**A) RATIONALE FOR THE PROJECT**

An increase in student mental health problems (particularly depression, anxiety and related disorders) has been observed by many, but remains poorly understood. Understanding individual differences in narrative identity – the stories we tell about ourselves – could potentially shed light on the aetiology of mental health problems and on factors that influence wellbeing during or after the transition to university.

**B) REFERENCES THAT SHOULD BE READ** (if you do not have access to these, please email me)


http://www.studentminds.org.uk/transitions-campaign.html


**C) RESEARCH AIMS / QUESTIONS**

*Is narrative identity related to mental health and wellbeing in the transition to university life?*

In addition to this main research question others such as the following (or alternatives) could be addressed:

- Does narrative identity, as it relates to mental health or wellbeing, differ by group (e.g. sex, SES, prior achievement)?
- How can an understanding of perceived ‘turning points’ be used to enhance mental health and wellbeing during the transition to university?
- How does narrative identity change between Year 13 and Year 1 of university (this longitudinal question would require a different sample to that described below).

**D) METHODS**

The first challenge is to select an appropriate method of data collection (e.g. Life Story Interviews, written narratives or see the work of members of this Danish group for work using some alternative approaches [http://psy.au.dk/en/research/research-centres-and-units/conamore/](http://psy.au.dk/en/research/research-centres-and-units/conamore/)); and the second is to select the most appropriate aspects of NI to focus on (e.g. contamination, communion, agency, positive resolution etc).

*Participants:* You will recruit a sample of ~100 first year undergraduate students who are willing to take part in a face to face interview. Alternatively, you could recruit a larger sample of students...
willing to provide you with a written account of their stories, or take a timeline / participant-rated approach as used by the Aarhus group (see link above).

**Measures:** You will create a narrative identity-focused interview schedule (or an alternative for written accounts). You will also develop a questionnaire using published measures of mental health and wellbeing, as well as demographic or background factors (please specify measures in your proposal).

**Analysis:** The rich qualitative data you gather will be coded and transformed into a series of quantitative Narrative Identity variables e.g. positive resolution, contamination, redemption, coherence, agency etc. Their associations with mental health and wellbeing variables, and possibly group differences, will be tested statistically.