

# IABA 2010

## Biennial Conference

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'Parents, Partners and Peers:  
Bearing the hidden costs of  
lifelong learning'  
(forthcoming in Int J. of  
Lifelong Ed, 2011)

# Format of presentation

1. Introduction (RW)
2. First Study (RW):  
Partners - Jo
3. Second Study (BP):  
Peers - Abe
4. Third Study (RW & BP):  
Parents - Cathy
5. Conclusions (RW & BP)

# The three studies

Paper uses data from three longitudinal studies of adult learners:

1. Adults returning to formal learning via *Access to HE* course at FE college [RW]
2. Learners on professional doctorate programme or trade union 'return to learn' course encouraging members to engage with HE/FE opportunities [BP]
3. Working-class women in secondary education during three periods: post-war; 1960/70s; and 1988 onwards and their re-engagement with FE/HE [HB]

# Hidden costs of lifelong learning

We consider participants' reflections upon their educational biographies - from childhood memories of schooling, through FE and, for some, to HE experiences

We explore how engaging with post-compulsory education impacts upon their wider lives; particularly the hidden costs of lifelong learning in risks to existing relationships

# First study: Partners - Jo

‘No room in my life for a relationship.’

## ◆ Why Jo?

Split with partner , father of her young child, soon after starting course

## ◆ Jo's story

Not enough room in her life for relationship

(Ex-)partner blamed course itself; Jo saw it as catalyst hastening break-up

## ◆ Theorising Jo's account

Wakeford's (1994) - risk to femininities

Peters (1997) - growing academic confidence transferrable

Baxter & Britton (2001) - neutrality = support

Brine & Waller (2004) - Re-assessment of own life

# Second Study: Peers - Abe

## 'Wanting to wear an eagle's feather.'

### ◆ Why Abe?

Impact of peers both limiting and expanding his 'horizons for action'

### ◆ Abe's story

Escaping worlds, changing identities

### ◆ Theorising Abe

1. Ball *et al* (2000)- taking on different identities as "some form of chameleon"
2. Scott *et al.* (2004)- 'intrinsic motivation' to seek his 'eagle feather'
3. Bloomer and Hodkinson (2000)- 'portfolio of dispositions'

## Third Study: Parents - Cathy

‘I did it in spite of you, not because of you!’

- ◆ Why Cathy?

Strongest sense of parental culpability

- ◆ Cathy’s story

- ◆ Theorising Cathy’s account

1. Bourdieu’s ‘*habitus*’ (1990a; 1990b)
2. Cultural capital ‘deficit’ (Reay, 1998; Lareau, 2000; Plummer, 2000)
3. Differential socialization (Crozier *et al.* 2008)
4. Parent/child - fear/shame/envy (Lucey *et al.* 2003)
5. Familial separation/distance (Christopher, 2009)



# Concluding remarks - BP

## Emergent themes across the studies

### Entitlement:

Familial and institutional processes leading to differential perceptions of entitlement:

1. Expectation of HE participation (Crozier *et al.* 2008)
2. Limiting and limited 'horizon for action' (Ball *et al.* 2000)
3. Exposure as 'fraud' (Skeggs, 1997 and 2004; Mahoney and Zmroczek, 1997; Reay, 2001, 2002, 2005)
4. Lack of middle-class confidence (Skeggs, 1997)
5. 'Abortive lift-offs' (Christopher, 2009)
6. Problematic non-linear progression (Brine, 1999, 2004)

# Concluding remarks – RW

## Themes to emerge across the studies

### Risk

1. Giddens (1991) 'risk society'; 'rational, calculating actors'
2. Tett (2004), Skeggs (1997), Reay *et al.* (2002) 'shame and fear' of w/c relationships to education
3. Mahony & Zymroczek (1997), Archer & Leathwood (2003) Contradiction of escaping from, *but preserving*, w/c identities
4. Brine & Waller (2004) Risk to existing relationships

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