

**LINCOLN HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH AWARDS (LHERA)**

**FINAL REPORT 2017-18**

*Please complete all sections of the proforma below and return to* [*lheri@lincoln.ac.uk*](mailto:lheri@lincoln.ac.uk) *by 29th June 2018*

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| **Project title** | Recording and recognising the experiences of estranged students in higher education: a participatory research project using photo-elicitation |
| **Project lead** | Dr. Rachel Spacey |
| **Other collaborators** | *n/a* |
| **Project duration** | *Seven months* |
| **Project dates** | *From: 01/12/2017*  *To: 01/07/2018* |
| **LHERI funding received** | *£750.00* |
| **Please provide an overall account of the project describing the research questions, ethics approval process, brief overview of the methodology and main activities, including how students and collaborators contributed to the research** *(max 500 words)* | |
| The aim of this project was to record and recognise the experiences of estranged students (independent or irreconcilably estranged from their parents) at the University of Lincoln. The project recruited a small group of estranged students (8) who were asked to take photos representing their student experience during a university vacation. The vacation period is significant since it is assumed most students will return home and spend time with their families. This qualitative research adopted a participatory approach which aimed to involve the student participants throughout the project. It used the visual method of photo-elicitation as the basis for focus group interviews with the participants. Photo-elicitation is frequently used in sociological studies and is considered a useful approach to engage vulnerable groups (Mannay, 2013).  The researcher applied for ethical approval via the School of Education Ethics Committee. An EA2 was completed and the research tools were included in the Appendices and submitted for consideration on 28.11.2017. The researcher was informed of Committee approval on 13.12.2017.  The researcher was advised by colleagues in Professional Services that the only way to identify estranged students would be for a member of the Student Administration team to provide the contact details of students under 25 with no sponsor once the Student Loans Company data contribution was downloaded into the Student Management System in January 2018. Following receipt of this data, the researcher sent an email to all those included in the spreadsheet in February 2018 which asked:   * Are you at university without the support of your family? * Are you no longer in communication with your biological or adoptive parents? * Do you have independent student status with Student Finance England because you are under 25 and estranged from your family? * Are you a young person with a permanent lack of contact with their parents?   Students who felt that this applied to them could email the researcher for more information. The researcher then set up a series of individual meetings with students where the project brief was explained. They received a £10 Amazon voucher for attending this meeting. Participants were asked to take a series of images during the Easter vacation and share their images in focus groups facilitated by the researcher; three were held in total to accommodate the students. The students’ comments about, and reactions to, these images were audio-recorded with their consent. The audio-recordings were transcribed and uploaded into the qualitative software analysis tool, NVivo to facilitate thematic analysis.  The students will also be given the opportunity to comment on the draft summative report in June/early July (and receive a £10 Amazon voucher if they do so) which will then be shared institutionally. The images taken by the students will, with their permission, be used in a Twitter campaign to raise awareness of the student experience of estranged students. This is planned to take place at the beginning of the new academic year 2018/19 to maximise the opportunity of a new influx of students into university. Again, the participants will each receive a £10 Amazon voucher for their participation. | |
| **What challenges, if any, occurred during your project and how did you overcome these?***(Max 250 words)* | |
| *Ethical approval delay*: The timing of the School of Education Ethics Committee meant that there was little time following approval to actually recruit students to the project. However, it transpired that recruitment, indeed, *identifying estranged students* was problematic. Plans to work with colleagues in Student Support and Student Funding did not come to fruition as there is no system to record estranged students and obviously the staff working there are bound by confidentiality and therefore unable to identify interested parties. However, a work-around was secured with the help of colleagues in Student Administration and eight students who identified as estranged responded to an email call [which as it turned out, went to the entire student body!]. This meant there was a slight delay to the project and the Easter vacation rather than Christmas became the vacation in which the students’ images were taken. | |
| **Please outline the major tasks and milestones delivered in this project. How far do these follow the outline in your original application? Please detail any variations and additional deliverables that occurred** *(Max 250 words)* | |
| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | **Original Timeline** | **Original Tasks and Milestones** | **Variations / additional deliverables** | | Nov 2017 | Project planning.  Recruitment to the project.  Preparing research brief for Workshop 1.  Emails to relevant colleagues to map issues and provision. | Application for ethical approval submitted 28.11.2017 so all research tools created. Emails to colleagues in professional services and the VC who were supportive of the research and began to map current support as well as finding out about the best ways to recruit students. | | Dec 2017 | Workshop 1 – briefing for the students. | Informed of ethical approval 13.12.2017. Attempt to recruit participants prior to Christmas holidays via social media and emailing colleagues to disseminate the call for participation 18.12.2017 onwards. However, colleagues in the Student Support Centre were unable to assist in forwarding on the email to students. Referred to colleagues in Student Administration. | | Jan 2018 | Workshop 2 – facilitated focus group session with the students. | Received data extract from colleague in Student Administration (had to wait for them to receive Student Loans Company data). | | Feb 2018 | Transcription of workshop 2. | Sent out an email mail merge 20.2.2018 to recruit interested estranged students to take part in the study over the Easter holidays (26/03/2018 - 06/04/2018). Recruited 8 students to take part. | | March 2018 | Data analysis. | Attended Stand Alone event in Salford on how to engage estranged students.  Met with interested participants individually before the Easter vacation to brief them on the requirements. | | April 2018 | Workshop 3 - facilitated workshop with staff\*. | Contacted students after the vacation to remind them to email me their images. Set up focus groups using Doodle. First focus group takes place. | | May 2018 | Write up report. | FGs 2 and 3 take place. Focus group audio is transcribed. | | June 2018 | Share report. Social media campaign. | Focus group transcripts analysed. Report writing begins. Submitted abstract to SRHE on the project. |  * The only deliverable which hasn’t been achieved has been Workshop 3 – session with staff due to adaptations to the project – primarily difficulties in recruitment meaning that the focus of fieldwork was the Easter vacation rather than Christmas. However, I do hope to use the report which I will share with Senior Staff where I will recommend some staff training/awareness sessions about student estrangement. | |
| **Please provide details of all outcomes and outputs from the Higher Education Award funded project, including any activity you plan to take forward beyond the funding –** *this will include specific details of dissemination / scholarly outputs, evidence of impact or potential impact from the research processes and findings, plans for ‘next steps’ with the research etc.* | |
| *Dissemination:* I have a conference presentation scheduled at the British Educational Research Association in September 2018 and I have just submitted an abstract to the Society For Research into Higher Education which I should hear about in September (conference is in December 2018). I also plan to write an academic journal article on the outcomes of the project. I would like to present the findings internally at the University as well.  *Impact:* Because I work on the Access and Participation Plan Evaluation Project I have been able to highlight the research to the Head of Student Affairs and I also emailed the Vice-Chancellor. My hope is that following the publication of the report, the University signs the Stand Alone pledge and makes explicit the institution’s commitment to supporting estranged students. Estranged students were mentioned in the recent draft Access and Participation Plan 2019/20 as I was involved in drafting some of the content for this and my understanding from senior colleagues is that there will be a more explicit support package in subsequent plans based on the findings of this research project.  *Next steps:* Beyond the project I would be interested in developing a collaborating project with other institutions and looking at mapping the experience of estranged students beyond England. | |
| **Please provide outline details of expenditure against the budget** *(this should be available from TechOne)***. If your project costs varied from the original application please provide details.** | |
| |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Project budget code:- 0003631-2162 |  |  |  |  | | |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Income | Budget | Actual | Remaining |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Pay |  | - | - |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Non-pay | £750.00 | £678.10 | £71.90 |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Funding was primarily used for Amazon e-vouchers to give to the participants following each stage of the project. Refreshments and transcription were not used. Attended a Stand Alone event. |  |  |  |  |  | | |
| **Is there any feedback you would like to give to the HE Research Institute to assist us in the development of these awards in future?** | |
| I think that there were a lot of positives in terms of the Awards and the ways in which recipients were supported especially the regular networking events and the dissemination exhibition in June 2018. Reporting was light touch which was appreciated especially when plans had to change. I think that some colleagues may need more support with the Ethics process and that there is acknowledgment that this can slow things down a little in the early stages. I appreciated the flexibility of the Award in terms of what I could use the funding on and changes to the project plan. | |

Completed by: R.E. Spacey

Date 26.6.2018

Please submit this report to [lheri@lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:lheri@lincoln.ac.uk) no later than …………….