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Inclusive Cultures



Project Overview

- PTAS funded project running 2020-2022
- Aim: creating a more inclusive university culture where students from diverse backgrounds thrive and feel a sense of belonging



Assemblage theory, WP and inclusive culture

“collection of connections”
(Currier, 2003: 326)

Wide-ranging elements, all
connected, affect people’s lives
and School culture



Methods

- Questionnaire (currently 17 responses)
- Interviews (currently 11)
- Focus groups will be used later to test our interventions

This presentation discusses our qualitative results from the survey and interviews



Temporal narratives

Temporal approach to assemblage

Storytelling as data presentation

First Year

‘I didn’t go to private school’ - Katie

‘I really noticed that in first year, I was not expecting it to be like this’ - Rebekah

‘I feel like it’s probably one of the most defining factors, you feel kinda segregated at uni’ , ‘I think it’s what makes the biggest difference between me and some of the people here background wise’ -Katie

‘whenever I’m in a room surrounded by really rich people. This department has so many who went to private school and it feels dominated by it. I feel like I can’t join in on conversations because they’re about things I’ve never experienced’ - questionnaire response

‘7% of people in the UK went to private school. 33% of Edinburgh Uni did’ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/07-02-2019/widening-participation-tables>’ - questionnaire response





'Honestly only with the friends I have made through social events completely outside of any organised university society or course do I feel accepted for who I truly am, the rest of the time I know I am a minority because of being working class and my experiences are so incredibly polar opposite to most of my peers.' - questionnaire response

"Halls are a really friendly place, it was just one big family, Brayhouse. It's one of the halls that's a bit further away but people that are in younger years and ask what halls should I apply to, I always suggest Brayhouse. And that walking up to uni everyday was such a sociable thing to do. So you'd kind of make friends through that which was nice' - Sarah



‘Someone can say something not that smart but it just sounded so smart because of their accent. And so I just thought, well I’m not going to speak’ - Rebekah

‘when the tutor for the tutorial is working class they often make me feel much more safe and I don’t feel as if I’m going to be gawped at’- questionnaire

‘made a real effort to include freshers and made me feel seen and wanted at a time when I was really lonely’- questionnaire

‘feel like I can’t join Geography society events because they’re all in expensive bars, and they don’t give a lot of notice for events, so I can’t get time off work for them’ - questionnaire

‘being thrown together for a weekend meant you got to know people’ - Isobel

‘it’s just like boarding school’ - Alastair

‘I feel like they already know each other and so that can be quite daunting’- Katie

Second Year

'I have to work a part time job because I don't have a safety net of my parents to rely upon so in summers and especially after I graduate I need to have savings so I can pay my rent and bills etc.' - questionnaire response

'It has tried a little bit with things such as the bursary, but it also categorises students based on their parent's income, however many people have more complicated home circumstances!' - questionnaire response



'often being the only black person in my accommodation and tutorial discussions' -
questionnaire response

'to my knowledge, there are just three Black people in third year doing either BSc Geography, or geology and physical geography. I do not feel represented' -
questionnaire response

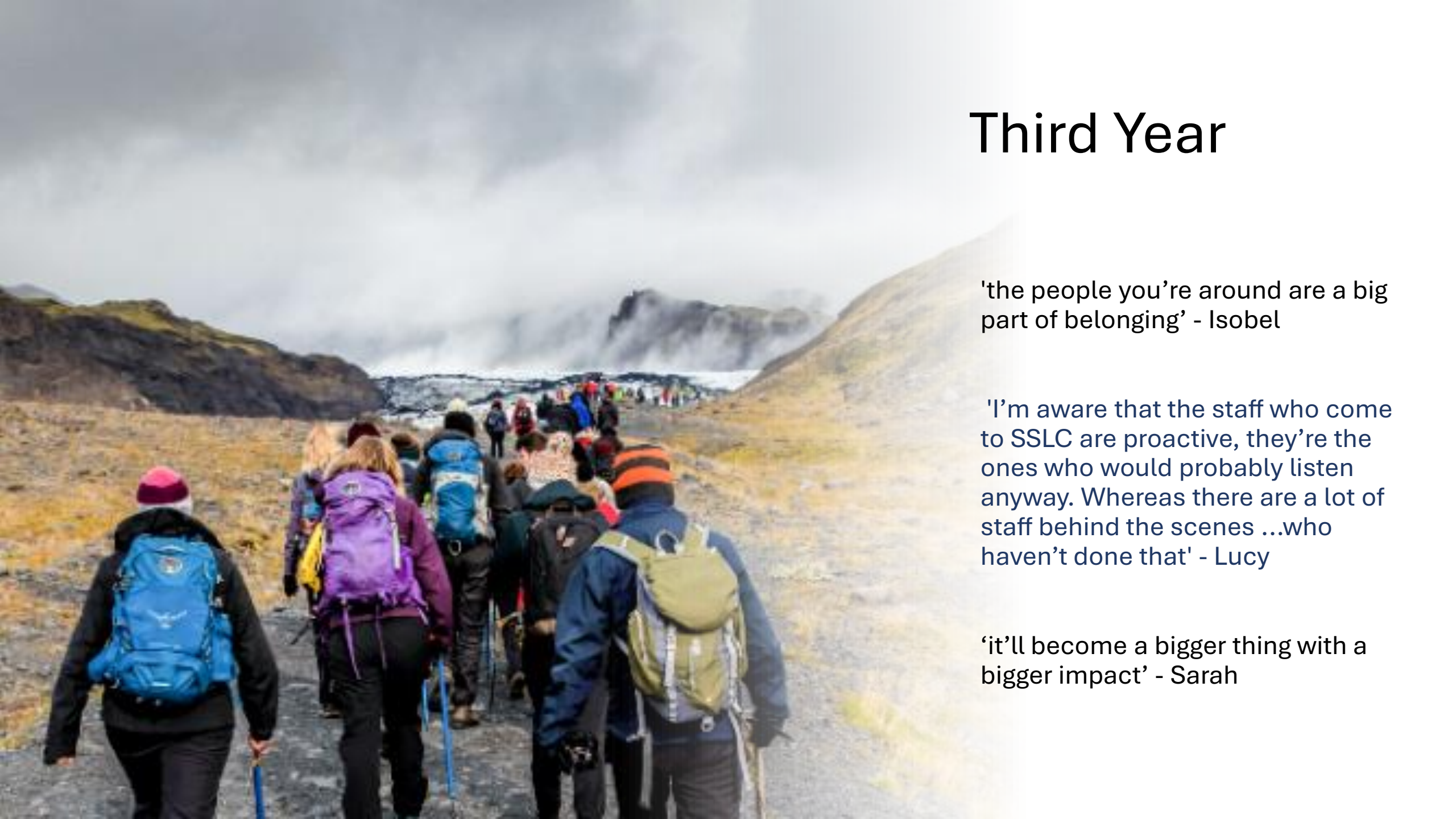
'in terms of being taught by people of colour...I think it's really interesting and deeply problematic' -
Rebekah

'the uptake of academic staff putting their pronouns in their email signatures'-
questionnaire response



'it was a nightmare to commute especially the 1st and 2nd year..[there] wasn't even like a place that I got to feel comfortable in because also the classes were like in many different buildings. Like I don't even know where are the toilets or anything like', then after 'I just go for the shuttle bus and then wait for 45 minutes until it actually arrived" - Iwan



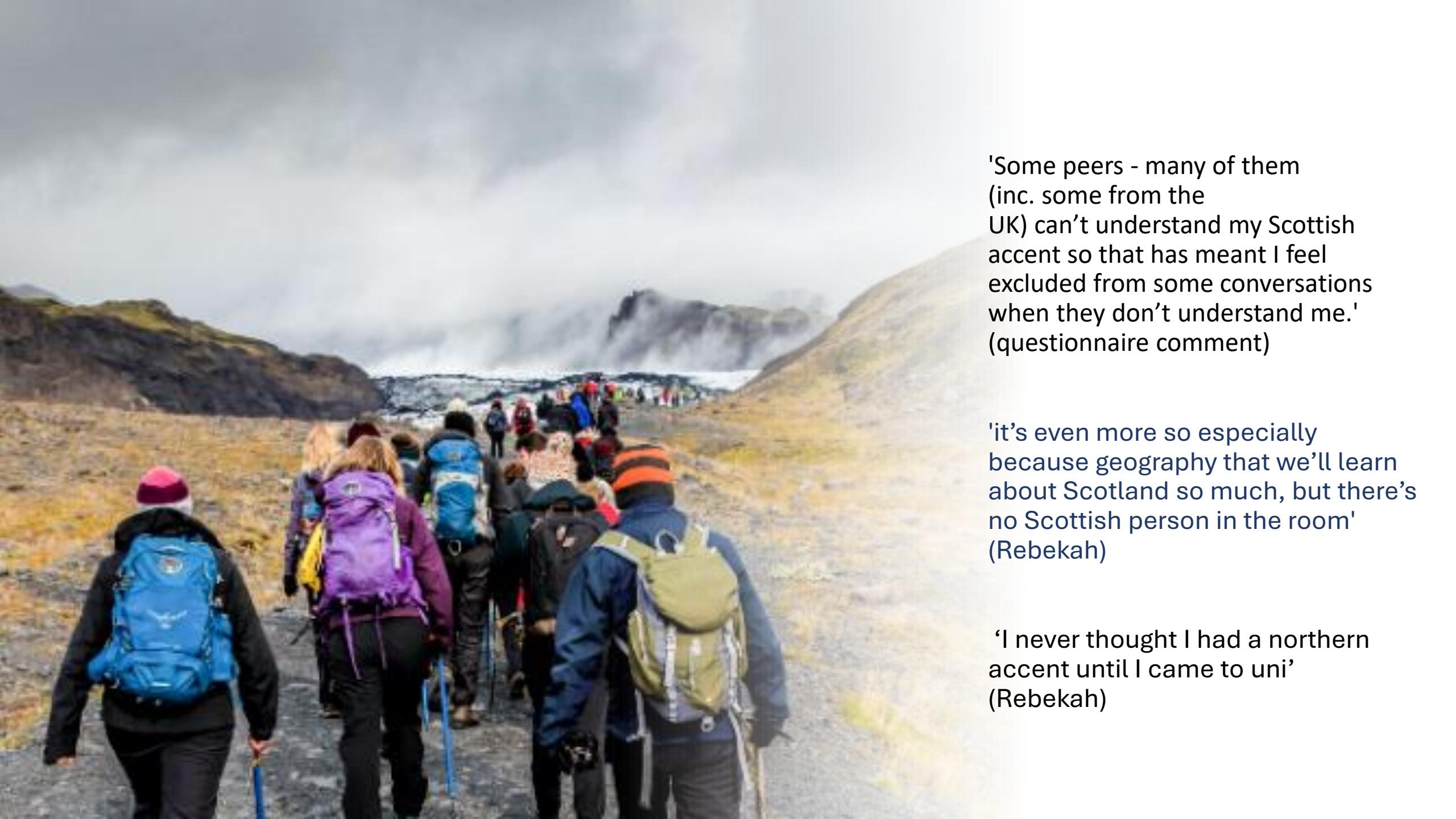


Third Year

'the people you're around are a big part of belonging' - Isobel

'I'm aware that the staff who come to SSLC are proactive, they're the ones who would probably listen anyway. Whereas there are a lot of staff behind the scenes ...who haven't done that' - Lucy

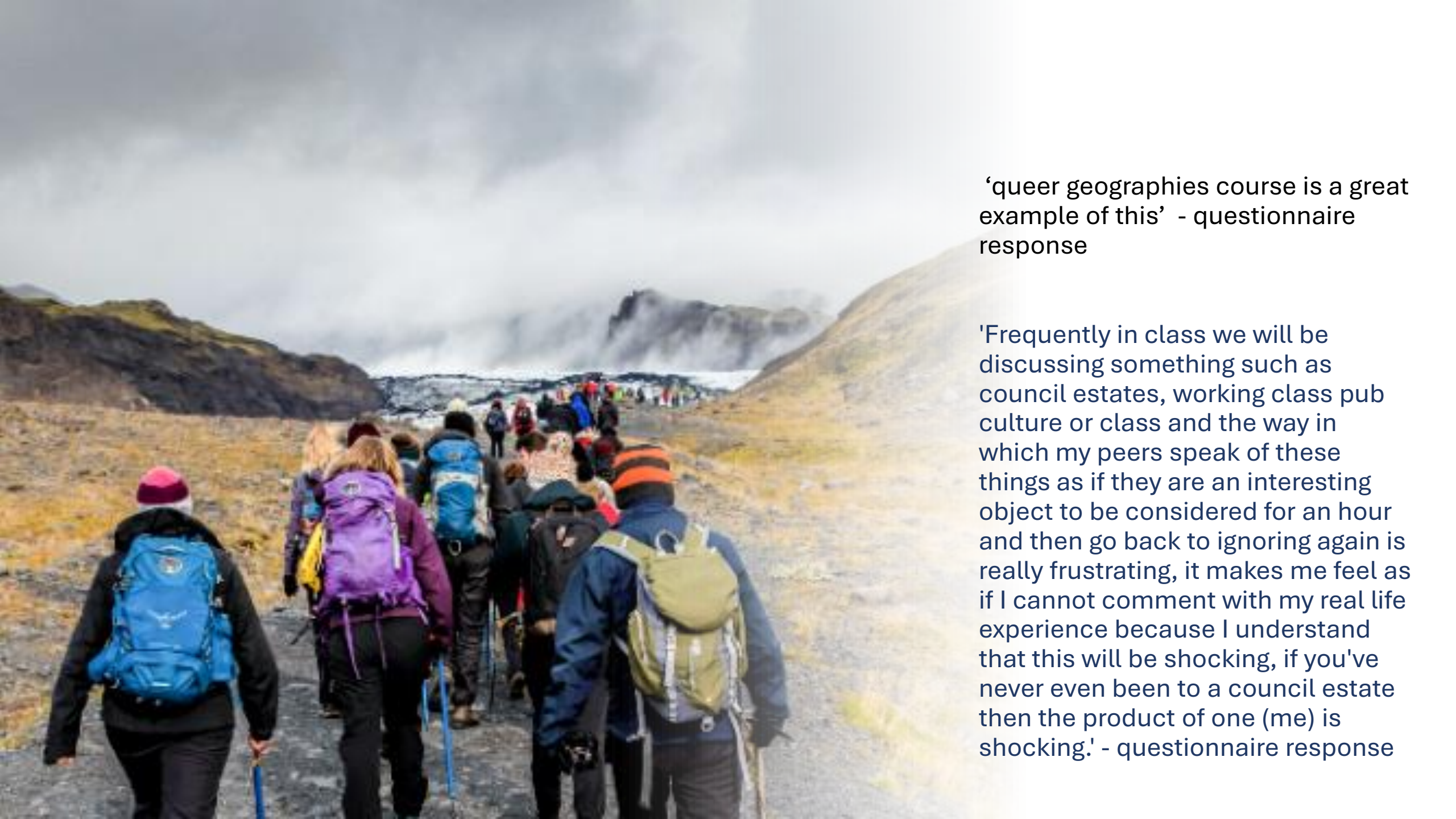
'it'll become a bigger thing with a bigger impact' - Sarah



'Some peers - many of them (inc. some from the UK) can't understand my Scottish accent so that has meant I feel excluded from some conversations when they don't understand me.' (questionnaire comment)

'it's even more so especially because geography that we'll learn about Scotland so much, but there's no Scottish person in the room' (Rebekah)

'I never thought I had a northern accent until I came to uni' (Rebekah)



‘queer geographies course is a great example of this’ - questionnaire response

‘Frequently in class we will be discussing something such as council estates, working class pub culture or class and the way in which my peers speak of these things as if they are an interesting object to be considered for an hour and then go back to ignoring again is really frustrating, it makes me feel as if I cannot comment with my real life experience because I understand that this will be shocking, if you've never even been to a council estate then the product of one (me) is shocking.’ - questionnaire response



'so you know you have Cape Town, Athens, Snowdonia? So we have a year group chat. And they're supposed to be free, paid for by the uni. And someone put in the chat 'if someone wants to swap with me so I can go to Cape Town I'll pay you £100'. And I noticed that girl wasn't in Athens so someone must've taken that £100 to swap. So it was a bit mad!' - Rebekah

Fourth Year

'One of my friends got one of those emails and I think she kind of took it wrong. I don't know if it was worded badly and she had a laptop but she got an email like 'in our records we don't think you can afford a laptop', I mean it wasn't worded like that but that's what she told me it came across as and it was a bit like oh. But great that they're doing it'- Rebekah

'I was at home for part of 2nd semester this year and the internet is terrible, so I struggled to take part in group discussions, sometimes I could barely even understand what people were saying. Very frustrating and because of the connection lag it seemed like I was interrupting every time I spoke.' - questionnaire response



‘it was nice because ... I wouldn’t necessarily expect us to sit together in a lecture but now we’re walking around and having a chat... so it made it less formal and kind of easier to mix, I guess’ – Isobel

‘new courses, the lecturer will ask not necessarily where you’re from but where you are staying’ – Sarah

‘I also think many courses could benefit from more diverse reading lists no matter the topic, as I think this could help shift assumptions and expectations of what ... scientists look and sound like’ - questionnaire response



"some staff were understanding but others were like kind of treating us like we're all existing with our family just outside of London in our steakhouse in the garden and sitting with our Mac books and writing our essays' - Ivan





Conclusions – thematic

- Encounters and Groupings
- Cultural capital
- Spaces and belonging
- Making connections



Conclusions - recommendations

- Measurability as a barrier to change
- Situate Best Practice
- School specific (split site, fieldtrips, makeup of cohort)
- Everyday nature of culture



Next steps

- If you would like to get in touch about this project – rachel.hunt@ed.ac.uk