

Indigenous middle-class and immigrant students' educational choices and perceptions of parental influence

Irene Kleanthous

University of Manchester

Abstract

This paper aims to compare and contrast the familial capital of indigenous middle-class families and immigrant families in Cyprus and to investigate how this familial capital mediates students' educational choices. We draw on some interview data with students and their parents and we discuss our findings from a Bourdieusian theoretical perspective. We found that indigenous middle-class students have a 'feel for the game' when they come to make their choices for future studies in Higher Education. The indigenous middle-class students often 'misrecognise' parental influence on their choices; we conceptualise this as a form of symbolic violence after Bourdieu (1980). On the contrary immigrant students implicitly talk about their parents' influence on their educational choices and they usually refer to the devaluation of their parents' cultural capital. While immigrant students try to adopt their habitus to the new field they become more conscious of their parents' influence on their educational choices. We interpret this finding as a reflexive process of the 'hysteresis effect' (Bourdieu, 1977) the immigrant families are experiencing. We argue that familial doxa is classed thus it differs across indigenous and immigrant families although symbolic violence and misrecognition undergo in both families to establish and naturalise familial doxa.

An overview of Bourdieu's theoretical framework

Why does someone make petty-bourgeois choices? Because he has a petty bourgeois habitus! By opposition to everything that the expression "this is not for the like of us" designates.
(Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: p.130)

Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, cultural capital, field and practice have become prominent in analyses of social inequalities among parent groups in school and crucial for understanding parenting practices and parental involvement in schools. For Bourdieu (1980) habitus functions to structure activity of human agents

(practice) as an integrated scheme or as 'internalized dispositions' for making sense of the world. However it does not exist outside of practice, it is directed towards practice to accomplish goals. "Habitus generates strategy towards what a human agent perceives to be opportunities and prohibitions that exist as conditions of social structure. Moreover actors occupying similar social positions tend to share habitus. Consequently inequalities become justified through dominant lifestyles characterized by economic and cultural capital" (Levine-Rasky, 2009: p.332).

In *Distinction* Bourdieu (1984: 101) maps out a formula of his theoretical framework : (Habitus X Capital) + Field = Practice. With this algebraic representation of his theory he highlights the importance of the interaction between these theoretical concepts. The habitus is structured by engagement in practice in the field but at the same time it is thereby structuring the field. This reciprocal relationship should always be taken into consideration, and the theoretical concepts of his theory should not be treated in isolation. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) argue that "such notions as habitus, field, and capital can be defined, but only within the theoretical system they constitute, not in isolation" (p.96).

The reciprocal relationship between habitus and field is summarized by Bourdieu and Wachquant (1992):

On one side it is a relation of *conditioning*, the field structures the habitus, which is the product of the embodiment of the immanent necessity of a field. [...] On the other side, it is a relation of knowledge, or *cognitive construction*. Habitus contributes to constituting the field. (p.127)

One of the crucial features of habitus is that it is embodied. Bourdieu (1990) argues that habitus is expressed through durable ways of 'standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking' (p.70). Bourdieu (1990) also describes habitus as 'the product of social conditionings, and thus of history' (p.116). On the other hand, the field, the setting in which practices take place, is "a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: p.97). 'Capital does not exist and function except in relation to a field. It confers a power over the field, over the materialized or embodied instruments of production or reproduction, whose distribution constitutes the very structure of the field' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: p.101).

Species of Capital (economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital)

The main components of social resources whose control defines the social position of actors are economic, social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). "To these we must add symbolic capital, which is the form that one or another of these species takes when it is grasped through categories or perception that recognize its specific logic or, if you prefer, misrecognize the arbitrariness of its possession and accumulation" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: p.119). 'Economic' capital consists of financial stock and income and may be institutionalized in forms of inheritance. 'Social' capital includes social networks and identities of individuals as member of social groups, which provide 'connections' as assets. "The volume of social capital possessed by a given agent [...] depends on the size of the network of connections that he can effectively mobilize" (Bourdieu, 1986: p.249). The second characteristic of social capital is that it is based on mutual cognition and recognition (Bourdieu, 1980). 'Cultural' capital consists of a large number of types of cultural knowledge and possessions including educational credentials.

Bourdieu and Wacquant, (1992) point out the peculiarity of cultural capital, "which we should in fact call *informational capital* to give the notion its full generality, and which itself exists in three forms embodied, objectified or institutionalized" (p.119). Dumais (2002) elaborated on the three forms of cultural capital that Bourdieu distinguished among:

- (a) *objectified* cultural capital, which refers to objects that require special cultural abilities to appreciate, such as works of art.
- (b) *institutionalized* cultural capital, which refers to educational credentials such as certificates, diplomas and examinations and
- (c) *embodied* cultural capital, which is the disposition to appreciate and understand cultural goods. "It exists, as incorporated in the habitus; and is to a large extent created through primary pedagogy, that is, in early childhood". (Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

To sum up, Bourdieu (1986) argues that cultural capital is the dispositional, affective and material resources associated with culturally authorized tastes, evident in consumption patterns and style of dress. Social capital is the social networks and relationships upon which someone may draw. Together with economic capital these function as resources for the exercise of power in a field.

Bourdieu on family: symbolic violence and the gift exchange economy

Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) argue that students' habitus is inculcated by their family and they conceptualise parental influence as the pedagogic work accomplished by the family. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) outline how middle-class students' habitus is formed by their parents' social class and how it aligns with the educational system:

the disposition which middle-class students or middle-rank teachers, and a fortiori, students whose fathers are middle rank teachers, manifest toward education – e.g. cultural willingness or esteem for hard work – cannot be understood unless the system of scholastic values is brought into relation with the middle class ethos, the principle of the value the middle classes set of scholastic values. (ibid, p.192)

Bourdieu (1996) also considers belonging to a 'normal family' a privilege, and this is one of the major conditions of the accumulation and transmission of economic and cultural capital.

The family plays a decisive role in the maintenance of the social order, through social as well as biological reproduction, i.e. reproduction of the structure of the social space and social conditions. It is one of the key sites of the accumulation of capital in its different forms and its transmission between the generations (Bourdieu, 1996: 23).

Bourdieu (1998) refers to these strategies of reproduction as 'the unconscious desire of the family or the household to perpetuate itself by perpetuating its unity [...] the reproduction of capital in its different forms depends, to a large degree, on the reproduction of the family unit' (p.107). Moreover, he argues that in the great bourgeois families of advanced modern societies, the reproduction of domestic ties is one of the conditions for the reproduction of their capital.

The rich and powerful have large families [...] they have a specific interest in maintaining extended family relations and through these relations, a particular form of concentration of capital. [...] The family remains one of the sites for the accumulation, conservation and reproduction of different kinds of capital. (ibid, 107-108).

Bourdieu (1996) writes that family "functions in habitus as a classificatory scheme and a principle of the constructions of the social world" (p.21) and its effect on habitus is mainly unconscious. The unconscious effect of parental influence on

students' habitus leads us to conceptualise parental influence as symbolic violence which is misrecognised. Bourdieu defines symbolic violence as:

the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity [...] I call misrecognition the fact of recognizing a violence which is wielded precisely inasmuch as one does not perceive it as such (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: p.167-168).

We argue elsewhere (Kleanthous & Williams, under review) that parental influence can be a form of symbolic violence which works in a gift exchange economy. For example parents pay for their children's private tutorials and their children feel their consequent debt, and thus a moral obligation to try harder at school and pursue studies in Higher Education. According to Bourdieu (1980) symbolic violence is at the heart of every social relation and it is present in the gift exchange economy:

Debts and gifts, the overtly economic obligations imposed by the usurer, or the moral obligations and emotional attachments created and maintained by the generous gift, in short, overt violence or symbolic violence, censored, euphemised, that is misrecognizable, recognized violence (p.126).

Moreover Bourdieu (1998) argues 'they are relations of symbolic violence which can only be established with the complicity of those who suffer from it, like intradomestic relations. The dominated collaborate in their own exploitation through affection or admiration' (p.111). In the case of adolescent students and their parents we note that children say in their interviews they feel indebted to their parents. Similarly, Bourdieu (1998) argues that intergenerational relations are driven by 'the logic of debt'.

But in order for intergenerational exchanges to continue despite everything, the logic of debt as recognition must also intervene and a feeling of obligation or gratitude must be constituted. Relations between generations are one of the sites par excellence of the transfiguration of the recognition of debt into recognition, filial devotion, love. (ibid, p.109).

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) clarify that symbolic violence accomplishes itself through an act of cognition and of misrecognition that lies beyond –or beneath– the controls of consciousness and will (p.172). Bourdieu further elaborates on misrecognition and explains how it is different to influence:

What I understand by misrecognition certainly does not fall under the category of influence; I never talk of influence. It is not a logic of “communicative interaction” where some make propaganda aimed at others that is operative here. [...] Of all forms of “hidden persuasion”, the most implacable is the one exerted, quite simply, by the *order of things*.

(Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: p.168)

As it will become clearer later in the paper we adopt Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic violence to interpret the ‘misrecognition’ of parental influence by the adolescent students of this study and to theorise the unconscious effect of parental influence on the formation of students’ habitus.

Background literature

Of all Bourdieu’s concepts, cultural capital has become the most popular and thoroughly examined by sociologists of education. Dumais (2002) argues that most studies have attempted to determine whether Bourdieu’s notion of social reproduction, based on the intergenerational transmission of cultural capital, is valid, and if so, the role the educational system plays. Lareau and Weininger (2004) investigated middle-class mothers’ habitus and the reproduction of social class advantage. Their results reflect not the possession of cultural capital but its activation. Their ability to ‘work the system’ includes widely shared, high status cultural signals used for social and cultural exclusion. Lareau and Weininger (2004) found that middle-class parents - and in particular mothers - regularly sought to improve institutional outcomes for their children. On the other hand, working-class parents “appeared to hold an ideology that parents should “fight” for their children when the school did not act in their best interests” (p.133). Unlike middle-class parents, working-class parents did not have the same resources and competences: “unfamiliar with educational terminology, working-class parents were unsure how to fulfill teachers’ expectations” (p.134).

Similar findings were noted by Reay (1998) who studied 33 mothers whose children attend a working-class or middle-class school in London. Reay (1998) concludes that the role of parents, and especially mothers, in activating cultural capital is critical to understanding class differences in children’s school experiences. Lareau and Weininger (2004) provide a review of the literature on cultural capital and

refer to its different operationalisations by various researchers. The notion of “parental cultural capital” surfaces in the literature review which is crucial for this study. For example McDonough used the concept of cultural capital in a qualitative study of influences on students’ college choice process and she argues:

cultural capital comprises the “first-hand” knowledge that parents have of the college admission process, particularly knowledge that they do not get from schools (e.g. detailed understanding of the significance of SAT scores, the possibility of raising SAT scores through tutoring [...] as well as the initiative to secure private tutors). (Lareau & Weininger, 2004: p.121)

Parents’ educational experiences are here considered to be the parental ‘educational’ or ‘cultural capital’ of the family whilst the first-hand knowledge they have of the educational system could be conceptualised as ‘informational capital’.

Immigrant families and the devaluation of their cultural capital

As far as immigrant mothers are concerned, Reay (1998) notes that “for women educated in countries other than Britain the resulting strangeness of their child’s educational experiences undermined their ability to mobilize cultural capital with the ease that the middle-class British born mothers did” (p.65). Gewirtz and her colleagues describe the educational experiences of immigrants as “having a cultural capital which is the wrong currency” (Gewirtz et al., 1994 cited in Reay, 1998). Reay (1998) notes that immigrant mothers had to understand and acclimatized to an educational system they had no prior experience of. “Being a recent immigrant, plus lack of sufficient language skills seem to disadvantage in relation to other middle-class mothers. They have to deal with a situation in which their cultural capital has been devalued” (p.66).

In a different study, Blackledge shows how mothers from Bangladesh living in England assiduously instruct their children in Bengali, but do not have sufficient English language skills to assist with homework.

Despite these mothers’ intensive efforts, they are not viewed as being sufficiently devoted to their children’s education by the teachers, since their efforts do not comply with teachers’ standards for parental involvement. Thus, Blackledge considers competence with the English language a form of cultural capital (Lareau & Weininger, 2004: p.124).

What is common in the abovementioned studies is the devaluation of the immigrant parents' linguistic capital by the educational system in the new country.

According to Reay (1998) Bourdieu has recognized the importance of the family as a site of social and cultural reproduction. "In recent work he discusses the practical and symbolic work undertaken in families; work which falls more particularly to women, who are responsible for maintaining relationships" (Bourdieu, 1996: p.22). Reay argues that the family for Bourdieu is both a habitus generating institution and a key site for the accumulation of cultural capital. Furthermore, Reay (1998) argues that Bourdieu's work for over 20 years has been directed at understanding the specific logic which groups, especially families, use to produce and reproduce themselves. "[Bourdieu's] his concept of habitus permits an analysis of social inequality which is not simply dependent on fixed notions of economic and social location. At the centre of this concept are the social practices which are the outcomes of an interaction between an individual habitus and field" (p.59). In this study we employ Bourdieu's theoretical framework to investigate students' educational choices for future studies in Higher Education (HE) and their perceptions of parental influence. We aim to compare and contrast the different forms of capital between indigenous and immigrant families in Cyprus and to investigate how these mediate students' perceptions of parental influence.

Methodology

This study involves an exploration of the way parental influence is perceived by adolescent students and their parents, through a diverse set of individual students' and parents' interviews. Six case studies of indigenous families and three case studies of immigrant families in Cyprus (originally from Syria, India and Russia) were included in the sample. We sought to explore how parents use their economic, social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) for their children's education and what are the parenting practices through which they 'transmit' different forms of capital to their children. Thematic coding of all the interviews was carried out based on Bourdieu's theoretical framework (habitus, capital, field, practice, symbolic violence, misrecognition). The students' interviews were triangulated against their parents' interviews; this provided a basis for grounding the interpretation of students'

perceptions of parental influence and allowed us to explore how parental influence is mediated through the family's capital.

In this paper we will focus on two case study families: an indigenous family and an immigrant family. The indigenous family consists of a male student who aspires to study Civil Engineering (Chris) and his mother Helen who is a public servant: this family is considered to be a representative middle-class family. The immigrant family consists of a male student who aspires to study medicine (Assad) and his mother Doris who is a university degree holder in English Literature but is currently working as a translator in Cyprus. This family has immigrated to Cyprus from Syria years before the interviews took place and Assad had all his education in Cyprus. Assad is fluent in Greek so the interview was conducted in Greek while the interview with his mother Doris was conducted in English.

Findings

Data from a native student and his mother

A common pattern in the interviews of the indigenous students was the 'misrecognition' of parental influence and the emphasis on students' autonomous decision making for future studies in HE. Chris and his mother explain:

Chris: She *lets me choose on my own* but she will tell me her opinion. Or I might tell her [about my choices] and she will say yeah that's good.

Helen: He completed the [university entry] form and he said, mum do you want to see what I have chosen? And I said I will see it, I don't have any problem with that. Since you have decided about these and you think this is what you like what can I say?

We interpret this 'misrecognition' of parental influence as a form of 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu, 1980) where the student stresses his autonomous decision making by saying he 'chose on his own' what he wants to study. But the phrase 'she lets me choose' is suggestive of the parents' influence and power in the family field. Bourdieu (1998) argues that family tends to function as a field, "with its physical, economic and, above all, symbolic power relations (linked, for example, to the

volume and structure of the capital possessed by each member) and its struggles to hold on to and transform these power relations” (p.69). We argue that family functions as a field where parents possess more capital than their children which they can choose to invest in their children’s education or not.

The mother is also ‘denying’ her influence by reassuring us ‘what can I say about his choices if he already made up his mind’, but we highlight the agreement between her aspirations and her son’s choices when she says ‘I don’t have any problem with that [his choices]’. We found this to be a common pattern in the interviews with native students and their parents; the students made the ‘right’ choices and their parents agreed with those. We argue that students’ choices are informed by the familial capital available to them and we exemplify this argument with some quotes from students and their parents to illustrate how the economic, social and cultural capital of the family mediates parental influence on students’ educational choices.

The mediation of the economic capital of the family is evident in the quote below by Chris. His family’s finances allow him to choose between studying abroad in England or Greece. He perceives this opportunity as ‘my parents let me do what I want’.

Chris: I think if I want to go to England they will help me financially. Or if I go to Greece, they won’t tell me stay in Cyprus because of finances. I think they will let me do what I want.

His mother Helen reinforces Chris’s claims about the economic capital of the family. She makes the familial economic capital available to him and she says she is happy to pay for his studies so that ‘he can study what he wants’.

Helen: I told him he can go anywhere he wants. Chris was a bit skeptical about England because of the cost but I told him don’t think about it. For me either you go to England or to Greece it’s the same [cost]. In Cyprus it will definitely be more economical. You will be staying at home, you will have a car to drive to the university but don’t worry about the finances. You should study what you want.

Arguably this is another incident where the economic capital of the family mediates students' educational choices: this student can 'choose' to pursue overseas studies without worrying about finances. Apart from the economic capital the social capital of the family is also mediating students' educational choices. Another common pattern in the data from native students was their visits to their parents' workplace for seeking crucial information about their studies. Chris explains how he decided to study Civil Engineering:

Chris: Yeah I asked some people from my mum's work, and they said Civil Engineering is better.

His mother refers to the extended family as another source of social capital. Her brother tried to convince Chris to study Law and although Chris didn't include Law in his choices the available social capital of the family is evident.

Helen: It's just that my brother told him, Chris being a lawyer is a good job. But at the end he didn't... He said he didn't want to influence him, we don't have a shortage, if you don't like the occupation... But at the end he [Chris] told me that he doesn't want to, he didn't even include it in his choices.

Lastly the cultural capital or informational capital of the family is evident in Chris familiarity with the English educational system:

Interviewer: Did you do any research for England? What courses are English universities offering?

Chris: Yeah I saw a few. I will put Imperial first and then some lower [ranking] universities. I think Imperial is the first.

His mother refers to the accumulation of 'institutionalized cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1986) and how she helped Chris to obtain the educational credentials which are necessary for university admission:

Helen: I tried to help him achieve his goals by being by his side, driving him to the tutorials he wanted. He wanted to do GCSE to prepare himself for England, although he had so many other tutorials, but I told him don't think about me. I have decided that I will devote 1-2 years to drive you wherever you want, I don't mind.

It is worth noting how devoted this mother seems to be to help her son achieve his goal to secure a position in a prestigious university in England. Reay (1998) has also noted how mothers invest their time strategically to enhance their children's education. In the *Three Forms of Capital* Bourdieu (1986) writes:

It is because the cultural capital that is effectively transmitted within the family itself depends not only on the quantity of cultural capital, itself accumulated by spending time, that the domestic group possess, but also on the usable time (particularly in the form of mother's free time) available to it. (Bourdieu, 1986: p.253).

We note that familial capital is transmitted from parents to their children through the investment of parents' time, money and energy for their children's education (see Helen) but we also highlight the asymmetry of power relations between parents and their children in the family field. This argument is consistent with Bourdieu (1980) who argues that symbolic violence creates a bond between persons and "masks the asymmetry of the relationship by symbolically denying it" (p.127).

It always presupposes a form of labour, a visible expenditure of time, money and energy [...] in the form of the recognition granted by the person who receives to the person, who being better placed in the distribution, is in a position to give, a recognition of a debt, which is also a recognition of value (p.129).

Data from an immigrant student and his mother

We now turn to discuss some data from an immigrant family in Cyprus and we explore how the three forms of capital mediate immigrant students' educational choices and their perceptions of parental influence. A common pattern in the data from immigrant students was the devaluation of their parents' cultural capital. Assad explains how both of his parents who are university degree holders found their cultural capital being devalued in Cyprus and had to work in manual job positions:

Assad: *She [my mother] has studied English Literature but now she is a translator. She translates from English into Arabic and from Arabic into English.*

Interviewer: *And your dad?*

Assad: *He is a driver. He used to be a primary school teacher at an Arabic school [in Syria].*

His mother Doris explains how language barriers prevent her from helping her son with his school homework. She says she can only help him with English drawing on her cultural capital.

Interviewer: Can you help him with his homework?

Doris: No. No because I am not able, of course I am not able to help him in maths, in physics, it's far [away] from my studies. I am able to help him in English, but he doesn't ask me to help him at all.

The three forms of capital of this immigrant family draw a very different picture from the one we drew for the native family. Both the student and his mother are concerned about finances (economic capital) before Assad makes his educational choices. Assad and his mother explain how Assad would have to get a job during his studies to support himself:

Assad: They said they will do anything they can to help me but from what I see, because I understand, they won't be able to help me. I will need to work. I don't know because I also do sports, I am not sure what will happen. What I will have to quit from all these.

Doris: Listen, he said don't worry about the expenses; I will try to find a job. It's not going to be on you or my dad, I will help myself. I will work during the day and I will study during the night and I will manage. I will find a job to have a salary.

They both refer to their extended family as a source of social capital to get information about the French educational system, where Assad aspires to study medicine:

Assad: They told me it is very hard in France, especially medicine is very hard in France. They said it is a bit crazy to go there but I insist because I like French a lot, and medicine in general.

Interviewer: He mentioned that you have some relatives in France. Is this one of the reasons why he is planning to go there?

Doris: Yeah we have relatives there and we have some friends there who can help him.

Assad seems well informed about the educational credentials he will need in order to get into French universities (institutionalised cultural capital):

Assad: Basically they want two diplomas. The first is called the baccalaureate [school leaving certificate], that's what the French have. And the other is DAF which I will do next year. If you have these two you get in automatically like French. And during the first year, there is always a competition for all subjects. It is called 'Concour' and this is very hard as I have been told.

With regards to mathematics as a subject both Assad and his mother seem to appreciate the use value of mathematics in everyday life.

Assad: Yes they always say sit down and study mathematics, it's very important; you will always face it in your life. And I remember in primary school when I didn't know the multiplication tables I always got beaten because I hadn't learned it. By year two I learned it.

Doris: I strongly believe that maths is very very important and essential. We must care about our children's future, and if they are not interested in maths we have to help them and support them to make them like maths. [...] And my husband always tells him that maths is very essential in life not only in school, it's vital.

We argue that Assad's parents (as well as other immigrant parents) stress the importance of doing well at mathematics perhaps as a way to compensate for the devaluation of their linguistic/cultural capital. We interpret this finding as a result of the hysteresis effect (Bourdieu, 1977) the immigrant families are experiencing. While immigrant families move across countries their habitus does not align with the new social context/field; because of their habitus' dislocation they face devaluation of their cultural capital from the dominant culture in the new country. As Bourdieu (1977) puts it:

Thus, as a result of the hysteresis effect necessarily implied in the logic of the constitution of habitus, practices are always liable to incur negative sanctions when the environment with which they are actually confronted *is too distant from that which they are objectively fitted.*

(Bourdieu, 1977: 78,our emphasis)

Another characteristic of the 'hysteresis effect' is the reflexivity it entails (Mesny, 2002). This theoretical tool helped us interpret why the immigrant students of this study implicitly refer to their parents' influence on their educational choices by contrast to their native/indigenous counterparts. Similarly to other adolescent (native and immigrant) students Assad initially 'denied' parental influence by stressing his autonomous decision-making:

Interviewer: You said it was your choice to study medicine. Did you discuss about it with your parents?

Assad: It was my choice. Whatever I say they agree.

Interviewer: Did they ever tell you in the past, that it's a good thing becoming a doctor? When you were younger?

Assad: Yes. But it has nothing to do with that. I was always good at these subjects since primary school. Not in mathematics, I was very good in science.

Although, Assad 'denies' parental influence at the beginning of his interview, later he says his parents encourage him to study medicine and were even more encouraging when Assad chose to study medicine.

Interviewer: Was it your choice? They hadn't encouraged you before?

Assad: It was mine. Basically both my mother and my father have some old-fashioned ideas, they are not modern. For example if you ask them "what do you want your son to become" they will say doctor, lawyer things like that. When they heard about it they encouraged me even more.

Assad seems to be unconscious of the effect his parents' aspirations had on his educational choices but during his interview he says '*everybody knows the Arabs have invented medicine*' which illustrates how narratives told by his parents might have influenced his decision-making to study medicine. Arguably, Bourdieu (1977) would classify these narratives as the beliefs that constitute familial doxa (Atkinson, 2011) which normally 'go without saying and therefore go unquestioned' (Bourdieu, 1997: p.166). We found this discourse of 'denial' to be quite common in the interviews of both native and immigrant students. We argue that this is a 'voiced'

doxa, an orthodoxy defending the doxa when we questioned students' autonomous decision making during the interview.

Bourdieu (1977) implies that a particular way of living is brought about by 'cultural contact' (p.168) and he claims that "between the child and the world the whole group intervenes [...] with a whole universe of ritual practices and also of discourses, sayings, proverbs" (ibid, p.167). These discourses, sayings and proverbs which constitute what Bourdieu defines as 'doxa' could take the form of narratives told by parents while upbringing their children. Assad's parents might have told the narrative 'medicine is an Arab invention' within the family field and this narrative influenced Assad's decision to study medicine albeit unconsciously. We argue that shared 'familial narratives' of 'familial doxa' seem to influence students' educational choices unconsciously as the students misrecognise their parents' influence on their choices.

Discussion

We found that indigenous middle-class students are positively disposed towards studies in Higher Education as a result of their middle-class habitus. However, middle-class students do not refer to their parents' influence on their decision making for future studies in Higher Education, arguably because of the unconscious effect of parental influence on students' habitus (Kleanthous & Williams, under review). We interpret the 'denial' of parental influence by indigenous middle-class students as 'misrecognition' and we conceptualise parental influence as 'symbolic violence' after Bourdieu (1980). On the contrary, immigrant students made their parents' influence on their educational aspirations more evident in their interviews and implicitly talked about their parents' influence on their educational choices.

However, the economic, social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) of the family is evident in the native middle-class students' interviews; as we saw Chris benefits from expensive private tutorials and he considers overseas studies (economic capital). He visited his parents' workplace and asked people they know about his choices for future studies (social capital). Most of the indigenous middle-class students like Chris seem to be well informed about university and well equipped with the educational credentials necessary for university admission (cultural capital). We

argue that familial capital in all its forms mediates parental influence on middle-class indigenous students' educational choices despite the 'misrecognition' of parental influence on students' educational choices. This might be an incident of 'familial doxa' (Atkinson, 2011) where middle-class students internalise doxa and argue they made their choices autonomously. This aligns with Bourdieu's (2001) argument of the doxic acceptance of "a belief that does not need to be thought and affirmed as such, and which in a sense 'makes' the symbolic violence which it undergoes" (p.34). Arguably, a doxic belief for middle-class students is 'going to university is what people like us do'.

We note that middle-class indigenous students seem to have a 'feel for the game' when they make their educational choices for future studies in Higher Education. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) refer to the 'feel for the game', "which implies an anticipated adjustment of habitus to the necessities and probabilities inscribed in the field, [which] does present itself under the appearance of a successful 'aiming at' a future" (p.125). Arguably, when middle-class students aim for studies in Higher Education they are aware of the probabilities inscribed in the educational field and the necessities for university admission (this was evident in the accumulation of educational credentials by most middle-class students). This 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu, 1980) probably derives from the adjustment of their habitus in the educational field. Bourdieu (1977) argues that social agents have a 'doxic experience' when their habitus matches the field. Thus it could be argued that native middle-class students have a doxic experience when they make their choices for future studies in Higher Education because their middle-class habitus aligns with the educational field.

On the contrary, the immigrant students find their habitus dislocated after migration; their habitus does not 'fit' the new educational field in the new country. Immigrant students and their parents have to adopt their habitus to the new field and as a result immigrant parents experience devaluation of their linguistic and cultural capital. We conceptualise this phenomenon as a 'hysteresis effect' after Bourdieu (1977). Bourdieu (1977) argues that:

the hysteresis of the habitus, which is inherent in the social conditions of the reproduction of the structures in habitus, is doubtless one of the foundations of the structural lag between opportunities and the dispositions to grasp them which is the cause of missed opportunities (p.83).

We understand as a 'hysteresis effect' the displacement of the immigrant students' and parents' habitus within the new social context/field and their effort to adjust to this new field. This lag of adjustment might lead to some missed opportunities according to Bourdieu (1977) although the immigrant students in our study seemed committed to pursuing studies in Higher Education (see Assad). Interestingly, immigrant students in this study resemble other immigrant groups in their relative commitment to education especially mathematics and science education (Sfard & Prusak, 2005; Cao, Forgasz & Bishop, 2007). We argue that the special case of mathematical capital (Williams, accepted), as compensation for lack of linguistic capital, may help explain the trends for immigrant students to enter studies in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics).

What is more interesting perhaps is that immigrant students were more conscious of their parents' influence on their educational choices than native middle class students. This finding aligns with previous research findings, which highlight immigrant students' willingness to refer to their parents' influence on their educational aspirations, by contrast to native students in various educational settings (Sfard & Prusak, 2005; Cao et al., 2007). Bourdieu (2000) acknowledges that a form of reflection and reflexivity can result from moments of hysteresis. It could be argued that the 'hysteresis effect' (Bourdieu, 1977) immigrant students are experiencing strengthens their perceptions of parental influence: the immigrant students are more reflective upon their parents' influence because they need to draw on their family's capital while their habitus adapts to the new field. The immigrant students feel indebted to their parents in this gift-exchange economy perhaps even more strongly than the native middle-class students do. What is homologous between native and immigrant families is the power structure in the family field between parents and their children: parents possess more capital than their children and this asymmetry of power in their relations leads the students to 'misrecognise' parental influence and treat the familial doxa as natural.

Perhaps instead of parental influence we should be talking about 'parental domination' over their children. As Bourdieu (2001) puts it "symbolic violence is instituted through the adherence that the dominated cannot fail to grant to the dominant [...] being no more than the embodied form of the relation of domination" (p.35). Although symbolic violence is the gentle and often invisible violence which

undergoes in a gift exchange economy, “this economy is oriented towards the accumulation of symbolic capital (honour) transforms various raw materials [...] into *gifts* (and not products), that is, communicative signs that are, inseparably, instruments of domination” (p.44). Thus when parents mobilise their capital for their children’s education this ‘gift’ is an instrument of domination. Finally Bourdieu (2001) argues that “symbolic violence is to say that, [...] the dominated tend to adopt the dominant point of view on themselves” (p.119). This is what we found when students deny their parents’ influence on their educational choices; the students argue it was their autonomous decision to study at university because they adopted their parents’ dominant view of going to university is ‘what people like us do’. This belief is what constitutes familial doxa and goes without questioning. Undoubtedly, each family is different and produces its own unique familial doxa but we found that familial doxa is classed thus middle-class native families have similar familial doxa which differs from immigrant families’ familial doxa.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we argue that parental influence on students’ educational choices is largely unconscious nevertheless it is quite influential on students’ decision making for future studies in Higher Education. Our data suggest that although parental influence is largely unconscious by the indigenous middle-class students, it is mediated by the economic, social and cultural capital of the family. The educational choices of middle-class students and their immigrant counterparts are informed by their class habitus and their family’s social and cultural capital. The immigrant students appear to be more reflective upon their parents’ influence arguably because of the ‘hysteresis effect’ their family is experiencing after migration. Hence we argue that immigrant students’ stronger perceptions of parental influence are the result of reflexivity the hysteresis effect entails.

We used Bourdieu’s concepts of ‘misrecognition’ and ‘symbolic violence’ in this paper to interpret the denial of parental influence by indigenous middle-class students and his concept of ‘hysteresis’ to interpret the articulation of parental influence by immigrants. Drawing on two case studies of a native and an immigrant family we also argue that parental influence is mediated by narratives told by the

parents to their children which constitute a shared 'familial doxa' (Atkinson, 2011). In both cases the familial doxa is not questioned by the students but when doxa is challenged in an interview context the denial of parental influence is voiced, an orthodoxy to defend the doxa. As Bourdieu (1998) claims "doxa is a particular point of view, the point of view of the dominant, which presents and imposes itself as a universal point of view" (p.57). Thus we argue students 'misrecognise' parental influence and familial doxa which is arguably their parents' dominant view about going to university: 'it's what people like us do'.

Although this study employed a Bourdieusian theoretical perspective to discuss data from native and immigrant families we pose the question to other theoretical frameworks such as Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT): how can we better interpret these families' data? Could it be that immigrant families are experiencing contradictions between two different activity systems, their family and the educational system? Can we conceptualise a family as a collective subject? What are the rules, the tools and division of labour within a family activity system? Possibly, these theoretical questions could be further investigated by synthesising Bourdieu's theory of sociology with CHAT.

References

- Atkinson, W. (2011). From sociological fictions to social fictions: some Bourdieusian reflections on the concepts of 'institutional habitus' and 'family habitus'. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 32 (3), 331-347
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1980). *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A Social critique of the judgment of taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J.C. Richardson (Ed), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education*, New York: Greenwood Press
- Bourdieu, P. (1996). On the family as a realised category. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 13 (3), 19-26
- Bourdieu, P. (2000). *Pascalian meditations*. Cambridge: Polity Press
- Bourdieu, P. (2001). *Masculine domination*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. & Passeron, J. C. (1990). *Reproduction in education, society and culture* (2nd ed). London: Sage.
- Cao, Z., Bishop, A. J., & Forgasz, H. (2007). Perceived parental influence on mathematics learning: A comparison among students in China and Australia. *Educational Studies in Mathematics*, 64(1), 85-106.
- Dumais, S.A. (2002). Cultural capital, gender and school success: the role of habitus. *Sociology of Education*, 75 (1): 44-78
- Kleanthous, I. & Williams, J. (under review). Perceived Parental Influence on Cypriot Students' Dispositions to Study Further Mathematics and the Mediation of Familial Capital. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*.
- Lareau, A. & Weininger, E.B. (2004). Cultural capital in education research: A critical assessment. In Swartz, D.L. & Zolberg, V.L. (Eds) *After Bourdieu*, Dordrecht: Kluwe

Levine-Rasky, C. (2009). Dynamics of parent involvement at a multicultural school. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 30(3), 331-344

Mesny, A. (2002). A view on Bourdieu's legacy: Sens pratique v. Hysteresis. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 27(1), 59-67

Reay, D. (1998). Cultural Reproduction: Mothers' involvement in their children's primary schooling. In Grenfell, M. & James, D. (Eds) *Bourdieu and Education: Acts of Practical Theory*. London: Falmer Press

Sfard, A. & Prusak, A. (2005). Telling identities: In search of an analytic tool for investigating learning as a culturally shaped activity. *Educational Researcher*, 34(4), 14-22

Williams, J. (accepted). The use of value in mathematics education: contemporary cultural historical activity theory meets Bourdieu's sociology. *Educational Studies of Mathematics*, Special Issue on Contemporary Theory in Mathematics Education.