

# Creating a capabilities-based persistence framework (or matrix) on university student persistence

A Framing Paper

## Appendices section

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## Appendix One: Details of collective nodes across the project

Nodes							
Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By	
ABiography - Brief interesting points about each person’s biography		0	15/01/2018 2:39 PM	SEO	29/03/2018 11:13 AM	OG	
Access to substantive freedoms or conversion factors to achieve goals		0	4/01/2018 3:39 PM	SEO	20/12/2018 2:59 PM	SEO	
Capabilities and cultural strengths underpinning persistence		0	4/01/2018 3:17 PM	SEO	19/01/2018 3:22 PM	SEO	
Community and family support strategies		0	17/01/2018 1:45 PM	SEO	17/01/2018 1:45 PM	SEO	
Concerning Success		0	17/01/2018 11:28 AM	SEO	17/01/2018 11:28 AM	SEO	
Expectations of university		0	17/01/2018 1:40 PM	SEO	17/01/2018 1:40 PM	SEO	
Fertile Functionings associated with persistence		0	4/01/2018 3:41 PM	SEO	20/12/2018 3:16 PM	SEO	
Improvements to university experience		0	17/01/2018 1:43 PM	SEO	17/01/2018 1:43 PM	SEO	
Invisible factors that constrain access to HE		0	4/01/2018 3:44 PM	SEO	16/01/2018 8:31 PM	SEO	
Life without uni		0	17/01/2018 11:37 AM	SEO	17/01/2018 11:37 AM	SEO	
Motivations to start		0	17/01/2018 11:38 AM	SEO	17/01/2018 11:38 AM	SEO	
New definitions of the self		43	4/01/2018 2:35 PM	SEO	17/07/2018 5:20 PM	SEO	
Reactions to attendance		0	17/01/2018 11:40 AM	SEO	17/01/2018 11:40 AM	SEO	
Regional versus urban settings		17	4/01/2018 4:20 PM	SEO	19/03/2018 2:35 PM	OG	
Sacrifice and university		0	4/01/2018 4:08 PM	SEO	4/01/2018 4:08 PM	SEO	
Stories of interrupted educational trajectories		26	8/01/2018 2:42 PM	SEO	17/07/2018 1:13 PM	SEO	
Strong future imaginaries		18	4/01/2018 3:16 PM	SEO	29/03/2018 9:50 AM	OG	
University as safe spaces for FIF students		0	17/01/2018 1:37 PM	SEO	17/01/2018 1:37 PM	SEO	
University Failings		0	17/01/2018 11:33 AM	SEO	17/01/2018 11:33 AM	SEO	
University is ...		0	17/01/2018 11:30 AM	SEO	17/01/2018 11:30 AM	SEO	
University valuing		0	17/01/2018 11:36 AM	SEO	17/01/2018 11:36 AM	SEO	
What has university brought to the students		0	4/01/2018 3:59 PM	SEO	4/01/2018 3:59 PM	SEO	
What qualities have assisted you		1	8/09/2017 6:28 PM	SEO	20/10/2017 2:53 PM	SEO	
What was not helpful		1	8/09/2017 6:28 PM	SEO	20/10/2017 2:00 PM	SEO	
xGood quotes		56	15/09/2017 12:45 PM	SEO	17/07/2018 1:32 PM	SEO	
xReferences to Enabling Programs		10	15/01/2018 3:40 PM	SEO	25/03/2018 11:25 AM	OG	
zExamples of Resilient statements		1	20/10/2017 2:45 PM	SEO	8/01/2018 3:18 PM	SEO	
zOLD NODES from the survey		0	17/01/2018 11:29 AM	SEO	17/01/2018 11:29 AM	SEO	

## Appendix Two: How the nodes were collapsed and refined

### Creation of Conversion Factors:

<i>Theme / Node</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Changes/Elaboration</i>
<b>Social networks of support</b>	<i>The act of drawing upon developed/ing social networks that enabled students to maintain persistence</i>	These relationships are supportive in nature so this is an emotional support base of friends mainly who provide encouragement – these are the ‘cheer leaders’ for students but also there are networks of influential people – these are more strategic relationships so will collapse these two but specify the elements of this:
<b>Networks of influential people</b>	<i>References to people that have assisted in this journey who are not family members, they may be in a position of power or relative power compared to the student</i>	<p>Social Networks of Support / Networks of influential people collapsed into:</p> <p><b>Access to productive Relational Networks that fulfil two key functions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emotional ‘champions’ or ‘cheer leaders’, usually friends who may or may not have any direct experience of HE</li> <li>AND</li> <li>- Strategic influencers, often in positions of relative power who</li> </ul>

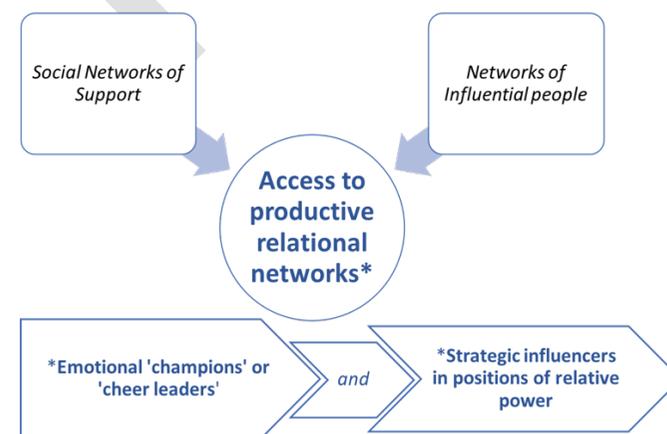


Figure 1: Access to productive relational networks

		provide instrumental encouragement & support
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<b>Theme / Node</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Changes/Elaboration</b>
<b>Engagement with industry and discipline</b>	<i>The blending of experience in both the industry and academic discipline which effectively facilitated opportunities for some learners</i>	This seems to be more about applying learning to practical situations so having the opportunity in the form of a job or volunteer role that allows immediate application of learning.
<b>Complementary institutional experiences</b>	<i>How some learners considered their experience in one education institutional environment as fundamental to sustaining their ongoing journey in HE.</i>	Again I am collapsing these two nodes into one as they both seem to have similar foci:  <b>Contextual applications of learning that are immediate and authentic.</b>

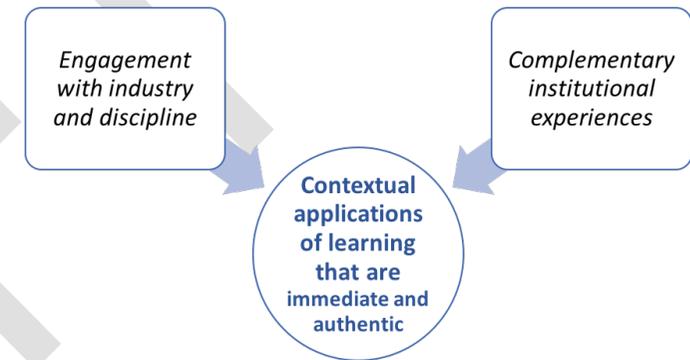


Figure 2: Contextual applications of learning

**Capabilities and Capitals merged and mapped to Conversion Factors**

Theme/Node	Description	Proposed Changes
8) Agency	<i>Students refer to personal agency around making HE work, this might include actively seeking out additional support to assist them in undertaking studies</i>	<p><b>Merge Agency / Altered or Fluid Trajectories and also Fluid Identity to create</b></p> <p><u>Personal Agency and Fluidity (Conversion Factor):</u></p> <p>This not only includes a personal agency but also an ability to enact fluid identity positions and trajectories. This would include a fluidity in relation to how HE attendance is maintained and incorporated in life; sometimes this fluidity is manifested in flexibility in life course directions and aspirations</p>
9) Altered or Fluid Trajectories	<i>Then and now statements that reveal changes to aspirations and how these have complemented movement through university</i>	
10) Fluid identity	<i>Students articulate fluid identity positions with regard to the various roles they occupy in life</i>	

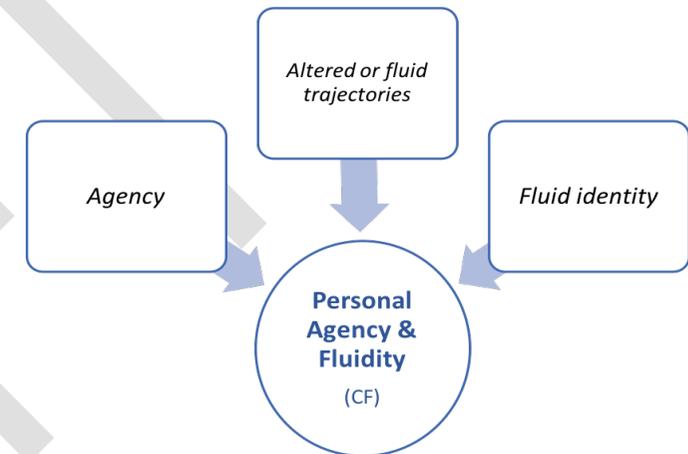


Figure 3: Personal Agency and Fluidity (CF)

Theme/Node	Description	Proposed Changes
5) Desiring More	<i>Passion or desire for getting more out of life which has underpinned this persistence at university</i>	<p><b>Merge ‘Desiring More’, ‘Finding a Passion’ and ‘Love of Learning’ to create</b></p> <p><u>HE attendance understood as an act of passion or love (Conversion Factor)</u></p> <p>This is a deliberate characterisation of HE as being an act of love or passion; this embodied nature sustains the learners in times of difficulty. This is a motivator. References include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A deep love of learning that can be both challenging and motivating</li> <li>- A passion to give back to the community and others.</li> </ul>
2) Finding a passion	<i>This passion may include the learning / discipline area/ applying knowledge/ giving back to community and others. This passion has acted as a motivator</i>	
7) Love of learning (Capability List)	<i>Students refer to a love of learning that both challenges and motivates them in their pursuit of HE</i>	

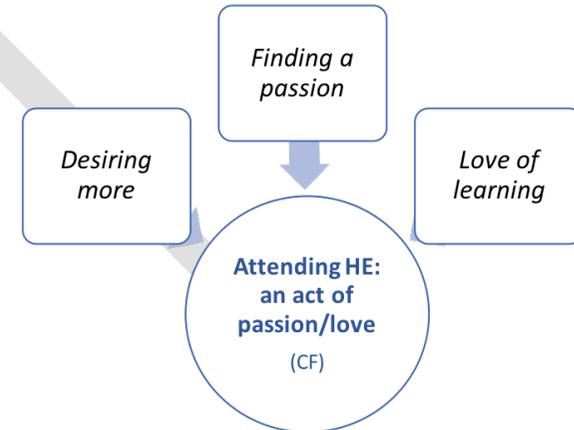


Figure 4: HE attendance: act of passion or love (CF)

Theme/Node	Description	Proposed Changes
Developing a sense of the self as persistent FF	<i>Students referring to themselves as persistent - recognising that trait in themselves - using 'self talk' to encourage continuation at uni</i>	<p><b>Merge developing a sense of the self as persistent, Resilient biographies, and resilience to create</b></p> <p><u>Resilient Lived Experience (Conversion Factor)</u></p> <p><i>This is more than just reflecting on ‘being resilient’ or defining the self as resilient but actually is derived from a <b>lived experience</b> of resilience. A resilience that is manifested by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A capacity to recover quickly from difficulties;</li> <li>- A toughness of spirit that does not allow difficult circumstances become a reason or rationale not to persist</li> <li>- Biographical experiences that students refer to as almost preparing them for HE</li> <li>- Using resilient self-talk to manage their persistence</li> </ul>
Resilient Biographies FF	<i>Examples of stories or biographical experiences that students refer to as almost preparing them for HE - these are often stories of struggles and overcoming obstacles to attend university</i>	
Resilience (Capability)	<i>The capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; a toughness of spirit, not letting difficult circumstance become a reason or rationale not to persist</i>	

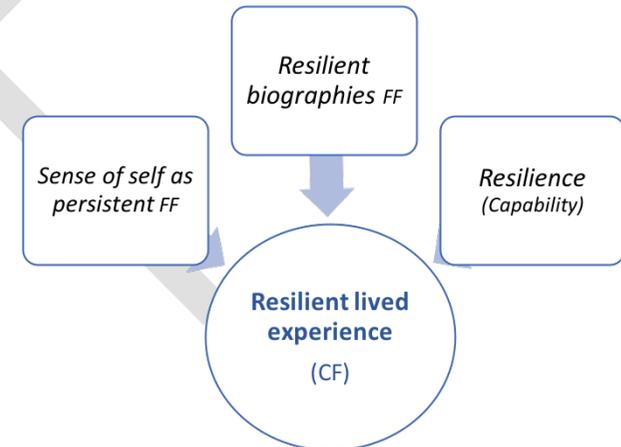


Figure 5: Resilient lived experience (CF)

Theme/Node	Description	Proposed Changes
3) Individual effort or independence	<i>When the HE journey feels like it has been the effort of the student alone, there has not been others involved in this journey of persistence</i>	<b>Merge individual effort or independence, perceptions or awareness of natural ability and being an exemplar for others to create:</b>  <u>Well-developed self-concept or efficacy (Conversion Factor)</u>
7) Perception or awareness of natural ability	<i>Students refer to having a sense of ability might be an affinity with learning or high IQ</i>	This refers to a sense of being able to achieve without the assistance or intervention of others, it may also manifest itself as an innate confidence in abilities (such as a high IQ) or perhaps an awareness of the self as being a role model or exemplar for others and the responsibilities this positionality holds
6) Being an exemplar for others	<i>References to an awareness of being an example, a role model and how this assists in persistence</i>	

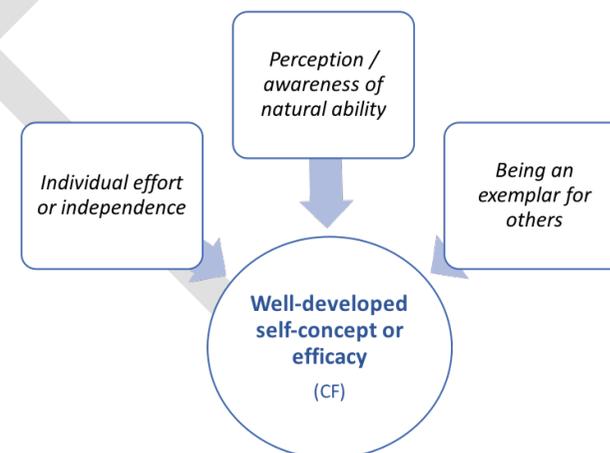


Figure 6: Well-developed self-concept or efficacy

### Final List of Capitals and Capabilities

Grit or determined persistence	<i>A sense of having to fight or push back to attend - this is not an entitlement. This is more than just persistence but a determination to keep going</i>	<p><b>Demonstrating ‘Sisu’</b></p> <p><i>This is a Finnish word that is used to refer to courage or an ability to keep going despite obstacles. This is more than Grit or determination (adopting Duckworth’s definition of Grit as a passion and perseverance for long-term and meaningful goals)</i></p> <p><i>According to Wikipedia, Sisu is ‘a grim, gritty, white-knuckle form of courage that is presented typically in situations where success is against the odds. It expresses itself in taking action against the odds and displaying courage and <u>resoluteness</u> in the face of adversity, in other words, deciding on a course of action and then sticking to that decision, even despite repeated failures.</i></p> <p><i>Sisu also contributes to what has been named the action mindset; a consistent, courageous approach toward challenges which at first seem to exceed our capacities</i></p>
Fearless or daunting (FF)	<i>Students refer to their decision to come to university as being an act of bravery - which might have negative repercussions</i>	<p><i>“Sisu is more about taking action against the odds and stretching beyond one’s observed capacities, than about pursuing long term goals” (Emilia Lahti, <a href="https://www.emiliaahti.com/">https://www.emiliaahti.com/</a>)</i></p>
Obstinacy or Tenacity	<i>Being tenacious or obstinate in dedication to continue with HE</i>	

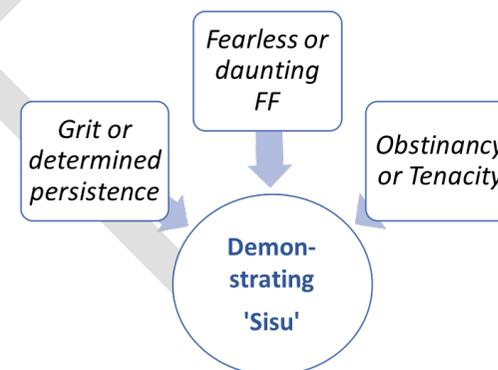


Figure 7: Demonstrating 'Sisu'

Familial Support	<i>Specific reference to the support/influence of family as a motivator to persist - the connection between family and persistence is key</i>
Help Seeking Behaviours	<i>Students seek help and advice in a proactive manner - seeking out support themselves</i>
Experiential Capital	<i>References to life skills or experiences that have enabled the student to dig deep and keep going - these experiences include those from life, work or family</i>
Reflexivity	<i>Skills at being able to reflect upon the self - student refer to their self-reflections or reflection on life as assisting them in their persistence</i>
Maturity	<i>Students refer to their age as assisting them in persisting - this may be related to experiential capital</i>
Discipline manifested in various aspects of life	<i>When students refer to being disciplined in other areas of their life and how this discipline impacted on their persistence behaviours</i>
Questioning the status quo	<i>An ability to ask questions and seek out information - just not accepting the status quo. This is not about seeking assistance but rather refusing to accept things just because this is how it has always been</i>

## Appendix Three: Additional examples of how students expressed the capabilities

Capabilities / Capitals	The ways in which students articulated these <sup>1</sup>
Demonstrating ‘Sisu’	<p><i>I like to talk about the fact that I’m persistent. It’s probably a strength of character that I did get from my working-class family is persistence is probably one of the greatest gifts that we’re given in the ability to succeed at anything that we undertake ... it’s the consistent applications of discipline and perseverance that get you to the result that you want to achieve. (Brett)</i></p> <p><i>I think coming from a family where I had nothing, I don’t want to provide that for my family so I’m determined to finish uni and secure the job that I want so that my children have a really good life. (Dyahn)</i></p> <p><i>My perseverance. My perseverance – never to give up. It was something that everyone in our family has; it was something that we were taught when we were younger that if you really want something, nothing in life is ever going to be handed to you on a silver platter and that’s probably because of that working class ethic in our family, just to never give up – where there’s a will, there’s a way. (Erin)</i></p> <p><i>That is grunt - that is do whatever is needed to get a job done. I play a bit of sport and I’m very competitive and that south-west Sydney mongrel is all about doing whatever you need to do to get the job done, through exhaustion, through pain; you do what you need to do to succeed. (Fabian)</i></p> <p><i>Probably because I know not to give up and no matter how many times people tell me “You can’t do it”, if I’ve set my mind to something and I’ve got a dream, I’ll do it, I’ll get there some way. (Hayley)</i></p> <p><i>I’m very stubborn and I’m driven so I think – I’m going to swear – but I think “I’m going to bloody well beat you. You’re not beating me”. That’s how I can say it – when I get that low it makes me angry and it motivates... (Lara)</i></p> <p><i>well, as a student, I hit that many obstacles, even just getting in these doors that I guess my – what’s the word? I’ve just been relentless. I just have not given up so I think that, you know, whether it be a hard assessment, a hard subject... I banged on so many doors in this place to make sure it happened and I could have easily given up but I didn’t, thankfully. I think that’s probably one of the biggest qualities is that I’m a fighter and a lot of that I think comes from my background as well. You know, you’ve got to be a fighter. (Molly)</i></p> <p><i>My persistence, my unwillingness to give up, my unwillingness to take “no” for an answer. (Paige)</i></p>

<sup>1</sup> These are simply a selection of quotes that are broadly representative of how students articulated these capabilities and capitals – a more thorough overview of this articulation is provided in forthcoming publications related to this project.

	<p><i>my determination to succeed by working my absolute arse off (Pippa)</i></p> <p><i>There’s been a lot of times when I’ve just stamped my foot and said, “I’m not” – because it would have been so easy to just stop, (Ruth)</i></p> <p><i>Honestly, at this point, it’s pretty sure it’s just my sheer determination to not quit – quitting, I hate it so much. I can’t do it. I can’t. I think it would drive me more insane than staying here. I don’t know. Honestly, I’ve considered it. (Sophie)</i></p> <p><i>After leaving a situation of domestic violence and during another period of depression I was tossing up whether to end my life or dig deeper and make something positive out of adversity. I chose the latter and I think that prior adversity has been a real impetus behind my drive to succeed at University. Survey respondents</i></p> <p><i>All I need is my foot in the door and I’ll drive a wedge through that until I get what I want because at the end of the day, if you’re not doing it for what you want, you’ll end up just falling by the wayside because other people’s dreams and goals will just be succeeding and overtaking yours. (Leon)</i></p> <p><i>I would describe myself as a fighter. I’m pretty – what’s the word? Maybe “strong-willed”. If I want to do something, I will tackle every obstacle. (Pippa)</i></p> <p><i>I won’t give up – I’ll keep going back at something until they say “No, you can’t do it anymore”. So no matter how bad this gets – uni in general – if I fail this semester and again and again, I’ll keep coming back to try and get to the end because I’ve made it this far. (Lucy)</i></p> <p><i>Resilient [laughing]. Very resilient and resourceful. Yep, and I also think that I’m quite outspoken because with all my resilient resourcefulness I’ve had to be, you know? I ask for help, I apply for extensions. If I didn’t have that ability, I couldn’t do university as a mother, as an adult carer, as the only person in my family who’s been to university because I can’t ask anyone in my family for advice, I can’t get help with assignments so I’ve had to find it. (Isabel)</i></p> <p><i>I’m self-motivated, so everything I do I’m motivated because of the hard life I went through so I see education like it’s very important and especially I’m the first one to go to university in my family ever, from my mum – so my mum never gone to school and my grandma, never. (Labreisha)</i></p>
<p>Familial Capital</p>	<p><i>I would say, like, mum and dad always stressed the mentality of “If you start something, finish it, no matter what it is. If you say you’re going to do something, if you tell someone you’re going to do something, do it. Stick to your word” kind of deal. (Lucas)</i></p> <p><i>It’s like having grit; I think I’ve got my determination from my mum; she’s a very gritty person that can grind out stuff and I think that that’s kind of what I’ve got from that sort of experience. (Nathan)</i></p> <p><i>I guess that value of putting in an effort, yeah, treatment, achievement, seeing the task through to the end. We’ve got a bit of a family mantra that you don’t give up, you’ll do what you said you were going to do. We don’t do things half-heartedly. (Nicole)</i></p>

*That persistence – you just keep on going because that's what you want; you don't give up – it's what you do and it almost comes naturally. It's very organic within our family. I know that other families or other people it doesn't come as naturally but when you've been surrounded by your whole life in the face of sadness, grief, you know, the unknown – after seeing all those things play out, you just keep on going. (Erin)*

*??? i began my degree when i was 36 years of age. I was 'terrible' at school, coming from a low socio-economic background, food was scarce and rife with domestic violence, so i could not concentrate. It was not until i had gotten to age that i felt safe and secure that i decided to embark on the journey of study - and have loved every bit of it. (Survey?)(Not sure about this one)*

*So primarily I think it's the expectation from my parents that I would finish university and the example that I've set for my siblings and in terms of me personally, (Leon)*

*I think when I graduate, it's going to be fabulous. My dad was very supportive that I was the first person to go to uni and he's really proud of me and things like that so I think once I finally graduate and being that first, everyone will be really happy. They'll be like "You finished uni. Well done", kind of thing. (Dyahn)*

*my achievements are also my parents' achievements because without them I wouldn't have been able to do this. (Erin)*

*It's like I took them to university with me and showed them around the campus and they were like, "Oh, we want to come here mummy", whereas that was never given to me. I was always told, "You can be a waitress or maybe an air hostess and that's about it. That's as clever as you can be and you're no good at maths and you'll never amount to anything so don't aspire to anything above what you can possibly achieve". So I've changed that. Actually that was probably my primary motivation is to change that cycle and stop that toxic cycle and to motivate my children. (Lara)*

*I guess I wanted to show my mum that I could grind it out and succeed. It was very important to me to finish university for her. (Nathan)*

*our parents are really proud of us for where we are, "Oh, I'm so proud of Sam. He's studying at the moment. He's going to graduate" and whatnot. I want them to be actually have the "Oh, I'm so proud of Sam. He got through", rather than, "He almost did and then he couldn't take it anymore". It's for their sake as well now. (sam)*

*My mum supporting me financially and emotionally has assisted me. I would not have been able to get through uni and pracs without her generosity and kindness. Being able to have my licence and access to a car has helped because I believe it would have been a deterrent for me to have to take public transport. (Survey)*

*My parents are the absolute biggest influence, they did not attend uni but supported any decision I made for the future and have bent over backwards to ensure I can attend despite not living locally to UOW eg transport Survey)*

	<p><i>Yeah, and I just didn't do it because there was no much pressure to... "No, university is no good. You just read books" and the whole family is dead against it; "Get a proper job" – they didn't even like me doing Year 11, like, "No, get a job. Everyone else got a job. Why can't you?" But I'd say to myself now, "Just do it. Don't listen. Just do it". (Aaron)</i></p>
<p>Help Seeking Behaviours</p>	<p><i>I had asked the question, so when I was enrolling, I had asked, "What happens if I fail this unit? What happens if I fail two units?" And I had that process explained to me fairly clearly so I knew what was going on.</i></p> <p><i>I did have other people doing the courses with me that didn't know the process and I used to wonder, "How did they enrol and not know the process?" But I suppose some people – they might be very nervous when they're enrolling and they don't think to ask or if it's been explained, they might not remember; a bit like being at the doctor's. (Aaron)</i></p> <p><i>Access to information about university was another critical issue. I was a bit overawed by the university website at the time and seeking information on that website was kind of like "Oh, there's too much here. Where do I start?" Overcoming that, I had to use people like careers advisors and year advisors and they were fundamental but, again, I think friendship and friend relationships were really important because we were able to seek out and acquire that information together. (Bradley)</i></p> <p><i>Personal research in terms of looking up things, seeing what other people have said about it – really weighing up what other people's opinions as well as... (Hayley)</i></p> <p><i>not knowing what uni was like in any small or great aspect and not really getting prepped that much by school or anyone that really knew what to expect and then early on, just like with help and kind of if you didn't go "Stuff it, I'm struggling. I'm going to ask 20 people how to get myself out of a hole" then I wouldn't have probably passed a few of those papers. (Fiona)</i></p> <p><i>I ask for help, I apply for extensions. If I didn't have that ability, I couldn't do university as a mother, as an adult carer, as the only person in my family who's been to university because I can't ask anyone in my family for advice, I can't get help with assignments so I've had to find it. (Isabel)</i></p> <p><i>So if I get stuck or if I'm not quite getting something, especially with online education, it's a little bit more challenging than face-to-face learning, I kind of just have to find it in myself to find the answer or figure it out or use the right resources, whether it's contacting my tutor or going on the online discussion boards to get my answers and things like that. (Jennifer)</i></p> <p><i>I think if you're open to it, the uni has supports there but you've got to be pro-active in letting it help you if you know what I mean. (Josie)</i></p> <p><i>After the lecture I'd be breaking my arse down there asking for more extra notes, asking for this, asking for that, "I didn't understand this. Can you explain this again?" (Leon)</i></p>

<p>Experiential Capital</p>	<p><i>I feel like the event kind of made me a stronger person. (Nathan)</i></p> <p><i>And now, having been through what I’ve been through in my life to this point, it’s been important that I kind of find something that I connect with (Donna)</i></p> <p><i>I think my resilience. I think I’m very proud of that. Very, very long stories that I could go through but I’ve had to be resilient – I dropped out of high school, I was homeless for a while, the father of my first born child passed away, then I got married, my husband and I had a child that passed away – I’ve had a whole huge massive difficult life (Isabel)</i></p> <p><i>feel like though, it’s kind of those “If it doesn’t kill you it does make you really stronger” and you say “Well, I coped with that so I can cope”, you know. (Josie)</i></p> <p><i>Anyone that can survive poverty, definitely. Definitely, because you really do have to be creative. (Mahalia)</i></p> <p><i>the really kick-ass exciting thing about this is I feel that I’ve been able to put a lot of the experiences that I’ve had in a toolbox, you know, it’s really exciting because I thought the worst thing that could ever happen in my life is if I ever ended up just being a victim of it and I’m not. (Michelle)</i></p> <p><i>What makes me different is I think by having cancer that made me reassess my life more to say, “Well, you know what, I’ve only got a short amount of time” – (Pippa)</i></p> <p><i>I have had some negative experiences which I believe have actually benefited me in ways because I am more motivated to set high goals and work hard to achieve them. (survey respondents)</i></p> <p><i>Coming from a rural background, often we were not offered the same opportunities as people who were. This makes you work harder to achieve the same goal. (Survey)</i></p> <p><i>After leaving a situation of domestic violence and during another period of depression I was tossing up whether to end my life or dig deeper and make something positive out of adversity. I chose the latter and I think that prior adversity has been a real impetus behind my drive to succeed at University. (Survey)</i></p>
<p>Reflexivity</p>	<p><i>I’ve always found it’s not about how you fail, it’s how you pick yourself up and learn from it and apply that to the next situation. (Leon)</i></p> <p><i>You know, I’ve really pushed myself to my limits in this and I think I keep finding new ceilings of those limits. I think, “Okay, I can’t possibly do anymore” and then I find something else that I can just stretch a tiny bit more. So I think finding those capacities that, you know, is reaffirming – that’s been good. It’s also been really hard but yeah, just finding those inner strengths I didn’t know that I had. (Miriam)</i></p>

	<p><i>I think having that critical view that you get from being at uni, you seem to have more control over what's happening to you. (Aaron) OR</i></p> <p><i>I think because I wanted to be changed by the experience and I was ready to immerse fully and let the university experience change me instead of trying to use the university experience to prove that I already knew everything. I wanted it to change me and so it did and out of that experience, I've been a winner really because it hasn't always been easy but I got what I wanted. I got to be changed. (Aaron)</i></p> <p><i>I think I'm a lot more critically reflective of myself and I looked at why I failed and I worked out it was because of me and then I realised that well, if I change my habits then I can easily get through (Drew)</i></p> <p><i>But to get the most out of university, you have to be willing to take apart a bit of yourself and realise that we don't know everything. I unlearned so much to learn what I now know and it was the most rewarding thing I've ever done. (Evelyn)</i></p> <p><i>Yeah, I had to change my perceptions of myself to be able to be like, "Okay, everyone's path is different. You're not the same as everyone else" and that's why I had to overcome that barrier. (Layla)</i></p> <p><i>I guess self-reflection is a big thing that's just natural to me, for whatever reason and that helps a lot in being here, especially social work because so much of it is about your practice and your skills and reflecting on those skills and how you interact with others and how that impacts on how they respond. So yeah, that's been beneficial. (Nerida)</i></p> <p><i>I was just thinking about what happiness actually means basically and I've had a bit of a crisis, like I was trying to work out what I was actually going to do to have a meaningful existence and I came to the conclusion of living in a community, a small community and whatnot. (Thomas)</i></p>
Maturity	<p><i>I'm very thankful that I decided to go through with this and that it was the right choice for me. But like I said, it took me a really long time to get here and I don't think as a school leaver, I would have been in this situation. (Danielle)</i></p> <p><i>So in some aspects, I worked a lot harder than the young students coming straight from school, however, in other aspects because of my vast working experience, it all makes a lot more sense; I can connect to real life and in those aspects, it was a lot easier.</i></p> <p><i>Quite willing to help other people so the smart young people realised, "Ooh, these oldies, they know a lot of things. I'll work with them in a group" [laughing]. (Erica)</i></p> <p><i>Being a mature age student as well, I think I've had plenty of years to reflect and think about what I would do if I could go to uni if I had that opportunity and I think it's more pronounced as you get older because you can narrow things down and you can follow that path because you know that that's what you want. (Helen)</i></p> <p><i>I mean the only other thing I wanted to add with socialising at the university, is I came from a low socioeconomic background and most of the other students haven't; they have come from a higher class and I don't have the money to buy fancy shoes and fancy clothes and fancy pens and pencils and</i></p>

	<p><i>laptops and things. I don't have that money, we have to live quite frugal and there is judgement from that – there is. Especially at first, before I started getting really good grades, I would end up sitting by myself. I didn't have people talking to me at lunch and recess – not recess but you know, your lunch time and in breaks – I felt quite shunned. I went to university as an adult though so I didn't feel like I had to socialise whereas I feel like if I was younger and I went into university as the first person in my family, I didn't have support at home and then all of the other students then looked down on me, I would not have been able to cope with that and I probably would have dropped out. (Isabel)</i></p> <p><i>My younger self? Yeah, I think my younger self would have been too distracted. Yeah, probably wait till you've had some life experience and then consider higher studies. (Nicole)</i></p> <p><i>I think if I was young there would have been heaps of negatives and I wouldn't have been a successful student because I would have been far more interested in doing all the things I'd never done before rather than sitting at my desk writing an essay, (Olivia)</i></p> <p><i>You know as you go through life, I think the maturity and working with groups and things not always going the way that you want them to in a working environment – that's definitely helped me at university. Definitely. (Trish)</i></p>
<p>Discipline manifested in various aspects of life</p>	<p><i>When I was younger I used to do dancing and I just danced my whole life and it's kind of instilled in me with the whole fact that if you want something you need to work hard for it, you need to work hard every day to get to your goal and the only way to do that is if you set yourself goals and incentives to work hard towards it. (Lily)</i></p> <p><i>I'm very organised. I think that comes from my background of event organising too. I know what has to be done and I set myself up before each semester, beginning of every week, I know exactly what has to be done that week. (Trish)</i></p> <p><i>just to get on with it, just being able to set goals and achieve those goals and know exactly how you're going to do it. I don't know, organisation. (Bernadette)</i></p>
<p>Questioning the status quo</p>	<p><i>During university, particularly in my first year, I struggled where there weren't really well-designed boundaries around questions. I could never work out when a question is being asked, do I answer it shallow, medium, deep, extra deep? I could never work out exactly where the limits were to a question and I complained. One of my lecturers, who is my course coordinator, actually changed the way she put the questions. She's very clear about the boundaries now and even though not every lecturer or every coordinator does it, that extra time of being able to get used to what's expected with boundaries in place let me work out what other lecturers wanted when they asked a question or an assessment task. (Aaron)</i></p> <p><i>that drive to want to get out and see the world was really important. Yeah, it sort of made me then probably wanting to decide what I wanted to do because I didn't really have any idea; being in such a small community it was just you were expected to probably remain in small communities or marry a farmer or something like that. I knew that wasn't for me but because I really hadn't seen much of the world... (Belinda)</i></p> <p><i>I also felt that going to university would help me escape I guess what I would call "the under-class" community – within housing commission you know, I saw a lot of drug abuse and mental illness and I saw a lot of despair and they also have in the under-class community, they reject the</i></p>

*mainstream community's kind of values, aspirations and justice system and so they have their own internal justice system and I kind of rejected a lot of that culture that was from my under-class, from that community. (Eleanor)*

*This is something I just wanted to do all my life; I wasn't just able to accept like say for instance, "Why is there water on the grass when it hasn't rained?" You know, I would question things like this and, you know, things like that so I've always wanted to do this and the fact that it is a more male dominant degree and I am older and all these odds stacked against me, it's just something that I wanted to do. (Pippa)*

*other students' negativity and the put-downs, "You can't do it. You can't achieve it from the low social background and you can't do it. People don't go to university from families that are born in low social backgrounds". Other than that, but I overcame that and that didn't stop me from attending university or applying so it's just that but that didn't bother me. I didn't pay attention to it. (Raina)*

*I'm always rebelling against that stereotype. I have a real problem with gender-based tasks, you know, just because I'm mum and I'm a woman, you're 19 now. I've always had that chip on my shoulder about just because I'm a girl it doesn't mean I... I mean my husband used to send his clothes back to New South Wales to be altered to take his hems up because I'm like "No, you can do it. You can sew just as easily as I can", so he'd send them home to his mum [laughing]. She once sent me a little sewing machine, a little hand portable, battery operated thing. I never took it out of its box. (Ruth)*

*If anything, I think about what life would be if I didn't go to uni, and aim away from that by continuing to study. (Survey)*