

**Contesting 'Transitions' and (Re-)Engaging with 'Subjectivities':
Locating and Celebrating the Habitus in Three Versions of 'the First Year Experience'
at Central Queensland University**

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Instead of the homogeneous and undifferentiated view of 'the first year experience' implied by the term 'transitions', we prefer to emphasise diversity and heterogeneity in mapping multiple experiences of university life, particularly in 'the first year'. This mapping includes – in the context of Central Queensland University (CQU) – students in a pre-undergraduate preparatory program with rich life experiences but limited formal education; school leavers and mature age students in a first year undergraduate program; and students with industry and professional experience in a pre-service teacher education program with both undergraduate and graduate entry points. Despite the considerable differences among these 'first year experiences', they have in common a focus on the habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990) as a framework for locating and celebrating student and staff subjectivities and hence for maximising student (re-)engagements with university life. The paper illustrates these crucial processes in each of these versions of 'the first year experience'.

Biographies

Jenny Simpson is Co-ordinator of the Language and Learning course in the Skills for Tertiary Education Preparatory Studies program in the Division of Teaching and Learning Services at the Rockhampton Campus of Central Queensland University. She developed the Language for Learning course, and her research interests include mythic structure, the Hero's Journey, and transformative learning.

Jeanne McConachie is Director of the Division of Teaching and Learning Services at the Rockhampton campus of Central Queensland University. Her Doctorate examined the introduction of an enterprise system to an Australian regional university. Her research interests include social entrepreneurship, university–community partnerships, transformative adult learning and the management of organisational change.

Phyllida Coombes is a former Lecturer in Communication and Literacy in the Skills for Tertiary Education Preparatory Studies program at the Rockhampton campus of Central Queensland University. She edited a senior secondary school modern history textbook (Thomas Nelson, 1996) and co-edited a theme issue of the *Queensland Journal of Educational Research* (2001).

Geoff Danaher is Lecturer in Contemporary Communication in the Faculty of Informatics and Communication at the Rockhampton campus of Central Queensland University. He has co-written books about Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu (Allen & Unwin, 2000, 2002). His research interests include occupational Travellers, emerging ethnicities, performance space, regional communities and creative writing.

R. E. Harreveld is Senior Lecturer in Professional and Vocational Education in the Faculty of Education and Creative Arts at the Rockhampton campus of Central Queensland University. She works in the fields of senior secondary schooling, vocational education and workplace training. Her research interests include language and literacy education, professional identities and work.

P. A. Danaher is Senior Lecturer in Open and Distance Learning in the Faculty of Education and Creative Arts at the Rockhampton campus of Central Queensland University. He edited *Beyond the Ferris Wheel: Educating Queensland Show Children* (Central Queensland University Press, 1998), and he has co-edited theme issues of three academic journals.

Filling the gaps: Students perceptions of university affordances

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University affordances are a significant factor in student retention. However mere availability of affordances does not equate with student ability to capitalise on these affordances. This paper explores the gaps between first year Education students' expectations and experiences, and between affordances and student access of them. An orientation week program designed as a first step towards filling some of the gaps is described and evaluated. The paper concludes that institutional habitus and peers are powerful constraints, both positive and negative, in university affordances.

Biography

Dr Glenice Watson is a lecturer in the Faculty of Education at Griffith University. Her interest in First Year issues in Higher Education arises from her convenorship of a large first year course in the Bachelor of Education (Primary) program. She is currently project managing a research project exploring issues of student retention, satisfaction and achievement across programs within the Faculty of Education that has been funded under a University Strategic Improvement grant. Her research interests include use of Information and Communication Technology to enhance learning, equity issues, and teacher professional development.