

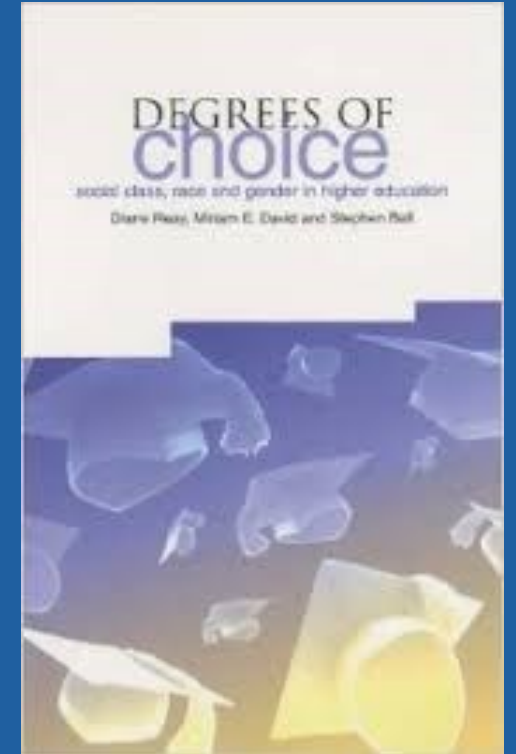
Fish out of water?

Contrasting the WP student experience at a selective HEI

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Contingent/Embedded Choosers

- Working / Middle Class
- Non-/Graduate Parents
- Non-/University-oriented School
 - Non-/University Disposition
 - Non-/Uni-oriented Peers
 - Post-/Pre-92 Orientation
 - Im-/Mobile
 - Culture Shock at Pre-92

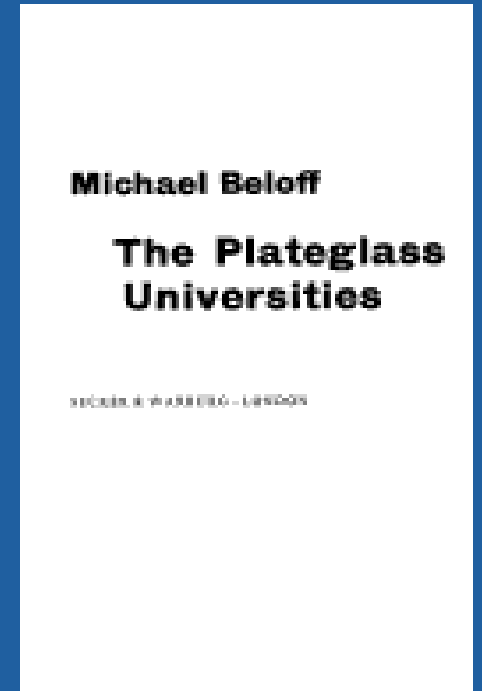


Reay et al (2005) Degrees of Choice. Stoke on Trent: Trentham.

Reay et al (2009) Strangers in Paradise? Working Class Students in Elite Universities. *Sociology*, 43 (6).
pp.1103-1121

'Mill' University, Spring 2012

- 1960s, Research-Intensive, Selective, High Status
- 7 domestic participants
 - M/F 4:3
 - First/Final year 5:2
 - Social Sciences/STEM 2:5
 - Middle/Working Class 4:3
 - 'British'/Immigrant 6:2
- Two 90-120 minute interviews each
 - How do students understand, experience, and negotiate HE?
- Last £3K cohort



Contingency

	Jo Psychology	Zachary Mathematics	Jack Civil Engineering
Parental Occupation	Nurse Itinerant Labourer	Civil Servant (Jobcentre) Civil Servant (Jobcentre)	Physics Teacher Businessman
Funding	Earnings, Loan, Bursary	Earnings, Loan, Bursary	Loan, Parents
Parental Education	Non-degree Degree (Mature)	Non-degree Non-degree	Degree Degree
Culture Shock	'I knew it was gonna be full of people who went to private school...I find it difficult to live with people like that.'	'One of the things that shocked me...someone saying "Daddy pays for it"...I had to put it together myself.'	'It reminds me a lot of school...I knew loads of people going to [Hume]...I'll not meet anyone new there.'
Fees	'I don't agree with them...it's gonna be the people who can afford it...[not] who're good'	'I don't agree with fees rising because...there will be a lot of people put off going to university.'	'[Uni] is a service...it might as well come out of the student's pocket as they're benefitting.'

Embeddedness

	Jo	Zachary	Jack
Disposition	'I'm just not done learning yet.'	'It's just a natural progression of what you do after A levels, really.'	'At first I accepted it...then I sort of started questioning it.' [But not really!]
School Orientation	'I didn't know very much about what it would be like.'	'the top sets...all went to these university things before school.'	'because everyone went to university, [they] had loads of information...'
Peers	'I just had the impression from friends in the year above I'm in touch with.'	'I think all of my friends have gone to uni apart from three of them, 90%.'	'98% of the people I knew, that was just the natural progression.'
University Choice	'I did largely base my decision on rankings...and location.'	'Rankings, it was the Times, I think...because I wanted to get a better job.'	'My mum was basically dragging up all these Telegraph lists.'
Extra-curricular Activities	'I was determined to but didn't get round to it...hopefully next year.'	'With maths we don't do teamwork...you've got something [for] that box.'	'it's just really middle class to do everything.'

Closing Thoughts/Questions

- Individual positions on an embedded – contingent spectrum?
- How can we track changes in the student 'choice'/experience?
 - Is the 'natural progression' more widespread?
- What fosters embeddedness in WP students?
 - Recursive, semiotic, open systems (Biesta, 2010)
- How can we theorise these issues?
 - Bourdieu
 - Capabilities Approach
 - Neo-institutionalism