**Equity groups: First in Family (FinF) students**

Literature Review

While it is true that first generation students are not an identified equity group, and they do not receive explicit attention in federal policy or funding, they are a significant focus in both the Australian and the international equity literature. The common argument put forward about first-in-family students is similar to the deficit arguments made about low SES students– that they have less recognised social and academic capital than students who have familial connections with higher education; that they are less-academically prepared; that they experience financial concerns about study and living expenses (Scevak et al., 2014; although see Southgate et al. 2015 for a rebuttal of the connection between first-in-family and low SES). Recent research by King et al. (2015) offers a rich characterisation of 5300 first-in-family learners in three universities in South Australia. This work illustrates that first-in-family students are predominantly school leavers, with only 15% classified as ‘mature age’, and that those school leavers are less likely to live with parents while studying. Most of the first-in-family attended public school, especially the mature students (74.1%). More of the first-in-family students attended a rural high school than not-first-in-family students (30% to 22%) and first-in-family students generally had lower ATARs. Similar to low SES students, when at university first-in-family students are more likely to be enrolled in the disciplines of nursing, education, management & commerce, society & culture.

Other work by Sarah O’Shea (2016) works against the deficit framing by unpacking the specific kinds of capitals (‘familial educational memory’) that first-in-family students bring with them to their studies. Drawing on Yosso’s (2005) Community Cultural Wealth framework (see also Harwood et al. 2015), O’Shea illustrates how the first-in-family students in her study hold great wealths of aspirational, resistant, familial, experiential capital. In foregrounding the intersectionality between diversity of factors, O’Shea pushes against reductive simplifications of ‘first-in-family’ and recognises multiplicity of experiences and strengths (thus resisting deficit framings) – these students may not have experienced networks to draw on, but they have “other more fundamental but equally rich personal resources drawn upon in this transition” (p.12). O’Shea places the impetus on institutions to reimagine ways of integrating these students into higher education: “This reconceptualisation should consider the very strong capitals that learners arrive with, regardless of ethnicity, SES status or educational background” (p.17). Unfortunately, these capitals do not necessarily translate to achievement; Southgate et al.’s (2015) research suggests that first-in-family students have poorer academic outcomes than their counterparts, particularly after Year 1 when all the scaffolded transition support finishes.

**References**

King, S., Luzeckyj, A., McCann, B. and Graham, C. (2015). *Exploring the Experience of Being First in Family at University: A 2014 Student Equity in Higher Education Research Grants Project*. National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education, Perth: Curtin University.

O’Shea, S. (2016). Avoiding the manufacture of ‘sameness’: first-in-family students, cultural capital and the higher education environment, *Higher Education,* 72, 59–78.

Scevak, J.; Southgate, E.; Rubin, M.; Macqueen, S.; Douglas, H.: & Williams, P. (2014). *A Guide for Educators in Higher Education: Responding to diversity for positive academic outcomes*: University of Newcastle, Newcastle, NSW.

Southgate, E; Douglas, H.; Scevak, J.; Macqueen, S.; Rubin, M.; & Lindell, C. (2015). The academic outcomes of first-in-family in an Australian university: An explanatory study, *International Studies in Widening Participation,* 1(2): 31-45.

**Equity and Higher Education Annotated Bibliography Series**

**Equity Groups: First in family**

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| **Citation** | **Annotation** |
| Collier, P. & Morgan, D. (2008). [“Is that paper really due today?”: differences in first-generation and traditional college students’ understandings of faculty expectations](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10734-007-9065-5), *Higher Education,* 55, 425–446.USAKeywords: *College student adjustment; Cultural capital; Faculty expectations; First-generation students; Focus group methodology; Role mastery; University retention*  | **Context:** US higher education; mismatch between lecturers’ and students’ expectations, and differences between ‘traditional’ and FinF students in terms of expectations and what counts as success. Framed against issues relating to attrition/ retention of students, and Tinto’s work on success in particular**Aim:** To examine differing perceptions of student success between lecturers and students, and to examine the differences between traditional and FinF students. Three questions presented on p.431:“First, how do faculty members understand and express their own expectations? Second, to what extent do students in general understand and accept the faculty’s expectations? Finally, how do first generation and more traditional students either overlap or differ in their ability to recognize and respond to faculty expectations?”**Theoretical frame:** Roles as resources/ role mastery (based on symbolic interactionist theory); Bourdieu - cultural capital (translating into ‘role expertise’); Tinto – social integration**Methodology:** Qualitative study with faculty and students at Portland State University (PSU) where 18% of students = FinF. Data collected via focus groups with lecturers (n=15 from faculties of Business/ Liberal Arts and Sciences) + focus groups with students (n=63: traditional or FinF, with more ‘non-traditional’ students included than traditional students)**Findings:** Authors categorised three themes for both groups: workload and priorities, the explicitness of expectations and assignments, and issues related to communication and problem solving.**Faculty members**: able to articulate the challenges they faced because of how they perceived students failed to understand/ follow the lecturers’ expectations.*Workload and priorities*: lecturers had clear ideas of the time they expected students to dedicate to their studies (1hr class = 3hrs of study), and that students should prioritise their studies over other commitments*Explicitness of expectations and assignments*: although lecturers recognised that their assumptions were not clear to students, they also described students’ struggles with understanding what is expected with assessment as ‘not following directions’ (see p.433). Lecturers expressed frustration that students did not pay attention to specific requirements/ expectations as outlined in course syllabus. *Expectations related to communication and problem solving:* agreement that communication between faculty and students = important, but questions over whose responsibility it is. Lecturers blamed students for not being more open about challenges they face (e,g. students not attending office hours)**Students***General expectations (for both groups):* students based investment of time on the amount of time they had available, rather than following lecturers’ guidelines. Both sets desired more explanation and explicit direction from lecturers. Students tended to discuss communication issues in terms of relationship building, with a shared perception that the onus for starting communication should lie with the student.*Expectations related to communication and problem solving*: both sets of students expressed a desire for lecturers to be more explicit, even though lecturers viewed their instructions as detailed and clear. Learning how to write in ways that were expected/ valued was particularly concerning, especially in General English classes where such practices were supposed to be taught.**FinF students**FinF students “reported markedly more problems related to time management and placing priority on the time they devoted to their classes” (p.436), resulting in descriptions of overcommitment and time management challenges. These were magnified by the increased commitments that FinF students had/ the limited resources (e.g. peers and family members) who could help them navigate their studies. FinF students wanted more information/ detail than traditional students about assessments. Authors also noted differences in the way the two types of students used the course syllabus: “first- generation students tended to rely almost exclusively on information they acquired from hearing, observing, and interpreting the actions of professors—especially their initial explanations of the course syllabus” (p.437). FinF students also more likely to complain/ express concern about the technical elements of written work/ academic writing.FinF students also likely to make a decision on whether to approach a lecturer based on their lecture style (two aspects: 1) use of disciplinary jargon; 2) unwillingness to rephrase instruction if students ask a question).Impact seen in students’ grades/ performance, largely because of issues with attendance, understanding disciplinary conventions, misunderstanding what was expected.**Core argument:** Student success involves mastery of what it means to be a ‘college [university] student’: “Mastering the college student role enables young people to understand their instructors’ expectations and to apply their existing skills to meet those expectations successfully” (p.425–6). |
| Crozier, G.; Reay, D.; Clayton, J.; Colliander, L.; & Grinstead, J. (2008). [Different strokes for different folks: diverse students in diverse institutions – experiences of higher education](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02671520802048703), *Research Papers in Education*, 23(2), 167–177.UKAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *widening participation; social class; Bourdieu; higher education* | **Context:** Reports on ESRC-funded project. Explores students experiences of higher education according to social class (middle/ working class) and across 4 different types of universities (context = “apparent polarisation of types of university attracting working class and minority ethnic students” and attrition of working class/ethnic minority students, p.167)**Aim:** To locate discourse of widening participation in discussion of classed privileged**Theoretical frame:** Bourdieu: field, capital, habitus + illusion + agoraphobia + playing the field**Methodology:** Qualitative, longitudinal methodology using critical ethnographic methods + questionnaire (n=1209) + classroom observations. Mix of student participants (n=88): working (n=27)/middle class, mix of ethnicities (white British = 89%), gender (female = 58%), age, Year 1 and 2, FinF. Followed 4 types of HEI = 3 geographic areas (post-1992 Northern, FE college + partnership with Northern Uni, elite southern university and pre-1992 civic Midlands**Findings:** Students at Northern = have qualifications/ achievements = tenuous (lower tariff for entry) = demonstrates WP but also has implications for students (attrition/ self-confidence), especially for working class students. Middle class students = greater confidence and sense self-worth (often previously successful students). Intellectual/ academic challenge = highest at elite uni where competition is highest; less so at midlands and northern universities. Family grooming: middle class students = varying levels of preparation for university [opposite experience in general for working class students, who were more likely to gain entry to HE via ‘second-chance’ pathways. High rates of previous family engagement at southern elite (83% been to uni; 19% = been to southern elite) compared with less than 50% at FE college (meaning more than 50% = FinF)Conditions of learning = adapting to new worlds (e.g. working class students moving into ‘middle class milieu’ of university; p.172). Variety of facilities (e.g. learning support, IT facilities etc.) across institutions = more at southern elite, less at northern where = online self-service. At southern, support= more tailored to student; at midlands and northern = more generic support offered.Different approaches to transition/ orientation taken by 4 institutions = Southern = more explicit and confronting; midlands = more implicit and facilitated by clubs/societies. Social capital and familial experience – mentions extra curricula activities. Different reasons for studying – working class students = “means to an end” (p.175).**Core argument:** Not polarisation around institutions, rather = “an interrelated spectrum of differentiated experiences exists across and within the institutions” (p.167). Need to help all students understand ‘invisible pedagogy’/rules of the game (see p.173). “Higher education not only needs to address the widening of access to university but it needs to get to grips with what goes on inside the hallowed grounds” (p.176). |
| Delahunty, J. & O’Shea, S. (2019). [‘I’m happy, and I’m passing. That’s all that matters!’: exploring discourses of university academic success through linguistic analysis](https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2018.1562468), Language and Education, 33(4), 302–321.AUSAnnotated by Sally BakerKeywords: *Student success; Appraisal; first-in-family; neoliberal discourse; higher education; discourse analysis*  | **Context:** Student success of FinF students; mismatch between students’ understandings of success and institutional/ policy discourses of success. **Aims:** To respond to the question of “how [FinF] students perceive and actually experience success” and what success means “from the perspective of students who do not have a family biography of university attendance, and thus do not have intergenerational knowledge of university study to draw upon for their conceptions of academic success” (p.302)**Analytic frame:** Uses the APPRAISAL framework from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to analyse evaluative choices: attitudinal stances (affect, judgement, appreciation) and graduation (force, focus)**Methodology:** Qualitative. Authors note own biographies and positioning that has impacted on their interpretations/ analysis. Data drawn from broader project on FinF experience; data in this article = from surveys collected with FinF students who were nearing the end of their undergraduate degrees (n=183) from 6 universities. Demographic information about participants found: 8 identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, 10 as having a disability, 68 from low socioeconomic circumstances, 71 from rural or isolated areas, 14 from non-English speaking backgrounds and 3 from refugee backgrounds + 38 ‘other’ (e.g. single parent, LGBTQI) (p.308). Majority = female (86%) and aged 26+ (45%).**Findings:**81% of participants chose ‘yes’ for the question about whether they considered themselves to be a successful student (7% chose no and 13% = unsure).Analysis using APPRAISAL suggests that the majority of the evaluative statements collected in the qualitative/ open-ended part of the survey were positive (93%). Most of the comments were coded as judgement (237), followed by affect (83) and appreciation (39). Competence and determination = most highly valued characteristics, with little reference to grades in their definitions of what counts as successfulMostly, students judged capacity (relationally against other students), tenacity, normality and propriety.Affect = mostly satisfaction and happinessAppreciation = mostly valuationAuthors offer linguistic analysis of examples for each.Students who self-reported as not being successful, commonly expressed using contrast linkers (however, although) to identify balance of values. Authors note that these students use negative words (coded as insecurity) that indicate a sense of disappointment in themselves. For these students, this positioning may represent a resistance to the neoliberal discourses of self-interest and competition: “Choosing lexis which reduces the suggestion of self-promotion might be one strategy that allows these learners used to straddle conflicting or competing worlds including the different worlds of participating in family/community and academia” (p.316).**Core argument:** “Success is also experienced as emotion (intangible), is ‘measured up’ through tangible outcomes such as grades and employment, as well as in levels of defiance towards pursuing success as popularly understood, accepted or defined. Similar to students who defined themselves as successful, these findings do not align with neoliberal discourses of success. These findings point to success as a ‘slippery’ concept that can be destabilised and re-imagined by those engaging in HE rather than solely reliant on dominant discourses” (p.317).FinF may eschew normative understandings of success because of unfamiliarity with apriori experiences/ understandings of higher education context. |
| Groves, O. & O’Shea, S. (2019). [Learning to ‘be’ a university student: First in family students negotiating membership of the university community](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2019.08.014), *International Journal of Educational Research,* 98, 48–54.AUSKeywords: *Community of Practice; Situated Learning; Participation; First in family; Higher education; Persistence*  | **Context:** First-in-family (FinF) students and belonging in higher education; wider context of inequitable participation of student cohorts in Australian higher education. Authors argue that FinF students do not necessarily have familiarity with systems and practices to ‘smoothly’ become a university student. **Aims:** To use situated learning theory “a lens to consider the ways in which this cohort engage with the learning environment, particularly how these students learn to ‘be’ a university student” (p.48); to explore how FinF students navigate their way in so as to provide “deeper insights into the nuances of learning experiences and the potential for support, retention and higher levels of success for FiF students in HE” (p.49); to “explore how FiF students transition from a place of not-knowing (about university participation) to that of knowledge and success” (p.49).**Theoretical frame:** Situated learning theory: “learning as social, situated and occurring through participation in a sociocultural environment” (p.48–9; ref to Lave & Wenger, 1991 so communities of practice).**Methodology:** Qualitative; draws on data from larger project conducted in 2017 with FinF students; article draws on interview data with students (n=69) — students asked to retrospectively narrate their ‘becomings’ as a university student**Findings:** ‘Becoming’ a student is a stepped and staged process: students first gain initial periphery membership before gaining full incorporation into membership.Initial periphery membership: participants described this in terms of “exploring, observing, reading, and attending”, such as by ‘being there’ or attending orientation activities (see p.51). In order to move towards the centre, ‘successful’ FinF students sought help from more central members (e.g. support staff, tutors and lecturers), but this seeking of support was individualised/ individual’s responsibility. Other students described asking help from peers via online forum. Support staff and tutors/ lecturers = important for those students who proactively sought help. Authors make connection with attrition of students who do not seek to move toward the centre: “By not accessing core members who can provide assistance and support, at-risk students may not move from the periphery, and in some cases this immovability leads to thoughts of departure” (p.52).**Core argument:** For students to be able to make use of more central members of CoP, universities should:Design ways to connect at-risk students + support staff/ other students (e.g. personal advisor model)Develop peer-mentoring programs |
| King, S., Luzeckyj, A., McCann, B. and Graham, C. (2015). [*Exploring the Experience of Being First in Family at University: A 2014 Student Equity in Higher Education Research Grants Project*](https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/publications/exploring-the-experience-of-being-first-in-family-at-university/). National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education, Perth: Curtin University.AUSAnnotated by Sally Baker | **Context:** NCSEHE-funded research on the experience of FinF students, who are defined as “Students who are the first member of their immediate family, including siblings, to attend university” (p.8). FinF understood as disadvantaged because “their cultural and social capital does not readily align with that of the university” (p.8). Project focused on: * The factors that influence FiF students’ decisions to enrol, attend and continue at university, including their realisation of initial aspirations and ambitions.
* How FiF students experienced university, including the incumbent costs and related constraints of attending university, such as living costs, transport, housing, sacrifices made.
* The impact studying at university had on FiF students’ physical, social and mental health and wellbeing.
* How FiF students managed points of transition; e.g. how they managed their first few weeks at university or the transition to final years of study, including how they dealt with differences between their expectations and experiences, what support and help seeking strategies they implemented.
* In what ways their self-image or identity was transformed as a result of their attendance at university, including how these transformative experiences impacted upon their day-to-day lives as well as their impact on relationships with significant others (e.g. partners, children, parents, close friends).
* How universities supported or hindered their experiences and/or progress in terms of provision of particular kinds of learning spaces and places and access to teaching and support staff
* And finally, as these FiF students transitioned out of university, what they considered were the benefits of their university experiences and qualifications for themselves as individuals, for the university and society more broadly. (p.8).

**Theoretical frame:****Methodology:** Mixed methods. Narrative inquiry case study approach adopted. Literature review (155 international papers reviewed); survey data from 5300 students; in-depth interviews with 18 FinF students. Data collection conducted in UniSA, UAD, FLIND**Findings:** 4 key themes in literature review (offered in Appendix A): 1. The individual – emphasising individual/ personal characteristics of broad group
2. The student – adjustment to learner identity and practices
3. The journey – pathway into and through studies, particularly when combining work, family and study
4. The networks – importance of support networks (who and how)

Findings from survey and interviews**Demographics**:FiF = mostly school leavers; 15% = mature ageFiF = attend UniSA and Flinders more than Uni Adelaide, although UAD = highest number of FinF school leavers School leaver FinF = less likely to live with parents while studyingMost FinF attended public school, especially mature FinF (74.1%)30% of FinF attended rural high school, compared with 22% non-FinFFinF generally had lower ATARsMore FinF students enrolled in nursing, education, management & commerce, society & cultureMature FinF more likely to get information/ form expectations from friends and ‘cold’ forms of informationMature FinF expected to study for the most time Mature and school leaver FinF students more likely to attend classes if they perceived the teacher as enthusiastic* There is clear diversity in FinF student cohort, in terms of age and prior life experience – important to remember that when using reductive categories, such as ‘mature age’.
* The key motivating factor for FinF participation in higher education = for a better life and interest
* There are substantial financial and personal costs for FinF students in higher education, particularly for students who have to relocate to the city
* FinF students lack ‘hot knowledge’ that their non FinF peers have
* Cultural capital of FinF = not recognised = mismatch in habitus
* Transition = individual and difficult but = commonalities in terms of finding university an alien place and feeling a need to prove themselves as intelligent enough for university study (see significance of prior life/educational experiences)
* Data suggests that FinF = have realistic expectations
* Family and friends = important forms of support, and formal supports also utilised and valued
* Three core themes in benefits associated with higher education: personal growth; social experiences; and increased understanding of broader society (p.10)

**Recommendations**Institutions should:* systematically collect data on FinF students
* expand outreach into the community
* ensure that information given to students is explicit
* involve family members
* recognize and value FinF cohort
* provide more financial support to FinF students

Teaching and professional staff should:* Recognise that higher education is transformational for many FinF students
* Get to know your student cohort
* Build a sense of community on campus
* Make expectations clear
* Use accessible language
* Be approachable and enthusiastic in teaching
* Promote health and wellbeing
* Encourage students to seek help

**Core argument:** Further research needed on why FinF choose the courses they do and why FinF students drop out. FinF are “able to successfully navigate the complexities of higher education when provided with the appropriate support and opportunities” (p.78). |
| Luzeckyj, A., King, S., Scutter, S., & Brinkworth, R. (2011). [The significance of being first: A consideration of cultural capital in relation to "first in family" student's choices of university and program. A Practice Report](http://dx.doi.org/10.5204/intjfyhe.v2i2.89). *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education, 2*(2), 91-n/a. AUSAnnotation by Sally Baker | **Context:** Starts from the argument that FinF students have a particularly difficult task when it comes to participating in post-compulsory education. Assumption = university is “of inherent value for an individual student given the premise that university graduates generally have higher average salaries, increasedemployment rates, greater economic security and social status” (p.95)**Aim:** To report on first stage of larger project on student transition and first year experience; to explore whether FinF students are more likely to choose an institution that acknowledges and recognises their cultural capital**Theoretical frame:** Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital**Methodology:** Surveys to FinF students in 3 South Australian universities (all had self-identified as FinF in the survey). Surveys conducted one month before O week. Statistical analysis = Chi squared and ANOVA. Open-ended questions = thematically analysed. ‘Alliance’ websites analysed using Bourdieu’s theories of game, field and capital.**Findings:** Survey results: 42% of respondents = FinF (33%m, 67%f)How expectations of university = informed: most FinF relied on school counsellors and university marketing materials, non-FinF relied more on parents and siblings.FinF more like to decide to attend university at the end of high school or after working for a whileFinF more likely to come from rural backgrounds (48%) compared to 39% of metro FinF studentsFinF students = slightly older average ageFinF less likely to be studying at Go8 (Uni Adelaide)FinF = more likely to be enrolled in education, economics and science, compared to non-FinF who were more likely to be enrolled in Law, Medicine, Dentistry and Engineering**Core argument:** FinF have less cultural capital when it comes to attending university:* “limited knowledge regarding the range of degree programs available;
* unrealistic expectations of university study, for example the time required for self-directed study;
* broader responsibilities, for example needing to work to support themselves through university, or family caring
* responsibilities” (p.95)
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| Luzeckyj,A. McCann,B., Graham, C., King, S. & McCann, J. (2017). [Being First in Family: motivations and metaphors](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/07294360.2017.1300138), *Higher Education Research & Development*, 36(6), 1237–1250.AUS Annotation by Anna Xavier Keywords: *First in Family; first generation; higher education; managing transition; metaphor; narrative motivations for attending university*  | **Context:** Despite being a growing cohort in the HE sector, FinF students remain an ‘under-recognised, equity grouping with a disproportionate number encompassing low-SES, mature-aged, regional and remote, and Indigenous students’ (p. 1238) (Bui, 2002; Engle, 2007; James, Krause, & Jennings, 2010). Authors highlight findings from their previous research (Luzeckyj et al., 2011) which showed that FinF students often experience educational disadvantage due to the misalignment of their cultural & social capital with that of the university. However, authors argue that despite shedding light on the expectations and experiences of FinF students’ university study through their previous research (Luzeckyj et al., 2011), there is limited knowledge on the ‘constraints FiF students face or what shapes their aspirations and ambitions to attend university, what factors impact on them most significantly whilst at university’ (p. 1237), as well as the impact of university life on their self-identity or their extended relationships with friends and family. **Aim:** To report on the interviews which explored FinF students’ understandings of their university experience, including motivations which influenced their commencement of study and factors which helped in sustaining their progress. The article focuses on students’ use of metaphors to describe their university experience. **Theoretical frame:** Conceptual framework – Metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980): Allow speakers ‘to open a door that cannot be opened by approaches that are too weighed down by duty to literal truth’ (Bakan, 1996, p. 7). **Methodology:** Qualitative approach; Data collection method: Semi-structured, in-depth interviews (6 interviews at each institution)– students were asked to identify a metaphor (or analogy) that described their university experience; Participants: FinF students from University of Adelaide, University of South Australia & Flinders University (n=18); various disciplines of study (Eg: Arts, Engineering, Speech Pathology, Graphic Design); Exclusion criteria: Students who had left university through attrition; Data analysis: **Findings:** 1) Three main themes & 8 sub-themes identified: Theme 1 – The student [sub-themes: individual characteristics & skills; consolidation of student identity; life at university); Theme 2 – The journey [sub-themes: motivators; enablers/barriers; choosing ‘what’ and ‘where’ to study]; Theme 3 – The networks [sub-themes: ‘who’; ‘how’] (p. 1240). Conceptual framework of themes, sub-themes and relationships between them: page5image173522) Metaphors utilised by participants of study: ‘linked to travel or a journey; illustrating unknowns; and illustrative of not belonging’ (p. 1242). All metaphors fit within the theme ‘student’, while aspects of motivation in the ‘journey’ theme and the aspects of ‘who’ and ‘how’ in the ‘networks’ theme were also evident in some responses, highlight interconnectedness of themes. A)Metaphors related to journey: Nina (35-year-old female, mother of six children) - ‘start here and you’ve got to get to there’; Rowan (31-year-old male) – ‘I think my university journey has been about, I would say it’s made me a more well-rounded adult’; Marg (43-year-old female) – variation of journey metaphor: climbing a mountain; Jen (26-year-old female) – variation of the journey metaphor that involved climbing – difficult but also ‘lovely’ (p. 1243); B) Metaphors illustrating unknowns: Carl (19-year-old male) – ocean metaphors (with a positive outlook – ‘you’re always heading towards your destination’); Travis (20-year-old male) – more dramatic & negative use of ocean metaphor (calmness of the ocean disguises potential danger); Gail (20-year-old female) – ‘University is like a surprise’; Alison (17-year-old female) – ‘like opening a can of worms’ (p. 1244); C) Metaphors about not belonging and adapting – Brendon (18-year-old male) – ‘fish out of water’ (showing a sense of not belonging & need to adapt); Todd – ‘popping bubble’ (to describe transition & learning experience); Roxie (33-year-old female) – diving board metaphor (reflects fears associated with getting started & needing a push, with changing roles between self & student); Carol (20-year-old female) – ‘roller coaster’ metaphor (indicates ups and downs experienced when renegotiating shift back to university life). **Discussion:** 1)Metaphors related to journey – The different descriptions of ‘journey’ provides some insight into students’ motivations – for Nina, the journey was about the ‘end point’, while for Rowan, it was about ‘personal development’ (p. 1243); Marg’s description of climbing a mountain emphasises an ‘uphill, long and hard’ time at university; 2)Metaphors illustrating unknowns – Carl’s positive outlook on his university experience as an ‘ocean’ with him always heading towards his destination reflects his resilience, while Travis’ negative connotation of the ocean as disguising potential danger through its calmness highlights the ‘culture shock’ experienced by students entering HE (Christie, Tett, Cree, Hounsell & McCune, 2008); Gail’s metaphor of ‘surprise’ and Alison’s metaphor of a ‘can of worms’ reflects their ‘confusion of being at university’, highlight the plight of FinF students who are often not sure of what to expect at university; 3)Metaphors about not belonging and adapting – Brendon’s metaphor of a ‘fish out of water’ reflects how the process of adapting to university is very difficult, especially for FinF students, who struggle to establish and assert their ‘student identity’ (p. 1245); Brendon’s metaphor also highlights the feelings of ‘social isolation’ and difficulty to fit in with the ‘clique’ experienced by FinF students. **Core argument:** The diversity of metaphors used by students ‘provide vivid depictions of students’ understandings of their lived experiences’, consequently offering ‘an avenue for the wider educational community to comprehend both the affective and cultural impacts that navigating the new environment of HE has on these students’ lives’. These insights into motivations and struggles could be considered by university staff and policy-makers when creating guiding strategies for future students’ (p. 1247). |
| McMillan, W. (2014). They Have Different Information about What Is Going On: Emotion in the Transition to University. *Higher Education Research & Development,* 33 (6), 1123–1135.SAAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *first-year experience; higher education; professional education; student diversity; student experience* | **Context:** First year dentistry course in South African university. Argues that ‘non-traditional’ students = most vulnerable in transitioning to higher education**Aim:** To examine intersections of “emotional commentary and classed locations”, and to identify “aspects of the university’s material and cultural environments which shape students’ emotional responses and whichconsequently, are implicated in the perpetuation of class-based differential life chances. (p. 1123)**Theoretical frame:** Archer’s (2002) concept of realism and agency: emotions = commentaries about ‘competing concerns’ (2002: 16; cited on p.1124). Archer argues that emotions emerge from 3 competing concerns: physical, performative, self-worth. These competing concerns = hierarchy and what is privileged by an individual = identity. Capital, including ‘emotional capital’ (Reay, 2000) = classed: middle class students are more tempered because there is less risk, fear, shame and guilt (see p.1124). Reay (2005) argues that f-in-f students in particular pay a higher ‘emotional cost’**Methodology:** [Presumably qualitative]. Study = focus groups with first year dentistry class with students in Academic Literacy core module [n=15] to explore experiences of transition. Author notes ‘classed post-apartheid social reality’; categorized students into broad middle class (Group 1) and working class (Group 2) groups plus a third group comprising friends who elected to participate together (mostly working class). Interviews = 3rd month of Year 1. Two broad questions asked: ‘What was it like coming to university’ and ‘What does being a dentist/oral hygienist mean to you?’. Emotions = not apriori theme but emerged in process of transcription = signaled either paralinguistically or through word choice + grounded theory. All 15 students = re-interviewed in Year 2**Findings:** *Funding* – managing finances = common theme but differences noted between ‘classes’; middle class students= more about staying within budget/ not overspending (with parents’ anger the factor to be avoided) = project of ‘becoming an adult’. For working class students, ‘managing finances’ = about making enough money to keep studying (impacting on when, what and where students studied). Travelling = major cost: “The working-class students, thus, experienced the emotional cost of being different (Reay, 2005) – of not being able to produce, financially, that which universities assume to be in place” (p.1128).*Access*– sense of inevitability about going to university for middle class students; no data to suggest emotional element to choice of whether to attend university. Analysis = middle class students had emotional capital to weather the risk: “middle-class students had access to resources which potentially alleviated feelings of risk and fear” (p.1128). For working class students = desire to go to university = impacted by assumptions about what was possible (relating to cultural capital/ familiarity with system and norms. Argues that middle class students’ data suggest that they had access to more information about university because of parents’ capital, whereas working class students did not have parents’ grapevine/ archive of experience to draw on [no ref to Ball & Vincent, 1998], resulting in emotional responses: “Bewilderment and frustration were evident for these students. In a tone of desperation, Siviwe declared, ‘I didn’t know what to do!’” (p.1130).*Academic preparedness ­*–middle class students’ talk suggests that they had been primed/ prepared at home for the idea of university (e.g. prep for independent study) and purchase of equipment and school explicated expectations/ standards: “Success in the academic challenges of school, and recognition that the challenges at university were similar, allowed these students to assume that they had the resources to meet the challenges of university and to perform successfully” (p.1130). Working class students = less likely to develop same set of resources and dispositions, and as a consequence they were less prepared for the academic environment of higher education. Author cites one student who described “university as a ‘new world’” (p.1131). Emotions evident in phrasing such as ‘feeling lost’, ‘foreignness’, and perception of others having ‘insider information’. “Disappointment and grief at not being able to perform the tasks pre-requisite for university success – tasks that other students appeared to perform so effortlessly that they gave the impression of having insider information – was implicit in accounts that constructed the self as ‘nothing’” (p.1131). *Becoming a dentist –* Role performance = emotional because of projection onto future = saturated with hopes and fears. Middle class students more likely to talk about course in terms of personal project and active choice. Less likely to be talked about as active choice by working class students; rather = framed as giving back to community. “Privileging the project of university student, rather than that of dentist/oral hygienist, suggests an emotional and energy investment related to ‘getting into’ university” (p.1133).**Core argument:** Differences in ways that middle and working class students experience transition to university and analysis of their emotional responses = explores students’ inner worlds. |
| O’Shea, S. (2013). [Transitions and turning points: exploring how first-in-family female students story their transition to university and student identity formation](file://localhost/doi/10.1080%3A09518398.2013.771226), *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 1–24. AUSAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *transition to university; first-in-family students; mature-age students* | **Context:** Transition into higher education study for female, mature age and first in family students, who are described as defining themselves as ‘imposters’ in O’Donnell & Tobbell’s (2007) study. Scopes gender divide in HE and scopes literature on women returners. Also navigates literature on identity/ies in HE (p.137-8). Transition = risky (see p.138). Social class also important frame **Aim:** To offer insight into women’s perceptions of their social world of the university and negotiations with the university; how the participants managed their transitions and their identity positions**Theoretical frame:** Learning identity (Johnston & Merrill, 2009) = complex/ contradictory (intersectional): “Learning identities may have been forged in previous educational environments and so entry into higher education may either confirm them or disrupt them, prompting a renegotiation” (p.138); ‘turning points’ (see Cappeliez, Beaupre, and Robitaille, 2008) and ‘becoming’**Methodology:** Narrative inquiry/ repeat interviews with mature age, female and FinF students (n=17). Ontology = symbolic interactionism. Longitudinal nature (one year) allowed O’Shea to “journey with the participants in order to explore the various critical stages encountered as they themselves were experiencing them” (p.141). Age range of participants = 18-47 (average age = 32). 9/17 had finished HSC; 10/17 had completed some form of post-school education (VET/ Access to gain access). 4/17 completed STAT test. Iterative process of analysis, a “circuitous process” (p.144)**Findings:** Three themes: Coming to university, Persisting in the university environment, Changes in thinking*Coming to university*: Decision to enrol at university = major, often with resistance from family members. Only 2/17 had experienced joy and excitement from partner. Turning points = varied between women but marked a point where university became a possibility/ necessity (e.g., an escape from dysfunction, possibility of getting more out of life, fulfilment, shift away from domestic space). Compromise =needed to manage dynamics with family.Initial interactions with university = complicated and intimidating (p.148). Persistence = characterised as series of turning points.P*ersisting in the university environment*: reflecting on ‘highs’ and ‘lows’, assessment featured prominently/ = significant turning points. At the beginning of Year 1, the idea of failing an assignment was the biggest fear (15/17 students); “This was related to both the financial implications of failure but also the personal and public repercussions such as diminished self-confidence as well as disappointment from self and others” (p.149).Perception of transition = relational to prior educational experiences and perceptions of learning selves and knowledge of university and culture (‘culture shock’, p.150)Changes in thinking: dramatic turning points in participants’ relational lives (including relationships at home). Their reasons for studying changed over the course of the year, “even those women who had initially described university in more instrumental terms talked more about self-fulfilment and changes in identity by the end of the year” (p.152)**Core argument:** Turning points = useful way of exploring students’ transitions in identities through process of entering and studying in Year 1 of university (relational, confidence as learner, confidence in self more generally): “University and the related turning points in self-identity also led some of the women to question the taken-for-granted aspects of their lives” (p.153) |
| O’Shea, S. (2016). [Avoiding the manufacture of ‘sameness’: first-in-family students, cultural capital and the higher education environment](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10734-015-9938-y), *Higher Education,* 72, 59–78.AUSAnnotated by Sally BakerKeywords: *First-in-family students; Cultural capital; Community Cultural Wealth; Transition to higher education* | **Context:** Works from field of research into FinF that has used capital as framing, leading to institutional strategies working from an ‘empty vessel’ model of teaching/ transitions; however, “such an approach is fundamentally flawed, as students can be either framed as deficit or replete in capitals depending on how their particular background and capabilities are perceived” (p.1). Title draws from work by Bejarano and Valverde (2012) that argued how university strategies seek to ‘manufacture sameness’ by reducing reliance on the familial/ social contexts in efforts to acculturate students into the academy.**Aim:** To examine how FinF students manage transitions into higher education; examine what would happen in FinF were considered through strengths view rather than deficit: to explore “how a strengths based model, such as Yosso’s, can enable data to be unpacked in order to re-envisage what is assumed to be a weakness or lack in terms of strengths” (p.2).**Theoretical frame:** Bourdieu: social and cultural capital = typical framing (e.g. King et al.2015); uses Yosso’s Community Cultural Wealth framework (see also Harwood et al. 2015). Draws on Appadurai (2004) in discussion of aspirational capital**Methodology:** Qualitative study. In-depth interviews with 23 FinF students (who represent approximately 15% of student body but no systematic measures used to collect data on FinF). Reasonable diversity in participants (all Anglo-Australians, mix of genders and ages, some multicultural connections, mix of disciplines and previous occupations). Interviews on experiences/perceptions of university, reactions from friends and family.**Findings:** Many students found starting university overwhelming, especially for older participants*Aspirational capital* = form of resilience to permit possibility of dreaming. Data suggests that attending university = long held dream for several students*Resistant capital* = knowledges and practices developed out of resisting subordination (‘resistance to the status quo’, p.14) – especially for older women. This = increased through “Both family and community, or what Yosso terms as familial capital, also complemented this personal agency, limiting the isolation of individuals by providing embodied support” (p.14).*Familial capital* = in particular, importance of children in making decision to go to university and support of spouses/partners/parents*Experiential capital* = a priori knowledge provides ‘significant capital’, especially for older students**Core argument:** In foregrounding the intersectionality between diversity of factors, moves away from reductive simplifications of ‘FinF’ and recognises multiplicity of experiences and strengths (thus resisting deficit framings) – if students don’t have a familial educational memory of higher education to draw on, they have “other morefundamental but equally rich personal resources drawn upon in this transition” (p.12). Need to reimagine ways of integrating students in: “This reconceptualisation should consider the very strong capitals that learners arrive with, regardless of ethnicity, SES status or educational background” (p.17). |
| O’Shea, S. (2020). [Crossing boundaries: rethinking the ways that first-in- family students navigate ‘barriers’ to higher education](https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2019.1668746), *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 41(1), 95–110. AUSKeywords: *Boundary crossing; first in family students; higher education participation; transition; educational equity; field*  | **Context:****Aim:****Theoretical frame:****Methodology:****Findings:****Core argument:** |
| O’Shea, S.; Stone, C.; Delahunty, J. & May, J. (2016). [Discourses of betterment and opportunity: exploring the privileging of university attendance for first-in-family learners](http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2016.1212325), *Studies in Higher Education,* AUSAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *First-in-family learners; university access and**participation; qualitative research; cultural capitals;**educational equity* | **Context:** First in family mature age students in Australian higher education. Addresses the deficit framing of ‘non-traditional’ students by problematising the concept of privilege in the context of the benefits of attending university. Benefits are often couched in economic/ financial terms and this is reflected in rise of marketing in the sector. Scopes literature on FinF students (from ‘financially poorer backgrounds’, p.2) – debt averse and unequal access to financial resources/ support; Australian context, preoccupation with living costs and transport, while in UK focus is more on tuition fees. Reviews literature on economic status and poverty/ higher education Offers definition of FinF as “those individuals who are the first in their immediate family, including parents, partners, children and siblings, to attend university” (p.3).**Aim:** [of overarching project]= to examine “the impact on the family and household when one of their own is the first to enter university studies and begins to build a student identity” (p.5); to explore transitions of FinF into higher education/ translations of this at family and community level.**Theoretical frame:****Methodology:** Qualitative/ mixed methods. Funded by OLT. Data collection = in-depth interviews and open-ended survey questions. Participants recruited from 3 cohorts: 1) enabling education, 2) undergraduate students studying face-to-face, 3) undergraduate students studying wholly online from a range of universities. Participants recruited via email. Interviews with 92 students (phone/ face-to-face); online survey (n=173). Additional interviews conducted with family members (n=4) and family members completed a survey (n=40). Questions for both interviews and survey had 4 broad themes: (1) university experience; (2) family/friends reactions; (3) family perceptions of university; and (4) student experience (see p.5). Paper focuses on interview data. Analysis = thematic and influenced by narrative research (focus on stories and comparison across cohort). Propose intersectional understanding of FinF (other variables = impactful such as gender, ethnicity and age). Focuses on younger group (18-25; n=35), none of whom had children, mostly studying full time and still living at home, most self-identified as white (no Indigenous participants in this group). Majority had completed HSC (28/35); most were female (21/35) and most in first year (19/35).**Findings:** Three major themes: Discourses of betterment and opportunity; Realising generational dreams and ambitions; Disparities between expectations and realities*Discourses of betterment and opportunity:* Participants mostly spoke about university as a chance to improve future opportunities (with positionality against parents’ lives, aka a rejection of – see example of Abbey on p.7); idea that university = ticket to ‘good jobs’ also prevalent in the data.*Realising generational dreams and ambitions*: Some of this is related to the vicarious wishes of parents and family members who ‘missed out’ on opportunities. The emotional burden of this bequeathing of opportunity = ‘burdensome’Disparities between expectations and realities: sources of information for FinF = ad-hoc and ill-informed. Students also largely underprepared for financial and academic/ time implications of study, which resulted in unexpected levels of stress (leading some to take leave from studies or drop units).**Core argument:** Expectations of FinF students need to be better understood: high opportunity factor, but mismatch between expectations and reality = stressful: “For some, the duality of the student role combined with the family pressure to achieve and succeed in life can result in significant stress” (p.10). Furthermore, the kinds of opportunities are largely understood in terms of future economic gain, which does not necessarily play out in reality: “[The] discourses [of betterment and opportunity] often focus narrowly on the ability to acquire financialcapital through successful tertiary study, failing to explicitly recognise and acknowledge other empowering types of social and cultural capital which higher education can confer. There is a need to recognise these other, more experiential transformations that the university experience can engender, instead of solely emphasising the financial benefits that may be acquired upon completion” (p.11). |
| Scevak, J.; Southgate, E.; Rubin, M.; Macqueen, S.; Douglas, H.: & Williams, P. (2014). [*A Guide for Educators in Higher Education: Responding to diversity for positive academic outcomes*](file://localhost/A%20Guide%20for%20Educators%20in%20Higher%20Education/%20Responding%20to%20diversity%20for%20positive%20academic%20outcomes): University of Newcastle, Newcastle, NSW.AUS Annotation by Sally Baker | **Project description**:This project investigated the influence of first in family (FiF) status, socioeconomic background and other demographic contributors to the academic outcomes of students at a regional Australian university. This project is set in the context where for many students in these groups, university is experienced as challenging because previous educational and life experiences have not prepared them for studying in higher education. Australian research on FiF university students is limited in number and in the scope of variables that may impact on achievement and university experience. Research suggests that FiF students were more likely to be enrolled in particular degrees (Education, Economics and Science), be older, and come from a rural background. Therefore, in the context of limited empirical work looking at FiF, this project sought to answer these Research Questions:1. Do First in Family students differ from non-FiF students in demographics, entry pathway to university, enrolment status, degree type enrolled in, social connections, help seeking, worry about expenses and engagement with university studies?
2. Do First in Family students come from lower socio-economic backgrounds than non-FiF students?
3. Are there differential levels of academic success measured by Grade Point Averages (GPAs) amongst First in Family and non-FiF groups enrolled in the same programs and what student and program characteristics relate to this?

 **Conceptual and/or methodological framework**:This project employed a quantitative research design and surveyed 983 undergraduate students enrolled in five broad disciplinary areas: Applied Health, The Sciences, Engineering, Business & Commerce and Medicine. The survey asked questions relating to demographic information, social lives, pathway into higher education, socioeconomic status and social class and FiF status. Data were examined to determine whether there were any differences between equity group and non-equity group students. A series of ANOVAs were conducted using categorical variables and Multiple Regression analysis was conducted to identify predictors of academic success. Retrospective and current data on the participants’ outcomes (GPA, progression, enrolment status) were included in the analysis.  **Key findings**:Being First in Family appears to have strong links with social class and economic variables:* FiF students were more likely to be female (69%) and older than non-FiF students;
* FiF and non-FiF students did not differ in entry pathways to university study;
* There were no significant differences between FiF and non-FiF students in full time or part time enrolment. Similarly, there were no differences between FiF and non- FiF enrolment in degree type (Business/Commerce, Engineering/ Construction Management, Sciences, Allied Health), year level of study (Year 1-4) or hours attended;
* FiF students were significantly less confident than non-FiF students in using Blackboard;
* FiF students worried significantly more about living and educational expenses;
* FiF students did not differ from non-FiF in number of hours enrolled in university study, number of hours spent in independent study, approach to learning (surface/deep), seeking student help, degree satisfaction, integration into university and First Year GPA and Second Year GPA; and

FiF students scored significantly lower than non-FiF students on coping with the academic workload, complexity of course material, intention to continue with the course, seeking resource help, and academic skills confidence.  |
| Southgate, E; Douglas, H.; Scevak, J.; Macqueen, S.; Rubin, M.; & Lindell, C. (2015). [The academic outcomes of first-in-family in an Australian university: An explanatory study](http://nova.newcastle.edu.au/ceehe/index.php/iswp/article/view/12), *International Studies in Widening Participation,* 1(2), 31–45.AUSAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords***:*** *first in family; under-presented students; academic outcomes* | **Context:** Works from positioning of novelty in Australian context (but see O’Shea’s body of work)**Aim:** To test hypotheses:(a) FIF students would come from lower socio-economic backgrounds than non-FIF students, and (b) FIF students would have lower levels of achievement than non-FIF students (p.34)**Theoretical frame:** Psychological**Methodology:** ‘Exploratory and descriptive’. Survey (n=211; 54% of whom = FinF) students from education, nursing and ‘liberal arts’ (online). 86.3% = female; median age of 25; 2,2% = Indigenous; 6.2% = NESB. Survey = demographic, course/ study information, student experiences and well-being, open-ended questions on experiences. Used *The Mental Health Inventory-five (MHI-5)* and *The Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991).*  **Findings:** No clear relationship between SES and FinFFinF students have poorer academic outcomes than their counterparts, particularly after Year 1 when all scaffolded transition support finishedFinF students = more likely to seek supportPossible reasons suggested: focus on ‘first year experience’, lack of skill in being self-regulated and self-directed learners (based on ‘Hope scores’), social networks (not clearly linked to data). If FinF prefer more personalised support, too bad: “there may be difficulties in an era characterised by the intensification of academic work” (p.40) and “It may be that FIF students have been socialised into working class interdependent norms and that they bring these norms to university, experiencing a clash of culture in the help-seeking process” (p.41).**Core argument:** Need to encourage FinF to develop better social networks (inexpensive and sustainable solution that passes most responsibility onto student) |
| Southgate, E.; Brosnan, C.; Lempp, H.; Kelly, B.; Wright, S.; Outram, S. & Bennett, A. (2016). [Travels in extreme social mobility: how first-in-family students find their way into and through medical education](http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2016.1263223), *Critical Studies in Education,* AUS/ CAN/ UKAnnotated by Sally BakerKeywords: *Higher education; medical education; non-traditional students; social mobility; widening participation* | **Context:** ‘Extreme’ or long-[social]distance social mobility and higher education journeys; the experiences of first-in-family students in medical education in context of massive under-representation of particular social groups in medicine. Authors cite Australian DET (2014) data that states “16% of students are from LSES backgrounds, with 46% from middle SES, and 38% from high SES backgrounds” (on p.4). Push to increase diversity in medical students = response to argument that doctors should represent the diversity of the community they serve. Earlier work points to the role of the admissions process in precluding ‘non-traditional’ students from accessing a medicine degree course**Aim:** To respond to this RQ: “What are the experiences of FiF medical students in medical education and how do they understand their personal and professional journey through a high-status professional degree?” (p.2)**Theoretical frame:** “theoretical eclecticism” (see p.6): Goffman (1963) and stigma; Reay, Crozier & Clayton’s (2009) use of Bourdieu to explore dispositions and psychic economy; Fraser (1998) = recognition/ social justice; intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989)**Methodology:** Qualitative/ critical interpretive epistemological framework. The term FinF used as ‘umbrella’ term to capture other under-represented groups (e.g. low SES/ Indigenous). Interviews (semi-structured) with FinF undergraduate medicine students (n=21). Two thirds of participants from lowest 2 quartiles of SES (low/ low-middle); 9 = late teens, 12 = mid twenties- mid thirties; 16 = female, 5 =male; 7 = Indigenous; 14 = R&R; 15 = Year 1 or 2, rest = Year 3-5. Only gender and Indigeneity used as markers to anonymise the data**Findings:** Three themes = (1) the roots of participants’ social mobility journeys; (2) how sociocultural difference is experienced and negotiated within medical school; and (3) how participants think about their professional identities and futures‘*Life isn’t that simple’*: for most, getting into medical school = “circuitous” and “protracted” (p.7). Only 2/21 = took direct route from school; 5/21 took a gap year; 5 (Indigenous) came via enabling = ‘getting there the hard way’. Participants described varying levels of happiness in childhood; some described themselves as bogans or having been to ‘dero’ schools (which hampered guidance/ produced limited information about medicine/ university and a lack of support/ negative expectations from teachers). Family attitudes were mixed*Difference*: Imposter syndrome/ not feeling good enough = significant barrier, which “point[s] to a collective characteristic of FiF medical students: a shared understanding that certain groups are not really ‘entitled’ to aspire to medicine, even if they have demonstrated significant academic achievement and life accomplishments. Indigenous participants were especially explicit in naming how social class and racism influenced their sense of entitlement” (p.9). Once in, students described growth in self-confidence and belonging to tight-knit group of peers. Some participants articulated clear awareness of the social/cultural differences with more privileged peers, and mix of admiration and envy reported in data. This was more profound in data from Indigenous students (social and cultural distance). Use of language (aka not ‘formal’ English or self-deprecating descriptors like bogan) = “the language of participants served to delineate and sometimes defend social and cultural difference” (p.11) – relates to Goffman’s understanding of stigma as a ‘language of relationships’ for discrediting certain identities.*Professional identity and future prospects*: Participants all recognized the high status of medicine and prestige associated with the career. In terms of social mobility, many of participants expressed a desire to remain ‘rooted’ to their home contexts/cultures, even though they viewed their social mobility favourably (see commentary on being ‘humble’, p.13). **Core argument:** Students engage in ‘tactical refinement of the self’, rather than a full blown discarding of previous identities; “they reflect a tactical incorporation (in a conscious and an embodied sense) of certainmiddle-class attributes, coupled with an articulated appreciation of the worth of what they can bring to a very exclusive table” (p.14) |
| Stahl, G. & McDonald, S. (2019). [Social capital and self-crafting: comparing two case studies of first-in-family males navigating elite Australian universities](https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1632945), *International Journal of Inclusive Education* AUSAnnotated by Sally BakerKeywords: *Social capital; first-in-family (FIF); higher education; self- crafting; learner identities; youth transitions*  | **Context:** First-in-family males from low SES backgrounds in Australian higher education (elite courses). Young FinF men remain underrepresented in Australian higher education. Authors position article at nexus of literature on identity/ self-crafting/ navigation of social capital for ‘non-traditional’ students and accrual and deployment of social capital. Literature view of FinF and aspirational masculinities: working class men seeking access to elite institutions face significant barriers. Author draws on Reay’s (2004) work that argues that emotional capital is depreciated through the process of accruing social/cultural capital while at university, leaving students (and young men in particular) open to ‘psychic costs’ (see p.3). Underrepresentation of low SES men = related to gender roles, pervasive depiction of men as ‘breadwinners’, the lure of employment in other trades. **Aim:** To explore “the experiences of two FIF males as they transition from secondary school to elite courses in prestigious universities” so as to explore how experience drives strategy development (abstract); to add to knowledge about young men and the accrual of social capital/ mobility; to focus on “the differentiated ways in which they accrue social capital and the relationship this has to how they craft their identities in higher education” (p.2)**Theoretical frame:** Bourdieu/ social capital; self-crafting as constant identity negotiation**Methodology:** Qualitative case study of two young low SES men — Lucas and Adam — high-aspiring/ academic attainment who studied in (low) fee-paying schools in low SES locales and went on to study in elite courses in universities. Students were recruited from high school (see p.5 for detail of recruitment and sampling). Lucas = from Western Sydney studied Law and Economics; Adam from North Adelaide studied Science. Data collection included interviews and visual methods**Findings:** Each student case study described in detailLucas: wanted to study at Uni of Sydney; was confident public speaker and participated in school life; understood the pathway into his chosen course/uni; he viewed himself as different from his peers because of his extracurricular activities (e.g. Youth Parliament), which introduced him to people outside of his local network. Lucas didn’t get the ATAR he needed, but he did get into USyd and took on self-entrepreneurial/ neoliberal subjectivities (getting the maximum out of every opportunity) by joining many societies and engaging in bridging (contrasted with bonding) activities with middle class peers. Lucas is also able to capitalise on his biography: “he is able to use his social mobility biography to his advantage; the son of a concreter from the Western suburbs of Sydney studying at an elite university appeals to the right-wing individualist ideology of pulling oneself up by one’s bootstraps” (p.9).Adam: wanted to study science at Uni Adelaide. Adam = competitive race walker, which offered confidence but he was anxious about his exams. Described as a ‘robot’ by one teacher; Adam saw it as hard work and focused on his academics at school, quitting his p/t job in Year 12 to focus on his studies. Adam = shy and spoke about recognising he would need to work to make friends. Once at university, he described enjoying the social aspect with likeminded people. Unlike Lucas, Adam didn’t join university clubs (time and money constraints) so didn’t accrue the social bridges that Lucas did.Both participants worked to enhance their sense of belonging and make university work for them (p.11). Authors note that social capital = ephemeral, with temporality a concern for bridges made, which necessitates adaptability with self-crafting. **Core argument:** Article argues the need to develop self-crafting strategies; the article thus highlights “the nuances between accessing social capital and operationalising social capital to one’s advantage, which may involve varying degrees of success depend- ing on who is playing their hand, the stakes, as well as the context. While it would appear that actively fostering social connections makes university life more enjoyable, further research needs to be done to explore how the accrual of social capital can be used to counter- act the perpetuation of inequitable education structures” (p.13). |
| Stone, C., O’Shea, S., May, J., Delahunty, J. & Partington, Z. (2016). [Opportunity through online learning: experiences of first-in-family students in online open-entry higher education](http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3411&context=sspapers), *Australian Journal of Adult Learning, 56*(2), 146–168.AUSAnnotation written by Evonne IrwinKeywords: *first, family, students, opportunity, open, online, entry, higher, education, learning, experiences*  | **Context:** First in Family students studying online, open entry, undergraduate units with the Open University Australia (OUA). The OUA is a commercial enterprise that works with 13 (at the time of publication) Australian universities to offer open entry online higher education; it has an annual enrolment of over 40,000 students (OUA, 2015). 67.7% of OUA students come from families where neither parent has university qualifications. While online study provides access to higher education for students who, for a variety of reasons including financial and educational disadvantage, cannot take ‘traditional’, face-to-face pathways, it also comes with low completion rates.**Aim:** To report on the experiences of mature-age students studying open entry undergraduate units online via the OUA.**Methodology:** Narrative methods were used to interview, design the survey/interview questions and analyse the data. In-depth semi-structured phone interviews (n=43) were conducted and a detailed survey administered (n=44), making the total number of participants, 87. Interviews and surveys covered the same themes including: motivations to study; experiences so far; reactions from family, friends, colleagues; managing their studies; any support received; the impact their journey had had so far; and specifically why they chose an online mode of study, how they experienced that online mode and any specific study strategies they employed. Demographic data was also gathered from participants.**Findings:** 85 of the 87 participants were mature-age students and most were partnered females with children. Most participants were in paid work.Participants expressed a desire to study based on the motivation to improve their lives and their children’s lives via more secure employment and increased income as well as to fulfil personal dreams and ambitions.Participants specifically chose online study for the promised flexibility. This allowed work, care-giving and other responsibilities to continue. The OUA open entry units offered also gave participants an avenue to begin in higher education without the usual necessary entry qualifications. This opportunity to study in higher education is also tied to family expectations (where university study is not the norm) and is situated in a “social milieu that sometimes positively and sometimes negatively influences the student’s experience” (157).Support from outside the institution in the form of friends, colleagues and family is just as, or more, important to online students as the support provided institutionally. Families also played an important part in inspiring and encouraging participants to enter their studies. Family members also acted as motivators during participants’ study, although some participants experienced negative or mixed reactions from family, including parents who did not understand the higher education system, nor their children’s choice to enter it. In summary, external support networks comprising family, colleagues and friends were important for participants to maintain their motivation for online study. Despite attending university in ‘virtual’ spaces, participants expressed the personal transformative nature of their study in higher education. This was particularly the case for women participants, however, men expressed transformation with respect to employment.**Core Argument:** While widening access to higher education is one benefit for online learning, it is not enough to only provide access. Institutional supports for online cohorts (specifically mature-age) should: understand that online cohorts have high proportions of first-in-family students who may need to build confidence and gain experience in university environments; recognise that online cohorts are highly motivated to improve their lives and want to work hard to fulfil their objectives; try to accommodate the diverse and complex needs of online mature-age students who experience multiple responsibilities outside of their studies; provide timely and appropriate outreach and proactive support; acknowledge the role families and other external networks play in supporting online students; develop strategies to better include families and communities in the learning journeys of online students. |
| Talebi, M.; Matheson, K.; & Anisman, H. (2013). [Does being first in family matter? The role of identity in the stigma of seeking help among first and non-first in family university students](file://localhost/doi/%2010.5204%3Aintjfyhe.v4i1.137), *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education,* 4(1), 47–58.CANAnnotation by Sally Baker | **Context:** First in family students transitioning into university from school in Canada. Argues that FinF students have greater challenges with regard to transition. Stigma = major deterrent to seeking help with emotional and academic support, related to notions/ values/ expectations of independence. FinF students are “especially prone to stigma perceptions, despite the fact they would benefit most from the professional support resources offered within a university” (p.48). FinF students = more likely to “perceive greater incompatibility between their life as a university student and their former self” (p.49), leading to identity conflicts that could impact on help-seeking.**Aim:** To explore relations between self-identification and stigma and the impact on help-seeking behaviours by comparing FinF and non-FinF students**Theoretical frame:** identity/ identification as a multidimensional concept that includes: *centrality/*group membership, *private regard/*esteem, *public regard/*perceptions of external evaluation**Methodology:** Quantitative/survey. Hypothesis 1: “although their status as university students would be equally central to FiF and non-FiF students, FiF students would report lower levels of public and private regard, and lower compatibility”. Hypothesis 2: “FiF status would moderate relations between students’ identification with their university status and the stigma associated with seeking help” (p.49-50). Participants = FinF students (n=83), non-FinF (n=269). Majority of participants = Euro-descent (65% FinF/ 78% non-FinF). 10% of FinF = South/SE Asian. Most participants had never been in therapy.Survey = 14-item identification scale; 5-item compatibility scale; measures of stigma of seeking help (one for academic help; one for personal help). Analysis = descriptive statistics (means/ SDs + t-test)**Findings:** No difference between FinF and non-FinF with regard to identificationFinF reported lower levels of self-stigma for seeking help for both academic and mental health issuesNo differences observed with stigmaCovariates of gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status = not significant in terms of self-stigmaSlopes analysis (see p.52) suggests private regard= related to lower self-stigma and asking for help; for non-FinF “self-stigma for seeking help for academic issues was most evident among this group when they perceived their identity to be held in low public regard, and self-stigma diminished as perceived public regard increased” (p.52).FinF = low self-stigma for seeking help with mental health; for non-FinF lower public regard correlates with greater self-stigmaFor FinF, ‘others’ (parents, siblings) = “not a source of assurance” with stigma and seeking helpNo evidence that in/compatability between home and university identities and FinF**Core argument:** Private and public regard = resources for diminishing self-stigma“FiF students were placing greater emphasis on their personal and private pursuits for the educational aspect of the university experience, and consequently derived less emotional and social benefits from the regard held by others” (p.54) |
| Whannell, R. (2013). [First-in-family students in a tertiary bridging program: Does it really make a difference](http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/openu/jwpll/2013/00000015/00000003/art00002)?, *Widening Participation & Lifelong Learning,* 15(3), 6–21.AUSAnnotation by Sally BakerKeywords: *bridging, first-in-family, cultural capital, Australia.* | **Context:** Examines importance of cultural capital in FinF enabling students’ experiences (regional university, Australia). 50% of students in enabling course had previously been found to have not completed secondary school (Whannell, Whannell & Lynch, 2010)**Theoretical frame:** Bourdieu’s notion of cultural capital (aka lack of for FinF students)**Methodology:** Quantitative: custom survey completed by 294 (47% of total cohort) students at two different points in the semester (week 3 and week 12), and from two different cohorts (S2, 2010; S1, 2011). Students = 32%m, 68% f with mean age of 28.4. Used Principle Components Analysis. Just under 50% = FinF; 53.2% had completed Year 12; 26.4% had completed Year 10**Findings:**Week 3: No significant difference in previous educational achievement by FinF or non-FinF; hours in class, classes missed = no significant differenceWeek 12: No significant difference in results of final assignment Overall: FinF students received less support from families consistently throughout programLower level of self-efficacy in FinF/ non-school completing students (week 3) resolved by week 12No significant differences in achievement or attrition found (FinF/ secondary school completers) **Core argument:** “the bridging program facilitated substantial improvements in academic efficacy through the social and academic support provided which bridged the gap between students of different cultural capital” (abstract) |