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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’
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)
  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)
4. Lack of middle-class confidence (Skeggs, 1997)
5. ‘Abortive lift-offs’ (Christopher, 2009)
Concluding remarks – RW
Themes to emerge across the studies

Risk

References (1)


Brine, J. and Waller, R. (2004) Working Class Women on an Access Course: Risk, opportunity and (re)constructing identities, Gender and Education 16, 97-113

References (2)


Peters, H. (1997) *An Exploration of a Group of Mature Students' Perceptions of and Approaches to Writing at University, Carried Out on a Twelve Week Pre-Entry Course*, *Journal of Access Studies* 12, 198-211


References (3)


