropologists as involving disorientation, ambiguity (Bell, 2021), learning skills/values and processes of becoming and transformation. This understanding chimed with some of the language used by our students as they reflected on their university journeys coming to an abrupt end – e.g. 'life changing'; 'tears, laughter, joy'; 'year of brainstorming ideas'. 'Liminality is also characterised by the rites and rituals that mark the beginning and the end of a period of transition: the rites and rituals of separation and re-incorporation' (Bell, 2021: 80).

Much of the loss represented across the student narratives was famed as a gap between the lockdown reality and what they expected to be doing to mark the end of their degrees or the end of the academic year. A common thread was also missing out on experiencing these important endings/milestones with their friends:

> *Instead a piece of me has just been suddenly ripped out; taken from my friends and a place that was home for the past three years, it was not how I anticipated my time at York to end. I feel numb, overwhelmed, emotional, confused and abandoned by how I thought my future was supposed to go. (M.C.)*

Students' expressions of missing out on marking their transitions from (or within) university, with family and friends, suggests that the disruption to the sociality of these moments has been particularly hard for our students to accept. Many of the narratives therefore suggest that as well as seeing final exams, graduations, and end of year celebrations as markers of personal success – 'transition to a new status' – our students see

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these rituals/events as integral parts of community and family life – cause for social gathering (Blumenkrantz & Goldstein, 2014) and collective recognition of completing a significant 'passage' in their lives.

CHAPTER 4:

Findings in the Narrative Analysis

Using storytelling and narrative analysis as a methodological approach supposes a number of challenges and opportunities for researchers. Yet, and maybe more interestingly, it presents a rather significant opportunity for participants, to actually shape the direction of the study, to provide a deeper and more personal insight into it, and even to develop a personal and individual perspective into the creative body they produce as data.

The submitted stories are not only descriptions of their authors' experiences, but also a mechanism through which they attempted to make meaning of such experiences, during a time of sudden uncertainties about diverse aspects of life. According to a certain conventional definition of narrative, it can be understood as "one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence

of events which (it is inferred) actually occurred" (Labov, in Franzosi, 1998:519). Or "a minimalist definition of narrative might be 'a perceived sequence of non-randomly connected events'" (Toolan, in ibid). These definitions set the basic elements to interpret stories as data, which offer non-accidental perspectives on reality, or, ultimately, ways to make sense of and provide meaning to such reality.

As Esin (2011: 116) notes, "while personalised over time, narratives are not created by individuals independently. They are constructed by drawing on a number of available resources." While these resources can refer to a number of cultural, technical and historical references, from a researcher's perspective, the pandemic and the lockdown shape this body of stories. Whilst the submissions are unique to each individual student,

these stories form part of a specific social and collective context, which influences the creative conditions in which they were produced and, of course, defines the analytical perspective that observes them.

As researchers, we need to consider that "unlike other qualitative research approaches, narrative research does not offer strict rules about the nature and mode of investigation" (ibid). This type of methodology acknowledges the challenge of handling data that is particularly malleable and shapeless in the beginning, as it heavily relies on the creative input of participants and not as much on traditional research tools, that usually define a number of aspects even before reaching out to the participants. In a similar way, the analysis relies strongly on a qualitative view of the data; multiple readings and interpretations of a diverse range of stories and creative works. For this particular study, the freedom participants had to choose their expressive medium demanded a broad understanding of what stories would actually be, using the term rather loosely, considering the

diversity of media, occasional multimedia works, and that a minority of submissions responded to non-linear or abstract narratives, such as drawings, photomontages and other visual works.

The analysis of diverse media, although challenging, is possible in this case because the main focus is still on the content and the creation of meaning, following an interactional-performative analytical model that "places collaborative meaning-making processes at the centre of the narrative analysis" (ibid). Yet, due to the more abstract nature of some of the submissions, we are also considering, when necessary, a more McLuhanian (1967) approach that considers the medium as content in itself, rather than just separating it from the core of the story. This approach readjusts the traditional structuralist view that distinguishes Story (fabula/histoire), Text (sjuñet/discourse) and Narration/narrating as the components of Narrative and that analytically separates the means from the substance. A more McLuhanian approach, on the other hand, sees the medium as the definer of

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the role of the substance (and even of the author). Located within Media Studies, this view considers the influence of, first, electric technologies and, nowadays, digitality in the ways we shape not only our messages, but also our experiences. This approach also considers the need to "keep the story intact in order to preserve and examine the wealth of storied detail contained in it" (Smith, 2016:210) and, thus, to avoid over-coding the data. Although this study doesn't focus especially on the category of digital storytelling, the diversity of media used in the submitted stories necessitates that we define a theoretical and methodological approach that includes these stories and considers them in the creation of meaning.

Alongside the findings obtained from the analysis of the stories themselves, we have also discovered some interesting findings in regard to this methodological approach, which highlight its potential value in terms of working with student communities, as well as giving some recommendations for future applications

Allows participants to propose key topics

One of the key features of narrative analysis is that it allows participants to indirectly set the key topics, problems and perspectives that can be relevant to the research. While it is true that "narrative analysis lacks a prescribed, step-by-step, linear procedure" (Smith, 2016:203), this is compensated by the possibility of obtaining unexpected and subjective views on the initial research objectives, stepping out from possible initial assumptions.

Despite having initial concerns and goals, as researchers we had to reformulate them once the data was collected, in order to meet the topics and interests that were present in the stories, namely, what was more relevant to the students. A general analysis allowed us to identify common experiences, concerns and subjectivities among the participants, and even a sort of collective narrative. This was especially relevant in the context of the pandemic and the first lockdown, which involved collective experiences that affected most of the participants – and the University as a whole – on some level. Commonly, narrative analysis methods are based on imaginary scenarios, with participants relying on their imagination to create stories about subjects they do not necessarily know much about. The context for 'Life in Lockdown' was certainly different, since we started from the premise that participants' creations were based on common experiences influenced by the pandemic. Hence, we found that students worked on expected topics, like the sudden disruption of academic life or struggles to adapt to lockdown routines and maintain mental health:

> But without this motivation, and knowing that 'first year doesn't count', I really struggled to revise, and spent a lot of time just sitting in my room in front of my laptop just staring aimlessly at the screen. (E.R.)

> Over the next few months life passes like a dream, the days blend into one. Wake up at nine, eat breakfast, do some revision, walk the dog in the local park for the daily outdoor venture, do some exercise mid-afternoon and then focus on my craft projects. Except I didn't

Allows participants to propose key topics

manage to keep to my exercise routine and would go two weeks without rigid exercise, then a few days of being motivated enough to do it every day, and then doing about every 4 days, also not revising very rigidly, procrastinating by watching YT videos with my textbook open and only managing to do 4 questions. (B.L.)

Yet, we also found intriguing topics regarding the sense of creating and building student identities and how this is related to their placement during lockdown. Indeed, while we expected to find stories about new studying habits and struggles and mental health concerns, it was interesting to find that many submissions reflected on re-negotiations of their student identities and how this seems to be tightly related to the sense of belonging to a community and to a physical location. We found that students separated home and university as places where student identity is negotiated differently.

I tried in vain to pick holes in memories so I'd miss those interactions less, or so I wouldn't be distraught if we ever drifted apart. 'Maybe', I thought to myself,

'I can be glad I have more control and freedom in my home environment'. But no-one is an island: I've benefited immensely from friends' influences and recommendations, and we've mutually benefited from giving them. (S.D.)

I assaulted myself with more questions: am I the only one who stayed? There was a girl living alone in her shared house near campus. A girl bunkering with other international students in their student house. Many attempted to fly home and were stuck in airports for days, others went to spend time with friends. A few were in my situation – a limbo, unsure of where to go or what to do and ultimately stuck with themselves. (S.T.)

Finally, the last category of topics related to pre-existing conditions that were accentuated during the context of lockdown, either because they got more challenging or became more evident. As the call for participants emphasised the inclusion of students with disabilities, and belonging to working classes and/or BAME communities, some of the stories highlighted how the pandemic impacted certain socio-cultural experiences and modes of exclusion/inclusion.

Allows participants to propose key topics

We work extremely hard, do all our work and reading as ahead of time as possible so that when inevitably our health fails us, we have a safety net of pre preparation to fall back on. The summer is a crucial time for me to get ahead for next year to make keeping up possible, but that time has been lost due to covid restricting hospitals on what medical support they could offer me. (L.K.)

I am a Chinese adoptee and although very "whitewashed" I still was very against the term "Chinese Virus". No matter how much I tried to defend myself, my old Sixth Form chat decided to advocate said term and use extremely harsh stereotypes against the entire Chinese population. Hardly anyone defended me and even told me to calm down. This really was one of the lowlights of quarantine during the holiday. (J.M.)

As argued by Kitzinger and Wood (2019: 26), "counting and reporting frequency of presence or absence of specific topics of interest becomes more important in typical qualitative research". This is particularly relevant in a methodological approach like narrative analysis, which demands special scrutiny of the participants' subjectivities, and how they are present in their stories.

Diversifies and individualizes the subjects

While, on the one hand, identifying common topics across the stories facilitates the comprehension of a collective narrative, on the other, individual stories present very personal subjective perspectives from the participants, which allows researchers to obtain, in most cases, a more detailed representation of each individual. Stories are testimonials, particularly in this study, where most of the submitted works resemble first person perspective chronicles, where authors talk about their personal experiences and include themselves in the narrative. Even in the few cases where they don't present themselves as protagonists, they still conform to the role of narrators. As Smith noted, "even though stories are shaped by culture, people feel a sense of ownership over 'their' stories because they are living them, in their bodies, day after day." (2016:211) This, if deemed necessary and prudent, could allow researchers to approach specific cases.

Due to the nature of the methodology, despite stories being the unit of analysis, individual subjects do not fade among the data, but rather remain as shaped characters, with their own active voices, whether as protagonists, narrators, or both. In some cases they even get to instrumentalise such voices. These stories allow complex individuals to prevail despite their anonymization and shape not only personalities, but place them in narrative contexts based not on hard data, but on experiences, opinions, emotions, fears, anxieties, and desires.

> *I am thrown into these caves randomly but when life is moving fast sometimes we don't have the time or really feel the need to find the strength to remove the rocks because our pain is numbed, often by naturally chasing highs in everyday life – whether it's a sense of accomplishment or external validation. Luckily quarantine threw me in this cave to try to fix something that feels broken. (S.G.)*

The presence of a personal print is a key component of creative work. It is to be expected that these stories will include authorial features

Diversifies and individualizes the subjects

that reflect the participant's individuality. Creative choices, for example, decisions about the medium through which to tell a story, are part of that signatorial exercise, and thus, should be taken into account during the analysis. What do these creative choices say about the author?

> *But what happened to the people the boy constantly asked. She smiled at his curiosity. The people? They were either self-isolating inside their homes and complying with the rules, or became rebels and exposed themselves to catching the virus. But what did you choose to do? Were you a fighter or a follower? She begun to laugh now. Me? I think you can say that I could be identified as both. (A-M.N.)*

This adds layers of complexity to the analysis, as it can make it harder to homogenise the data. However, "narrative research enables researchers to see multiple and sometimes contradictory layers of meaning, to reconstruct meanings through linking these layers, and to explore and understand the interrelations between individual and social processes" (Esin, 2011:116). The heterogeneity and

individualization of narrative experiences, as well as the media used, doesn't necessarily undermine the comprehensive analysis of the sample, despite the methodological challenges it provides. Instead, individualized perspectives can provide specific views on certain problematic categories – such as disabled or BAME – and even re-humanize the narratives around them.

Data is harder to analyse, but is also potentially richer

As with most qualitative research, storytelling-based data is highly malleable, voluble, and hard to analyse. Narrative analysis in particular requires the methodological flexibility to adapt to whatever the data sets as the most relevant topics. But mainly, working with stories as data – and especially with multimedia stories – presents a challenge to define analytical criteria and to group the components of the sample so they can be analysed under the same lens. As Clarke et

Diversifies and individualizes the subjects

al (2019:15) noted, "the data are less predictable than other conventional (self-report) methods. This makes it trickier to plan how to analyse the data, and some research questions [...] may need to be revised or discarded and replaced with others more appropriate to the data collected". This was one of the challenges we faced as a research team.

Compared to other qualitative methods, narrative analysis can seem less reliable, since the "data generated can be less 'transparent' and accessible and, therefore, harder to analyse, including identifying patterns or themes, than self-report data." (Ibid:16) Nevertheless, this type of data also provides complex intimate and emotional landscapes on each particular individual, and can provide a larger scope based on shared topics among participants. Creative work and storytelling provide a tool with the potential to bypass participants' self-report and a way to obtain more subjective and unconscious information related

to the participants' experiences on more layered and complex levels. As such, in order to generate a more constructionist interpretation, stories are meant to be analysed as units - avoiding their fragmentation into allegedly more comprehensive bits, a process that could dangerously strip them of their meaning - that can later be integrated into an even more complex layout of collective narratives. As Chatman (in Franzosi, 1998:519) noted, "for many narratives what is crucial is the tenuous complexity of actual analysis rather than the powerful simplicity of reduction."

Due to the requirements of this type of analysis, it seems recommendable for future studies to include a psychological perspective to complement the existing views and further enrich the interdisciplinary approach.

Creative work as creations of meaning and making sense

As stated by Williams (in Bailey, 1996:187), "narrative reconstructions [are] attempts to account for and repair breaks in the social order." Storytelling practices, whether when consumed or produced, are efforts by those involved to make sense of their own personal experiences. For this study, researchers asked participants to organise their initial feelings and experiences of the pandemic and lockdown in a narrative way. It is not surprising that most of the submitted works have certain characteristics. However, even in the most common type of submission (written, first person, narrator, chronicle), creative choices are manifestations of points of view and/or expressive intentions. For instance, the choice of narrative voice – whether active or passive, direct or narratorial, first or third person – can say something about the type of message, or the type of engagement, the creator wants to have with the reader/viewer, and with themselves.

He was a good guy, but pretty intense at the best of times. On this occasion, he appeared to lose control, and one or two others were more than happy to go with it. Z and his girlfriend sat in silence for over an hour, politely listening, then went to bed miserable. It was an awful evening, but they couldn't blame him. Thousands were about to die. (J.R.)

At the same time however, he cannot help but feel like his worries are insignificant. He understands that he is in a much more privileged position than others, still being able to afford food and have a place to stay in spite of the disruption to normal life. He feels selfish for feeling the way he does. He misses family, friends and a semblance of normalcy, yet there are people out there who have family members on the frontlines, or who are struggling to make ends meet and fill their stomachs. (M.C.)

Although most of the collected data can be defined as chronicles or experiential diaries, the few that correspond to fictional, docu-fictional, abstract, visual or audio-visual work, demonstrate that this kind of data can't really be analysed as factual, but rather as creative processes through which participants attempt to make sense of their own subjectivities. The fidelity of the narrated events is less important than how authors shape

Creative work as creations of meaning and making sense

the characters – whether protagonists or narrators – and the environments in which they unfold. The diversity of creative and expressive means makes it challenging to rely on an accurate description of events. Instead, we are in possession of rich material to explore creation of meaning through a constructivist optic: "There are two main epistemological approaches that shape the understanding of narratives: naturalist, that use rich descriptions of people in their habitats, and constructivist, which focuses on how a sense of social order is created through talk and interaction" (Esin, 2011:116). The constructivist view is reinforced by Franzosi's (1998: 547) statement that "texts do not just index a relation between words and between texts, but between text and social reality", whether they are fiction or nonfiction, or anything in between.

Pertinently, even in the majority of chronicles that can be read as descriptions of the authors' lives, participants were requested to write stories about the pandemic, which "are meaning-making events interpreted by the teller, then the analyst. It is the reconstruction of meaning, not truth, that the researcher wishes to understand and then reinterpret theoretically" (Hill Bailey, 1996:187). It is not only that we as researchers are looking for meaning, but also the subjects in our research. This can be observed in many of the submissions, in which authors tell of a transformative process that is consistent with the traditional aristotelian functionality of storytelling: to reach a cathartic climax that allows audiences to release strong and/or repressed emotions. Stories should always be about transformation, as most structuralists defend: "The elements [of a story] are related [not] only by succession; ... they are also related by transformation" (Todorov, in Franzosi, 1998:521). It is not surprising, but rather expected and welcomed, that participants have been able to use the methodological tool to "transform" and find ways to, arguably, make some sense and provide some meaning to their lockdown experiences.

Creative work as creations of meaning and making sense

Although I have the odd blip here and there, and some difficulty adjusting to new normals, I now feel as if I have the confidence and ability to navigate my academic career to my full potential regardless of my environment, mental health and other factors. I am confident I can go on next year to achieve my career dreams, and this is all down to the university, so thank you. (M.D.)

As a whole, I've enjoyed this experience of talking about lockdown experiences. I hope we all take this as a lesson to appreciate the things that come into our lives and that life is incredibly short. Don't wait to tell those you love and appreciate how much they mean to you and cherish every moment you have. (K.M.)

Finally, the use of a narrative analysis method to approach a traumatic and collective experience, such as the pandemic, may also contribute to the generation of collective meaning in relation to a historical moment. As noted by many participants, narratives/stories enable us to imagine how we will remember these events in the future, and how we will make sense of it with a different perspective.

"Stories are our crucial equipment for making sense

of, organizing, rewriting and communicating our past, present and possible futures. Unlike in other forms of discourse, like a list, account or chronicle, stories involve a specific mode of temporality in which there is a tacking back and forth between events in questions and the evolving whole to which they contribute. For example, somebody transitioning out of the army might recall events from their past in a new or different light now they have moved into civilian life." (Smith, 2016: 210)

The form is also data

One of the main challenges of this research was to conform the submissions as one sample despite the diversity of expressive means and media. Despite the methodological challenges, we believe in the validity of the data ("Valid research was distinguished from invalid research in terms of the extent to which the proper procedures were properly applied" [Smith, in Hill Bailey 1996:188]) and certainly in the expressive and meaningful potential of all submissions. While most of the data corresponded to written work, the exceptions forced us to find methodological approaches to equally and fairly analyse them within the sample. In this regard, to quote Marshall McLuhan's famous principle, "the medium is the message", and even if we are focused on analysing the content within the medium, we can't discard the notion that media, as technological objects, are the pervasive means through which content affects any recipient body (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967: 26). In this case, the formats and media chosen by participants to deliver their stories are data in themselves, and are to be considered part of the content of the stories. This is particularly significant in cases where participants chose more abstract formats, like poetry, images, drawings, or audiovisual narratives.

This presented a major analytical challenge, particularly in some of the more abstract works. However, we have considered that the creation of meaning is not only in the "what is being said", but also the "how it is being said", following the principle that "narrative analytic methods focus on both the whats and hows of talk" (Smith, 2016: 210) and welcoming the possibility that "unpredictable data can be good and even exciting: unexpected data can reveal new things!" (Clarke et al, 2019:16).

We found a diversity of media that is hard to categorize with the same coherence as the prevalent style and genre used in most of the written works. However, we can roughly divide them in:

The form is also data

1. Image-text complement
2. Abstract images (photo, photo-montages, and drawings)
3. Audio-Visual (photovoice, fiction and non-fiction)

Following the principle that creative choices provide information about the author and their view of the world, we tried to interpret these works to understand what this vision could be. In some cases, like in those where images were complemented by text or vice-versa, the search for meaning was less challenging, as it was more transparent to understand how the author interpreted their own subjectivity within the creative process.
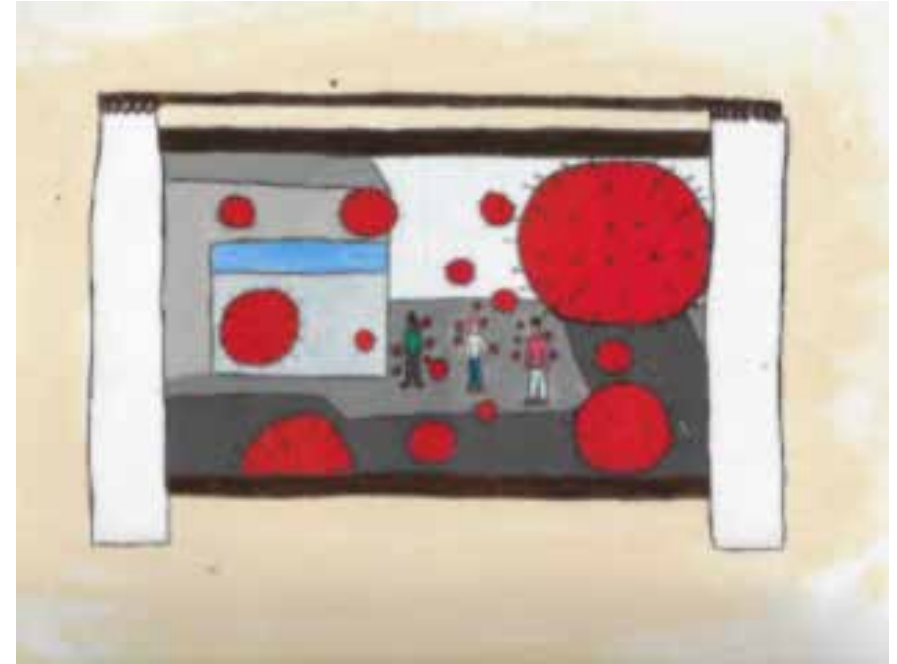
The first image is about my anxiety: I have health anxiety at the best of times, but when the threat of coronavirus was growing and I was stuck at home, I would look out of the window at the shop across the road. Seeing people moving around outside—many of them panic-buying essential items—wondering if they had the virus, if they were spreading it among themselves, if they had spread it to my friends and family. It felt as though the virus was knocking against my window, trying to force its way into my safe space. (S.B.)

The form is also data

But even in those works where the intention was less direct, it was still possible to see the development of the authorial view. For instance, P.P's docu–fiction short film proposes a light, comedic story of friends from different households that find alternative analog ways to communicate from opposite sides of the river Ouse. This scene suggested allegorical reflections on isolation and communication during lockdown.

P.P.

Other audiovisual work, by H.L., showed a selfie–style framing of the author reciting poetry. This was an interesting creative choice, considering that the poetry could have been submitted as a written piece. Yet, it was chosen to be delivered as a recitation and through a video that individualized the author and speaker, which denotes certain intentionality in the delivery of the message, and makes a considerably more complex and multimedia expressive piece.

More abstract submissions presented greater challenges in terms of interpretation, but we still consider they were produced with evident intention, even if the messages are rather obscure, ambiguous or ambivalent. They still provided elements that can be interpreted within the context of the research, and are a significant contrast to other, more direct works. It is in these cases where we can observe that the production of collective meaning is still possible as long as the context is common for all participants.

The form is also data

The variety of expressive means doesn't affect the interpretation of meaning, as long as the works are generated through a validated method that allows them to be organically grouped around a core thematic concept, like the pandemic and lockdown. There is a methodological temptation to deconstruct the creative works in order to homogenise them and potentially make the analysis an easier task. However, "precisely because they are essential meaning-making structures, narratives must be preserved, not fractured" (Riessman, in Franzosi, 1998:548) and media must be understood as integral parts of the story, not just as a messenger or deliverer, but rather as a creative choice that contributes with meaning and says things about the author and about the context

S.R.

Practical advantages

Despite the challenges described in this report, we were able to find some practical advantage in the use of narrative analysis:

- It doesn't require interviewing skills, nor focus group moderation skills, which makes it suitable for young researchers, coming from diverse disciplines;

- Which also makes it suitable to work in university environments and among students.

- Allows non-intrusive methods to sensitive topics, as we were able to see during the interpretation of the stories and how some of the authors directly referred to delicate themes, such as race, racism, disabilities, and loss.

- The data doesn't require transcriptions; at least in most cases, and it is easy to store,

- Which simplifies scrutiny over data, due to the direct method of recollection and storage.

- Research tools don't require too long to design, especially at the beginning of the study, while

further development of new tools will depend on the first stages of analysis and the identification of relevant topics and themes.

- This methodology can be complemented and/or contrasted with data obtained from more essentialist or positivist approaches.

CONCLUSIONS

One of the many evolving impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic is that the crisis has shone a light on the dynamic relationship between students and the University. The move to remote teaching has affirmed the need for a more nuanced understanding of where, why, when and how students' engage with their learning and the University. We have been inspired by Kahu and Nelson's (2018) idea that student engagement occurs at the 'educational interface' – where university, psychosocial, personal and social-cultural factors coalesce. This study has found that students' engagement and learning has been severely impacted during the pandemic; with their motivation and capacity to connect to and access their learning influenced by diverse experiences of online teaching, their unique 'everyday lives' in lockdown, fluid attachments to new learning environments and, the sociomaterial contexts in which they live and learn.

Our findings highlighted how students' everyday life stories were often characterised by a sense of apathy and lack of purpose in mundane activities, which influenced academic performance and, most importantly, perceived performance. Students struggled to keep up with their academic workload during the first national lockdown and, as a result, feelings of disappointment surged in relation to their performance. The absence of a routine and the inability to follow a predetermined schedule left them feeling dissatisfied, not only with their academic performance, but with themselves at large. To mitigate these feelings, students tried to develop new routines and adjusted to what they called "the new normal", but they often failed to stick to their plans and this led to further dissatisfaction. Students were trapped in a vicious cycle of lack of motivation, attempts to create a daily routine, and perceived failures to actualise desired structure.

Within this new routine, technology played an important role. Our findings suggest that students felt ambivalent about using technology and communication devices during lockdown. While some used them as means to stay connected with their distant and loved ones, for others, technology

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- and social media platforms, in particular – represented a source of anxiety and tension.

The uncertainty students experienced during the first national lockdown translated into imaginings of their immediate futures lives at university. Most participants reported feelings of nostalgia about the social events they were going to miss out on because of Covid-19, including graduation ceremonies, summer balls and holiday plans. Others – particularly disabled students – questioned how their future life and career was going to be affected by missed opportunities. Overall, these stories have highlighted how the uncertainties caused by the global pandemic affected not only students' everyday lives, but also their sense of worth and their anxiety about the future.

One of the fundamental impacts of lockdown on students' lives was that most of our participants – who changed their living places or moved back to their family home during the first national lockdown – had to negotiate and reconstruct their student identities based on places. The narratives suggest a critical relationship between place and the negotiation and development of student identities. The family home implied a range of feelings, attachments and daily practices for students in this study. It also structured students' domestic identities, by creating mutual living spaces, shared life satisfaction, a sense of timetabling and daily routines at the family home. Experiences of domesticity challenged students' educational practices, while they had to adjust and perform family norms and routines. Sharing mutual living space and family timetabling were particularly influential on students' educational practices and learning. We found that family homes became places where students embodied a range of everyday practices and identities – both related to being a HE student and more domestic modes of being. In this sense, our findings provide insight into the intersectionality and instability of students' identities, highlighting the need for future research on the connections between place and student identity development and engagement (Blunt & Varley, 2004; Walsh, 2006; Richardson,

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2008; Newbold et al., 2011; Holton and Riley, 2016). Equally, our study suggests that student identities can be reconstructed through social and daily activities within living places as well as social factors, including living environment, economic conditions and relationships. The narratives revealed the diverse ways in which experiences of being a student in their immediate community - influenced by family dynamics, culture, space and resources - can differ from those of the learning environments. Working class students' narratives highlighted that certain socio-economic circumstances were barriers to learning engagement during the lockdown, namely, the lack of resources, tools and adequate learning environment (Brooks, 2003; Blunt & Varley, 2004; Fincher & Shaw, 2009; Holton and Riley, 2016). Participants' identity formation process in the family home highlighted how the university as space represents interwoven meanings that offer opportunities to learn to manage, construct and transform their student identities and experiences. One of our key contributions is highlighting students' diverse and complex transitions to online

teaching and learning. Given the sudden transition to emergency remote teaching during the first lockdown, many of our students unsurprisingly reported struggles with motivation and connection, inside and outside of the virtual classroom. Most telling was that many of the students linked their motivation struggles - their disconnection - to what they saw as a deficit in sociality within virtual classrooms. Students weren't simply nostalgic about face-to-face delivery per se, they alluded to missing the impact of social connections on their learning.

Another key insight from the narratives was that key decisions taken by the University on assessments during the lockdown had profound impacts on students' engagement and learning. For example, first year students reported struggles with motivation due to their summatives being changed to formatives. Similarly, second and third year undergraduates linked their lack of motivation to the University's safety net policy, which guaranteed that their overall grade for the year would not diminish. Another example,

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highlighted by students, was the shift to 24 hour and open book exams. Notwithstanding the reported challenges of doing assessments in the family home, students were largely positive about the University's use of open book exams, which were associated with deeper learning and engagement. These findings suggest the need to reflect on what the key tenets of post pandemic assessment design should look like. Students' experiences of assessment during lockdown arguably call for a focus on assessments that are deliberately relevant, learning-focused and flexible.

Our findings have clear implications for the access and participation and inclusive learning agendas. We found that the lockdown and the shift to remote teaching and learning reinforced existing modes of disadvantage, as well as creating new forms of exclusion. A key implication of students' representations of their lives in lockdown is that student engagement is both situated and sociomaterial. Hence, we found that students' learning during lockdown was deeply entangled

in their lives and impacted by their wellbeing, the time they had, the spaces they used to learn, their access to resources such as wifi/laptops, their family responsibilities and their sense of self. Our findings will hopefully enable a focus on how the material, temporal and spatial dimensions of online and face-to-face teaching influences the engagement of diverse learners. Our key challenge, as we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, is how we activate access, student engagement and belonging for all students.

Methodologically, our multimedia storytelling (data collection) and narrative (analysis) approaches provided an interesting and alternative way of accessing students' perspectives about their lives, experiences and identities. These approaches allowed us to observe experiences, emotions and struggles that were unexpected at the start of the research. While some of the key representations were expected – i.e. issues with online learning, anxiety about the future and the pandemic – we were also able to identify themes relevant to a significant number of participants, enough to be

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considered as collective narratives and, thus, fundamental parts of the analysis – i.e. struggles about identity and place.

We believe narrative and multimedia methodologies can allow greater space for participants' agency to influence the research, as well as to have more creative instances of self-reckoning and introspection, even if it is on an unconscious level. We suggest that future research with similar approaches include an expert in psychological interpretation of creative work, in order to complement and enrich the findings we are already capable of obtaining.

Involving students' creatively in research about their lives produced a certain type of data, which allowed us as researchers to grapple with issues of identity and highly personalised experiences of everyday life and learning and teaching. Personal stories emerge from the data, instead of being homogenized, as usually happens with more quantitative methods. Nevertheless, the common context in which the research was

conducted – the first lockdown and the Covid-19 pandemic – has also allowed us to observe a collective narrative, where certain struggles and perspectives meet under an umbrella concept. This makes it possible to group a variety of, on the one hand, diverse narratives and, on the other, diverse media. We suggest that, for future research, these two factors need to be balanced. If there are contextual circumstances that serve to group the narratives, then the diversity of media shouldn't undermine the analysis. If, on the contrary, the production of narratives isn't influenced by such a central context - i.e. lockdown - having multiple media could make it significantly harder to group the narratives and conduct proper analysis.

Recommendations

Student Engagement

- Integrating Kahu and Nelson's (2018) concept of the 'educational interface' into our ongoing work on [building academic communities](#) and [student engagement](#), may deepen our understanding of how different institutional and student characteristics interact to influence engagement and success, in changing contexts.

- Our findings call into question our ongoing reliance on single snapshot survey measures of student engagement. Future research and interventions should respond to the dynamic and contextual nature of student engagement, which can be unique to each individual student and influenced by social, economic, cultural and 'lifeload' factors. **Listening to student stories, systematically, should therefore be a priority.**

- Identity should be a key consideration for future work around engagement, belonging and community building, particularly as students re-adapt to university life on campus. Covid disruptions have emphasised the value in understanding how students' living spaces, places and resources influence their sense of 'being' a student and their attachments to the University. A focus on the relationship between student identity development and place, will have implications for colleagues working within access and participation, learning and teaching and also those working in student accommodation.

- Further research will be crucial in exploring student engagement as students (re)adapt to face-to-face teaching and university life. Greater use of qualitative, narrative, longitudinal and participatory approaches will better enable us to focus on the processual experiences of engagement, as well as on the journeys of students from specific backgrounds.

Recommendations

Access and Participation: accessibility and student-centred teaching

- Continue attending to modes of exclusion that have been reinforced and generated by Covid-19. This means foregrounding the idea that engagement with the University - courses, resources, staff and activities - will always be impacted if students do not have effective and equitable access to it.

- In light of Covid-19, a continued focus on the sociomateriality of student engagement will be crucial, putting clear mechanisms in place to systematically identify and respond to students' diverse access needs.

- Our financial support systems should take account of how learners are studying and participating and be agile enough to support students' changing material needs. This means continuing to fund material resources such as laptops and wifi - post Covid - for all students in need.

- A renewed focus on accessibility in learning design and support is crucial. We must look beyond the face-to-face Vs online binary and focus on how blended, student-centred approaches can reduce inequalities through the development of inclusive learning environments.

- Courses should not be rigidly focused on synchronous, didactic and face-to-face delivery. They should offer flexibility to meet diverse student needs - moving away from fixed timetables, spaces, equipment requirements and modes of assessment.

Online teaching

- In light of Covid-19, the University should promote, widely, the use of student-centred course design and pedagogies, which think carefully about what students actually have to do to learn; addressing learners' cognitive and social needs and situating learning within contexts that are meaningful to students.

Recommendations

- Social spaces and activities that facilitate student–student and student–staff connections should be central to design. Enhanced peer collaboration, inside and outside the classroom, should be prioritised - e.g. via group assessments, peer teaching and peer assessment.

- Experiences of disconnection during lockdown illustrate the need to prioritise the active involvement of learners in co-design of learning activities and environments. Enabling students to play an active role in setting and modifying tasks, producing learning tools and resources etc, will function positively towards their engagement and their capacity to self-regulate, in a post Covid world.

Assessments

- In these uncertain times, course leaders/ lecturers should prioritise finding ways to articulate, clearly and intentionally, why students are doing a topic, task or assessment.

- The University should take particular inspiration from Brown and Sambell's (2020) recommendations for assessment in a post Covid world. They advocate for assessment strategies that:

1. Are authentic, life-relevant tasks that foster self-regulation and place as much emphasis on process as on outcome.

2. Clearly contribute to the student learning journey, by enabling them to develop and demonstrate skills and capabilities as well as knowledge.

3. Do not use unseen, synchronous and isolated assessments as the default methodology.

4. Provide choice for students to undertake assessments when they feel ready, rather than on single set dates, allowing self-paced progress.

Recommendations

- Continuous project-based assessment models could drive engagement and motivation in the aftermath of Covid-19. Self-regulation could be embedded as part of the assessment – e.g. through self-reflections or portfolios (Rapanta et al, 2020) – and enhanced via ongoing feedback and opportunities to share and discuss work.

- Positive experiences of open book exams during lockdown suggest a need to focus on designing assignments that promote the application/explanation rather than the recollection of information

Value of Narrative Methods

- Future research looking at students' lived experiences – particularly through the lenses of widening participation and inclusive practice – should consider how the development of authorship and agency via narrative and storytelling methodologies, could amplify hidden or marginalised voices at York.

- Despite being able to satisfactorily deal with a diverse sample of expressive and creative means, we believe that methodological difficulties could be avoided with a clearer definition of the data characteristics before the collection.

- A possible way to approach this could be the application of more direct story completion techniques, or similar approaches. This technique is usually based on fictional scenarios set by the researchers, in contrast to the contextual circumstances that drove this study, but that can vary depending on the purpose of each particular project. Like with the pandemic in our case, these scenarios could also be defined by common experiences for the participants. Certainly, this could involve different degrees of emotional engagement with the scenario, but as we have seen, story-based data is strongly founded on the premise of getting subjective information from participants. Story completion techniques are 'a way to

Recommendations

access perceptions or constructions around your object of interest' (Clarke et al, 2019:15) and are less suited for directly accessing experiences. However, it is a good tool to access assumptions and perspectives, by potentially bypassing the social demands of self-report data collection and self-conscious responses.

- This technique could be more effective when complemented with other approaches, since it provides a certain type of data, which has its own characteristics and limitations. It would be interesting to complement more subjective data from narrative analysis, with other data based on participants' self-report.

- Further studies using student stories could be conducted by interdisciplinary teams, in order to gain diverse perspectives on students' lived experiences and bring together different analytical techniques. We recommend the inclusion of specialists from disciplines such as psychology, education, sociology, narrative studies, cultural studies, among others,

depending on the requirements of each particular study.

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Appendices

Appendix I Participants' profile [1]

Participants	Working Class	Disability	Ethnic Background	Care-dependents
A.S.	No	No	White	No
A-M.N.	Prefer not to say	No	White	No
A.J.	Yes	No	BAME	No
A.M.	Prefer not to say	Prefer not to say	White	No
B.L.	No	Yes	White	No
C.G.	Yes	No	BAME	No

[1] Participant V. A. took part in the project after the initial promotion of the project. Although she completed the Consent Form and gave full consent for her data usage, she did not complete the Expression of Interest Form that consists of demographic details of participants. V.A.'s demographic details, including social class, disability conditions, ethics background and care dependency, were deduced from her narrative. Similarly, a small number of participants did not provide some demographic details in the Expression of Interest Form. We also deduced missing demographic details from these participants' narratives.

Appendices

Participants	Working Class	Disability	Ethnic Background	Care-dependents
E.B.	No	No	White	No
E.R.	No	No	White	No
E.H.	No	No	White	No
F.S.	Prefer not to say	Yes	White	No
F.N.	Yes	No	BAME	No
H.K.	Yes	No	BAME	No
H.L.	No	No	White	No
H.M.	Yes	No	White	No
H.J.	No	No	White	No
J.M	Prefer not to say	No	BAME	Yes

Appendices

Participants	Working Class	Disability	Ethnic Background	Care-dependents
J.C.	No	No	White	No
J-H.U.	Yes	No	BAME	Prefer not to say
J.R.	Yes	Yes	White	No
K.M.	No	Yes	White	Yes
K.M.	Yes	Yes	BAME	No
L.P.	No	No	White	No
L.A.	No	No	White	No
L.H.	Yes	No	White	No
L.K.	No	Yes	White	No
M.S.	Prefer not to say	Yes	White	Yes

Appendices

Participants	Working Class	Disability	Ethnic Background	Care-dependents
M.C.	Prefer not to say	No	White	No
M-C.C.	Prefer not to say	No	BAME	No
M.D..	Yes	No	White	No
O.W.	Yes	Yes	White	No
P.P.	No	No	White	No
R.H.	No	No	White	No
R.A.	No	Yes	BAME	No
S.B.	No	Yes	White	No
S.C.	Yes	No	BAME	No
S.T.	No	Yes	BAME	No

Appendices

Participants	Working Class	Disability	Ethnic Background	Care-dependents
S.G.	Prefer not to say	Yes	BAME	No
S.M.	Yes	Yes	White	No
S.H.	No	No	White British	No
S.D.	No	Yes	White	No
T.D.	Prefer not to say	No	White	No
W.P.	Yes	No	White	Yes

Appendices

Appendix II Participant information sheet

What is the project?
We want to give students a chance to share their stories of Covid-19 and the impact it is having on their lives. We know that all students are different and we are particularly keen to understand the wide variety of experiences that are taking place, especially in your experiences of digital learning, teaching and assessments. We're keen to understand and explore differences across courses, departments or backgrounds. We are particularly interested in hearing from those of you who identify as working class, BAME (Black, Asian or Minority Ethic) and/or disabled. The stories will be the basis of a YUSU research project and we would like to analyse and share your story with other students and University staff, so they can learn from experiences. We hope the research will inform the University's online teaching approaches and their Access and Participation work.

What are we looking for?
We want to give students a chance to share their stories of Covid-19 and the impact it is having on their lives. We know that all students are different and we are particularly keen to understand the wide variety of experiences that are taking place, especially in your experiences of digital learning, teaching and assessments. We're keen to understand and explore differences across courses, departments or backgrounds. We are particularly interested in hearing from those of you who identify as working class, BAME (Black, Asian or Minority Ethic) and/or disabled. The stories will be the basis of a YUSU research project and we would like to analyse and share your story with other students and University staff, so they can learn from experiences. We hope the research will inform the University's online teaching approaches and their Access and Participation work.

Appendices

You can choose to tell your story in whatever way you would like, this could be:

- A written piece (Min 500 words)
- A vlog
- A digital story
- A set of photos (Min 300 words of narrative)
- A piece of art (Min 300 words of narrative)

Why should I get involved?

At this challenging time, amplifying student voices and experiences is incredibly important for positive action and change. Storytelling is also an important skill that you can develop by taking part in this project, contributing to your personal development. We will provide resources to help you learn how to frame a story and introduce you to the different methods of storytelling. Sharing your experiences can also be a cathartic process, giving yourself the time to be reflective and creative.

Appendices

We are providing payment for your stories of between £20 and £40. We would like to encourage you to provide a comparative or series of pieces, so we can see the changes in your experience over time. Therefore payment* will be:

- £20 a single submission
- £30 for two comparative pieces (e.g. then and now,pre and post exam)
- £40 for a series of more than two pieces

*YUSU has the right to refuse payment for any submissions they do not consider to be a genuine personal experience piece.

What will happen to your story?
The stories will help YUSU understand how students from different backgrounds are currently experiencing university. With your consent, we will also share some of the stories with the University so they can get a better picture of the diversity of student experiences during Covid-19, through a research report.

In the future, we hope to publish some of your amazing work on the YUSU website and social media (not all stories will be published due to capacity). You can let us know if you are happy for us to do that in the project consent form. There is also the option of having your work published anonymously, if you would like to see your work shared but aren't comfortable with your name being displayed.

How do I get involved?
All you have to do is fill out this 'Expression of Interest' form if you haven't already. We will then provide you with a 'how to guide' and workshops, with practical tips and resources for producing a personal story.

Appendices

You can spend as much time as you want working on your story. However, we envisage receiving most stories before the end of Summer Term. Here are some milestones:

- **Week 6-7** – Sign up to the project.
- **Week 7** – Attend a workshop, familiarise yourself with the 'How to Guide'.
- **Week 8-9** – Plan and develop your story – we'll be on hand to discuss ideas and   provide support.
- **Week 10** – Initial submission – although you can submit your story earlier or later. For   those submitting comparative/multiple stories, this will be a good milestone for your initial story.

The YUSU Student Voice team is happy to answer any questions you have about the project. Please email us at engagement@yusu.org

Appendices

Appendix III Expression of interest form [2]

*[2] https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdnozWUWuV
3trFS9Jh45HHt4uoNrg24UqF0sZmoefK9QZzUnA/formResponse
'Expression of Interest'*

Appendices

Ethnicity

Your answer

Religion / Faith / Belief

Your answer

Disability

Do you consider yourself to have a disability, learning difficulty, long term health condition or anything else that has an impact on your wellbeing, physical health or mental health?

○ Yes

○ No

○ I'd prefer not to say

Would you consider yourself to be a working class student?

○ Yes

○ No

○ I'd prefer not to say

Appendices

Appendix IV Consent form

We will ask you to reflect on your experiences during the Covid-19 outbreak. The content is controlled by you. The stories will help YUSU understand how students from different backgrounds are currently experiencing university.

We will provide you with a 'how to guide', with practical tips and resources for producing a personal story. We will also host optional workshops where you can ask questions, discuss your ideas and learn more about the project.

Initially we would share your story with the YUSU Student Voice Team and the Sabbatical Officers via a Google folder with restricted access. With your consent, we will also share some of the stories with the University so they can get a better picture of the diversity of student experiences during Covid-19. We will also generate key themes from the stories and share the insights with the University via a research report.

In the future, we hope to publish some of your amazing work on the YUSU website and we may link to this via social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. You can let us know if you are happy for us to do that in the project consent form. There is also the option of having your work published anonymously, if you would like to see your work shared but aren't comfortable with your name being displayed.

Appendices

For further information or to ask any questions regarding this project, please contact:
engagement@yusu.org
*Required

1. Email *

_____

Your Rights
You do not have to take part in this project, the process is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw from it at any point without giving us an explanation. If consent is withdrawn at any stage, we will securely destroy any material that has been shared up to that point.

You do not have to discuss anything that you feel uncomfortable with.

Although this story is about you and your experiences, you can remain anonymous.

Consent

Privacy Notice: https://yusu.org/
about-us/organisational-policies/
privacy-policy

If you do not want us to use your story at the end of the process, we will not use it. We will only use your story if you have provided us with a signed consent form.

In line with new Guidelines for Data Protection Regulation, this research adheres to YUSU's Privacy Notice: https://yusu.org/about-us/organisational-policies/privacy-policy

Risks
You may find reflecting on and discussing some of your experiences upsetting, and if you wish to withdraw from the process you can do so at any point without giving a reason why. Staff will be able to signpost you onto necessary support services.

Costs
You will be reimbursed for your participation in this research. Once your story has been submitted and accepted, we will ask for your bank details so we can process a payment.

2. Name

_____

3. I have read the information above for this study and/or have had the details of this study explained to me *Mark only one oval.*

⬭ Yes

⬭ No

Appendices

4. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any point.

   Mark only one oval.

   ( ) Yes

   ( ) No

5. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study within the time limits outlined in the information above, without giving a reason for my withdrawal and without any consequences.

   Mark only one oval.

   ( ) Yes

   ( ) No

6. I wish to participate in the study under the conditions set out in the information above

   Mark only one oval.

   ( ) Yes

   ( ) No

7. I consent to my story being used in the following ways (please tick all that apply)

   Tick all that apply.

   Sent anonymously to the University

   [ ] Used by YUSU to evaluate student experiences and to inform work with the University on enhancing learning and teaching and access and participation

   [ ] Viewed by Staff and Officers at YUSU

   [ ] Published on the YUSU website, anonymously (no identifying material)

   [ ] Published on the YUSU website, with your name and identifiable material

Appendices

Appendix V Express consent email

University of York Students' Union Mail - Life in Lockdown

Student Engagement <engagement@yusu.org>
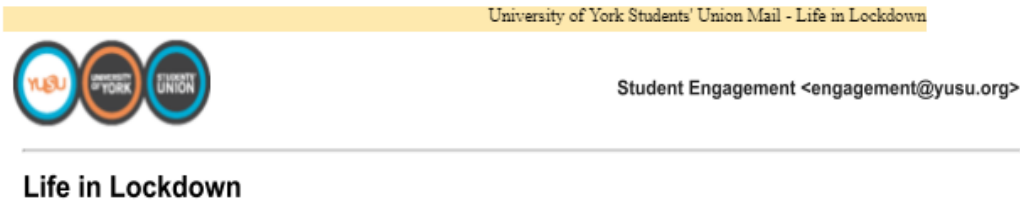
Life in Lockdown

Dear (Name of student) …

As the Life in Lockdown project is in progress, we would like to thank you for your participation in this important project. As the project team, we are astounded by the level of creativity and effort students have put into their stories. Students' stories provide significant insight into understanding how students experience and interpret their life in lockdown. These stories propose fundamental implications for how the University and YUSU can attempt to improve learning and teaching, wellbeing and participation. We hope you have enjoyed and found value in the process of storytelling.

We plan to close the submission stage of the project at the end of August 2020. We would like to ask you to submit your story(ies) by this time if you have not submitted yours yet. We also plan to publish all stories as raw data on the website starting with 12th October 2020.

As we have stressed before, your privacy and data are important for us. We ensure that information collected about you during the research are kept with full protection, and are used under the new guideline for Data Protection Regulation of YUSU's Privacy Notice. As such, you complete the consent form in accordance with this guideline of data protection. We also specifically ask for your consent for publishing your stories on YUSU's website.

Please respond to this email that you are also giving your consent for YUSU to publish your story. Please state clearly how you would prefer your story(ies) is published. Options are as follow:

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a) Not publishing the story on the YUSU website.
b) Publishing the story anonymously
c) Publishing the story alongside my name

We guarantee that your story(ies) will not be published/ accessible without your Express consent confirmation email. If you submit videos or photographs in your story, it may not be possible to publish your story anonymously. If you have any concerns, please contact us at [engagement@yusu.org.](mailto:engagement@yusu.org)

Once again, thank you for your wonderful contribution to this project.

Nick Glover
Student Voice & Insight Manager at YUSU