

Adolescents' perceptions of future planning in Italy, France and Greece: dimensions of time and disadvantage

La percezione della pianificazione del futuro degli adolescenti in Italia, Francia e Grecia: concettualizzare il tempo come risorsa educativa

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This paper addresses the problem of time and more specifically future planning among vocational education students in Italy, France and Greece. Research results revealed a very similar phenomenon in all three population groups, including: a) there were significant and very similar cumulative percentages of students who did not value future planning in their everyday strategies, and b) a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed that gender, specialisation and type of area/class were not statistically significant for this sample. The paper concludes that the students' problematic relation with future planning exposes them to a situation of vulnerability, inequality and disadvantage. Furthermore, the conclusion highlights the implications of the finding for policy makers and educational professionals.

Keywords

time, future planning, vocational education disadvantage, policy making, school

Il contributo affronta il problema del tempo e in particolare la considerazione della pianificazione futura da parte degli studenti dell'istruzione professionale in Italia, Francia e Grecia. I risultati della ricerca hanno rivelato un fenomeno molto simile in tutti e tre i gruppi di popolazione, tra cui: a) percentuali cumulative significative e molto simili di studenti che non considerano particolarmente la pianificazione futura nelle loro strategie quotidiane, e b) un'analisi (ANOVA) ha evidenziato che il genere, la specializzazione e il tipo di area/classe non sono statisticamente significativi per questo campione. Il contributo rileva come, d'altro canto, la relazione problematica degli studenti con la pianificazione futura li espone a una situazione di vulnerabilità, disuguaglianza e svantaggio sociale. Il che deve fare riflettere i responsabili politici e i professionisti dell'educazione in relazione a possibili percorsi scolastico-educativi da progettare per ridurre tali problematiche.

Parole chiave

tempo, pianificazione futura, istruzione professionale svantaggio, politica educativa, scuola

* Konidari Victoria is the researcher in charge of the European Union funded Re-mapping project in the context of Marie Curie Individual Fellowship actions (grant number:750405), <https://re-mapping.eu>.

Two authors wrote this paper: Mirca Benetton wrote Sections 3 and 4, and Victoria Konidari wrote Sections 1, 2, 5 and 6.

Non ci sono più angeli nel nostro mondo, né scale che salgono al cielo. Tutto si svolge qui e ora. Ma questo qui e ora non prevede la quiete dello stato contemplativo, quanto piuttosto il tendere verso un orizzonte ormai così sottile da diventare invisibile. [...] L'unico binario su cui veniamo avviati è quello del piccolo tran-tran quotidiano, andare avanti con lo sguardo a terra, assolvendo i compiti che ci vengono richiesti, senza porci inutili domande. (Tamaro, 2018, p. 80)

1. Introduction

Time has been underlined many times in the relevant literature as a strong motivational factor that affects educational outcomes. This paper explores the relation between vocational education students and future planning and discusses the findings under the wider perspective of disadvantage in relation to specific sociodemographic characteristics.

This paper presents the results of a small scale quantitative study undertaken in Italy, France and Greece among 222 14-19 years old vocational education students, using the Future Time Perspective Scale for Adolescents and Young Adults (FTPS-AYA). The paper focuses only on the future-planning factor of the scale because this is the only factor that is not correlated with the other factors of the scale; furthermore, it presents a very similar phenomena cross all three national population groups. This study is limited in scale because it is part of a larger qualitative research project, and it is mainly used for the triangulation of qualitative results. However, despite the limited size of the sample, the high homogeneity of the research results reveal that the future-planning factor should be further explored, as it is related to various forms of inequality, vulnerability and disadvantage.

In the first part, the paper presents an overview of the relevant literature and explains the methodological decisions made in relation to the research tool. In the second part, the paper examines future planning within wider theorisations on the formation of a project of life in adolescence. In this part, the paper presents the main research findings in relation to the future-planning factor of the FTPS-AYA. Finally, the paper concludes by underlining the need for policy makers and education professionals to match their practices with evidence from the field.

2. Adolescents and time: Choosing the methodological instrument

Among the main instruments of the last 20 years that have been used to explore the psychological and subjective dimension of time are: a) the Consideration of Future Consequences Scale (CFCS) (Strathman et al., 1994), b) the Time Orientation Questionnaire (TOQ) (Shirai, 1997), c) the Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI) (Zimbardo, Boyd, 1999), d) the Future Time Per-

spective Scale (FTPS) (Husman, Shell, 2008) and e) the Future Negative Scale (Carelli et al., 2015). All of these instruments try to encompass the shortcomings of the previous ones, with the ZTPI being the most used. The CFCS explores how the perceived impact of potential future outcomes may influence present behaviours. The TOQ explores five main time orientations: positive future orientation, positive present orientation, negative future orientation, negative present orientation and past orientation. The ZTPI explores five time factors: past negative, past positive, present hedonistic, present fatalistic and future. The FTPS explores four temporal dimensions – speed, connectedness, value and connection – and how the individual situates itself in relation to them. Carelli et al. (2015) developed the S-ZTPI, which comprised a future negative scale to assess time perspective, as they believed that time perspective should not be limited to positive future evaluations and that negative dimensions of the future should also be included.

In relation to adolescence, which is our age group of interest, of the above instruments, ZTPI has a version for adolescents consisting of 25 items (compared to 61 for the adult version). Worrell and Mello (2007) developed the Adolescent Time Attitude Scale (ATAS) to explore time attitudes in secondary school students. ATAS also focused on the continuity of time, as with the ZTPI; however, ATAS focuses only on six factors – past positive, past negative, present positive, present negative, future positive and future negative – and skips the hedonistic and fatalistic dimensions of Zimbardo and Boyd's (1999) scale.

In our research, we did not use either of the two scales mentioned above; this was for two reasons. First, we did not use ZTPI because a comprehensive measure of ZTPI constructs was not yet available (Husman, Shell, 2008), and many consider its 25-item version for adolescents as controversial (Worrell et al., 2007; Perry et al., 2015). Moreover, although we share Zimbardo and Boy's (1999) criticism of the one-dimensional character of studies that focus only on the future time perspective (FTP) and their position that a more balanced time perspective that focuses on all three time periods – past, present and future – is necessary to provide a complete personality profile, we chose to privilege only the FTP approach, which is directly related to the locus of our research. More specifically, in a school context, students' representations of the future have been found to impact their academic motivation (Simons et al., 2004; Malka, Covington, 2005), academic achievements (Mello, Worrell, 2010), school investment (Peetsma, 2000) and goalsetting, planning, perceived agency and commitment (Nurmi, 1991). It has also been found that there is correlation between the length of FTP and a) the number of goals and plans set (Simons et al., 2004), b) the psychological dimensions related to motivation (Hushman, Shell, 2008) and c) long-term planning, future outcomes and decision making skills (Ferrari et al., 2010, p. 62).

Given the above positioning, we chose to use the FTPS-AYA, which was developed by Lyo and Xiting (2016) and contains 28 items that explore six factors. This choice was made not only because we are mainly interested in the FTP but also because the six factors of the scale offer the opportunity to

explore the contradictions inherent in the future time perspective, particularly among adolescents. The FTPS-AYA contains six factors that satisfy this need. The first factor *future-negative* refers to a predominantly negative vision of the future and reflects generally negative, aversive and pessimistic feelings about one's future. The second factor *future-positive* embodies a generally positive, warm, happy and meaningful attitude and emotion towards the future. The third factor *future-confusion* reflects general confusion and uncertainty about one's future. The fourth factor *future-perseverant* explores long-term perseverance regarding the future despite failure, adversity and plans in progress. The fifth factor *future-perspicuity* explores the existence of an explicit and clear attitude towards the future. Finally, the sixth factor *future-planning* reflects a present anticipation of future planning and future goal setting. In this paper, as mentioned above, we will only present results related the future-planning factor.

3. Adolescents and the project of life

Since the 1970s, the idea of linearity in the developmental phases of the cycle of life has been abandoned. The course of human life is now conceptualised not as linear but as recursive, wherein various biological, social and personal parameters interact and every stage of life is correlated with both the previous and the subsequent stages in an integrated and dynamic way that is marked by change and continuity (Sugarman, 2001). According to Erikson (1999), in the construction of identity in adolescence, we find both characteristics of previous life phases and experimentations with new and diverse paths – a growth in the physical, emotional, cognitive and social levels that are integrated and harmonised in personal self-development (Sbattella et al., 2008). Crises experienced in adolescence – between the ages of 14 and 18 years old – therefore do not represent a totally new situation, since every age in life entails crisis, change, separation and choice. What is special in the age of adolescence is that adolescents start conceiving themselves as autonomous beings that can reflect upon and redefine their thoughts about their future. This reflection and redefinition of the self during adolescence requires a capacity for experimentation, whereby a person stays true to themselves while exploring and expanding their horizons.

In adolescence, a gradual development of autonomy takes place, leading to an adulthood in which young people have a competent self-consciousness and are able to trust their own potentialities. Due to their cognitive development, adolescents are able to see future time perspective as stable and elaborate long-term projects (Berti et al., 2018, p. 478). In standard descriptions of this life phase (add citations), adolescents are often considered as having a tendency to use hypothetical deductive thinking to represent reality in ways that diverge from the status quo; they are also considered as wanting to bring about change, perhaps in a messianic and egocentric way, as this is based on an overestimation of thought over experience (Berti et al., 2018, p. 433).

In this process, adolescents' social environments are of paramount importance. The development of autonomy emerges through the negotiation of those relations that the adolescent holds with significant others, particularly parent figures, teachers and educators, who are expected to provide the necessary help to adolescents to gradually assume the capacity for mindfulness and slowly make more voluntary and personal decisions. These significant others should therefore support adolescents with care and 'flexible protection' (Scabini, 1995), rendering the adolescent able to correctly orient their own future life course and take into consideration their own resources and potentialities. Moreover, the practice of choice and the capacity for projection also depends on the sociocultural context. In accordance with the historical moment, this may support, promote or inhibit the elaboration of the sense of autonomy and security, which is founded on practices and norms that condition the way that the adolescent explores and experiments with their own future.

This complex phase of identity definition should lead to a stable assumption of the self, new roles and expectations and a mature orientation to one's future – the environment and the persons around adolescents have a determinant role in this. The capacity to explore the environment and oneself and to commit to carrying out specific decisions that engage with different areas of development (professional, sexual, cognitive and social) at different times without confusion or the dispersion of identity also depends on the significant figures that the subject is in relation with and from whom they should receive support.

However, we observe today that adolescents' social environments are problematic:

The biggest part of autonomy coming from the weakening of the capacity of contemporary society's main institutions to structure the social life is transformed, for a big part of the population, in an erosion of the capacity for individual self-determination, from which results a permanent condition of insecurity (De Luigi, 2007, p. 38).

The perceived deregulation of life paths and the perceived instability in the possibility to reach one's objectives augment a sense of fluidity and the ephemeral character of becoming for both adults and adolescents:

The temporal perspective in which someone can place its own projects for life can be only short term: the only possible project is the one that is transitory and light, useful for the creation of new social relations and new opportunities, avoiding however every long term engagement with people and things if it could be an obstacle to mobility and flexibility (De Luigi, 2007, p. 40).

In this context, the age of adolescence cannot remain unaffected. Previous research (Cesareo, Vaccarini, 2006; Cesareo, 2005) has shown that adolescents appear to act within the multiplicity of suggestions provided by the social context that they live in and in which they are evaluated on the basis of a short time perspective. Consequently, planning is short term.

4. Adolescence and the delay syndrome

What is confirmed in the contemporary societies of many European countries is a diffusion of a delay syndrome that invalidates the growth of countries and of young people themselves. We witness an extension of the process times needed for the acquisition of autonomy (Livi Bacci, 2008, p. 34) – the lengthening cycles of education and study postpone the transition into the professional working environment. The transition phases (autonomy from the family, formation of a stable love life and entrance into the work market, etc.) increasingly occur later – particularly in Italy – compared to the 1950s. The socioeconomic scenarios of today's society make young people persevere in the exploration of the self without arriving to assume the responsibility of choice and future planning. This way, adolescents are satisfied with 'generic' actions that do not really contribute to an authentic self-realisation (Barbagli et al., 2003, p. 34). In fact, adolescents are not led gradually to a transition into the world of adulthood – they do not rely on society and the various choices proposed to them but prefer to remain in a state of indecision and experimentation. This is why adolescents appear to be uncertain while, paradoxically, being satisfied, in most cases, with living in the present, as long as they are exonerated from the necessity to assume the responsibilities associated with choice and obligation. Social reality, with its own problematic, comes to appear rather far from their interests, as it is the family that protects them (Livi Bacci, 2008, p. 83).

In other words, adolescents today appear to find ways to avoid confronting and resolving the natural anxiety related to the incertitude that is fundamental for the transition to the next developmental phase. Life choices appear to be rather ephemeral and to assume a rather individualistic dimension. The mutations of the current socioeducative context in relation to 1950s and 1960s, when E. Erikson (1966) theorised the adolescence phase, have led many researchers (Fass, 2016) to propose a different description of the age of adolescence that is related to the different contemporary perception and experience of time (Arnett, 2010). Adolescents in the stage of social moratorium are found to extend the experimentation stage to the point that it places them in a dimension 'without time' (Ammaniti, 2018), i.e. without the objective of projection into adulthood, as adulthood is barely recognisable.

This all leads adolescents to have a conception of time and future perspective that oscillates between naivety and superficiality. In this way, adolescence does not assume the connotations of a period of projection but rather of a purely experimental situation, which is for the largest part self-centred, and of how to live on their own. This has been confirmed by studies over the last decade:

An evident characteristic of the socialization path today is that of the weakening of the will to grow up and, therefore, of a prospective and projective vision; it is developing rather an 'experimental', individualistic-narcissistic concession of the existence: the adolescent and *young* condition is configured as the time for identity creation, for experimentation

of the Self, of one's own choices, for the acquisition of cognitive and relational competences, a time free of extreme obligations and sanctions and, in some ways, different from the ones of adult life, focused more on performance and the attainment of results (Besozzi, 2009, p. 15).

According to Besozzi, if social projection exists, it is not about changing the world but about being in the world. If living in the present with mindlessness does not appear to have immediate negative effects on studies and social relations (Berti, Bombi, 2018, p. 479), then the future consequences obtain a different weight, and this mindlessness becomes a pattern in the life path.

5. Research

Participants were asked to participate in the research within the framework of the *Re-mapping* research project during the school year of 2017–2018. Before proceeding with the completion of the questionnaire, students read the instructions, and further instructions were given during the process when needed. The administration and completion of the questionnaire lasted approximately 50 minutes, with slight variations between the countries.

Sample

Our sample consisted of 222 vocational education students in Italy, France and Greece. In choosing our sample, we took two parameters into consideration—one related to the choice of countries and one related to the choice of students. First, France, Italy and Greece were chosen because during the last ten years all three countries have faced, to varying degrees and extents, forms of economic, security and migration crisis. Besides differences in the socioeconomic and cultural profiles of the countries, France, Italy and Greece also present different profiles in educational terms, specifically a) in terms of public expenditure for education as a proportion of gross domestic product (Eurostat, 2019), b) in terms of the student–teacher ratio and the number of students per class (OECD, 2018a, pp. 350–355) and c) in terms of the modernisation of vocational education and training (Education and Training Monitor, 2018, pp. 98, 131, 164). However, if we explore the attainment of early school leaving rates (Education and Training Monitor, 2018, pp. 102, 125, 158) and the PISA results (OECD, 2018b, p. 5), we can note important similarities between them, although not in a way that would allow us to establish common trends.

Second, we made decisions regarding the choice of students for our sample in terms of age and educational structure. Regarding educational structure, we chose to include vocational education students because the nature of vocational education means that it has more direct links with the three spheres of education, economy and society that are affected by globalisation. According to the Cedefop Report (2018b, p. 15), ‘VET [vocational education and training] is

more differentiated and complex than other education sectors. It is interlinked, and needs to interact, within a pedagogical framework, with industry, employment and social policy'. Regarding age, we chose the 14–15-year-old age group because this age is a critical stage in all three educational systems, as it marks both the transition from the lower to upper secondary education and the most common verge of dropping out of school. This choice provided us with a sample of 222 students who had two common sociodemographic characteristics: 1) low-educated parents, 2) who were either both working in low paid jobs or one of them was recently unemployed.

Demographics: France	=64	100%
Gender		
Boys	45	70.3
Girls	19	29.7
Age		
15	4	6.3
16	30	46.9
17	24	37.5
18	6	9.4
Specialisation		
Fashion	17	26.6
Carpentry	12	18.8
Boiler making	18	28.1
Management/Administration	7	10.9
Host class (no specialisation)	10	15.6
Type of class		
Standard	52	81.3
Host class (<i>Classe d'accueil</i>)	12	18.8

Table 1: Sample in France

Demographics: Italy	=79	100%
Gender		
Boys	67	84.8
Girls	12	15.2
Age		
14	62	78.5
15 (repeat class)	15	19.0
Specialisation		

Informaticsz	26	32.9
Management, Finance, Marketing	18	22.8
Electronics	12	15.2
Mechanics	23	29.1
Area		
Urban	35	44.3
Rural	44	55.7

Table 2: Sample in Italy

Demographics: Greece	=79	100%
Gender		
Boys	49	62.0
Girls	30	38.0
Age		
14	63	79.7
15 (repeat class)	16	20.3
Specialisation		
Mechanical engineering	23	29.1
Aesthetics: hairdressing	17	21.5
Electrical engineering	10	12.7
Nursing	9	11.4
Informatics	8	10.1
Physiotherapy	8	10.1
Childcare	2	2.5
Area		
Urban	46	58.2
Rural	33	41.8

Table 3: Sample in Greece

Main results

The presentation of the results follows three main steps. In the first step, we present the results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), which shows the non-correlation of the future-planning factor (F6 in Tables 4-6) with the other factors of the scale. In the second part, we present the results of the one-way ANOVA, which shows the correlations between the future-planning factor and the four demographic characteristics of our sample. Finally, in the third section we present, in a comparative manner, the cumulative percentages of the students' responses to the four questions that comprise the future-planning factor of the FTFS-AYA.

Correlations between factors: The non-correlation of the future-planning factor

The one-way ANOVA correlations between the six factors of the scale revealed that the first five factors of the FTP-AYA scale, with slight variations, are strongly positively or negatively correlated. However, this is not the case for the future-planning factor. In Table 4, we show the correlation matrix for the future-planning factor per country. For Italy, we can see that the future-planning factor is not correlated with any of the other factors. For France, we can see that the future-planning factor is only positively correlated only with the future-negative factor. For Greece, the future-planning factor is positively correlated only with the future-perseverant factor.

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN F6 AND F1–5		<i>Future-negative</i> (F1)	<i>Future-positive</i> (F2)	<i>Future-confusion</i> (F3)	<i>Future-perseverant</i> (F4)	<i>Future-perspicuity</i> (F5)	<i>Future-planning</i> (F6)	
<i>Future-planning</i> (F6)	Pearson Correlation	.112	.169	-.113	.130	-.049	1	
	ITALY Sig. (2-tailed)	.326	.137	.320	.253	.667		
<i>Future-planning</i> (F6)	Pearson Correlation	.362**	.047	.245	.202	-.020	1	
	FRANCE Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.715	.051	.110	.875		
<i>Future-planning</i> (F6)	Pearson Correlation		.032	.155	-.021	.338**	.163	1
	GREECE Sig. (2-tailed)		.781	.172	.851	.002	.150	
** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).								

Table 4: One-way ANOVA: Correlations between F6 and F1–F5 for Italy, France and Greece

Correlations between F6 and demographic characteristics

In this section, we present the results of the one-way ANOVA for each country (Table 5) and explore the correlations between the future-planning factor of the FTP-AYA scale and four demographic characteristics of our sample: 1) gender, 2) age, 3) specialisation and 4) type of area (urban/rural) or type of

class (standard/host) according to country. As we can see in Tables 5 and 6, one-way ANOVA for Italy and Greece showed that there are no statistically significant differences between gender, age, specialisation and type of area and the future planning factor.

Correlation between F6 and demographics per country		GENDER	AGE	SPECIALISATION	RURAL/URBAN AREA
ITALY	F	0.268	1.199	0.540	0.230
	Sig.	.606	.307	.656	.880
FRANCE	F	4.565	2.176	7.764	5.102
	Sig.	.037*	.100	.000*	.027*
GREECE	F	0.592	1.762	0.723	0.074
	Sig.	.444	.188	.653	.787

Table 5: *F values and level of significance in relation to gender, age, specialisation and type of area. $p < .05$*

However, for France, the results are different, as the future planning factor is found to be correlated with gender, specialisation and type of class. Concerning the variable gender, the results for France showed that there are statistically significant differences between boys and girls; the comparison of means showed that girls score higher in future planning, whereas boys have a rather neutral position. Concerning the variable specialisation, the results for France showed that there are statistically significant differences between the students' specialisation and the future-planning factor ($F [4.59] = 7.764, p < .05$). The post hoc Scheffe analysis showed that there are statistically significant differences between the students of boiler making and the students of the host class (*classe d'accueil*), although they attend the same school. Students attending the boiler making specialisation had a more neutral position (neither agree nor disagree) compared to the students of the host class (strongly disagree) regarding the future-planning factor. Given that our French sample is from three schools in Paris, we conducted the one-way ANOVA between French students that attended the standard classes and those that had arrived from abroad (mainly Morocco, Haiti, Moldavia, Turkey, Algeria) the last six months and were in the host class. The results of the analysis showed that there are statistically significant differences between the type of class (standard or host) and the future-planning factor ($F [1.63] = 5.102, p < .05$). Students from the standard class have a more negative perception of the need for future planning compared to the students from the host class, who appear to have a more neutral position (neither agree nor disagree) ($F [0.023] = 0.880, p < .05$).

Cumulative percentages of students opting for planning and not planning in F6

Table 6 shows a summary of the students' responses according to country for the future-planning factor of the FTFS-AYA. This factor is explored in the scale by the following four questions: *I think that every day should be planned ahead of time* (Q3); *I get by every day without making plans* (Q12); *I make lists of things to do* (Q14); and *When I want to complete a task, I make specific plans for reaching the goals I set for myself* (Q16). Questions 3, 14 and 16 explore the existence of future planning, whereas Question 12 explores the absence of planning. For the needs of our analysis, in the table, we chose to present the cumulative percentages of questions 3, 14 and 16 and to present the responses to question 12 separately.

CUMULATIVE PERCENTAGES OF QUESTIONS ADDRESSING F6		DO NOT AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	AGREE
ITALY	FUTURE-PLANNING Q3+Q14+Q16	43.00%	26.50%	30.30%
	NO PLANNING Q12	48.10%	29.10%	22.80%
FRANCE	FUTURE-PLANNING Q3+Q14+Q16	41.66%	18.26%	42.17%
	NO PLANNING Q12	53.00%	21.90%	25.10%
GREECE	FUTURE-PLANNING Q3+Q14+Q16	24.00%	34.00%	42.00%
	NO PLANNING Q12	55.70%	21.50%	22.80%

Table 6: Comparative results of the future-planning factor in Italy, France and Greece.

The results in Table 6 allow us to make three main observations. First, France and Greece present almost the same percentage of students who like to make plans in order to achieve their goals (42.17% and 42.00%, respectively); this is followed by a significantly lower percentage (30.3%) in Italy. Second, the percentages of students who, by stating 'do not agree' in relation to question 12, affirm that they make no plans on an everyday basis are also significantly high, ranging from 22.8% for Italy and Greece to 25.10% for France. Third, we observe that there is a non-negligible percentage of students with no clear position (neither agree or disagree) ranging from 26.50% to 29.10% for Italy, from 18.26% to 21.90% for France and from 21.50% to 34.00% for Greece.

6. Lack of future planning as a condition of disadvantage or ineffective functioning

The research results revealed that a high and similar number of students across the three countries of our sample do not value and do not include future planning in their life strategies. In relation to this finding, we can make two remarks. The first is related to the situation of vulnerability, disadvantage and inequality that the above lack entails for students. The absence of future planning suggests that these students are present oriented, as they do not value anticipatory strategies for the future. This present orientedness places students in a situation of vulnerability, as they do not recognise the need for future planning to ‘insure [themselves] against many kinds of accident’ (Luhmann, 1995, p. 72). Present orientedness also places students *in a situation of disadvantage* regarding the decisions that they make. Present orientedness has been correlated with risky health behaviours (Keough et al., 1999; Wills et al., 2001), whereas extreme present orientedness has been correlated with the ‘culture of poverty’ (Banfield, 1968, 125-126). Through an emphasis on concrete over abstract thinking, present-oriented persons have difficulty in delaying gratification; they focus less on instrumental activities, and they do not engage in appropriate future-oriented actions (Zimbardo, Boyd, 1999). Finally, if we consider that the perception of time as a resource is associated with various symbolic forms of capital, the lack of future planning places students *in a situation of inequality*. In the context of an accelerated society, these students are in a position of disadvantage, as ‘those who are well equipped with economic, social and cultural capital successfully use these resources in the speed-game [...] while those who lack these resources are “left behind” with the gap widening’ (Rosa, 2017, p. 36).

The second remark to be made relates the homogeneity of responses across the three population groups within the sociodemographic characteristics of the sample. The social implications of this remark become even more accentuated if we take into consideration two additional factors. First, as we saw in Table 5, the future-planning factor is not correlated with any of the demographic characteristics in the cases of Italy and Greece, and it is correlated only with gender for the French population. However, the correlations between the future-planning factor and the variables of specialisation and type of class for France, as shown in Table 5, cannot be taken into consideration because in reality they refer to the differentiation between the standard class and the host class, which is composed of students from various cultural, political and socioeconomic environments who came to France in the six-month period before the research was carried out. Moreover, the correlation with gender is questionable, as students for the standard classes are either first or second generation immigrants coming more or less from the same countries of origin as the students from the host class.

What is of utmost importance in relation to the above two remarks is that students have the same discourse in all three population groups despite mi-

crosscale and national characteristics and despite differences in the respective education policies. The only common elements across the sample are a) the educational structure that the students attend (vocational education) and b) the education and working status of their parents.

The third remark to be made relates the above findings to implications for policy makers and education professionals. On one hand, the research results suggest that unless this type of disadvantage is adequately addressed, policy design focusing on the development of skills, competences and learning outcomes cannot flourish, since future planning as a sustaining condition for the development of the above is missing. On the other hand, the role of schools in reversing this type of disadvantage is fundamental. As Ingoglia et al. (2011) underlined, it is important to become aware of the decisive role that teachers can play in influencing the construction of adolescents' concept of time and future planning when they help them to identify the social, political and cultural system in which they are immersed. In this way, they offer support to the construction of well-being, autonomy and social competences of the students who can thus have a more articulated, conscious, interactive and emancipatory self-projection. (Ingoglia et al., 2011).

The important element in the third remark is that 'many exclusions are made without the knowledge that they are being made' (Butler, 2015, p. 4) if emergent forms of disadvantage go unattended. Pietropolli Charmet's position on this matter is quite eloquent:

According to my experience, teenagers leave school classes mortified by their identity as future ruling class members, as nowadays no teacher dares to name them, if not sarcastically. The ministerial educational programs were not written with the teenagers' futures in sight, and the teachers' casual and careless comments suggest that they do not deceive themselves. The school, an institution with great educational importance, showed a lack of interest in their future, on what will happen, on their needs, projects and expectations. I believe that this has a fatal effect on teenagers' perceptions of the investments that the previous generations make in them (Pietropolli Charmet, 2012, pp. 32-33).

This paper has argued that we need to further explore students' relation with time and, more specifically, the future-planning dimension as a fundamental parameter for the successful design of their educational trajectories and life projects. The results from a comparative quantitative study in three European Union countries revealed that student populations with similar sociodemographic characteristics present high similarity regarding their relation to future planning. The paper has argued that a problematic relation with the future-planning dimension of time exposes students to a position of vulnerability, inequality and disadvantage, and it concludes that both policy making and educational aspirations should match evidence from the field to be effective.

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