

The effect of cultural capital on the differential educational achievement of girls and boys

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Abstract

One of the less discussed issues in the literature on educational production functions, in Spain, is the contribution of variables related to students' lifestyles to explain the gender gap in terms of educational achievement. We intend to shed light on this issue by means of empirical evidence based on recent rich microdata from Andalusia (the UE region with the highest female unemployment rate and with extremely high male dropout rate before finishing compulsory education) on students' cultural capital variables; additionally, we check whether the available measures of cultural capital have any relationship with differences by gender in pupil's subsequent educational choices at the end of compulsory education (age 16).

Once we control for “cultural capital” related variables, significant nuances arise regarding results dealing with gender differences in educational performance. Our results show, among other findings, that when parents foster cultural activities and values for their children without following the existing gender stereotypes, students' achievement is increased, so parents must make an effort and get implied in achieving this aim. Thus, schools should insist on properly informing parents in this subject while investing in cultural resources, in order to avoid their misleading preconceived gendered ideas.

Keywords: gender, students' performance, cultural capital, stereotypes

JEL Codes: J16, I21, B54

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