Student identities in new spaces of higher education

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University of Brighton

Introduction

- Research aims
- Methodology
- Research setting
- Visual representation
- Local findings
- National context

Research Aims

Student identities in new spaces of higher education

- To explore the influences on the construction and formation of student identities in a new university town

- To investigate the similarities and differences of home based and migrant , post-18 student identities, examining the emergence of student 'lifecourses', spaces and experiences in a new university town

- To consider the impact of space and place on student identities

Methodology

- Survey

- Photo-elicitation

- Semi-structured
  key actor
  interviews

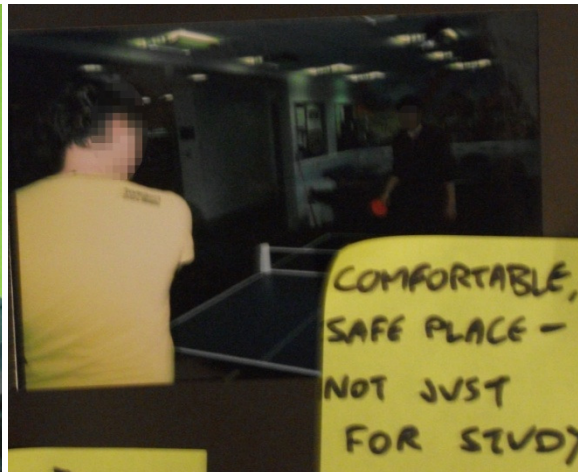
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Setting

Space, place and identity

'Some groups have more power than others to enter into negotiation'

These groups learn which spaces are 'safe' for them   Skeggs,B. 1999

University spaces

"…When you're in Brighton you feel you're at a university..."

Ph.E 6 [local-origin]

Space, place and identity

- "…field which despite undergoing substantial shifts in recent times, remains somewhat 'fixed' in terms of patterns of dominant power relations. Thus, those who do not fit or pass easily within this (white, middle class) space may be impelled to perform their identities otherwise, in an attempt to 'break in' and 'be accepted'." (Archer 2008:394)

- Students consider a range of factors when making applications from 'lifestyle' large city centre campus to 'family' small town university.

(Thomas 2002)

University spaces

" *I'm a different character in different places…in any form of education, I'm always the quiet one. Unless I'm at work and then I'm very talkative. I was bullied at school and that's always at the back of my mind ...*

I contribute more when I'm in Brighton [Falmer Campus] *because everyone knows each other - people always ask what I'm doing - accepting me and so I just join in…*

There's more structure there in seminar groups, I'm put into one so I have to make the effort. We're not put into groups here [Hastings Campus] *so I won't talk out loud unless I have to.*"
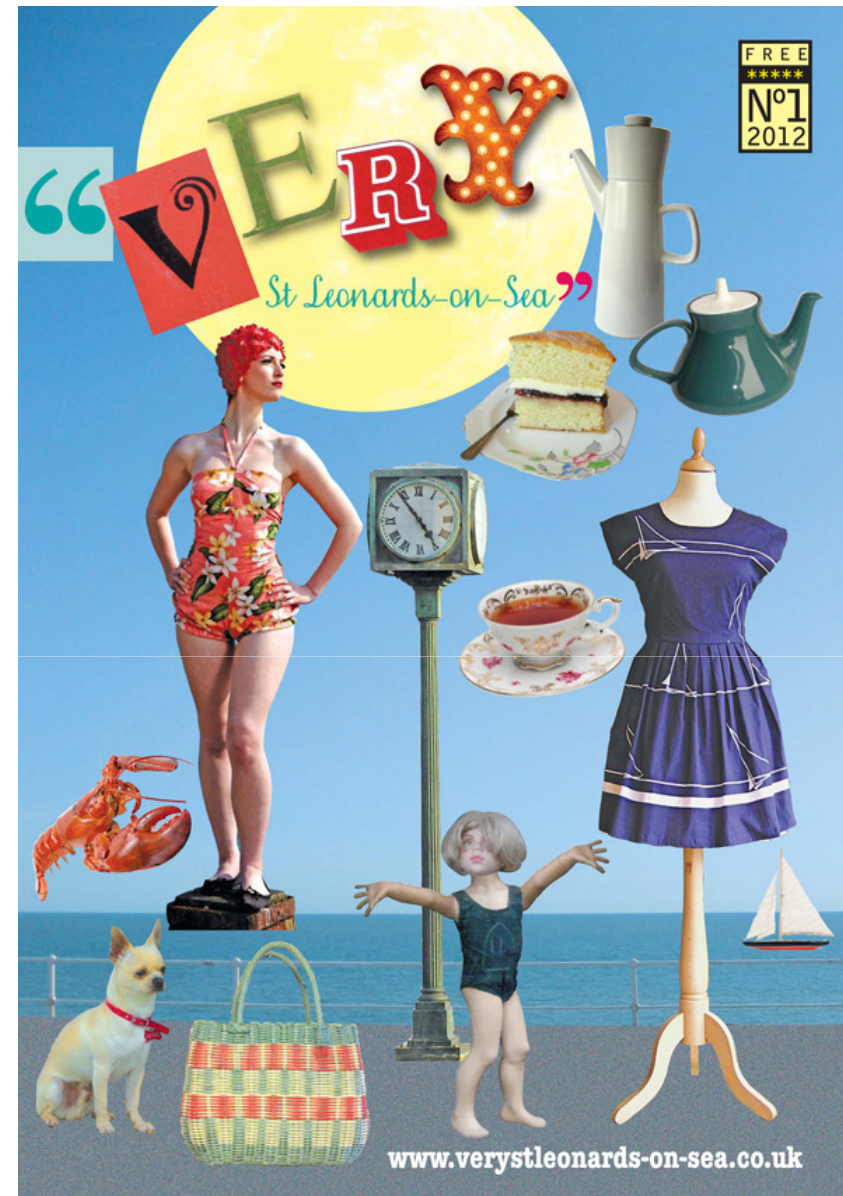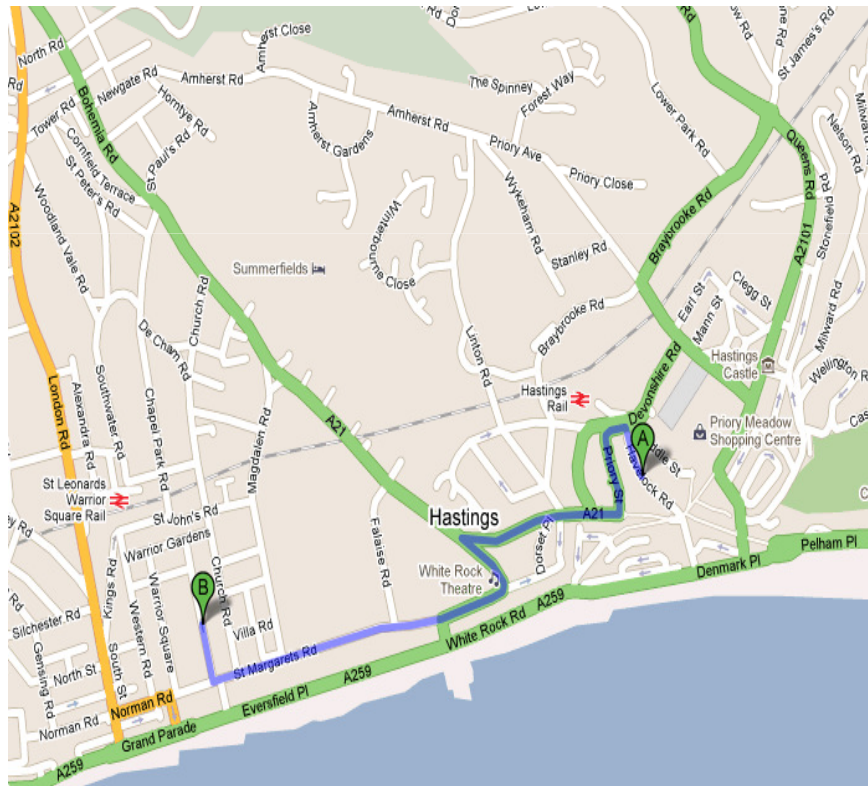
Hazel PhE 5

Case Study

The journey between student halls
and campus   (Google)

www.verystleonards-on-sea.co.uk

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Governance

"*We need to identify where students go - and want to - separate and apart from where young people go. We have a lack of knowledge here and possibly a lack of numbers...never-the-less we want students to feel comfortable anywhere. Community and student safety is important for Hastings and St Leonards.*"

KI. 1

"*The growing number of local independent cafes, shops and galleries … are making the neighbourhood a more 'funky', desirable place to live.*"

KI. 2

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What the students say...

'...*Expected closer links between Brighton campus and Hastings¸ never realised distance between two...*'   FN1-RT

'...*Thought was in Brighton...*' FN2-RT

'...*Go out in Brighton...*'   FN3-RT

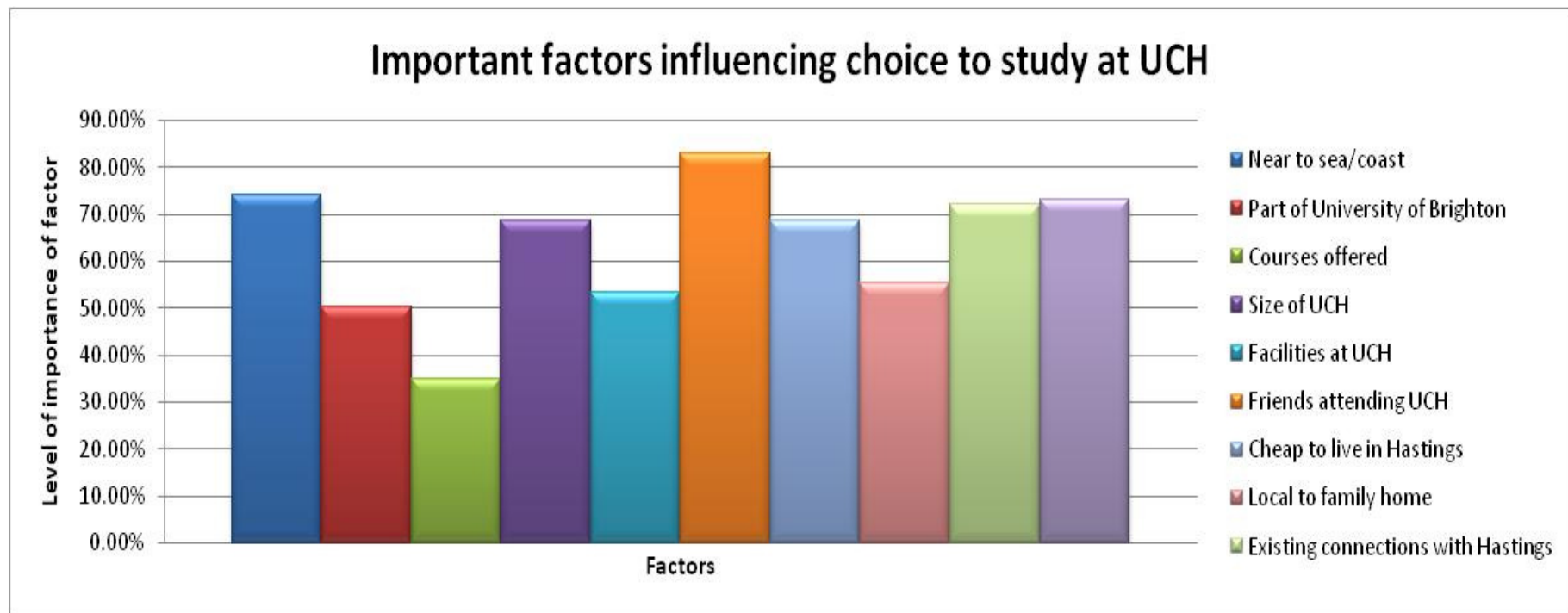'....Gayness of Brighton...'   FN1-RT

Who is saying what?

'...I like being by the sea...'

'...Selected UCH because it's a small university....'

'...Best thing so far has been the Bonfire Celebrations...'

Taken from Field Notes (FN1-RT)

Important factors influencing choice to study at UCH

Photo-elicitation

Photographic contexts provide
meaning in two strands

(Adelman 2006)

1. That belonging to who made the image...
2. The way in which it is viewed...

Visual sociology and postmodernism

A "2-headed beast" (Harper 2006:24) ...empirical and symbolic meaning.

- 1920's: Early anthropological use of classification/categorisation of people.
- 1940's: Bateson and Mead use visual representation in "Balinese Character" but not revival expected.
- 1970's Becker discussed the photographer's
  i. point of view
  ii. bias
  iii. knowledge (or lack of it).

Meaning is constructed by both the maker and viewer.

The photograph changes in different viewing contexts (Harper). The colonial photographs became interesting because they now portray colonial interpretation.

# Self identity vs joint construction

Participant voice

Myers (2009) reflects on how the photographer is given a voice.

Shared ownership of the method is achieved through short descriptions that provided opportunity for the [student] voice or viewpoint to be heard within a process where they may otherwise be **excluded, unheard or distorted** (Hopkins 2007, Myers 2010) and offered both immediate and reflexive response opportunities.
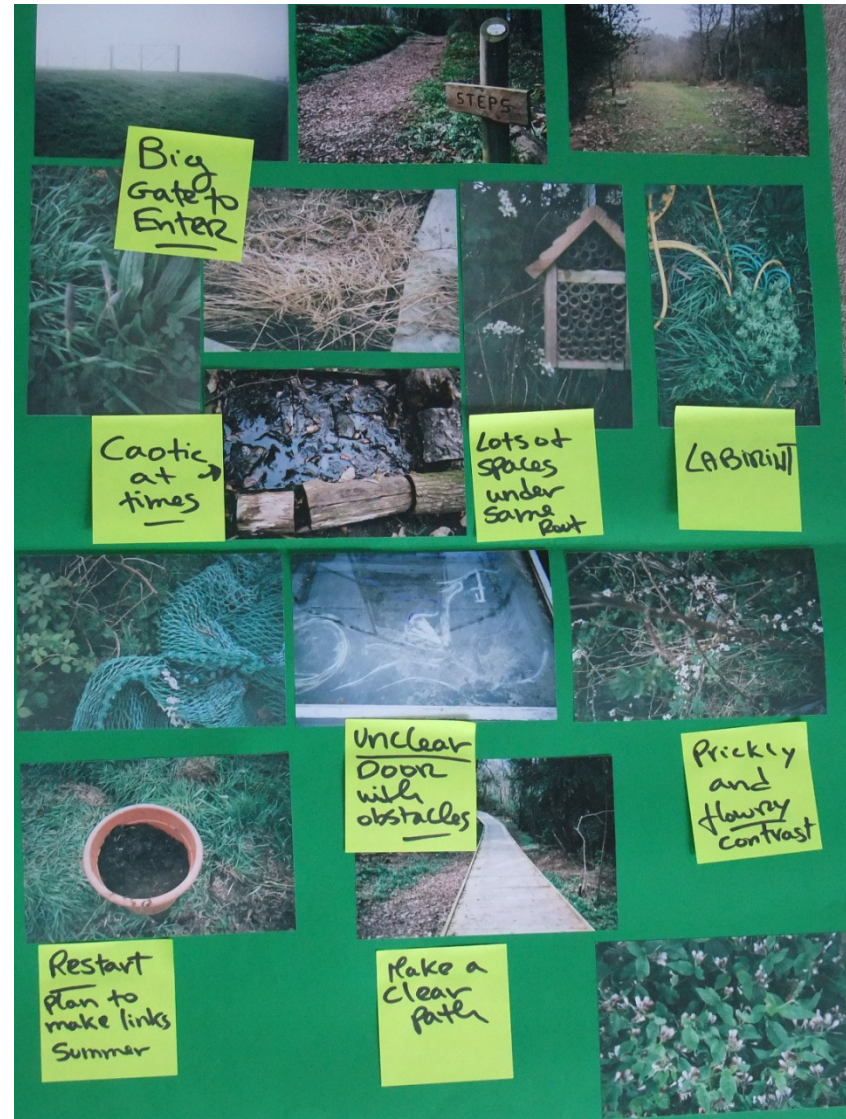
National context

✓ Venues try too hard to attract students

✓ Students prefer the 'soft lived-in look'.

✓ Take time to understand the differences in the student market

✓ Art/film students

✓ Students in bands

✓ DJ's

✓ Producing 'student club nights'
Chatterton 1999

Thank you

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