European Journal of Education Studies
ISSN: 2501 - 1111
ISSN-L: 2501 - 1111
Available on-line at: www.oapub.org/edu

doi: 10.5281/zenodo.1287599 Volume 4 | Issue 9 | 2018

THE IMPACT OF GENDER DIFFERENCES ON THE FORMATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S ASPIRATIONS/EXPECTATIONS AND CHOICES FOR THEIR EDUCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL FUTURE: A REVIEW OF SOCIOLOGICAL SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE

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Abstract:
The purpose of this study is to investigate and present the formation of the aspirations/expectations and choices of young people in relation to their educational and occupational future, as these are influenced by the 'gender' factor, through a review of recent sociological scientific literature. From a study of the research findings of relevant scientific papers, it emerges that there is a gender dichotomy in the choice of school subjects, disciplines and occupations, with girls making choices that are specific to positions largely held by women and boys preferring those that are 'male-dominated'. It seems that young people are mainly oriented towards traditional stereotypical educational and occupational choices. Thus, young boys and girls activate 'dispositions' that are related to their educational future and their professional destination, which are suited to either 'male' or 'female' nature as timeless stereotypical patterns. In addition, social class of origin tends to dictate gender beliefs among young people, which directs them to more or less gender stereotypical choices and paths.

Keywords: gender, young people, educational and occupational choices, educational and occupational aspirations/expectations, gendered habitus

1. Introduction

In contrast with the situation that existed at least 3 decades ago, access to all levels of education seems to be applied equally to both sexes at least in the Western world. Indeed, it is noted that in modern times girls tend to have high levels of academic achievement that in turn lead to demanding jobs. This greatly contributes to the

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'transformation' of the position of the contemporary woman in the division of labor. In particular, the current gender distribution rate in higher education at European and international level is particularly high. This suggests that there is a trend towards upward social mobility regarding the social position of women. However, despite the significant changes that have been made in gender equality, there are still social constraints on the choices that define the educational future and the occupational career of young people according to their gender (Bourdieu, 2015; Giddens, 2002; Lörz, Schindler, & Walter, 2011; Vitsilakis-Soroniatis, Maratou-Alipranti, & Kapella, 2001).

In the context of a review of recent scientific literature, the impact of socio-economic and demographic factors on the educational preferences and choices of young people from diverse national and class environments has garnered the interest of a large number of scientists in their papers (see: Archer, 2002; Archer & Macrae, 1991; David, Ball, Davies, & Reay, 2003; Hansen, 1997; Rogers & Hallam, 2010; Støren & Arnesen, 2007; Van de Werfhorst, Sullivan, & Cheung, 2003).

This paper focuses on a review of recent scientific literature and attempts to highlight the impact of the 'gender' factor in identifying and potentially diversifying young people's expectations and choices concerning their educational and occupational future.

The content of this work, which follows the theoretical notes, is shaped by the categorization of the findings of scientific papers into specific sections based on their thematic content. This work closes with a section containing our conclusions.

2. Theoretical notes

The approach to the theme which is under investigation is related to the use of the concepts of 'gendered habitus' (educational and occupational) 'field' and 'class habitus' from Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework.

The social world constructs the body as a 'gendered reality and as a legacy of "sexuants" principles of vision and division' (Bourdieu, 2015, p. 44). The biological difference between the two sexes may appear as the natural justification of the socially constructed difference between the generations and, in particular, the gender division of labor (Bourdieu, 2015, p. 45).

The differences between the two biological sexes are established on the basis of the practical forms of the male-dominated view. The male class is recorded in things, as it is recorded in the bodies through the subtle control contained within the division of labor. Social positions are gender-based and ingrained, and men attempting to defend their abilities against expulsion, react to the entry of women into some occupations associated with the image of 'manhood' (such as military and manual occupations) effectively protecting the deeper idea they have of themselves (Bourdieu, 2015, pp. 65, 175). Bourdieu (2015, pp. 184-185) underlines the structure of the relationship of dominance between men and women in all social spaces and sub-spaces (such as the

school universe and the world of work) which is maintained in the context of a super-historical continuity.

The concept of the field indicates a relatively autonomous space, a microcosm, which has its own laws, but which doesn't completely escape the constraints of the macrocosm (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 24). All the relatively autonomous worlds, the fields, require the participants to have a habitus that derives from socialization processes in order to manipulate their laws of operation in a practical way (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 157). According to Bourdieu (1993), the field is a notion that allows the conception of social reality in terms of relationships. At the level of analysis, the field is defined as 'a network of objective relationships between positions' (Bourdieu, 1994, pp. 63-64; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 72-73; Swingewood, 1998, p. 92). The concept of the field is one of the terms of the constructed relationship between the two forms of the social element, that is, the habitus and the field, or else, the 'history that became a body and the history that became a thing' (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 63). The social world is comprised of various fields, such as the field of education and labor. These fields can be divided into sub-fields. In the context of the present study, sub-fields of education are schools and higher academic institutions where the subjects undertake to select school subjects, disciplines and future professions. Each sub-field follows the general logic of the field to which it belongs, while at the same time it can be governed by its own internal logic and its own rules (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 34; Thomson, 2008, p. 72; Wacquant, 1989, p. 39).

Each field (such as the field of education and labor) is a space of controversy in which specific agents are structurally involved in order to maintain or transform the structure of the field for their own benefit (Accardo & Corcuff, 1986, p. 91; Bourdieu 2007, p. 83). The positions of the subjects within the field are determined by the structure of their own capital, as well as by the power relations that develop between them. Those who have acquired dispositions that are inconsistent with those that the field requires, risk being left out of it (Bourdieu, 2005, pp. 34-35). In every field there are forces, benefits and stakes (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 65). Within the field of education, the actors struggle to acquire 'institutionalized' cultural capital in the form of titles (Bourdieu, 1986, 1994), which 'formally' are expected to secure their access in the most advantageous manner to the 'game' played in the workplace (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 84; Thomson, 2008, p. 69).

Bourdieu highlights the link between habitus and the individual's social class. Class is determined by the 'relational' position of individuals within the social space. Those, that is, who hold 'similar or neighboring positions' of a similar volume and type of capital and who are placed in similar social conditions (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 17). In particular, Bourdieu argues that class habitus is perceived as the whole of the structures built up through socialization, which play a role of structuring structures for the placement of individuals within society while at the same time perpetuating the distinction within it. Social class is composed of people who have similar schemes of

thought, perception and action as a result of the accumulation of structurally similar experiences within the social world (Bourdieu, 2006, pp. 88, 99).

In the course of this paper, the scientific literature based on the thematic content of the findings of the various studies, is presented. In addition, in each thematic category we will focus our interest on a brief presentation of the findings of some representative studies, which contribute to the explanation of the meaning of the particular categories.

3. Aspirations/expectations of young people for their educational and occupational future as these are influenced by gender differences

The study of sociological literature reveals that an increasing number of girls tend to have high educational and occupational aspirations, which seem to be similar to those of boys and/or in some cases, their expectations are at a higher level (Feliciano & Rumbaut, 2005; Minello, 2014). Thus, girls today tend to appear more academically-focused than boys. Again, compared with the past, girls have higher occupational aspirations in positions of social standing (Francis, Hutchings, Archer, & Melling, 2003). Feliciano & Rumbaut's study (2005), which focused on highlighting changes in young students' educational and occupational aspirations for a period of over ten years, is indicative. More specifically, their survey was large-scale and involved immigrant children attending public schools in San Diego. The first stage of data collection took place in 1992 when the participants were in the 8th and 9th grade and most were 14-15 years old. The second stage of the survey was conducted in 1995, and it involved 85 per cent of the students who took part in the first stage of the survey. Finally, the third stage was conducted in 2001-2003 when the majority of the participants were 24-25 years old. The findings of this longitudinal survey showed that the expectations and preferences of the sample students in 1992 were 'gendered'. However, there were cases of girls who aspired to pursue high-status and traditionally male-dominated occupations, such as that of the physician. In addition, research findings in 2001-2003 showed that the occupational preferences of male and female participants were still gender defined. Early educational expectations were important predictors of subsequent success in the case of both males and females (Feliciano & Rumbaut, 2005, pp. 1087, 1093-1094, 1101-1103, 1106, 1111-1114).

The increasing trend of aspirations in the case of girls and their gradual entry into more 'male-dominated' fields can be interpreted in the light of modern social and economic changes over the last few decades, contributing, to a certain extent, to the restructuring of the stereotypically defined occupational choices of both sexes (Arnot, David, & Weiner, 1999; Francis, 2002).

Characteristically, Francis (2002) analyzes the occupational aspirations of 14-16 year-old pupils in relation to gender. The findings of this survey showed that girls' occupational choices were clearly more ambitious than in the past (Francis, 1996, as cited in Francis, 2002, p. 79). However, the occupational choices of both boys and girls

still reflected a gender dichotomy. From this perspective, the gender choices of the two sexes show little change over time (Francis, 2002, pp. 75, 77, 79-80, 83-85).

It seems, therefore, that in recent years man's dominance is being called into question because the girls' occupational aspirations are increasing and gradually penetrating 'male-dominated' occupations. In this case, there could be talk of a tendency to remove the 'harmonious encounter' between girls' occupational choices and their 'female' dispositions. This is because girls tend to appear less attached to the traditional professional model of the female condition (Bourdieu, 2015, pp. 116, 164, 166).

4. Young people's choice of school subjects and gender stereotypes

The results of many studies reveal that 'science', including mathematics, computing and technology, is characterized by students as a 'masculine' domain. On the contrary, 'arts', including languages and humanities, such as history, are conceived of and identified as 'feminine' (Clegg, 2001; Whitehead, 1996). In this case, on the part of the students, a relationship emerges between 'masculinity' and practical sciences, as well as between 'femininity' and theoretical sciences (Arnot et al., 1999). It seems that pupils attach a gendered stereotypical dimension to the content of curriculum subjects by distinguishing them as 'masculine' and 'feminine', which could be linked to their gender-based hexis (Bourdieu, 2007).

Although in recent years there has been a predominance in the school performance of girls compared to boys, even in good grades and in courses identified as 'masculine', such as Mathematics and Physics, gender differences as far as preferences and the choices of school subjects are concerned, still exist. Thus, girls tend to focus mainly on 'theoretical' subjects such as arts, while boys focus mainly on 'practical' subjects such as Physics, Computer Science and Technology (Arnot et al., 1999; Colley & Comber, 2003; Colley, Comber, & Hargreaves, 1997; Francis, 2000; Lightbody, Siann, Stocks, & Walsh, 1996).

Lightbody, Siann, Stocks & Walsh's research (1996), carried out on a sample of 1068 secondary school pupils in London, is representative of the above finding. The results of this study showed gender differences in the sense of satisfaction with school attendance, with girls expressing greater satisfaction than boys. Girls also expressed greater satisfaction with school subjects than boys, who were more interested in sports. The students' interest in school subjects reflected gender stereotypes: girls were interested in foreign language courses (English, French, German), History, Music and Home Economics. The boys were interested in Information Technology, Craft and Physical Education. The factors that contributed to academic success showed gender differences. Thus, the girls devoted more time to study and were interested in the efficiency of the teachers' teaching, as well as the contribution of family and friends to their learning effort. Instead, the boys believed that academic success was the result of cleverness, talent and luck (Lightbody et al., 1996, pp. 13, 15, 22-24).

It therefore appears that pupils' preferences and choice of school subjects display a gender-based stereotypical view shaped in relation to 'male' or 'female' hexis (Bourdieu, 2015, p. 114).

5. Gender and field of study choices

Although in modern times women all over the world have achieved high levels of academic education, they are still under-represented in several workplaces with high social status, experiencing the *glass ceiling effect*. This prevents them from evolving and occupying high positions in the academic hierarchy (Kemelgor & Etzkowitz, 2001; Sanders, Willemsen, & Millar, 2008). Therefore, there is a 'vertical occupational separation' in the case of the feminine gender (Alexander, Thompson, & Edles, 2016, p. 402).

Under-representation of women is also found in the choice of a field of study, such as physical sciences, computing science, engineering and applied mathematics, which incorporate a sex segregation associated with 'manhood' (Bourdieu, 2015). It is a gendered stereotypical concept that perpetuates 'male' superiority in technical-type subjects and which tends to be cultivated within the educational system (Clegg, 2001; Durndell, Siann, & Glissov, 1990; Eccles, 1994, 2011).

Durndell, Siann & Glissov's study (1990), which was conducted on a sample of 387 higher education students in the UK, is indicative. While boys were more 'orchestrated' than girls in their choices for academic studies, the students of both sexes studying Information Technology seemed to be attracted to exogenous rewards, as in British society this particular professional sector had high social prestige. The findings of this research have shown that several students believed that girls were convinced they did not have computer-related skills. In addition, IT students expressed the view that girls were afraid of being seen as 'non-females' if they entered technological fields, which prevented them from opting for studies related to new technologies. Also, the students in the sample argued that the traditional perceptions of society and social stereotypes for gender roles play an important role in the limited number of girls in technological areas. Finally, although the research subjects admitted that girls had the ability to study Computing, they criticized their school teachers severely because they felt they urged the students to follow traditional academic orientations and discouraged them from studying in technological fields. That is, secondary school teachers cultivated a 'male-oriented' atmosphere around Computing in their classrooms (Durndell et al., 1990, pp. 149-152, 158-161).

Under-representation of women in the fields of Science, Engineering and Technology is often the subject of reflection in the context of feminist educational scientific research. In particular, under-representation of girls is mainly found in faculties/technological departments, which have been identified as 'male-dominated'. Instead, boys tend to choose faculties/departments of physical sciences and engineering

that lead to high-paying jobs (see: Clegg, 2001; Eccles, 1994, 2011; Maragoudaki, 2003; Siann & Callaghan, 2001; Vitsilakis-Soroniatis, 1997).

In particular, Siann & Callaghan's study (2001) shows that the main reasons preventing or discouraging women from choosing Science, Engineering and Technology are: a) the nature of technical courses in secondary schools related mainly to their 'male' identity; b) the nature of scientific inquiry, dominated by 'masculine' characteristics; c) the culture of 'masculinity' that dominates Science, Engineering and Technology; and d) the lack of female role models and the absence of female support networks within the specific occupational areas.

From this perspective, the girls' dispositions don't seem to create the tendency and the ability to enter scientific fields associated with perceptions of professional male roles. That is why the positions in these fields are mainly occupied by men, which connects them to the 'male' identity (Bourdieu, 2015, p. 115). In fact, the relationship between 'male' and 'female' subjects and the attitudes of individuals can act as a control system and remove and/or exclude girls *de facto* from such educational choices, which for boys look absolutely natural (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 139).

6. Young people's occupational choices and gender stereotypes

The occupational choices of boys and girls, according to a number of international empirical studies, appear to be more gender-stereotypical, with the two sexes choosing a range of traditionally defined 'male' and 'female' occupations (Furlong & Biggart, 1999; Rommes, Overbeek, Scholte, Engels, & De Kemp, 2007).

Characteristically, Rommes, Overbeek, Scholte, Engels & De Kemp's study (2007), conducted with a sample of 86 Dutch teenagers, boys and girls aged between 14 and 18 years old, highlighted a number of findings in relation to science subjects which concern their occupational future. In particular, there was a tendency towards gender discrimination in the subject of computer science, as girls said: 'I would rather work with people than with computers.' Although some girls were interested in 'technical' occupations (such as being architects), none of them expressed the desire to work in computer science because they claimed they did not want to 'sit behind a computer all day.' The researchers argued that 'self-to prototype matching' theory could offer a better description of how the professional choice of the adolescents who participated in the study is shaped. For example, choosing computer science implies, according to boys and girls, not only the desire to work with computers but also that one is a 'nerd', i.e. an antisocial, unattractive person. Identifying yourself with the pattern of a profession on the basis of sex has provided a good interpretation of why boys and girls wished to pursue a particular profession. The reasons given by girls for their lack of interest in computer science may be a rationalization of their choice rather than a comparison of the characteristics of the particular subject with the characteristics of their personality and their preferences. Similarly, their statement that they were interested in working with people seemed to be a reaffirmation of their femininity and their interest in

'feminine' occupations rather than a deep dislike for 'things' such as computers (Rommes et al., 2007, pp. 299-300, 305-307, 310-311, 314).

Feminist studies that took place in the 1980s in the field of education showed that school girls tended to choose a narrowly defined range of 'feminine' professions (see: Adams & Walkerdine, 1986; Best, 1983; Spender, 1982). Findings from more recent studies have shown that girls' occupational choices tended to be less gender-stereotyped but also more ambitious than in the past (Arnot et al., 1999; Francis, 1996, 2000, 2002; Francis et al., 2003; Lightbody & Durndell, 1996; Riddell, 1992). However, in this research group there is still a gender dichotomy between the type or the characteristics of the occupations that girls state as a preference (Bourdieu, 2015; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1996). It could therefore be argued that girls tend to adopt an image of women's 'qualities' or 'gifts' that continues to be dominated by the traditional pattern of the division of labor between the sexes (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1996, p. 127).

For example, Francis, Hutchings, Archer & Melling's study (2003), conducted with 14-16 year-old pupils at eight different state-maintained girls' schools in England, showed that in recent years girls have become more academically-focused and ambitious for their occupational future than they were twenty years ago. However, there is still a gender dichotomy in the types of future occupation chosen by girls as they are mainly oriented to caring jobs (Francis et al., 2003, pp. 425-428, 437-438).

Therefore, although there has been an upward shift in the academic aspirations of women in contemporary social reality, their occupational orientations continue to obey the logic of their traditional model of the gender division of labor. Thus, girls, while displaying high levels of academic aspirations, continue to choose gender-specific jobs due to the activation of 'female' dispositions, which are an extension of household functions, such as caring jobs (Bourdieu, 2015, p. 172).

7. Gendered habitus, social class of origin and young people's educational expectations and choices

Recent studies highlight the crucial role played by the family's social class of origin, in the context of adopting gendered attitudes, and in engraving the young people's socially 'delimited' educational aspirations and choices (Bourdieu, 2015; Maton, 2008). This leads to the reproduction of stereotypical perceptions about the social roles of both sexes (Archer, Halsall, & Hollingworth, 2007; Evans, 2009; Pásztor, 2010).

Characteristically, the study by Evans (2009, pp. 340, 343-344, 351-352), which took place in a south London borough in 2005-2006 and which involved 21 female students who were 17-18 years old, showed that family ties created gender-based family obligations for working-class girls. Such a fact reduced their ambitions to study in higher education. In particular, their class position showed them home-like commitment and family responsibilities, such as family care. The working class's gendered expectations of the role of the female sex within the family seemed to prevent girls from attending higher education.

In this case, a male-based view, which is legitimized through existing family practices, which determine the system of girls' (lower) expectations and (subordinate) choices, is adopted due to the working-class origin of the agents. The norms of the social class of origin of families that promote male domination impose and engrave class dispositions in such a way as to restrict and/or exclude working-class students from attending higher levels of education. Thus, girls appear to be channeled into domestic work that suggests a subjugation and symbolic dependence on the male 'player', which is a kind of 'naturalization' in the context of a social construction that involves gender roles (Bourdieu, 2015).

8. Conclusions

According to what we have examined above, we come to the following conclusions:

From an analysis of the findings of recent sociological scientific research, it is mainly found that there is a gender dichotomy in the choice of school subjects, disciplines and professions, with boys and girls orienting mainly to traditional stereotypical choices. To a significant extent, students tend to choose school subjects and study disciplines that are traditionally associated with their gender. In this case, it could be argued that young people, boys and girls, activate dispositions that are appropriate to 'male' or 'female' nature respectively, which is reflected in the formation of gender-specific educational and professional choices (Bourdieu, 2015; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1996).

Moreover, the findings of many studies reveal the existence of a clear gender dichotomy between the type or the characteristics of the occupations that boys and girls choose. Thus, girls show their preference mainly for caring jobs, while boys tend mainly to choose occupations of a technical character. Boys focus more on professional success and high earnings, while girls emphasize the creation of a family and the choice of studies and occupations that are consistent with 'female' nature and their traditionally defined social role. In this case, there is a 'harmonious encounter' between the occupational choices and the attitudes of the agents, both boys and girls (Bourdieu, 2015, p. 116). The hexes of boys and girls, as principles for the production of diversified practices (Bourdieu, 2015, p. 102), tend to adopt an image of male and female 'traits' and 'characteristics' that continues to be dominated by the traditional division of labor between the two sexes (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1996, p. 127).

The occupational preferences of boys and girls, according to a range of empirical surveys, appear to be more gender stereotyped, with the sexes choosing occupations that are thought to suit them. However, there are studies that show that gender preferences vary, with girls' occupational choices being less gender-stereotyped, moving towards less conventional professional 'pathways'. In the case of these studies, there is a diminishing of girls' gender stereotypes in their occupational future, but this does not mean that they are eliminated. It could therefore be argued that changes in the

female condition in terms of career guidance and choices continue to 'follow the logic of the traditional model of male/female division' (Bourdieu, 2015, p. 172).

Finally, from the results of sociological studies it emerges that within the families' social class of origin it seems that stereotypical perceptions about the role of the two sexes are adopted in the educational and occupational world, which in turn are engraved in the young people's system of dispositions. Thus, it is considered more appropriate for boys to pursue higher education and then take a leading position of responsibility, than it is for girls. On the other hand, girls, in the context of incorporating family class dispositions, tend at times to be removed from the choice of higher education studies and are therefore limited to (subordinate) housekeeping roles, including the role of raising children and the role of housewife (Bourdieu, 1989, 2006, 2015).

Concluding this endeavor, we believe that it would be worthy of scientific interest to carry out a longitudinal investigation and analysis, in the light of the sociological interpretative approaches, of the findings of scientific studies that highlight the changes in the space and time of young people's aspirations, expectations and choices concerning their educational paths and their occupational careers as these are influenced by gender differences.

Acknowledgements
This work was financially supported by the General Secretariat for Research and Technology (GSRT) and the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (HFRI) in the context of the action '1st Proclamation of Scholarships from ELIDEK for PhD Candidates' - Scholarship Code: 2081.

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