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BSA 2010 Annual Conference

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'Parents, Partners and Peers:
The Hidden Costs of Lifelong
Learning'
(forthcoming in special edition
of IJLE 2011)

Format of presentation

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

The Three studies

This paper uses data from three longitudinal studies of post-compulsory learners.

1. The first on adults returning to formal learning via an *Access to HE* course at an FE college.
2. The second on working-class women in secondary education during three periods: post-war; 1960/70s; and 1988 onwards and their re-engagement with FE/HE.
3. The third on adults on a 'return to learn' course which offers trade union members who are unlikely to engage with HE/FE opportunities to do so.

Potential Hidden Costs of Lifelong Learning.

The presentation reports and theorises on participants' reflections upon their educational biographies - from childhood memories of schooling, through FE and, for some, to experiences at university.

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

First 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.

1. 'Habitus' Bourdieu (1990a; 1990b).
2. Lacking valuable 'cultural capital' (Reay, 1998; Lareau, 2000; Plummer, 2000)
3. Differential socialization (Crozier et.al.2008).
4. Parental/child - fear/shame/envy (Lucey et.al. 2003)
5. Familial separation/distance (Christopher, 2009).

Second study. Partners. Jo. 'No room in my life for a relationship.'

- ◆ Why Jo?
- ◆ Jo's story.
- ◆ Theorising Jo.

Third Study. Peers. Abe. 'Wanting to wear an eagle's feather.'

- ◆ Why Abe.
- ◆ Abe's story.
- ◆ Theorising Abe.

Concluding remarks – HB

Themes to emerge across the studies.

◆ Entitlement:

Familial and institutional processes leading to differential perceptions of entitlement:

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

Concluding remarks – RW

Themes to emerge across the studies.

◆ Risk

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