



Intergenerational Dynamics of Educational Values

*The impact of graduate parents on
young peoples' educational decision
making*



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Research Question

- *What is the impact of having graduate parents or parents engaged in tertiary education in the decision making process associated with entering higher education?*



Gaps in the literature

- A review of the literature identifies two significant gaps
 - A focus on socio-economic factors has ignored the past educational achievements of parents instead focusing on occupation
 - The literature also tends to see graduate parents in terms of those who graduated in their early 20s



Widening participation

- W.P. has lead to the expansion of HE.
- Also lead to a more diverse population of graduates.
- In particular, an increase in mature, 'non-traditional' students.
- So need to take account of both traditional and non-traditional graduates as parents.



The niche...

- So, research is interested in the impact of being a graduate parent on the decision making of their children.



At the same time...

- There has been an expansion in the opportunities for young people
- Young people are expected to engage with new educational opportunities
 - training, vocational qualifications, diplomas.
- Decision making of young people necessitates counsel from others (especially given the cost implications of post-compulsory education)
- Parents are drawn into the ‘landscape’ of educational choice and opportunity
 - A landscape which contains many different offers.
 - A landscape of opportunities for parents too



Reviewing the literature

- Feinstein et al (2004)
 - Distal factors (family structure, family size, teenage motherhood, income and poverty, maternal employment).
 - Family characteristics (parental cognitions, parental well-being and mental health, resources and Parental physical health).
 - Proximal factors (parenting style and educational behaviours).



Proposed foci

- **Distal**
 - “the more global or descriptive aspects that characterise the environment and provide an index of a family’s demographic or socio-economic situation” (Feinstein et al, 2004, p.6)



Proximal

- Proximal family processes are those actually experienced by the child.
- Includes:
 - “aspects of parent-child relationships such as warmth and affection, the use of discipline, control and punishment, as well as the educational content of language use in the home environment” (Feinstein et al, 2004, p.6)



Social capital

- This is not fore grounded by Feinstein et al. but is useful in this context.
- Is useful to consider the transmission of intergenerational success in a context where the rhetoric focuses on ‘opportunity’ as the benefit to be derived from participation in HE (rather than a guarantee of social and economic ‘success’).



Learning trajectories

- Gorard et al
 - “complex interactions between parental patterns of participation in adult education and training and those of their children (and grandchildren)” (Gorard et al, 1999, p. 518).
- They suggest:
 - Variety of learning trajectories.
 - Continued importance of families in the creation of a range of stable ‘learner identities’ which, in turn, influence whether individuals embark on learning trajectories which include lifelong learning or not.



Role of parents

- There is growing body of literature which explores the role of parents in the choices young people make in terms of post-compulsory education.
- In a major UK studies of young peoples' decision making, Conner et al (1999) found that many students have formulated career plans, particularly about further study, by Year 11 of secondary school.
- These plans are influenced by young peoples' beliefs about their own ability, previous school experiences, access to careers advice and expectations from school and home.



Influence of parents

- Wright (2005) (reviewing literature about the decision making of 14-19 years olds) suggests parents are more influential in early stages decisions about post-compulsory education and training choices.
- For many young people parental influence may be limited to choices of whether or not to stay on in education or training after 16.



Social networks

- Brooks (2002) identifies social networks, (primarily family and friends) as key sources of information which inform the decision making process of young people.
- And that, although parents are commonly consulted by young people, they may not be the most useful sources of information compared to schools and universities.



Our plans

- Pilot in next academic year (2008/2009)
- Years 10/11
- Questionnaire
- The views of young people
- Envisage bringing in voices of parents as well
- (We are particularly interested in graduate parents)



Your involvement?

- Talking to mature students in your institution who are parents of young people on the verge of entering post-compulsory education.
- Talking to younger students in your institution about their decision and the role of parents
- Comparative work focusing of different modes of provision, locality and funding.
- Develop a research proposal.
- Possible funding bid (HEFCE?).



Reference

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