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Title 'Cutting Rough Diamonds': the transition experiences of First Generation Students in Higher Education

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'Cutting Rough Diamonds': the transition experiences of First Generation Students in Higher Education

- Julia Hope, University of Kent

Presented is an analysis the experiences of a cohort of first-generation students in their first semester at a United Kingdom (UK) Higher Education Institution. The 'rough diamonds' are white, under 25 and from an urban coastal town. The study, tracked students as they negotiated their entry to a satellite university campus called 'The Centre'. Findings suggest that the students' experiences of transition were a complex interplay between becoming, being and achieving as a higher education student and their own cultural and social identity. Financial, motivational, social and emotional issues which can all affect academic success (Pritchard & Wilson, 2003) were evident. A 'transition' model is proposed to illuminate how these students navigate crossing the cultures of home and university, and to inform practice in relation to retention of first generation students. Whilst the transitions and adjustments vary between individuals, all students experience some level of challenge in their first semester.

"I want something better for my children". A study of the 'experimental capital' of mature students in Higher Education.

- Julia Hope, University of Kent

Presented are the transition experiences of mature students at an English Higher Education Institution. The study captures how these students moved into and took up their place at university and engaged in study during their first year at a satellite campus. It focuses on how this mature (aged over 25) cohort from under-represented groups drew on their communities and families. Yosso's (2005) concept of community cultural wealth is used to challenge traditional interpretations of cultural capital. Through examination of the origins of these capitals this paper proposes that HEIs need focus on the range of capitals that mature students bring to university and how these are not deficit but are a source of resilience. The importance of experiential capital and support networks, and the transformative effect of HE on mature students' and the whole family needs be considered by HE staff and policy makers.