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2014

# Ripples of learning -higher education participation, familial habitus, gender and first in family female students

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## Publication Details

O'Shea, S., May, J. & Stone, C. (2014). Ripples of learning -higher education participation, familial habitus, gender and first in family female students. *Gender and Education in the Asia Pacific: Possibilities and Provocations* (pp. 54-55).

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# Ripples of learning -higher education participation, familial habitus, gender and first in family female students

## **Abstract**

Abstract presented at the Gender and Education Association Asia Pacific Biennial Interim Conference, 9-11 December 2014, Melbourne, Australia

## **Keywords**

first, family, female, students, participation, education, higher, learning, familial, ripples, gender, habitus

## **Disciplines**

Education | Social and Behavioral Sciences

## **Publication Details**

O'Shea, S., May, J. & Stone, C. (2014). Ripples of learning -higher education participation, familial habitus, gender and first in family female students. *Gender and Education in the Asia Pacific: Possibilities and Provocations* (pp. 54-55).

This has proved to be particularly challenging in the context of addressing the negative impacts of gender-based violence, including pornography.

Using qualitative data collected through interviews, surveys and students work samples from seven schools in Victoria; the challenges, contradictions and possibilities of teaching about gender-based violence and violence against women including pornography, as part of a respectful relationships approach is explored.

**Dr Sarah O' Shea, University of Wollongong**

**A/Professor Josephine May, University of Newcastle**

**Dr Cathy Stone, Open Universities Australia**

### **Ripples of learning –higher education participation, familial habitus, gender and first in family female students**

**Biography:** The authors of this paper are all interested in the access and participation of students from diverse backgrounds, each has published and conducted research in this field. This presentation will report on a joint study that is focusing on first in family students and exploring the ripple effects of this return to education.

Drawing upon interviews and surveys<sup>2</sup> conducted with university students and relatives, this presentation explores higher education participation for women who are the first in their families to participate in university. Overall the literature around first in family students has a tendency to portray this student cohort in deficit terms using words such as 'challenges', 'difficulties' and 'help' (Thayer, 2000; Brachman, 2012; Gardner, 1996). For first in family students, educational choices are perceived as being limited by the lack of access to an 'educational memory' within the family. Ball, Davies, David and Reay (2002) refer to the important role of 'transgenerational family scripts or "inheritance codes"' (p57) in educational choices. In those families where attending university is not the norm the lack of this narrative thread is regarded as contributing in part to individual's ambitions around university attendance or lack thereof. Until recently however little work has been carried out on these effects on first in family women through a gendered lens (Stone & O'Shea, 2012; Stone & O'Shea 2013; O'Shea, 2011). The presentation will address the conference theme '*Place-based inequalities*' as we seek to explore how these female students move between home and university, particularly how gender, place and space intersect to inform educational futures, motivation and experience. The presentation will report the initial findings from the study and also include a *PechaKucha* that takes the form of a 'collective narrative' (Richardson, 1988), drawing upon the 'multiple voices and direct quotations' (p.205) of participants.

**Key Words:** First in Family students, higher education, access and participation, gender and family

#### **References**

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<sup>2</sup> This research has been funded by an Office of Learning and Teaching Grant and is a partnership between University of Wollongong, University of Newcastle and Open Universities Australia

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## **Helen Proctor, Rose Leontini and Kellie Burns**

### **Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Sydney**

#### **Schools, public health and the making of the Australian family in the twentieth century, 1900s-1940s**

**Biographies:** Dr Helen Proctor is a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Education and Social Work at Sydney University, with an interest in the historical and present relationships between schools and families. Her current research projects include a history of the work of public schools in the governance of public health in twentieth century Australia with Dr Kellie Burns.

Dr Rose Leontini is a researcher in the Discipline of Behavioural and Social Sciences in Health, and the Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Sydney, Australia. Her research interests include health sociology, health ethics, university students and alcohol, hereditary disease, genetic testing and public health education.

Dr Kellie Burns is a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Education and Social Work at The University of Sydney. Her research focuses on the production of gendered and sexual citizenship in media and schooling cultures and in public health programs and campaigns. Her current work with Helen Proctor offers a socio-historical analysis of schools as modalities of public health that produce and uphold gender and citizenship norms.

This paper reports early findings of a historical investigation into the activity of public elementary schools in the production, management and bureaucratization of public health in early twentieth century Australia (c1910-c1940). In particular the paper focuses on the work of the school as an instrument of public policy in the making of the healthy and hygienic family. From the early 1900s the Australian state governments established Medical Branches within their Departments of Public Instruction, headed by medical doctors who specialised in public health. The NSW Branch, the subject of this paper, ran ambitious screening programs and disseminated educational information about hygiene, communicable diseases and physical "defects". An explicit agenda was to improve national fitness by improving the habits of the nation's families. The way into the family home was, it was argued, through its children. Using gender as its principal category of analysis, this paper draws on an examination of the public reporting and confidential archives of the NSW School Medical Branch, and contemporary press accounts of its work. Our purpose is to contribute to a richer understanding of the historical relationship between schools and family formation, especially its moral dimensions. We describe, for example, how particular norms of cleanliness and hygiene in schools were frequently conflated with personal and civic morality and "good" mothering. Finally, the paper describes some of the ways in which health anxieties varied across gender, race and social class, and how shifting beliefs about health and illness reflected and produced contested views of difference.