Educational aspirations and choices of people from differentiated national and cultural environments: a review of recent scientific literature

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ABSTRACT

The social field in the modern globalized world includes groups of people with differentiated national and cultural characteristics. These groups possess their own system of dispositions, which are primarily shaped within the context of the family. The purpose of this study is the investigation and presentation of young people's aspirations and choices concerning their educational future as these are influenced by factors which are related to the phenomenon of migration, through a review of recent scientific literature. From the analysis of the research findings of relevant scientific papers, the influence of socio-economic, cultural and institutional factors on the formation of young people's educational aspirations/expectations and choices emerges. Family habitus, as well as the institutional habitus that exists within the academic institutions, tend to contribute significantly to the decisions and choices young people make which define their educational course. In particular, most research findings converge on the fact that education constitutes a means of social mobility offering the opportunity to young people from underprivileged family environments to 'transform' and/or improve their position in the field of social stratification. As a result, young people aspire to pursue higher education studies though the mobilization of a 'transformative' habitus, anticipating that it will improve the terms, conditions and prospects of their life in the future.

KEYWORDS

Immigrants, socio-economic status, habitus, educational aspirations and expectations, young people's educational choices

RÉSUMÉ

Le champ social dans le monde globalisé moderne inclut des groupes de personnes avec des caractéristiques nationales et culturelles différenciées. Ces groupes possèdent leur propre système de dispositions, qui sont principalement façonnées dans le contexte de la famille. Le but de cette étude est d'étudier et de présenter les aspirations et les choix des jeunes concernant leur avenir éducatif, influencés par des facteurs liés au phénomène migratoire, à travers une revue de la littérature scientifique récente. À partir de l'analyse des résultats de recherche des articles scientifiques pertinent, l'influence des facteurs socio-économiques, culturels et institutionnels sur la formation des aspirations/des choix éducatifs des jeunes émerge. L'habitus familial, ainsi que l'habitus institutionnel existant au sein des institutions académiques, ont tendance à contribuer de manière significative aux décisions et aux choix des jeunes qui définissent leur parcours éducatif. En particulier, la plupart des résultats de recherche convergent sur le fait que l'éducation est un moyen de mobilité sociale qui offre la possibilité aux jeunes issus de milieux familiaux défavorisés de 'transformer' et/ou d'améliorer leur position dans le domaine de la stratification sociale. En conséquence, les jeunes aspirent à poursuivre des études supérieures grâce à la mobilisation d'un habitus 'transformateur', en anticipant qu'il améliorera les termes, conditions et perspectives de leur vie future.

MOTS-CLÉS

Les immigrants, statut socioéconomique, l'habitus, aspirations et attentes scolaires, les choix éducatifs des jeunes

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of migrating populations in the modern globalized world, attributed to demographic, political and economic factors, constitutes a major social issue, which seems to take explosive dimensions in some areas of the earth, and contributes to the change in social conditions and the composition of the population of societies which accept immigrants. This fact contributes to the redefining of the characteristics of modern societies thus leading to the formation of multicultural countries. These societies end up experiencing diverse groups from a national and cultural point of view, who have their own culture and their own system of perceptions, thoughts, actions and social evaluations. It is worth noting that countries of the European South, such as Greece and Italy, but also in the case of the American continent, the United States, are strong poles of attraction for immigrants. These immigrants mainly come from Asian and African countries in the case of European countries, and Latin America in the case of the United States (Kao & Tienda 1998; Kaufman, Alt & Chapman, 2001; Labrianidis, Lyberaki, Tinios & Hatziprokopiou, 2004; Kasimis & Papadopoulos, 2005; Erisman & Looney, 2007; Kent, 2007).

The interest of recent scientific literature focuses on studies which concern native and immigrant students (see: Perna, 2000; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Perreira, Mullan Harris & Lee, 2006; Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Meunier, De Coulon, Marcenaro-Gutierrez & Vignoles, 2013) approaching a series of issues such as social and school adaptation of immigrant students (see: Fuligni, 1998; St-Hilaire, 2002; Giavrimis, Konstantinou & Hatzichristou, 2003; Moon & Lee, 2009), as well as the discriminations faced by students with immigrant backgrounds at school bringing to the fore the issue of social and educational inequalities (see: Connolly & Keenan, 2002; Levy & Massalha, 2010). The interest of scientific studies also focuses on the issue of

social mobility and educational choices of students who come from immigrant environments (see: Xie & Goyette, 2003). Moreover, there are studies which focus on the examination of the forms of interaction and cooperation immigrant parents have with their children's teachers seeking as they do to contribute positively and facilitate the children's educational course (see: Seyfried & Chung, 2002; Levine-Rasky, 2009). In addition, the investigation of the influence of socio-economic factors and various forms of 'capital' on the academic success and educational choices of students from differentiated national and cultural environments has attracted researchers' attention (see: Hamrick & Stage, 1998; Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Freeman, 1999; Ball, Reay & David, 2002; González, Stoner & Jovel, 2003; Massey, Mooney, Torres & Charles, 2007; Keller & Harker Tillman, 2008; Bennett & Lutz, 2009; Devine, 2009; Vaquero & Kao, 2012; Leopold & Shavit, 2013).

This paper, through the study of the content of recent scientific literature, seeks to present the factors which influence the shaping of the educational aspirations, expectations and choices of individuals who come from differentiated national and cultural family environments in the context of recent scientific studies. In particular, by conducting a meta-analysis process, we attempt through the categorization and synthesis of scientific literature related to our theme to form a 'secondary source of primary research references' (Creswell, 2011, p. 117).

The content of this paper, after the section on theoretical references, is shaped by the categorization of a review of scientific literature into specific sections based on the thematic content of relevant studies. It should be mentioned that in the case of each thematic categorization there is a brief presentation of the findings of some representative studies, which illustrate the findings of the specific sections.

THEORETICAL NOTES

According to Bourdieu (1986; Kim, 2011, p. 111), cultural capital refers to the estimated cultural resources that contribute to the maintenance or improvement of a particular type of social status or the person's position. This particular French Sociologist highlights with his work the influence of three forms of cultural capital, which shape the characteristics of the personality of social subjects and define their action in the social field (Bourdieu, 1986, 1994): the embodied form-habitus, the objectified form and the institutionalized cultural capital in the form of educational titles.

Cultural capital in its embodied state constitutes 'a have that became a be, a property that became a body, that became an integral part of the "individual", an hexis, a habitus' (Accardo, 1991, p. 88; Bourdieu, 1994, p. 78). Objectified cultural capital possesses a series of properties which are defined in accordance with embodied cultural capital, and includes visible cultural goods that are transmissible to inheritors, such as books, paintings, instruments and machines (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243; Bourdieu, 1994, p. 81). Institutionalized cultural capital in the form of educational titles, which is a form of objectification, reflects the degree of individuals' success in the educational field and is reflected by the possession of educational credentials (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248).

The social agent forms habitus in early childhood, either through his immediate experiences or through family upbringing, and this constitutes the basis for the formation of any future habitus. Namely, it is the source of the subsequent general standards of appreciation, thought, perception and action (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970, p. 58; Milonas, n.d., p. 214-215; Milonas, 1995, p. 78). Habitus is constantly reproduced and 'transformed' throughout the

person's life, with reproduction being determined by past social conditions. In other words, it is an internal structure that is constantly undergoing a restructuring process. It is about the incorporation of personal history, including the individual's social origin, such as the social stratum to which he belongs and his ethnic origin (Bourdieu, 1977; Askland, 2007, p. 240). In fact, Bourdieu mentions characteristically:

> *As the product of history, habitus produces individual and collective practices, and thus history, in accordance with the schemata engendered by history. It ensures the active presence of past experiences which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemata of thought and action, tend, more surely than all formal rules and all explicit norms, to guarantee the conformity of practices and their constancy across time* (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 91).

School, as a pedagogical action of engraving a cultural arbitrariness (habitus), tends to impose upon members of the 'dominated' social groups or social strata acceptance of the 'legitimacy' of the 'dominant' cultural arbitrariness. Every member of a social group or social class enters the school with an already formed primary habitus that has arisen as a result of a primary pedagogical process within the family environment. The success of any secondary pedagogical process in the context of education is related to primary family upbringing, especially when school, with the ideology it 'legitimizes' and its educational practices, challenges the student's primary habitus. And this might happen as school appears neutral considering its own history as a history without a history (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970, p. 58-59; Milonas, n.d., p. 227-228; Milonas, 1995, p. 82-83).

It could therefore be argued that the educational system produces and reproduces itself, due to its relative autonomy from the rest of the social system, and by its means as a social institution, the engraving of the 'legitimate' culture. In this way, it contributes to the reproduction of power relations between 'dominated' and 'dominant' social groups or social classes (Milonas, n.d., p. 229; Milonas, 1995, p. 83).

MIGRATION AND EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS/EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS FOR THEIR CHILDREN

As emerges from the results of many studies, parents who come from differentiated national and cultural environments have high educational aspirations for their children and wish for them to study in higher education. In particular, immigrant parents expect that through education their children will be able to get a better position in the workplace and will follow a socially upward course when compared to themselves. Furthermore, education is considered by many immigrant parents as a means for the social assimilation of their children, an exit from poverty, and future economic success and independence (see: Li, 2004; Song & Glick, 2004; Stevenson & Willott, 2007; Terrén & Carrasco, 2007; Devine, 2009; Støren, 2011; Byrne & De Tona, 2012).

Findings from Støren's research (2011), conducted in Norway, are representative. From this study it emerged that students' parents with an immigrant background, many of whom have been deprived of the opportunity to acquire higher educational qualifications in the country of origin, tend to encourage their children to use all the opportunities provided for free education in Norway. This is because they want their children to integrate smoothly into Norwegian social reality and be assimilated by Norwegian society.

In this regard, it could be argued that immigrant parents from disadvantaged socio-cultural environments recognize the difficulties that exist in the modern social map of the host countries. That's why they consider education to be an important 'investment' for the future of their children. Therefore, these parents have high educational expectations for their children because they consider education as the 'vehicle' that can lead them to a better life, which is associated with the ability to claim professional positions, which will bring them social status and economic independence. So, many immigrant parents invest in educating their children by urging and encouraging the use of the opportunities this gives them thus 'orchestrating' the 'transformation' of the habitus children have primarily incorporated within the family environment through the formation of new schemata of perception and action. This is because they expect these schemata to help their children move up occupationally and socially in the future (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970; Accardo, 1991).

However, the social context of countries with strong social stratification and great socio-cultural diversity, such as contemporary China, can affect the expectations, choices and general behaviour of immigrants (Sheng, 2012, 2015). In this framework, Koo's (2012) research findings are characteristic. It emerges that immigrant families in Beijing have hopes of their children's educational achievement as high as other Chinese families. In fact, educational aspirations of immigrant parents for their children don't appear to be affected by their low socio-economic position in the host country. However, the social inequalities immigrants experience in their daily life in the host society, force them to reduce their educational expectations for their children. More particularly, discriminatory policies and the limited financial resources of immigrant families constitute factors which hamper the progress of immigrant students in the educational system. This leads both immigrant parents and their children to the realization that the possibilities for admission to higher education are limited to non-existent. Consequently, the objective social conditions prevailing in the host country, which are linked to social discrimination and unequal opportunities for social mobility through education, force immigrant parents to lower their educational expectations for their children.

MIGRATION AND THE EDUCATIONAL EXPECTATIONS/CHOICES OF YOUNG PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENTIATED NATIONAL AND CULTURAL ENVIRONMENTS

The results of recent empirical research show that young people with immigrant backgrounds have high educational expectations for their future. However, differences in educational expectations among different ethnic groups, who live in multicultural societies, in accordance with the impact of socio-economic factors, emerge. The fact that, according to U.S. surveys, Asian-Americans expect to advance to higher levels of education in order to achieve high social status and climb the ladder of social stratification is characteristic (see: Goyette & Xie, 1999; Cheng & Starks, 2002; Carnevale & Rose, 2004; Krahn & Taylor, 2005; DeWitt, Archer, Osborne, Dillon, Willis & Wong, 2011; Law, Finney & Swann, 2014).

Goyette and Xie's study (1999) is representative of the previous finding. Indeed, the findings of this research showed that although all Asian-American ethnic groups have higher educational expectations than 'whites', high educational expectations of Asian-Americans who have been assimilated into U.S. society, are affected to a large extent by socio-economic and demographic factors. Parents' educational expectations contribute to the interpretation of their children's high educational expectations in all ethnic Asian-American groups. Asian-American youths expect for different reasons, and seek through different educational outlets and routes, to

achieve higher levels of education than their 'white' counterparts. Experiences Asian-Americans of immigrant origin share (Gibson & Ogbu, 1991, as cited in Goyette & Xie, 1999, p. 33; Kao & Tienda, 1995, as cited in Goyette & Xie, 1999, p. 33), as well as their desire to overcome racial discrimination and achieve social mobility (Sue & Okazaki, 1990, as cited in Goyette & Xie, 1999, p. 33; Xie & Goyette, 1998, as cited in Goyette & Xie, 1999, p. 33) explain the cultivation of high educational expectations by young Asian-Americans, as well as the effort to implement them with the acquisition of university degrees.

Then, the cultural capital and habitus of families with immigrant backgrounds tend to affect to a large degree the formation of their children's educational choices in order to 'legitimize' their position in the host societies (Devine, 2009; Pásztor, 2010). Characteristic of this finding is Devine's study (2009) conducted in Ireland. The research results showed that all immigrant parents, who participated in the research and lived in this country, wanted their children to study because they recognized the value of education for their future. Also, immigrant children seemed to realize the sacrifices their parents had made in coming to Ireland and the importance of education in order to ensure a better future. For this reason, they wanted to pursue higher education studies by realizing their parents' ambitions. In fact, all children from immigrant families, who, thanks to their parents' occupations in Ireland, belonged to the middle-class, placed emphasis on hard work to obtain educational credentials. This is because through these educational qualifications they sought to 'legitimize' their class position either in Ireland, which is the host country, or in the country of origin in case they had to return at some point.

School as a secondary source of socialization (Giddens, 2002; Hughes & Kroehler, 2007) seems to play a significant role in young people's educational choices (Reay, 1998; Reay, David & Ball, 2001). In particular, schools, through the culture and institutional habitus they transfer to students, influence children's educational choices and at the same time bring to the fore issues related to educational and class inequalities. In this context, Pásztor's study (2010), conducted in the Netherlands, is characteristic. This research showed that young people with an immigrant background (second-generation Turks) whose parents possess low educational qualifications, tend to carry from their families norms, values and cultural practices different to those the school or teachers demand and 'legitimize'. Teachers give advice to them and show them how to act. As a result, 'school advice' may embody engendered or racial discriminations. Moreover, Turkish boys and girls apply contrasting strategies in the context of their educational choices deeply rooted in the system of perceptions of their families. It is expected for girls to abide by the rules, whereas boys are favoured with freedom and autonomy. In fact, girls faced differential treatment in the classroom. Teachers' lower academic expectations towards females turned into self-fulfilling prophecies. In this regard, girls were considered as 'safe choosers' based on the views of their teachers, as they decided not to advance to higher levels of education. On the contrary, Turkish boys wanted to move up socially choosing different educational courses, even if it meant they had to make educational choices that involved taking more risks. In this case, girls were self-excluded from the entrance to academic institutions (Dumais, 2006, p. 85) resulting in their 'reconfiment' in family working-class culture (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964, p. 110), which contributed to the reproduction of a habitus associated with the woman's residual position within the traditional Turkish family.

Based on the above findings, it seems that the school, which has its own institutional habitus, shapes the secondary habitus of its students, by structuring and largely unconsciously determining their expectations and choices for their educational future. In this regard, teacher habitus acts as a factor in the reproduction of educational inequalities at the expense of young people who come from underprivileged social environments (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970).

Then, empirical research focusing on the United States, which is a society in which the multicultural element is strongly projected, showed that there is an increasing tendency for the Black population to participate in higher education, a significant part of whom comes from immigrant families (see: Erisman & Looney, 2007; Kent, 2007; Massey et al., 2007). In this case, the habitus and cultural capital young people of immigrant origin have acquired through socialization within their family environment seem to play a significant role in their educational decisions and choices concerning higher education studies (Nora, 2004; Griffin, del Pilar, McIntosh & Griffin, 2012). In particular, Griffin, del Pilar, McIntosh and Griffin's study (2012) is characteristic. From this research it emerges that education and the benefits it offers are of great importance for the shaping of the system of perceptions (habitus) of the first and second-generation immigrants in the United States, who are oriented to attend college. The great value young people, who come from Black immigrant families, place on the educational system is related to their expectations concerning academic success and their desire to provide financial support to their families in the future, since they made a lot of sacrifices in order to support their children's educational course. Prestige and good reputation of colleges, the 'institutional' prestige of institutions, seemed to have a significant impact on the decision of some young people to apply to colleges. Also, educational plans and the system of educational perceptions of immigrants seem to have been shaped by the financial resources and working conditions of their families in the host country. Indeed, it emerges that the development of an early predisposition in relation to children's attendance at college is associated with the cultural capital of their parents, who urged them from a very young age to pursue higher education studies in order to escape their parents' restricted way of life. This is because immigrant parents considered long before they migrated to the United States to search for a better fortune, that obtaining credentials in the form of prestigious educational titles by their children would provide them with career prospects. It could therefore be argued that young people's choice of college attendance is made with the aim of 'transforming' the effort and capital invested by their parents in their own educational effort, moving up socially and 'legitimizing' their position in U.S. society, which constitutes the host country in which they wish to live and become active (Accardo, 1991; Swingewood, 1998).

Besides immigrant parents with low educational qualifications, there are also parents with high levels of education but with low socio-economic status in the host country, who encourage their children to pursue higher education studies. In this case, the phenomenon of 'displaced' capital emerges, where the cultural 'stock' of immigrant parents, who have a high level of institutionalized cultural capital accumulated in the country of origin, shifts to their children. This is because these parents attach great value to the benefits of education, which seems to have an effect on shaping a habitus for their children to achieve a higher level of education (Griffin et al., 2012, p. 105). In this case, it is perceived that the collective habitus of families is internalized in the subjective habitus of children, since individuals are products of the same social conditions (Koca, Atencio & Demirhan, 2009, p. 57).

Therefore, it could be claimed that the habitus of students with an immigrant background is influenced by external 'conditions of existence', including social class and family, 'which in turn become the basis of perception and appreciation of all subsequent experience' (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, p. 78, as cited in Naidoo, 2009, p. 264).

In the case of current Greek social reality, which highlights the multicultural element due to the constant influx of immigrant populations, a fact which is also reflected in the educational field (Cavounidis, 2002; Motti-Stefanidi, Pavlopoulos, Obradović & Masten, 2008), Koustourakis, Spiliopoulou and Asimaki's study (2016) is characteristic. This research was carried out during 2013-2014 at state primary schools in the city of Patras with mainly working-

class socio-economic status. The results showed that the educational expectations of the majority of students, natives and immigrants, are high and are related to their desire to pursue tertiary education studies. This is because they consider that education would contribute to their future job stability. This fact reveals the desire of children to 'broaden' their cultural capital in order to 'transform' and/or improve their position in the social structure. This comes about because most students, natives and immigrants, who participated in the research, come from socio-culturally underprivileged environments, which don't seem to constitute a source of accumulation of a high volume of 'embodied' cultural capital.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

According to the above examination we arrive at the following concluding observations:

Educational aspirations and expectations of young people with immigrant backgrounds and their parents, as shown by most of the sociological research, seem to be high. This fact is linked to their desire to improve the existing low socio-economic situation of their families. In this case, it appears that social subjects who come from social environments that are underprivileged and differentiated from an ethnic and cultural point of view try to enter the social field and 'break' the barriers of their entry to it by claiming a position that will ensure them social 'legitimacy' (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 72).

Most research findings converge on the fact that education constitutes a means of social mobility enabling young people from socio-economically and culturally disadvantaged families to 'transform' and/or improve their position in the social field. In this regard, young people tend to choose higher education studies in the context of a 'transformative' habitus effort (Mills, 2008a, 2008b).

Family habitus, as well as the institutional habitus that exists within the academic institutions, as highlighted by the results of relevant research, contribute to a large extent to the formation of decision-making and choices, which define the educational path of young people with an immigrant background, and in particular, people who come from underprivileged socio-economic environments in the host countries.

The present work shows that the habitus of young people from differentiated national and cultural environments, which is shaped by their individual experience and the stimuli they derive from the specific social, cultural and historical contexts in which they move, reflects two things. It reflects not only the personal biography of the individual but also the collective history of the social class to which he belongs, which inevitably contributes to the formation of the expectations and choices for his educational future (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970; Bourdieu, 1977; Askland, 2007, p. 240). Also, the 'transformative' function of habitus emerges, which is associated with its genetic dimension, creativity and improvisation of social agents (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 583).

From the analysis of the research findings the impact of socio-economic, cultural and institutional factors (socio-economic status of the family, family habitus/cultural capital, institutionalized cultural capital of parents and institutional habitus within the academic institutions) on shaping the educational aspirations/expectations and choices of people from differentiated national and cultural environments becomes evident. In particular, it seems that the system of educational expectations and choices of young people with immigrant backgrounds was shaped by the financial resources and working conditions of their families in the host countries, as well as a 'limited' or 'strong' in volume institutionalized cultural capital of their

parents. The cultural capital and habitus of parents of immigrant origin from underprivileged socio-economic environments seem to have a significant impact on making their children's decisions and choices for higher education studies in order to ascend the ladder of social stratification. Furthermore, school, through the culture and institutional habitus it transfers to students, tends to have a significant effect on the educational expectations and choices of young people with an immigrant background from underprivileged socio-economic and cultural environments, while acting as a factor in the reproduction of educational and class inequalities at the expense of these individuals.

To sum up, we assume that it would be interesting to carry out a study focusing on the analysis of the content of research papers, which are engaged in young people's educational expectations and choices in relation to the social content of countries with strong social differentiation and stratification, as well as great socio-cultural diversity, as is the case with contemporary China (Li, 2005; Sheng, 2012, 2015).

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