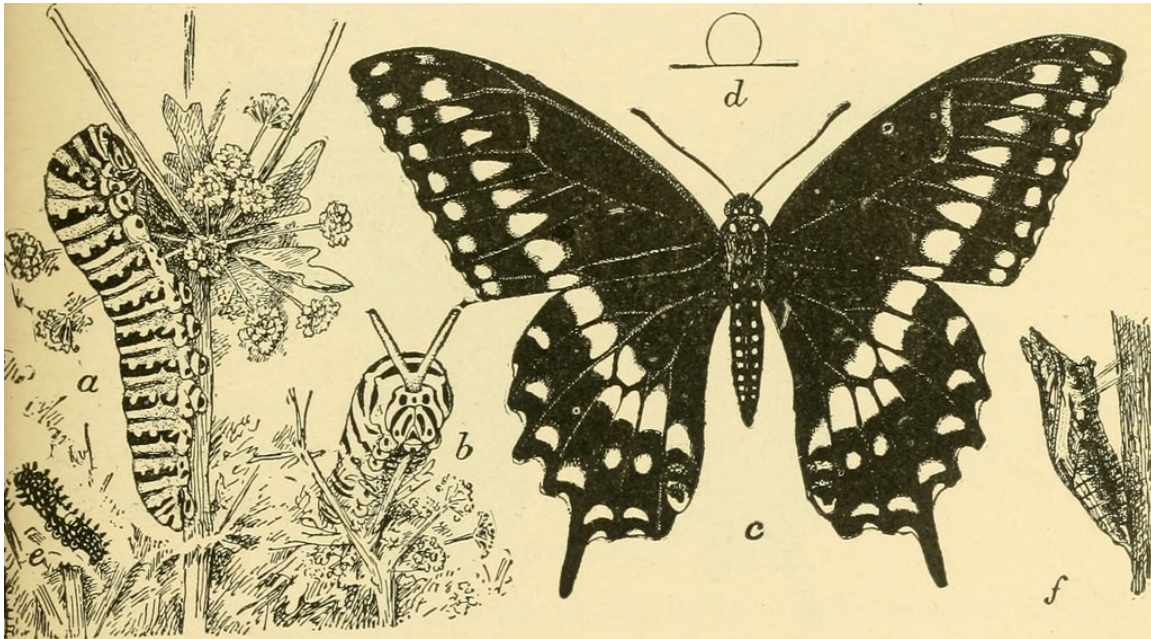US

UNIVERSITY
OF SUSSEX

Critical perspectives on transitions into, through and beyond Higher Education

CENTRE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AND EQUITY RESEARCH AND THE
CENTRE FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

JUBILEE LIBRARY, JUBILEE ST, BRIGHTON BN1 1GE
9.00 – 16.00, 15TH OCTOBER 2018

Agenda

Time	Activity
9.00 – 9.30	Arrivals, registration and coffee
9.30 – 10.00	Welcome to the conference
	Icebreaker
10.00 – 11.00	Keynote: Dr Sarah O'Shea
	Older and first: Navigating the transitions of older students who are the first in their family to attend university
11.00 – 11.15	Comfort break
11.15 – 12.15	Breakout presentations: Session One
	Rethinking the role of 'the social' in transitions
	Breakout presentations: Session Two
	Elite spaces and identities in transitions
12.15 – 13.15	Lunch
13.15 – 14.15	Breakout presentations: Session Three
	Identities, pedagogies and academic practices
	Breakout presentations: Session Four
	UK and international policy imperatives
14.15 – 14.30	Comfort break
14.30 – 15.00	Panel session and roundtable discussion
	Challenging the 'typified' student of HE practice: Perspectives from foundation programmes, Master's degrees and early career academics
15.00 – 16.00	Keynote: Dr Richard Waller
	Critical perspectives on transitions into, through and beyond Higher Education: Learning from the Paired Peers project
16.00	Finish and close
16.30 – 19.00	Post-conference drinks
	Battle of Trafalgar, 34 Guildford Rd, Brighton BN1 3LW

Morning Keynote: Dr Sarah O'Shea

Dr Sarah O'Shea is an Associate Professor in Adult, Vocational and Higher Education in the School of Education, Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Wollongong, Australia. Sarah has over 20 years' experience teaching in universities as well as the VET and Adult Education sector, she has also published widely on issues related to educational access and equity. Her publication record includes 27 peer reviewed journal articles, three scholarly books and five book chapters - this work has also featured in The Conversation, University World News and The Australian.

OLDER AND FIRST: NAVIGATING THE TRANSITIONS OF OLDER STUDENTS WHO ARE THE FIRST IN THEIR FAMILY TO ATTEND UNIVERSITY

Across higher education (HE) sectors, many universities are working towards equity of access amongst learners. The 'widening participation' agenda has led to a greater diversity of learners, many of whom are intersected by various biographical and cultural factors that can impact on transition into HE and educational achievement. One such group are those who are the first in their family (FiF), a collective grouping that includes larger proportions of students who are from lower socio-economic backgrounds, from ethnic minority backgrounds and also who are older (Spiegler & Bednarek, 2013). Such demographics can lead to many FiF students having a limited sense of belonging within the university setting, resulting in a more complex transition to this environment and for some, greater difficulty in 'mastering the college role' (Spiegler & Bednarek, 2013, p. 330).

This presentation focuses on first-in-family students who are returning to education after a gap in learning. This older cohort is growing across a number of countries including the UK (Johnes, 2014), the United States (NESA, 2017) and also, Australia (ABS, 2012). Being older and first can have implications for student retention with higher rates of 'dropout' correlated to the age of the learner. For example, within Australia recent government statistics have indicated that students older than 25 are three times more likely to drop out in the first year of study compared to their school-leaver counterparts (Burke, 2017). Similarly within the UK, differences in retention rates amongst age groups are noted. Between 2014 and 2015, HEFCE reported that 12% per cent of older students left university, 5% higher that the attrition rates recorded for younger school age entrants (HEFCE, 2017). Such greater risk of departure means that it is imperative that we consider how we can more fully understand how institutions can create environments, which encourage successful transition into, through and beyond higher education across our student populations.

Reporting on recent Australian research (O'Shea, 2018), this presentation seeks to disrupt possible 'deficit discourses' surrounding older, first-in-family students by analysing the

capitals and capabilities that learners drew upon during their transition to the university environment and at significant points during these learning journeys. Literature and research related to older student HE participation has been regarded as being located within a 'narrative of disadvantage' (Woodfield, 2011, p. 410). Such analysis characterised by 'explicitly or implicitly suggestive of mature students' experience comparing less well with that of their traditional-entry counterparts…' (Woodfield, 2011, p. 91). Hence rather than examine the shortfalls or weaknesses of learners, this presentation will focus on how participants conceptualise of themselves as successful learners and what assisted in the enactment of this success. Drawing upon the complementary lenses of Bourdieu (1997) and Sen's (1999) Capability Approach, these findings provide the basis for further understanding of how the self and existing capitals are drawn upon when older first-in-family students transition into, and engage with, the HE environment.

References:

ABS (2012) *Students: Selected Higher Education Statistics* Canberra
Retrieved from https://www.education.gov.au/selected-higher-education-statistics-2012-student-data

Bourdieu, P. (1997) "The Forms of Capital" In Halsey, Lauder, Brown & Wells (Eds.) *Education, Culture and Economy* London: Oxford.

Burke, L. (2017) *Nation of dropouts: University completion rates drop to a new low*
Available from http://www.news.com.au/finance/work/careers/nation-of-dropouts-university-completion-rates-drop-to-a-new-low/news-story/1265f4d9872db263694aaa74f815c432

HEFCE (2017) *Briefing: Non-continuation rates: trends and profiles*
Available from http://www.hefce.ac.uk/analysis/ncr/

HESP (2017) *Improving retention, completion and success in higher education* Canberra: Department of Education and Training.

Johnes, J (2014) *Hard Evidence: Are more older people going to university?* The Conversation
Available from https://theconversation.com/hard-evidence-are-more-older-people-going-to-university-31034

NCES (2017) *Fast Facts: Back to School Statistics*
Available from https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372

O'Shea, S. (2018) "Considering the cultural strengths of older first generation university students" In Bell, A. and Santamaria, L.J. (Eds) *Understanding Experiences of First Generation university students: Culturally responsive and sustaining methodologies* Bloomsbury Publishing, UK

Sen, A. (1999) *Development as Freedom* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Woodfield, R. (2011) *The relationship between age and first destination employability for UK Graduates: Are mature students disadvantaged?* Studies in Higher Education, 6(5) pp. 409 – 425

Breakout Presentations: Session One

RETHINKING THE ROLE OF 'THE SOCIAL' IN TRANSITIONS

Neoliberal transitions? An artful inquiry into the personal histories and transitions of underrepresented students at Southeastern University

Gale, T. and Parker, S. (2014) *Navigating Change: A Typology of Student Transition in Higher Education* Studies in Higher Education, 39(5) pp. 734–753.

Reay, D., Crozier, G. and Clayton, J. (2009) *"Strangers in Paradise"? Working-class Students in Elite Universities* Sociology, 43(6) pp. 1-19.

Wingate, U. (2007) *A Framework for Transition: Supporting "Learning to Learn" in Higher Education* Higher Education Quarterly, 61(3) pp. 391–405.

Yorke, M. and Longden, B. (2007) *The First Year Experience of Higher Education in the UK: Report on Phase 1 of a Project Funded by the Higher Education Academy* York: Higher Education Academy.

The role of transitions in the mental health and wellbeing of postgraduate research students

Jane Creaton, Reader in Higher Education, University of Portsmouth
Karen Heard-Lauréote, Professor of Education and Society, University of Portsmouth
Rachel Moss, Research Assistant, PGR Mental Health and Wellbeing Project, University of Portsmouth

Students embarking on postgraduate research will have some familiarity with the norms, expectations and culture of higher education. However, postgraduate research students (PGRs) must also navigate and experience significant and complex transitions (Hussey & Smith, 2010), which may be equally challenging to those which face new entrants. The requirement in the qualification descriptor that doctoral students demonstrate *"personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments"* (QAA, 2014:21) necessitates the acquisition of new personal and professional skills and competences (Mowbray & Halse, 2010), which can place considerable stress on students. Recent research studies have indicated that PGRs are at high risk of experiencing symptoms of psychological distress and developing a psychiatric disorder (Barry, Woods, Warnecke, Stirling, & Martin, 2018; Guthrie et al., 2018; Levecque, Anseel, De Beuckelaer, Van der Heyden, & Gisle, 2017).

Our ongoing project, funded by the OfS, is exploring how transitions to doctoral study can impact on student experience, retention and mental health and wellbeing. Drawing on the concept of "social support", defined as the emotional and practical resources available through social networks, we consider the potential for mentoring circles to support students in navigating transitions at each stage of the postgraduate research journey, including subsequent transitions to employment. Mentoring circles may enhance social support through an innovative, group mentoring model which increases social interactions, resilience and a sense of belonging (Darwin & Palmer, 2009). If critical periods of transition can be identified, then further, tailored support (psychoeducational, professional training etc.) can be offered to PGR students at appropriate points.

References:

Barry, K. M., Woods, M., Warnecke, E., Stirling, C. and Martin, A. (2018) *Psychological health of doctoral candidates, study-related challenges and perceived performance* Higher Education Research & Development, 37(3): pp. 468-483

Darwin, A. and Palmer, E. (2009) *Mentoring circles in higher education* Higher Education Research & Development, 28(2) pp. 125-136

Guthrie, S., Lichten, C. A., Van Belle, J., Ball, S., Knack, A. and Hofman, J. (2018) *Understanding mental health in the research environment: A Rapid Evidence Assessment* Rand Health Quarterly, 7(3) pp. 2

Hussey, T. and Smith, P. (2010) *Transitions in higher education* Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 47(2) pp. 155-164

Levecque, K., Anseel, F., De Beuckelaer, A., Van der Heyden, J. and Gisle, L. (2017) *Work organization and mental health problems in PhD students* Research Policy, 46(4) pp. 868-879

Mowbray, S. and Halse, C. (2010). The purpose of the PhD: theorising the skills acquired by students. Higher Education Research & Development, 29(6) pp. 653-664

QAA (2014) *UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards* http://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/qualifications-frameworks.pdf?sfvrsn=170af781_14

Challenging transitions: Learning from autistic students' experiences in transition to college to inform HE transitions

Dr Jacqui Shepherd, Lecturer in Education, University of Sussex

This paper will focus on the lessons learned from research into transitions of autistic learners to colleges of Further Education (FE) and how this informs a new research proposal for transitions of autistic learners into Higher Education (HE). Whilst an unsettling time for many young people, the prospect of leaving the school environment and moving on to college or university can be overwhelming for autistic students when even the smallest, everyday transitions can be problematic (Hume, 2008).

The original research set out to learn more about the lived experience of transition to FE for autistic learners and used a longitudinal case study approach to interview young people, their parents and tutors. Using 'interrupted interviews' (Shepherd, 2015) including visual methods and walking interviews, allowed for access to the substantive lived experiences through the methodological process. This paper will reference the key themes of time management, independence and vulnerability, social transition and communication in building a new participatory research project with current autistic students (Nind, 2014) to develop a framework for autism-friendly universities.

Using a social model approach, this paper considers the responsibilities on systems and institutions to make reasonable adjustments for this group of students. In order to effect a truly inclusive university experience we not only need to prepare learners with autism for the HE environment but also prepare universities and the wider HE community to engage, celebrate and realise the full potential of autistic students.

References:

Hume, K. (2008) *Transition Time: Helping Individuals on the Autism Spectrum Move Successfully from One Activity to Another* The Reporter, 13(2) pp. 6–10

Nind, M. (2014) *What is inclusive research?* London: Bloomsbury

Shepherd, J. (2015) *'Interrupted Interviews': Listening to young people with autism in transition* Exchanges: The Interdisciplinary Research Journal, 2(2) pp. 249-262

Breakout Presentations: Session Two

ELITE SPACES AND IDENTITIES IN TRANSITIONS

Transition Talk: discursive constructions of identity beyond 'BME' for architecture students entering HE

Steve Dixon-Smith, Doctoral Researcher, Department of Educational Studies, Goldsmiths, University of London

The presentation outlines a PhD research project in its early stages that focuses on transition at entry to HE for architecture students ascribed the category BME. Using critical sociolinguistics to explore discursive constructions of identity, the research sets the fixed and separate framings of identity categories relating to race, ethnicity and social class used in HE equality policies against the fluid, contingent and intersectional conceptions articulated in contemporary social theory (Hall 1996, Gilroy 2000, Fraser 2001). Taking a linguistic ethnographic approach, it explores how subject positions are resisted, reproduced and appropriated across a range of interactions in the architecture studio and in narrative accounts over the first year of study.

In the context of stubborn inequalities in HE and specifically in architectural education (CABE, 2005, RIBA 2017), there is policy-level recognition that the causes of different outcomes involve a complex mix of wider socio-historical structures, the social contexts of individual Higher Education (HE) providers, and day-to-day communication between staff and students at the level of micro-interaction (HEFCE et al, 2015:ii). This research attempts to set these stratified levels within the same frame of analysis employing a linguistic ethnographic 'commitment to making both academic and political generalisations about social life accountable to the kinds of small scale everyday activity which we can record and transcribe (Rampton et al. 2014:15).'

The presentation will invite delegates to comment on tensions within the research and engage with themes emerging from a pilot study and early stages of data collection and analysis.

References:

CABE (2005) *Architecture and Race: A study of black and ethnic minority students in the profession* CABE.

Fraser, N (2000) *Rethinking Recognition* New Left Review, 3 pp. 107-120.

Gilroy, P. (2001) *Joined-up politics and postcolonial melancholia* Theory, Culture and Society, 18(2-3) pp. 151-167.

Hall, S. (1996) "Introduction: who needs identity?" in Hall, S. and Du Gay, P. (Eds) *Questions of cultural identity* London: Sage

HEFCE, King's College London, the University of Manchester and the ARC Network (2015) *Causes of differences in student outcomes* HEFCE

Rampton, B., Maybin, J. and Roberts, C. (2014) "Theory and Method in Linguistic Ethnography" in Copland, F., Shaw, S. and Snell, J (Eds) *Linguistic Ethnography: Interdisciplinary Explorations* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

RIBA (2017) *RIBA Education Statistics 2015/16* London: RIBA

Racism, Classism and the Politics of Belonging: Working-Class Student's Experience at an Elite University, Socio-Culturally and Pedagogically

Carli Rowell, Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Glasgow

"I've never seen a black girl"
"Ah you sound so stupid"
"Speak the queens English [...] you fucking common scum"
"Oh my god were you like poor?"
"You're at the university, are you sure?"
"When I've gone to talk to people they didn't believe that I was at the university"

As the aforementioned quotations, taken verbatim from a number of participants of my study, make one headline conclusion clear: racism and classism on campus prevails and shapes participants' everyday experiences of University in profound ways. Drawing upon empirical data generated through an ESRC ethnographic study of working-class, first-generation students at an elite university this paper elucidates the way in which racism and classism occurred both implicitly and explicitly and permeated participant's everyday mundane interactions pervading the classroom, corridors, cafes and bars and of the emotional and educational costs of such experiences. In doing so, I investigate the way in which the participants of my study were required to navigate a barrage of stereotypes and discrimination pertaining to race, class, welfare and place considering the implication of this upon participants' socio-cultural and pedagogical experiences.

This paper contributes to the existing literature pertaining to the university experience of working-class and BME students (Abrahams and Ingram 2013; Lehmann 2014, 2013; Reay et al., 2009, 2010; Burke 2015; Read et al., 2003; Sian 2017). To do so, this paper asks: what are the effect of being accused of lying about ones student status in order to romantically impress others; of having your academic grades called into question as a result of your status as a recipient of social security? What are the effect of being the only young black women on your course and thus being called upon to speak for all black women? Of recognising a photo of your locale in a lecture that heavily perpetuates stereotypes perpetuates racialized serotypes; and of being told you don't belong and to "speak properly". Importantly, what can be done by HE stakeholders to not only ensure successful transition through higher education but in fostering academic belonging per se?

References:

Abrahams, J. and Ingram, N. (2013) *The chameleon habitus: exploring local students' negotiations of multiple fields* Sociological Research Online, 18(4) pp. 21.

Burke, P. (2015) *Reimagining higher education pedagogies: gender, emotion and difference* Teaching in Higher Education, 20(4) pp. 388-401.

Lehmann, W. (2013) *Habitus transformation and hidden injuries: successful working-class university students* Sociology of Education, 87(1) pp. 1–15.

Lehmann, W. (2014) *Habitus transformation and hidden injuries: successful working class university students* Sociology of Education, 87(1) pp. 1-15.

Read, B., Archer, L. and Leathwood, C. (2003) *Challenging cultures? Student conceptions of 'belonging' and 'isolation' at a post–1992 university* Studies in Higher Education, 28(3) pp. 261–277

Sian, K. (2017) *Being black in a white world: understanding racism in British universities* International Journal on Collective Identity Research, 176(2) pp. 1-26.

Anne-Sofie Nyström, Researcher and Senior Lecturer, Uppsala University
Co-authors: Carolyn Jackson, Lancaster University (UK) and Minna Salminen-Karlsson,
Uppsala University (Sweden)

This paper explores students' experiences of moving into, and participating in, highly selective and prestigious H.E. programmes; a move that for many students constitutes a transition from being a 'big fish in a little pond' to being a 'little fish in a big pond' (cf. Goetz et al. 2008). We draw on our large comparative interview project about men, masculinities and self-worth protection strategies in England and Sweden. Data were generated through semi-structured interviews with students (Men: 71; Women: 40) and staff (35) in law, medicine and engineering physics programmes in two leading universities. The status of each institution was underpinned and maintained by students experiencing 'trial by fire', which informed students' identities and emotions and normalized high levels of stress (Nyström & Jackson forthcoming; Nyström et al. 2018).

Our analysis applies Marsh's theory about the big-fish-little-pond-effect (BFLPE) to explore how peers' achievements affect students' self-evaluations and emotional responses. The BFLPE suggests that when (self- and other-identified) top students move into a context where there are other academic high fliers, they will experience an identity shift and high levels of anxiety prompted by social comparisons. Our research supports quantitative studies by demonstrating that the first year on these programmes induced fear and stress in many students, and this was related to the competitive environment. Anxiety about no longer being 'the best' was especially pronounced for middle-class (and direct-entry) students. However, some of the students (men) described the shift as a relief as they were no longer the 'odd guy who strived' or they no longer felt they had to strive to be top of the class. We explore these findings and how they were influenced by social class, gender and age.

References:

Baik, Naylor and Arkoudis (2015) *The First Year Experience in Australian Universities: Findings from Two Decades, 1994-2014* Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education.

Goetz, Preckel, Zeidner and Schleyer (2008) *Big Fish in Big Ponds: A Multilevel Analysis of Test Anxiety and Achievement in Special Gifted Classes* Anxiety, Stress, and Coping, 21(2) pp. 185–98.

Holmegaard, Møller Madsen and Ulriksen (2013) *A Journey of Negotiation and Belonging: Understanding Students' Transitions to Science and Engineering in Higher Education* Cultural Studies of Science Education, 9(3) pp. 755–86.

Jackman, Wilson, Seaton and Craven (2011) *Big Fish in a Big Pond: A Study of Academic Self Concept in First Year Medical Students* BMC Medical Education, 11 pp. 48.

Nyström and Jackson (Forthcoming) "Coping with Higher Education Expectations: Stress and Wellbeing in Prestigious Degree Programmes" in Tina Besley, Cameron McCarthy, Michael Peters, and Fazal Rizvi (eds.) *Social Justice in Times of Crisis and Hope: Young People, Wellbeing and the Politics of Education* Peter Lang International Academic Publishers.

Nyström, Jackson and Salminen Karlsson (2018) *What counts as success? Constructions of achievement in prestigious higher education programme* Research Papers in Education 0 (0), DOI: 10.1080/02671522.2018.1452964 [Published online: 30 Mar 2018]

Reay, Crozier, and Clayton (2009) *"Strangers in Paradise"? Working-Class Students in Elite Universities* Sociology, 43(6) pp. 1103–21

Breakout Presentations: Session Three

IDENTITIES, PEDAGOGIES AND ACADEMIC PRACTICES

The transition from teaching International to Home Students: Identities, Challenges and Strategies: An EAP Tutor's Experience

Deirdre McKenna, Teaching Fellow, Sussex Centre for Language Studies, University of Sussex

The EAP (English for Academic Purposes) practitioner, specialising in language and skills development for international students, may need to adapt to a changing HE sector by delivering such content to 'Home' students. At the University of Sussex, for example, a core first year (FY) module, 'Academic Development', has been designed for a cohort of over 700 'Home' students, the majority of whom are native English speakers; however, the module is delivered by Teaching Fellows largely from an English Language Teaching (ELT) background, specialising in working with non-native speakers. This diversification in the EAP/ELT role suggests that the teaching culture itself may be changing (Munn, 2017), raising questions for the practitioner in terms of their teacher identity, the methodology they apply, and their role within the wider HE context (Ashwin, 2015; Kreber, 2010).

This talk presents the recent experiences of Teaching Fellows in ELT delivering academic skills to 'Home' students. Participants completed a questionnaire focusing on areas such as teaching identity, the transferral of teaching skills from a 'non-native' to a 'native' speaker context, the challenges this poses, and the strategies found most effective in this new context. The findings highlight the difficulties, and rewards, involved in this 'identity trajectory' (Wenger, 1998 cited in Ashwin, 2015, p. 5). They also emphasise that the needs of the Home FY student can be similar to those of the international student, particularly in terms of training for academic writing (Jones, 2017, p.935). In addition, the principles which are applicable in EAP course design (Basturkmen, 2010) can also be applied to the 'Home' student context. This means that the EAP practitioner has a broad range of transferrable skills which can be evidenced through the experiences of the University of Sussex Teaching Fellows.

References:

Ashwin, P. (2015) *Reflective Teaching in Higher Education* London: Bloomsbury

Basturkmen, H. (2010) *Developing Courses for English for Specific Purposes* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Jones, E. (2017) *Problematising and reimagining the notion of 'international student experience'* Studies in Higher Education, 42(5) pp. 933-943

Kavanagh, M. (2017) *Teaching Home Students: Teachers' Attitudes to a New Challenge* BALEAP: Addressing the State of the Union: Working Together - Learning Together. University of Bristol, Bristol.
Available at: https://www.baleap.org/event/addressing-state-union-working-together-learning-together (Accessed: 01 August 2018)

Kreber, C. (2010) *Academics' teacher identities, authenticity and pedagogy* Studies in Higher Education, 35(2) pp. 171-194

Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Munn, M. (2017) *Cultural Practices within EAP and Study Skills/ Academic Development - for Ed.D in Education* PR8008: Cultural Practices, University of Chester. Unpublished Assignment

Sue Robbins, Teaching Fellow, Sussex Centre for Language Studies, University of Sussex

The idea of threshold concepts emerged in 2003 following a UK national research project into the possible characteristics of strong teaching and learning environments in the disciplines for undergraduate education, when Meyer & Land (2003) drew up a set of concepts which they held to be central to the mastery of their subject (Economics).

The idea of a threshold concept or 'conceptual gateway' that opens up 'previously inaccessible way[s] of thinking about something' is intuitively appealing (Meyer & Land 2003). I expect we've all experienced a 'light bulb' moment, where something suddenly or finally makes sense to us. And we may have noticed this happen for one of our students or someone we work with.

Since 2003 threshold concepts have been drawn up for many other disciplines, including the discipline of writing studies where Adler-Kassner & Wardle (2015) have identified 5 metaconcepts that they deem critical for epistemological participation. In that time there has been little critical analysis of threshold concepts, and yet the concepts in themselves are slippery.

This presentation will consider the question 'whose threshold concepts?' Because whoever controls the narrative decides the threshold concepts. As Fister says 'we need to bear in mind how these thresholds we define are cultural constructs.'

References:

Adler-Kassner, L. and Wardle, E. (2015) *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies* University Press of Colorado (published by the Utah State University Press)

Enhancing Teaching-Learning Environments in Undergraduate Courses (n.d.) Available at: http://www.etl.tla.ed.ac.uk/ (Accessed: 13.7.2018).

Meyer, J.H.F. and Land, R. (2003) "Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge: linkages to ways of thinking and practising" In: Rust, C. (ed.) *Improving Student Learning – Theory and Practice Ten Years On* Oxford: Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development (OCSLD), pp. 412-424.

Transitioning within and between doctoral spaces for writing and knowing

Rebecca Webb, Lecturer in Early Years and Primary Education, Department of Education, University of Sussex
Co-authored by:
Emily Danvers, Lecturer in Education, University of Sussex; and
Tamsin Hinton-Smith, Senior Lecturer in Education, University of Sussex

Transitions to becoming an academic researcher are shaped through complex trajectories of different lives and experiences. This paper explores the possibilities of one writing group for social science doctoral researchers in supporting processes of writing and 'coming to know'.

Drawing on the work of Gordon (2008), on 'haunting' to deconstruct ideas of 'internationalness', it questions the possibilities of the group as a means to intervene in a range of transitions throughout the life course of the doctoral journey. In so doing, it draws, particularly, on recent interview data concerning the ways in which 'international' students speak knowledgeably about their own experiences of academic writing in English in two universities in the UK. Initial analysis of some data, questions ways in which doctoral researchers feel adequately supported to transit between a range of language and cultural scripts. It also challenges normative assumptions of 'good' academic writing in ways that invoke doctoral student's legitimacy as knowers in ways that must be taken seriously.

References:

Anderson, V. (2008) *The International Education Agenda: International and New Zealand Women Students* Sites, New series 5(2)

Gordon, A. (2011) *Some Thoughts on Haunting and Futurity* borderlands, 10(2) pp. 1-21

Breakout Presentations: Session Four

UK AND INTERNATIONAL POLICY IMPERATIVES

Equal practices? Findings from a comparative study of widening participation practices in pre- and post-92 institutions

---

Jon Rainford, Doctoral Researcher, Staffordshire University

Pre-entry widening access work has both a moral and an economic imperative. Increasingly, this work is having more demands placed upon it at both a national and institutional level. Practitioners delivering the work are expected to offer advice and guidance, help to raise academic attainment and rigorously evaluate the work they do. Previous research has focused mainly on policy at national (e.g. McCaig 2015) and institutional levels (e.g. Stevenson, Clegg and Lefever 2010). This presentation will discuss the findings of a study examining policy and practices across England that focused primarily on the practitioners who deliver the intervention. The study adopted a two-phase approach. Phase one was a critical discourse analysis of ten institutions access agreements and phase two sixteen semi-structured interviews with practitioners working in seven higher education institutions.

The presentation will adopt the format of a research informed comic exploring some of the emergent themes across different types of institutions and individuals. Through this, I highlight some of the competing demands and explore the tensions that can limit the effectiveness of their practices. Through the paper I will also argue that in order to carry out this work ethically and effectively, we need to reconsider how we recruit, train and support practitioners within their work.

References:

Archer, L., DeWitt, J. and Wong, B. (2014) *Spheres of influence: what shapes young people's aspirations at age 12/13 and what are the implications for education policy?* Journal of Education Policy, 29(1) pp. 58-85.

Archer, M. S. (1995) *Realist social theory: the morphogenetic approach* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Allen, K. and Hollingworth, S. (2013) *'Sticky Subjects' or 'Cosmopolitan Creatives'? Social Class, Place and Urban Young People's Aspirations for Work in the Knowledge Economy* Urban Studies, 50(3) pp. 499-517.

Baker, W. (2016) *Aspirations: the moral of the story* British Journal of Sociology of Education, 38(8) pp. 1-13.

Ball, S., Maguire, M. and Braun, A. (2012) *How Schools Do Policy: policy enactment in secondary schools* Abingdon: Routledge.

McCaig, C. (2015) *The impact of the changing English higher education marketplace on widening participation and fair access: evidence from a discourse analysis of access agreements* Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning, 17(1) pp. 5-22.

Harrison, N., Waller, R. and Last, K. (2015) *The evaluation of widening participation activities in higher education: A survey of institutional leaders in England* Available at: http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/26590/1/Report%201%20-%20Institutional%20Survey%20-%20June%202015.pdf [Accessed: 17 April 2018]

Spohrer, K. (2011) *Deconstructing 'Aspiration': UK Policy Debates and European Policy Trends* European Educational Research Journal, 10(1) pp. 53-63.

Stevenson, J., Clegg, S. and Lefever, R. (2010) *The discourse of widening participation and its critics: an institutional case study* London Review of Education, 8(2) pp. 105-115.

Wilkins, A. and Burke, P. J. (2013) *Widening participation in higher education: the role of professional and social class identities and commitments* British Journal of Sociology of Education, 36(3) pp. 1-19.

Boys from the Black Country: The educational expectations of white working-class males at a school in the West Midlands

Alex Blower, Doctoral Researcher, University of Wolverhampton

The educational success of white working class boys has been a significant focus of Government discourse within education (House of Commons, 2014). In recent times policy makers have expressed concerns with specific regard to the low number of young white working class males participating in Higher Education (BIS, 2015). This study investigates how discourses surrounding the educational success of white working class boys can play out within their lived experience as students. Utilising a qualitative methodology, this piece of research is designed to address several key areas. Firstly the research will examine how the perception of an individual as a 'white working class male' may contribute toward the structuring of their identity as a student within an educational institution. Secondly it explores who or what the key influences may be on the expectations of these students for the future. Finally it examines how white working class male students negotiate their expectations for the future within the setting of the school that they attend. The study takes place with individuals from the Black Country region of the West Midlands. All participants engaged in the research have a relationship with a single educational institution which is the main focus of the research, and are at differing stages of their careers in work and education. Following a strong tradition of research which facilitates a rich understanding in to the lived experience of working-class students in education (Ball, 2005; Ingram, 2018; Reay, 2002; Willis, 1977), this study provides a mechanism in which to add to the growing body of knowledge surrounding white working class students aspirations (Archer, 2014), expectations (Khattab, 2015) and their chances of future success in education.

References:

Archer, L., DeWitt, J. and Wong, B. (2014) *Spheres of influence: what shapes young people's aspirations at age 12/13 and what are the implications for education policy?* Abingdon: Routledge Journals, Taylor and Francis Ltd

Ball, S.J. (2005) *Education policy and social class: The selected works of Stephen J. Ball* London: Routledge

Bourdieu, P. (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

BIS (2015) *Fulfilling our potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice* London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

House of Commons (2014) *Underachievement in education by white working class children* London: House of Commons.

Heath, S., Fuller, A. and Paton, K. (2008) *Network-based ambivalence and educational decision-making: a case study of 'non-participation' in higher education* London: Routledge

Ingram, N. (2018) *Working-Class Boys and Educational Success: Teenage Identities, Masculinity and Urban Schooling* London: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd

Khattab, N. (2015) *Students' aspirations, expectations and school achievement: what really matters?* Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell

Reay, D. (2002) *Shaun's Story: Troubling discourses of white working-class masculinities* Abingdon: Taylor and Francis Group

Willis, P.E. (1977) *Learning to labor: How working class kids get working class jobs* Columbia University Press

Factors influencing the employability of non-traditional university students

María Aurora Tenorio Rodríguez, Doctoral Researcher, Universidad de Sevilla (Spain), funded by the Spanish Ministry of Education

The employability of graduates has become a key objective in the Bologna process (EACEA, 2012). Research indicates that non-traditional students face specific difficulties in achieving effective labour market transitions (Brown and Hesketh 2004). The aim of this paper is to understand factors that influence labour market insertion from the perspective of non-traditional students and graduates, as well as employers and career counsellors.

First, we show a view of the current panorama of the presence of non-traditional students in Spanish universities by providing relevant figures. Secondly, we identify the employability skills that are demanded from the labour market and we investigate the reality of these students' access to work. Subsequently, we present the results of a qualitative analysis developed from biographical interviews with "non-traditional" students and graduates of the University of Seville belonging to all fields of knowledge and representing the different characteristics of non-traditional students, as well as employers and professional advisors.

We detect that there is a wide variety of factors that influence the labour market insertion of subjects with a "non-traditional" profile, among which the lack of economic resources to expand training, stereotypes and social prejudices, the excess of responsibilities and the absence of facilitators to carry out the labour transit, a situation that is aggravated by the demands of the current labour market.

References:

Brown, P. and Hesketh, A. (2004) *The mismanagement of talent: employability and jobs in the knowledge economy* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (2012) *The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report* http://www.indire.it/lucabas/lookmyweb/templates/up_files/Bologna_promoters/Doc%20del%20BoPro/BoPro%20Implementation%20Report.pdf

Panel and roundtable discussions

CHALLENGING THE 'TYPIFIED' STUDENT OF HE PRACTICE: PERSPECTIVES FROM FOUNDATION PROGRAMMES, MASTER'S DEGREES AND EARLY CAREER ACADEMICS

Wendy Ashall, Doctoral Researcher and Teaching Fellow, University of Sussex
Yasser Kosbar, Doctoral Researcher, University of Sussex
Rosa Marvell, Doctoral Researcher and Doctoral Tutor, University of Sussex
Facilitator: Charlotte Morris, Teaching Fellow, University of Sussex

The forces of globalization, massification, internationalization and widening participation have served to diversify student bodies in Higher Education (Scott, 1995). However, the expressive and institutional orders of university environments often belie this change (Lehmann, 2012). Conventional institutional structures and values persist, reflecting the deeply held beliefs which underpin them (Haggis, 2006). The 'rules of the game' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) of HE have been designed in the image of the 'typified' student they were originally designed for: male, mobile, advantaged, middle- class, and white (see Edwards, 1993). As a result, marked differences persist regarding student experience and outcomes (Antonucci, 2016).

This panel begins from three early-stage doctoral research projects which consider student experiences at various stages of transition into, through and beyond higher education. These comprise: UK foundation learners, UK first-generation students on Master's programmes and female Egyptian early career academics who engaged in postgraduate studies in the UK. Employing feminist, anthropological and sociological perspectives, we will reflect on normative conceptualisations of 'the student', how these characterisations shape HE practice and student experience in each context, and the implications for diverse bodies.

This will stimulate roundtable discussions on how student 'tropes' operate in HE transitions. This will consider, *inter alia*, evidence on 'typicalisations' at play in different educational settings, the impact on students, who benefits from these conceptualisations and how we can disrupt them and bring non-deterministic personifications to the fore (Haggis, 2004).

References:

Antonucci, L. (2016) *Student Lives in Crises: Deepening Inequality in Times of Austerity* Polity Press: Bristol.

Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, L. (1992) *An invitation to reflexive sociology* Chicago: Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Edwards, R. (1993) *Mature Women Students: Separating or Connecting Family and Education* London: Taylor and Francis.

Haggis, T. (2006) *Pedagogies for Diversity: Retaining Critical Challenge amidst Fears of 'Dumbing Down'* Studies in Higher Education, 31(5) pp. 521-535.

Haggis, T. (2004) *Meaning, Identity and "motivation": Expanding What Matters in Understanding Learning in Higher Education* Studies in Higher Education, 29(3) pp. 335–352.

Lehmann, W. (2012) *Working-Class Students, Habitus, and the Development of Student Roles: A Canadian Case Study* British Journal of Sociology of Education, 33(4) pp. 527-546.

Scott, P. (1995) *The Meanings of Mass Higher Education* SHRE and Open University Press: Buckingham.

Afternoon Keynote: Dr Richard Waller

Dr Richard Waller is Associate Professor of the Sociology of Education at the University of the West of England, and has expertise across post-compulsory education, sociology of education, student experience/s, qualitative research methods, identity and the intersections between education, gender and social class. He is co-leader of the departmental research group, jointly leads their PhD and Professional Doctorate in Education (EdD) programmes and co-convenes the universities Education Research Network (ERNie). Dr Waller is the editorial board of four journals, and a trustee of the British Sociological Association, for whom he has previously been Education Study Group convenor and conference stream co-ordinator

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON TRANSITIONS INTO, THROUGH AND BEYOND HIGHER EDUCATION: LEARNING FROM THE PAIRED PEERS PROJECT

The phenomenon of people's access to and experience of higher education being informed by their social class position is by no means new. Yet despite numerous policy initiatives and interventions in the last few decades, significant inequalities remain between working and middle class young people regarding their chances of going to university, the type of university attended and their graduate outcomes. The Paired Peers project was a two-part longitudinal study (2010-2103 and 2014-2017), funded by the Leverhulme Trust which followed an initial cohort of 90 undergraduates studying at either of the two universities in one English city. The University of Bristol is an 'elite', research intensive institution and a founding member of the Russell Group. The University of the West of England is an ex-polytechnic, a post-1992 institution generally lying around the middle of HE league tables and which prides itself on the quality of its teaching. The project matched pairs of students by social class, gender and subject discipline both within and between the two institutions, and followed them from induction to graduation and for several years beyond into their post-university lives and careers. The project explored not just what class-based inequalities existed in terms of access to university, the experience of going through university and the transition into the workplace, but also the processes by which these significant inequalities were established and maintained.