

IDENTITY CAPITAL AND ITS INFLUENCE ON MIGRATION AND EDUCATION DECISIONS

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Abstract (AJ)

Young adults make choices for a future that is based on environmental expectations of today. It is often assumed that these choices are made based on neoclassic principles. The modern world with its metropolitan cities and new information technologies has created a condition where success has been limited by bounded expectations. This article presents research made at the University of Matej Bel about future expectations of university students in Slovakia with regards to planning for the future (education) and future expectations (work and migration). It illustrates a quest for success that is defined more by identity capital rather than neoclassic utility. The ability to provide this capital is a crucial factor to the institutions in society, especially educational and local institutions.

Keywords: Identity capital, Status, Life's Narrative, Modernity, Historical institutionalism

INTRODUCTION

In the old industrial model of economic production, one industry replaces another creating conditions of benefits for some and misfortune for others. This is the natural process of creative destruction. This term created by Joseph Schumpeter describes a process where industrial mutation continuously revolutionizes from within incessantly breaking down the old models while creating new ones [1]. Connected to this creative destruction is the matter of living preference; where and how we desire to live and what type of family unit we crave. If an area or economic activity is in decline, people will tend to change jobs, change professions, and even relocate.

Young adults exiting gymnasium studies must make profound choices as to how they desire to enter adulthood and in what capacity they will contribute to society. Modern society presents an increasingly problematic challenge for the individual that are looking for an adult identity based on commitments that is a part of the community of others [2]. Late-modern society, with its lack of commitment to the individual, makes it harder for a young adult to reach a state of accelerated development where one can considered to have reached a stage of stability and full-membership in society. As the financial crisis in Europe continues and, with it, a high level of youth unemployment, young adults are investing their efforts in gaining identity capital—the collection of educational credentials (academic capital), social identification (human capital), and associated memberships (social capital) [3] [4]. With this capital it is hoped that they will gain a position as a full-fledged member in a community and with it, the necessary markers for success.

It is a widely accepted concept that a nation whose inhabitants can easily migrate in the pursuit of economic success will also be a successful nation. The ease of mobility has meant that economic opportunities that no longer exist in one area can easily be found in another. Thus, people move in order to maximize their earning potential in order to get the things they want. This ease of movement creates a condition of expectations based on historical precedent. Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman developed the *cumulative prospect theory* that further detailed expectation utility. Risk decisions are based on a point of view or a frame of reference. Individuals make a

decision based on a set of outcomes based on past experiences of ourselves, our society, the status quo, and generally accepted concepts [5].

All individuals in society are looking to find the best alternative for themselves. The desires can be expressed in terms of both material attainment and societal status. Thus each individual is trying to complete their 'life story' by choosing options that will leave them with a respectable legacy. Sociologist Anthony Giddens states "A person's identity is not found in our behaviour or in the reactions of others, but in the ability to keep a particular narrative going" [6]. This narrative extends beyond the self to include the family with expectations from the parents, from the spouse, and from future children. Decisions are thus made to optimize opportunities for both the self and the family based on one's own particular 'life story'.

A capitalist-based society is predicated on neoclassic theory. This theory has three main assumptions, people have rational preferences among outcomes; individuals maximize utility and firms maximize profits; and people act independently on the basis of full and relevant information [7]. In other words, people know what they want and will do their best to achieve their desires with the minimum amount of effort and at the same time, companies will try to make the most profit from their customers. And all parties will make these economic decisions from available information.

This perfect conception of neoclassic principles rarely occurs as both individual and collective behaviour create conditions that are far less predictable and in many cases irrational. The accumulative advantage states that the more you have, the more you will receive. Also known as the Mathew effect from the Gospel of Mathew (13,12), which states "Whoever *has* will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever *does not have*, even what he has will be taken from him"[8]. George Soros noted that agents in a markets can stay unequal for an extended period of time as people behave reflexively to relevant information—the theory of reflexivity [9]. Historical institutionalism emphasizes the constraints institutions place on decision-making and individual discretion [10]. In other, words people tend to adopt past models of success and alternatives are neglected or disregarded.

Game theorists have a concept of bounded rationality. This concept concludes that individuals have a limit on information, have limited amount of decision-making resource, and a finite amount of time. Thus people will make choices only after greatly simplifying the process [11]. Men in general, wish to behave efficiently and with thus avoid uncertainty [12] and thus men tend to look for favourable probabilities [13]. Decisions on where to move and what knowledge to gain are based on a calculated probability for success.

In the desire to achieve the good life, students for Universities in Slovakia have bounded expectations of the future that could be summarized in the following way:

- Individuals must move to a big city where there is more work and social opportunities even though it may be prohibitively expensive especially for material gains and family.
- The office job is mostly superior to blue-colour work in all of their particular specialties.
- Other countries are mostly superior to Slovakia and offer better life opportunities.

The bounded rationality of today has thus created a more limited definition of status. Thorstein Veblen's Theory of the leisure class states that individuals are drawn to the high-status (low-energy work) of the white-collar class, regardless of the pay [14]. It is thus hoped that one day, gaining identity capital will somehow lead to normal middle class existents.

1 THE NEW DEFINITION OF MIDDLE CLASS

Previous definitions of the middle class was based specifically on income—a neoclassic construct. If people were truly motivated by neoclassic thought, they would be making decisions that would result in greater access to material gains. In other words, people would choose occupations and places to live that would give them more money, thus entitling them to a greater status based on income. Yet choices for study are not necessarily based on high-probability for high-income. Few people have the fortitude to be in the top echelon of society or even the desire to be fabulously wealthy and the very definition of wealthy is nebulous as it depends on individual quantification.

Most individuals are looking to become part of the middle-class, a term that has become a catch-all phrase to mean most everybody as it is only a vague measurement of income somewhere between relatively poor and relatively wealthy. Sociologists Mike Savage from the London School of Economics and Fiona Devine from the University of Manchester together with the BBC posed to create a new class system that takes into account not only economic capital but also social and cultural capital—the Great British Class Survey. The latter two are often ignored by traditional economics since it is hard to put a value on social connections and social awareness. This new measurement takes into account the need for social connections (the right choice of friends and contacts) and cultural identity (the need for status based on cultural markers), neither of which are based on money. Thus, the new middle class has the following five distinct groups [15] [16].

- *The Established Middle class*- This is the second wealthiest group, but is not a part of the elite class. Many work in management and traditional highly regulatory professions (Judges, Doctors, etc.). They are comfortably well-off and often live outside of urban areas.
- *Technical Middle Class*: This is a new, small class with high economic capital but less cultural engagement as they tend to mix with people similar to themselves. With fewer social contacts they are socially less engaged. Many people in this group work in research, science, and technical occupations.
- *New Affluent Workers*: This class is economically secure without being well off. A young and active group they have higher on emerging cultural capital but low on “highbrow” cultural capital (established forms of emerging capital tend to be shunned). This group tends to include trades oriented professions. They have high incomes, but their work also depends on high levels of social contacts and cultural awareness.
- *Emergent Service Workers*: This new class has low economic capital but has high levels of 'emerging' cultural capital and high social capital. This group is young and often found in urban areas. For this group, it is enough to have contact with the *new affluent workers* and access to the latest trends including cultural trends.
- *Traditional Working Class*: This class scores low in all forms of capital, although they are not the poorest group. They also tend to own their own homes. The average age of this class is older than the others (home acquisition and “start of life” conditions had a different set of rules for the older generation). They could include low-level trades men and shop assistants. Their lives, however, are stable, yet humble. This lifestyle, even if desired is largely unavailable to the young, as economics have changed from the time of their parents or grandparents.

A student, whose judges his own mental prowess to be less than what is needed to join the *established middle class* or the *technical middle class*, can still find himself comfortable in the class of *emergent service worker* as this still fulfills the need for creation of the life narrative. As this study concerned British society, it is sure to differ from Slovakia. England is a receiver nation of migrants with many major cities. It is also a country still deeply rooted in a historic class system not necessarily based on income. Slovakia is a donor nation of migrants with only its capital Bratislava that could be considered major.

At a young age, more important than money is the need to be ‘interesting’ hence the desire for high social capital. Migration adds a new dynamism to social capital as interaction in a foreign country makes an individual more interesting and expands the social network. Whether or not migration will result in future trade-offs is inconsequential to the younger generation as the need for status is paramount—at least in this stage of life.

2 THE RESEARCH WITH STUDENTS OF UMB IN TERMS OF MIGRATION AND EDUCATION AND THE FULFILLMENT OF INDIVIDUAL CAPITAL

To measure young adult’s future preferences, three different tests were conducted at the University of Matea Bel in the Economic, Humanities, and Political Science faculty. Since this was an intensive measurement that included many different facets of future expectations, only questions that had some correlation with identity capital will be discussed in this article. The research was conducted as follows:

- A one-page essay assigned to first-year students in the departments of Economics, titled simply “Where do I see myself in 10 years?” The concept was to look for key words that would indicate accepted standards of status.
- A questionnaire exploring why they would migrate to another country and under what conditions they would decide to stay or comeback.
- A two-choice option pictorial presentation in PowerPoint composed of 25 slides, each with two or three *picture/description* choices.

The test was designed to yield a *true* response rather than an *expected or scripted* response.

Approximately 470 students were surveyed in 2012 at the Humanities, Political Science, and Economic Faculty. Another 250 students were surveyed in 2011 in the Economic Faculty. Each section below describes the test in more detail as well as their significant outcomes.

3 RESPONSE FROM ESSAY IN RELATIONSHIP TO IDENTITY CAPITAL

This measurement was the least scientific and was designed to find key words that are used to define future expectation. First-year students at the UMB in the Department of Economics were asked to write a one-page essay entitled “Where do I see myself in 10 years?” This exercise was not repeated at other faculties due to the restrictions of time and course content. Students were given a lengthy description of areas to consider including their imagination about work, living space, place of residence, and family. Students were not told which of the points they needed to write about; the presentation was merely a guideline of things they could write about. The students were cautioned against flip responses and clichés and to concentrate on their life as

adults as opposed to student life. This paper was assigned to approximately 180 students in 2010, 2011, and 2012.

The essay yielded the expected banal responses associated with success in life especially with housing and family arrangements. Almost all mentioned that they would prefer a house outside of the big city with two children. Most students were unable to describe their work other than that they would be some type of manager in a big corporation. Their vision of work was a desk, a computer, and an office but lacked any details regarding what that work would involve or the necessities involved with that job. Almost all students described their future jobs in a nebulous fashion without specific details — essentially, it would involve work in a skyscraper with colleagues, shifting paper, and peering into a monitor.

More interesting were the key words used to describe life success. The word “*garden*” was the most used word to describe homes followed by “*swimming pool*”. The garden mostly described flowers and the look of the house. The swimming pool, a fairly useless item in the cold climate of Slovakia, nevertheless, would demonstrate to neighbours the idea of success or rather “having made it.” The vision of the home is described from the exterior since it is difficult to envision what the inside of a home will look like. Many students describe their jobs as being in a downtown setting, but their homes as being in a small town, leading to the notion of commuting. The description the students gave bore uncanny resemblance to the American suburb and exurb (an outer ring of growth in a metropolitan area outside of the suburbs).

Roughly 20 percent of the students indicated that the first few years after gaining a diploma could be spent in base-level jobs in another country. Many felt that this would be a good first step into the job market, with the expected language skills boosting their employability on their return. Even if the foray into a foreign country was not fitting to their education, it would still add to their identity capital.

With the results of these essays, it can be seen that our students do plan on one day reaching the point where identity capital will turn into economic capital giving them the ability to buy into the suburban lifestyle. This plan runs afoul of many modern city planners whose vision of a modern metropolitan area is more aligned with high density living and public transportation.

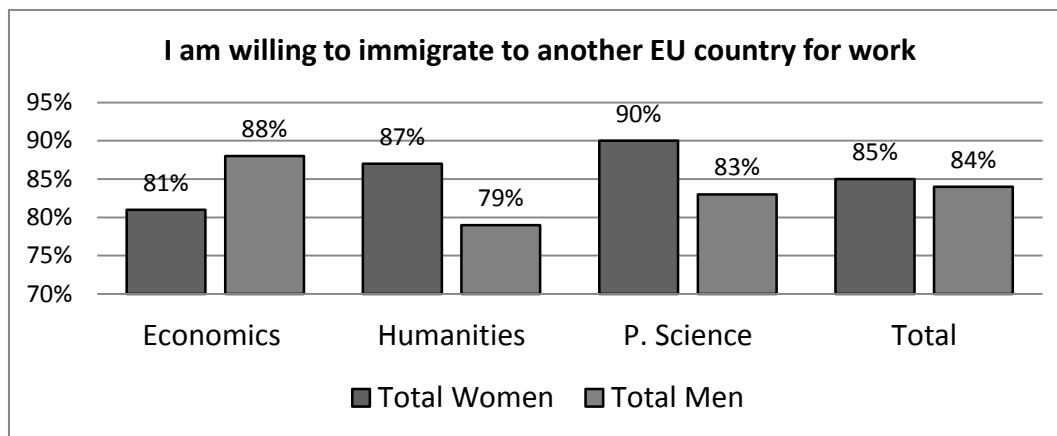
4 MEASUREMENT OF IDENTITY CAPITAL WITH EMIGRATION TO ANOTHER COUNTRY FOR WORK OPPORTUNITIES

This part of the questionnaire was designed to measure the level of comfort or discomfort students were willing to endure in going to another country. Each question suggested a higher degree of disillusionment with the host nation and measure the point at which the students would wish to return. As mentioned before, only the questions directly impacting identity capital are presented here in the following:

Q 2) You get a job with higher salary in your field of study in another Member State of the EU.

A) I accept it.

B) I refuse it. I don't want to leave my home country other than for a holiday.

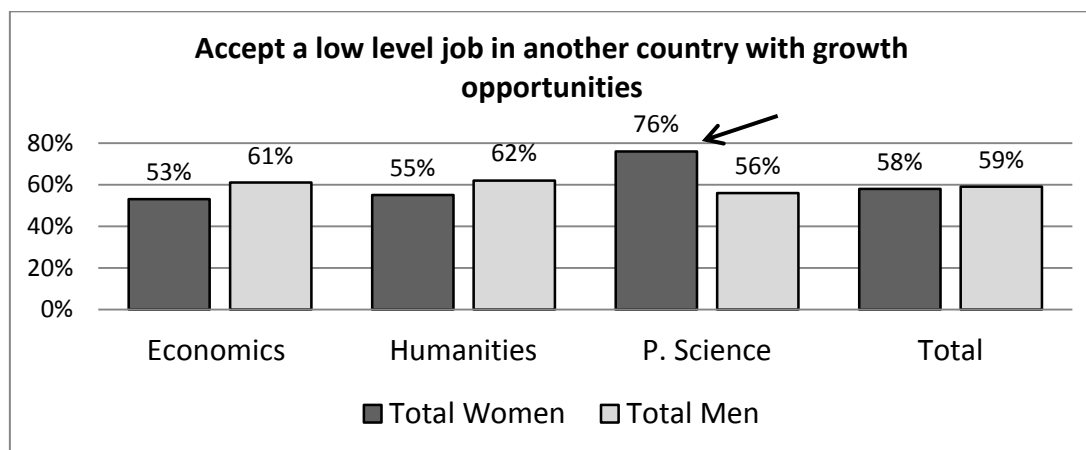


The high likelihood of emigration suggested here points to the historical institution of migration in Slovakia. Their predecessors were successful in the past; therefore, the new graduates will be successful now. It clearly indicates that moving to another country is perceived as an advantage. With the entire EU available for work opportunities, exciting locales together with openness to Slavic people for “front-line” work means that migrating for a job is relatively painless. In interviews with students in the Economic faculty, it was interesting to find several students who had summer jobs in Greece and Spain, the two countries hardest hit by the economic crisis and youth unemployment of over 52 percent. The common factors among these students were apparently aesthetic quality prized by those host countries (young, good looking). Thus aesthetics becomes an important element in whether an immigrant will be accepted or rejected in a host country.

Q 3) You go to another Member State in the EU and get a low level job that does not pay so well but has a potential for career advancement.

A) I accept it.

B) I refuse it. I don't want to leave my home country other than for a holiday.



In this question, the job conditions offered are not very favourable, but might have future benefits. In this situation, there is no evident advantage to migrating for work since the same benefit could be found at home. The number of potential migrants drops to approximately 58 percent, the exception being female students of the Political Science faculty. One speculation is that Political Science is a field that is not directly connected to “real” work (unlike Economics

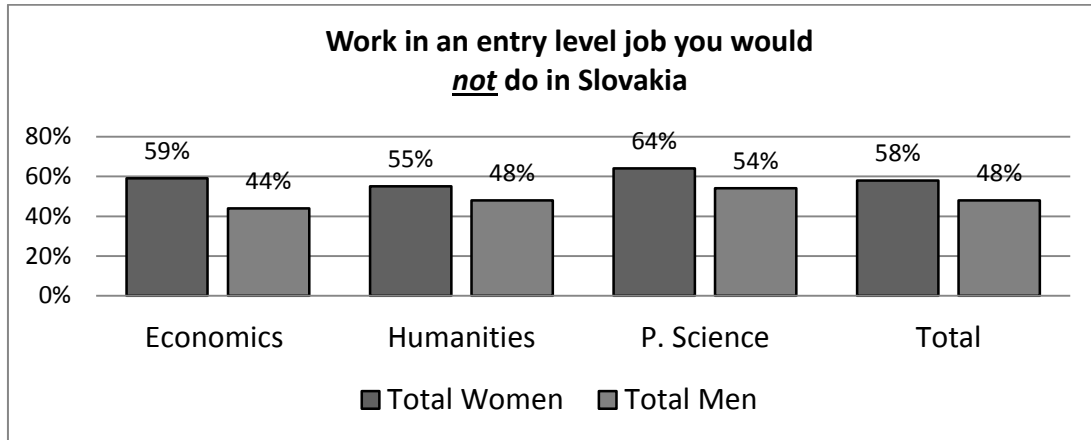
which requires accounting/marketing skills and Humanities with its heavy focus on language skills).

This questions still demonstrates the advantage of work in a foreign country over work in Slovakia.

Q 4) I would do an entry-level job (cleaner, waiter, farm work, au pair) in another country that I would not do in my own country.

A) Yes, no one will ever know.

B) No, I would have done the same job in my own country.



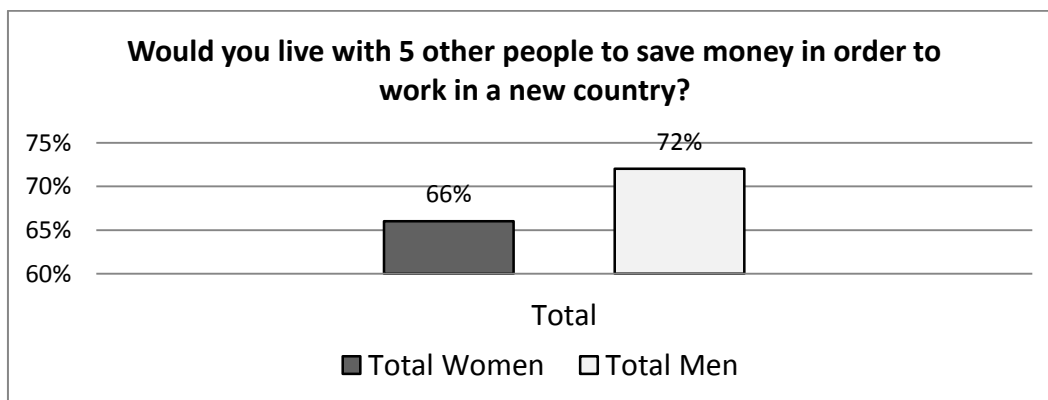
This question demonstrates the importance of status in society. Graduates of university feel that they must get a high level job in their own country. If this is not possible, the opportunity to “hide” in a new country is possible. Working in a low-level job in a new country is not perceived as a problem especially since it can be used as a way to increase their language skills. Identity capital is increased due to the worldly nature of having work in a foreign culture.

This question, more than all others, reinforces the notion of status over economics. The definition of success is now so bounded to “the right job”, that failure to meet society’s expectation creates an incentive for self-imposed banishment.

Q 6) To save money, I will live with five other people in a two-room flat.

A) Yes.

B) No, I’m going home.



This question demonstrates a willingness to accept less favourable living standards in a new country that would not be tolerated in Slovakia. With the possible exception of living in Bratislava, most people would not tolerate a reduced lifestyle in their own country in order to save more. This seems, however, to be acceptable for a short period of time in a foreign country, and much more so for men.

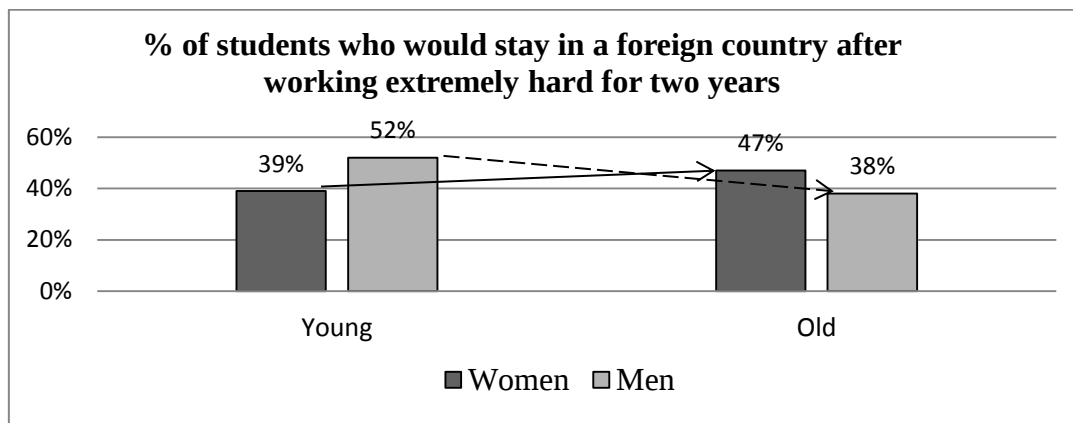
The problem with this concept is the skewed notion the superior buying power of wages earned in a foreign country. Many people have tales of being able to buy daily consumable items and even durable goods for a fraction of the working time necessary to buy the same goods needed in Slovakia. This arithmetic falls apart when their wages are applied to long term purchases in the host country. A low-wage job will not provide the income to purchase a house in England, but if the worker could save 10-20 percent of the wages in England, he could use the savings to purchase a flat in Slovakia (but only outside of the Bratislava area).

This data also reinforces the notion that work in another country can be a short term prospect to gain capital for an eventual return home. Living in a communal setting maximizes savings for future capital investments.

Q 8) I am making money but I have been living and working like a dog for two years

A) I stay.

B) No, I'm going home.



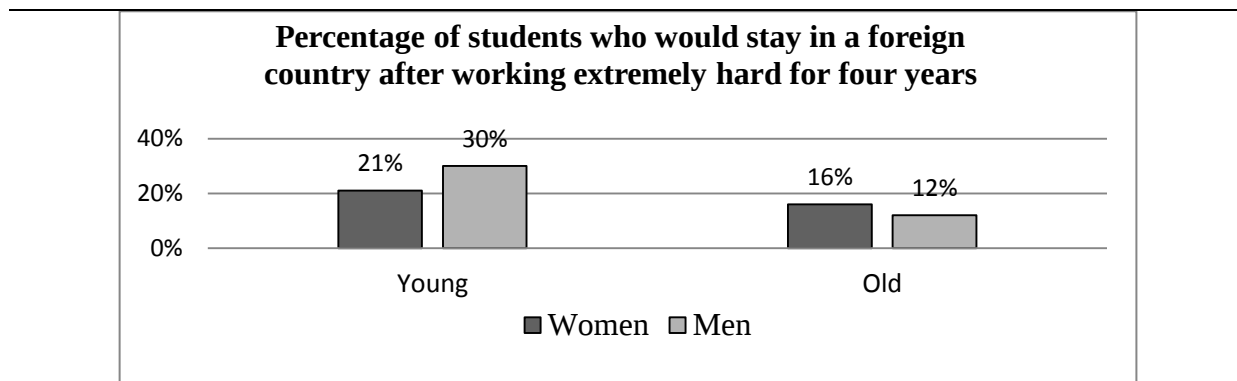
This question brings to bear the notion of working abroad is a short-term proposition, almost as if it was a rite of passage. It is a way to get a monetary boost before the more stable adulthood begins. For the students in this survey, many would return home after two years, but it would mean delaying the start of adulthood in Slovakia until an average age of 26-27.

A comparison of gender and age shows a split. As men get older they are more likely to return home. As women get older, they are more likely to stay. One hypothesis is that men have less of a desire to work for a long time in a “dead-end” job and are eager to get to a stage in life where there is better work. The question above may also prompt assumptions by men that the hard work implied would more likely to be physical than mental work.

Q 9) I am making money but I have been living and working like a dog for four years

A) I stay.

B) No, I'm going home.

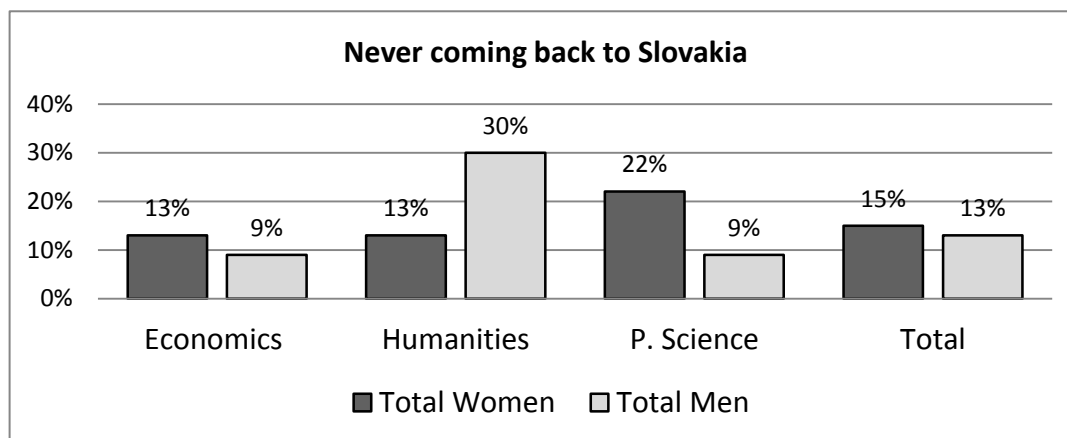


We can see that most forays into a foreign country are short-term propositions. Paradoxically, the number of women who wish to stay in a foreign country also goes down tremendously after four years where as in the previous question (two years) it went up. Thus working abroad, from the perspective of our university trained students, is a short term experience. Somewhere between two years and four years of work, there is the idea that it is time to return to Slovak society. This question implies that the “hard” work is oriented specifically at labour, or rather, manual labour. Status cannot be achieved by extremely long hours. Time is necessary for family and social recognition. It is also hoped that there could be a return to Slovakia, were the foreign experience could be monetized into a good job and property.

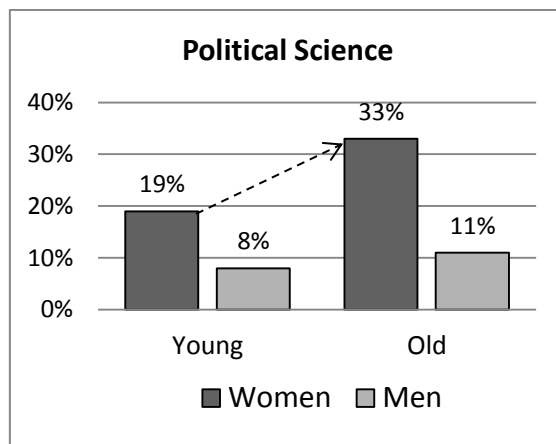
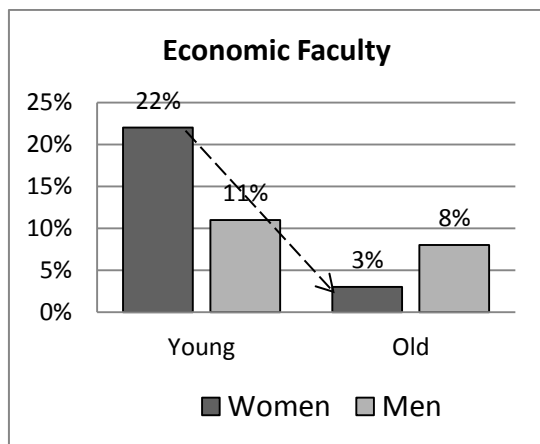
Q 10) No matter how bad it gets I am never going back to my own country to live.

A) Yes

B) No



Obviously, most people are not “gluttons for punishment”, with most of the students wishing to return to Slovakia under the worst-case scenario. A spike of 30 percent of the men in Humanities indicates that many see their education as a stepping-stone to a new country. Most of the surveys completed in the Department of Humanities were from students studying languages. For these studies, acquiring a language either means a future as an interpreter, a teacher, or work abroad. Teaching being a female dominated career and rather low paid in Slovakia would give men an impetus to leave for better work possibilities abroad. It can be assumed that students of European cultural studies and languages are more likely to yield a response more in line with outward migration. More interesting would be to interpret the data from both the Economic and Political Science faculty since language learning is not the primary target of their education.

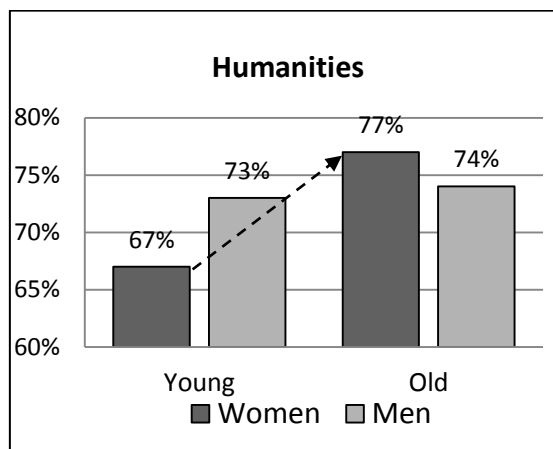
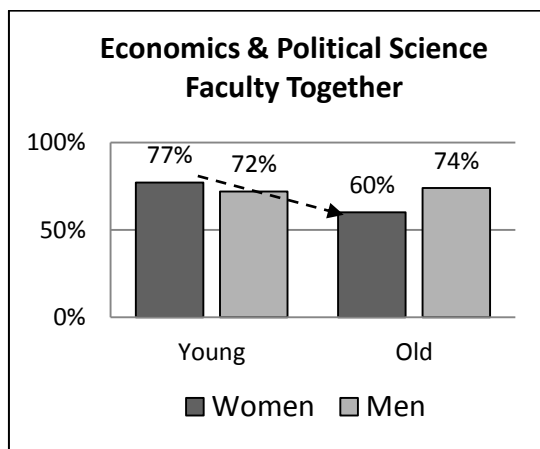


As students get older, emigrating for a better life loses its appeal, except in the Political Sciences, where it goes up dramatically, especially for women. Slightly more women indicate that they would not return to Slovakia, no matter how bad it gets. It could indicate the possibility of women marrying to alleviate a negative situation. To put it bluntly, the spoils of war go to the victor, and that includes women, as the ending of the Cold War and the corresponding ending of travel restrictions opened up chances for relationships abroad.

Q 11) On the other hand, life and opportunities were good to me in my new country

A) So, I'm staying.

B) I will return to my home country no matter how good it is.



Under the best-case scenario 72 percent of the students stated that they would stay in their new country. Among the three faculties the intent to stay in a new country if they prove successful there remains fairly constant among men. Among women, the number of women who would stay in a new country if they prove successful there declines with age in the faculties of Economics and Political Science whereas it increases in the Faculty of Humanities. Though expressed at a young age, personal choices may change over time, indicating that Eastern Europe will have a significant challenge with brain-drain in the near future.

5 MEASUREMENT OF IDENTITY CAPITAL THROUGH PICTORIAL PREFERENCES

A PowerPoint slide presentation was presented to the students giving a choice between two equal options. Instead of presenting questions, most slides presented two pictures. Students were instructed to choose the picture they preferred the most or which picture they disliked the least.

The first slide addressed the preference of moving to Bratislava. It is so hard to imagine good jobs being available in a small city that most young people have the reflexive response to migrate (a good job means moving to an agglomerated area or out of the country).

The first question posed a simple “*WHAT IF*” question of equalities between a large city and a smaller micropolitan area. *What if the jobs were available in the smaller city? Would people choose to go there?*

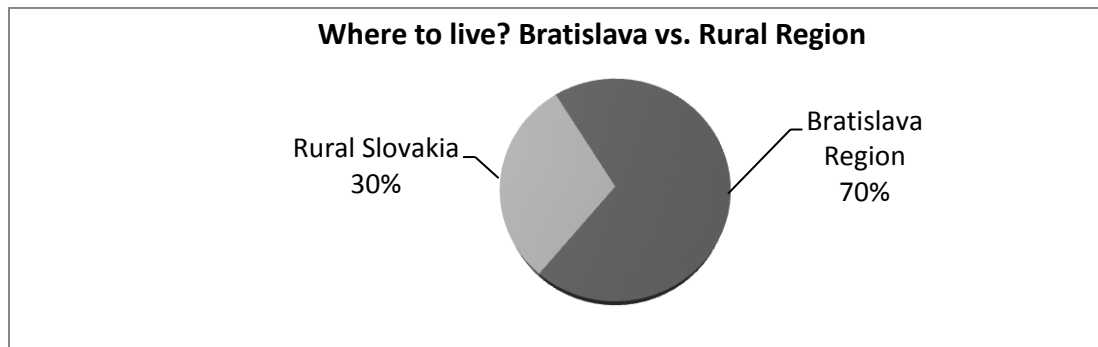
Part 2 - Q 1

1st Question: You have just graduated from the University. You have two options.	
A Take a job in or close to Bratislava	B Take a job in a small town/city that pays 25% less and is far away from the big city.

In this first scenario, the economic advantage goes to the smaller city/town because of the value of real estate. The differences between real-estate prices between these two regions are quite substantial and could mean the difference between buying a house (or high quality flat with enough room for children) or doing without. It needs to be noted that there are substantial differences in property price in central Europe between agglomerated areas and their more rural counterparts. Consider the following cities in Slovakia:

Bratislava residential prices are 62% higher than the average of all areas in Slovakia excluding Bratislava itself.[17] The situation would be starker if we excluded the larger cities and only included micropolitan areas. A quick look at reality prices in areas of extreme collapse (Čierna nad Tisou, Trebišov, Velký Krtíš, etc.) would yield flat prices as low as 100€-300€ per square meter.

Even with the price advantage of real estate in out-of-favour areas, most students (70 percent) indicate that they would rather start their working life in or around Bratislava. Much of this is reflexive as Bratislava is seen to be the only place that provides high-status work.



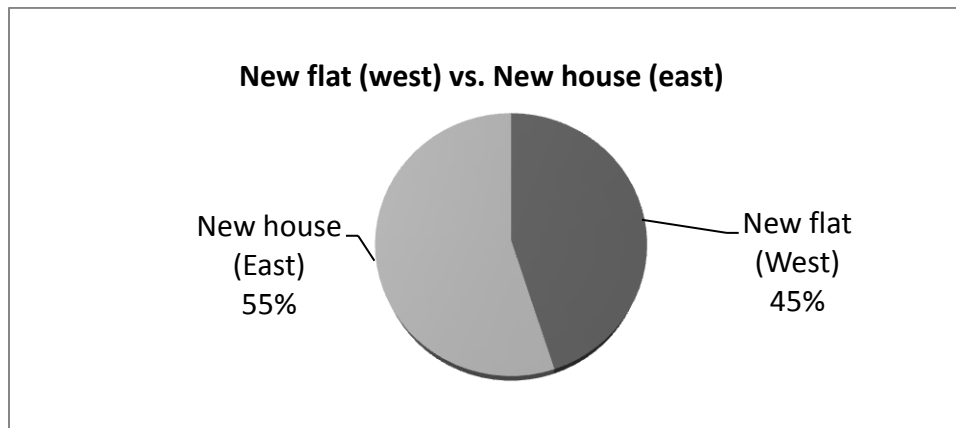
Currently the situation is that few to no jobs are available in micropolitan cities outside of the agglomerated areas. This question assumes that there are jobs in the out-of-favour areas, but they pay 25 percent less. Even if there were jobs at this lesser pay, it is assumed that there aren't and thus students feel they must prepare themselves for the eventual job in Bratislava. It is hypothesized that Out-of-favour areas are perceived to be so void of any possibilities for cultural, social, economic enhancements (i.e. the ability to fulfill one's 'life story'), that it would be fruitless to stay.

The following slides provide examples of how choices are made based on status and how these choices impact the country and its citizens.

Part 3 - Slide 1

Q. 6 A or B?	1st Response Picture of new flat in agglomerated Slovakia 2nd Response Picture of new house in OFA Slovakia Trade-off Urban living with access to big city amenities versus smaller more rural settings with few amenities but better living space. Both house and flats are new.
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This slide illustrates two choices: to live in East Slovakia in a new house or in West Slovakia in a new flat. The choices in West Slovakia are all growing areas with a booming economy. The choices in East Slovakia are limited by shrinking production and limited opportunities as the young leave for opportunities in the West. An added disadvantage is a sizeable Romany population that is mired in poverty.



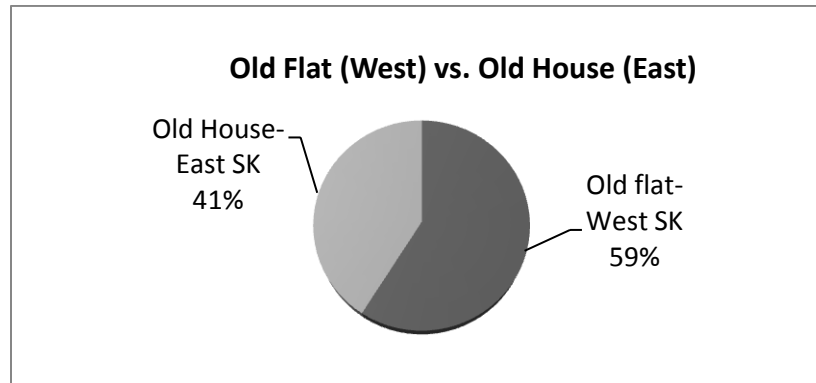
More respondents indicated that they would be willing to live in the East if they could have a new house, new houses being a strong status symbol in Slovakia. Students from Eastern Slovakia were much more likely to want to live in the East under this condition, thus there is a desire not to migrate if a new house can be obtained. Students from the urban areas of west Slovakia were the least likely to want to move East. East/West movement is a one-way street.

Part 3 - Slide 2

Old A B Q. 7	1st Response Picture of old flat in agglomerated Slovakia 2nd Response Picture of old house in OFA Slovakia Trade-off Same measurement as slide 1 but with less favourable housing conditions. Both flat and house are old.
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This question is the same as the previous one, but instead of new flats and houses, we have old ones. The house in this illustration is not extremely old, but belongs to a style built under socialism. These homes were usually designed for multiple generations and some can be quite large.

Interestingly, houses lose their status when they are old and at the same time old flats gain value. A shift of 14 percent from East to West is significant, illustrating how difficult it will be to get people interested in the disadvantaged part of the country.

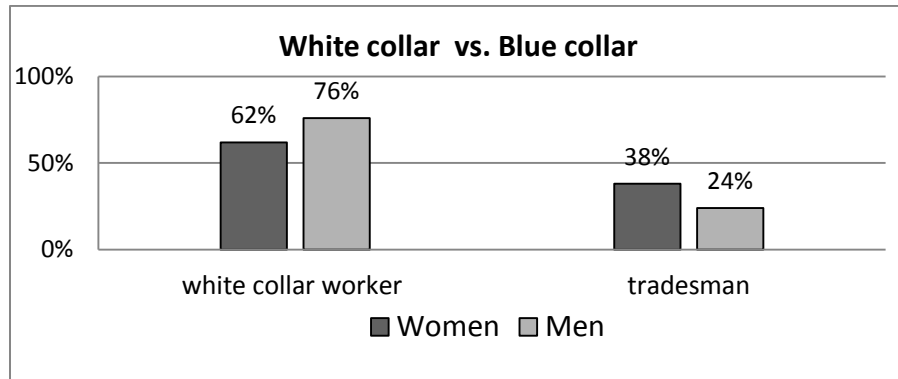


Western Slovaks were particularly uninterested in moving to Eastern Slovakia to live in an old home. However, over half of Eastern Slovaks would stay in the East and have an old home over an old flat in the West (54 percent); they need only a reason to stay. Any attempts at luring prospective pioneers to the Eastern part of the country will have to include some affordable way to improve the existing housing stock especially exterior finishes. As was seen in the essay questions, judgments about housing stock are usually from an exterior perspective, i.e. the outward appearance of a house is its most important feature. Simple fixes such as poly-styrene insulation, new windows and refurbished roofs would help to make an old home more appealing.

Part 3 Slide 4

Q. 9 A  800€ a month salary B  1 200€ a month salary	1st Response Picture of office worker behind computer + salary of 800€ a month (male) 2nd Response Picture of tradesman + salary of 1,200 € a month (male) Trade-off More prestigious white collar job vs. higher paying blue collar job. Men were told to envision themselves in these jobs. Women were told to envision their future husbands in these jobs.
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The next slide was the most controversial in the whole group as 66 percent of the respondents chose the white collar job over the blue-collar one even though there was a 50 percent pay difference. Told to imagine these two men as potential husbands, 62 percent of the women chose the white-collar worker, despite his lower income. The bias was most pronounced in the Political Science department, where 77 percent of the students preferred the white-collar worker.



The implication here is that there is a huge swathe of man-oriented jobs that are seen as a disadvantage no matter what the pay is. The status of the male worker is extremely important, especially when considering partnerships.

The economic crisis, however, is quickly erasing pre-existing notions of work. The previous year's survey in the Economic department had 84 percent of respondents preferring the white-collar worker over the higher paid blue-collar worker (especially the women). Between this year's and last year's survey, coupled with the turbulent economic times, it can be seen that the concept of work is quite fungible. As this crisis lingers, more attention is being paid to marketable skills.

Age also seems to be a factor in the equation. Note the difference according to age:

Women are more incline to go for the man with more money as they get older, while men focus more on the "status" white-collar job. As men get older and reached a certain educational level, they may feel "locked in" to a profession oriented to their degree.

Still, in both cases, craft oriented skills are considered inferior to the more cerebral job. One reason for this is an increasing level of "credentialism" as employers are requiring ever higher levels of degrees and certificates for even low-level jobs. The skilled blue-collar jobs and there accompanying training belongs to a world that is alien to them.

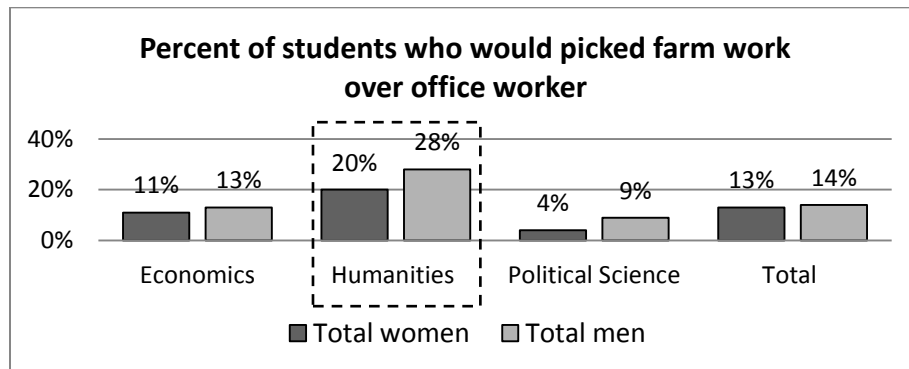
It needs to be noted that the "unimaginable" event that ended socialism was followed by another "unimaginable" event that ended "growth through real estate". With this, came the end of the accompanying white collar jobs as reality agents, developers, and financiers lost work. The German economy, with its emphasis on trade-oriented education, seems to be immune to the status trap of blue-collar work (conjecture).

Part 3 - Slide 5

Q. 10 A ↓   B ↑	1st Response Picture of a farmer on a tractor 2nd Response Picture of office worker behind computer Trade-off Determine if an "idyllic" outdoor job is at all desired. The question is gender neutral.
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The 2011 survey yielded very low rewards for the farm worker with only seven percent choosing the farmer over the office worker. The on-going economic crisis has increased the status of the

farmer considerably. Last year, only four percent of women in the Economic faculty reported a favourable impression on farm life compared to 11 percent today.



The Humanities reported an even higher favourable return for farmer work. It needs to be noted that recent popular programs on TV about farm life may be a factor in raising the status of the farmer. Only in the Political Science faculty is there still such a low opinion about the farm worker.

Mating preferences cannot be overlooked when a student seeks an education, especially for men. If it is determined that a profession is detrimental for finding a partner, they will be less likely to show interest in that particular field.

Part 3 - Slide 6

Q. 11

A

800€ a month salary

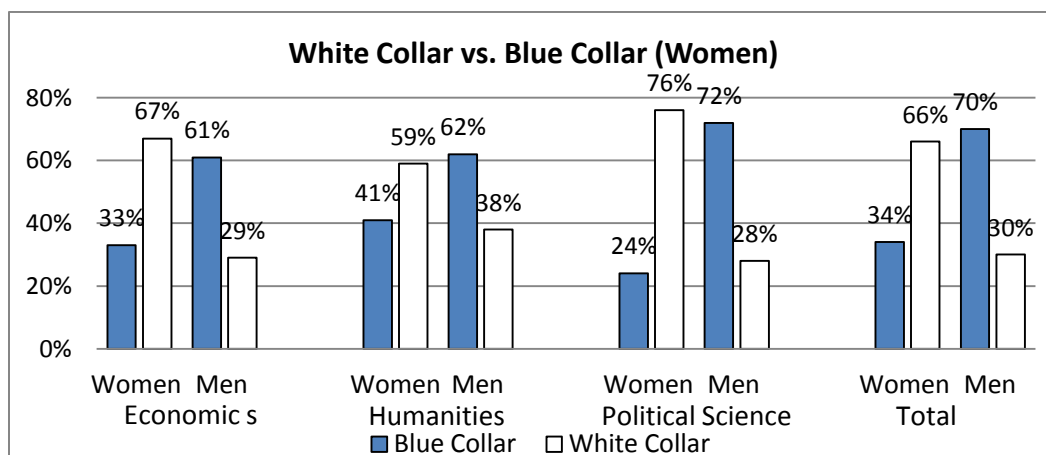
B

1 200€ a month salary

1st Response
Picture of office worker behind computer + salary of 800€ a month (female)

2nd Response
Picture of trades woman + salary of 1,000 € a month (female)

Trade-off More prestigious white collar job vs. higher-paying blue collar job. Women were told to envision themselves in these jobs while men were told to envision their future wives in these jobs.



This question was reposed with female jobs and the concept of white-collar vs. blue-collar. Again most people chose the white-collar work even though it paid 50 percent less. Among the men, however, 70 percent chose the blue-collar worker (up from 52 percent from the survey the year before). For men, the status of a woman is less important; more important is the benefit of the additional income.

From these last three queries, it can be seen that the male blue-collar worker has an extreme disadvantage, especially in the area of relationships. Economists like the safety of dealing strictly with numbers and figures and are reticent to tackle emotional questions of love and partnership. Women in general attempt to find a partner who has a higher level of status, but this is a losing game as not all men can be engaged in white-collar work. Men in general tend to look for other qualities in women, with aesthetics being at the top of the list. In the past, the quest for a partner was limited to what was available locally, especially under socialism when travel and migration were not permitted. Today, women are not limited by geography and can thus find a wider range of potential partners throughout the world. As we are beginning to see throughout the world, certain professions are also seen as a disadvantage, which has dangerous consequences for the future.

Part 3 - Slide 8

Q. 13 B ↓  A →  C → 	1st Response Work on an assembly line 2nd Response Work as a farmer 3rd Response Working in a food or department store Trade-off Measuring the willingness to work in either the 1st, 2nd or tertiary sector of the economy. (note that - there are no choices for desk jobs).
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This slide was designed to measure the response with the disappointment of having to accept non-prestigious work. The farmer is not necessary low-paid but his occupation involves solitude, hard work, and no glamour. The assembly line, especially the automobile assembly line, is better paid, however workers must accept the concept of being told what to do and to follow orders. The Tesco job provides the fewest responsibilities and the fewest rewards.

Each of the above choices would not be considered a prize for our aspiring graduates. One choice, the job at Tesco, would be considered the least challenging economically and intellectually. Assembly line workers in Slovakia are still paid fairly well compared to other professions. Workers at Kia for example are paid an average of 1,040€.[17]

		Economic			Humanities			Political Science		
		A. Auto Assembly	B. Farmer	C. Tesco	A. Auto Assembly	B. Farmer	C. Tesco	A. Auto Assembly	B. Farmer	C. Tesco
	Younger W.	19%	17%	64%	16%	24%	61%	25%	27%	48%
	Older W.	10%	35%	55%	36%	20%	69%	53%	0%	47%
Interest in the profession with age		↓	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓
	Younger M.	42%	37%	21%	53%	40%	7%	32%	47%	21%
	Older M.	35%	35%	31%	50%	43%	7%	67%	33%	0%
Interest in the profession with age		↓	↓	↑	↓	↑	NC	↑	↓	↓

It can be seen that for women the Tesco job is approximately twice as popular as the other two professions. At a young age this might be considered acceptable as entry level jobs are a part of growing up, but after university, the entry-level job should properly be seen as a curse. In the United States and England, a university education comes at a great expense and most students incur some level of debt upon graduation (the average student debt in the US is \$26,000 for a college graduate).[18] This debt prompts many students to seek the highest pay possible upon graduation. This does bring up a question about office work that is at the same pay level as Tesco. Would women be willing to forgo better pay in order to work in the higher status office Job?

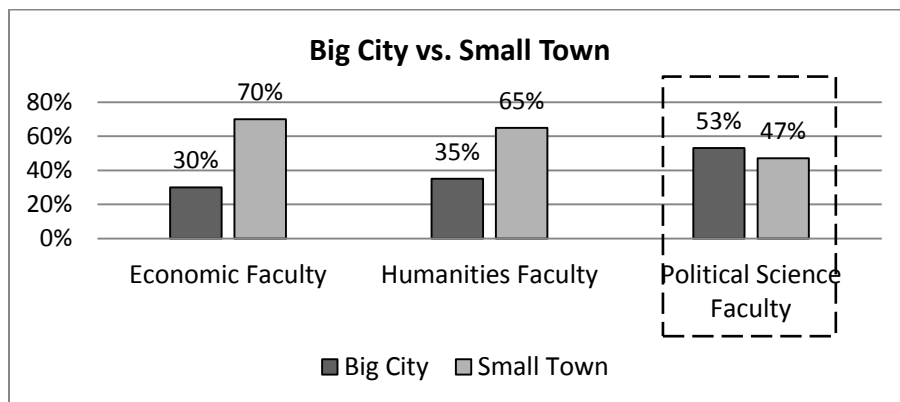
In this survey, men are more likely to gravitate towards the factory job as they understand the expectancy that men should earn money. (Tesco is not an occupation for a grown man).

More important for our respondents would be to gauge the changes in attitude towards these jobs as students get older. The appeal of Tesco remains high among women (an exception is the Economics Faculty, where the attention shifted to farming). Interestingly, Political Science students have the most interest in the car factory, especially as they age. For those students studying economics and management, many forget that much of the management jobs are not in offices but on the factory floor, yet manufacturing has a relatively low appeal to the Economic student. Thus careers in economic, finance, management, etc. are seen as desk jobs, not hands on operations.

Part 3 - Slide 12

Q. 17 A ↓   ↑ B	1st Response Aerial view of large city 2nd Response Aerial view of small town Trade-off Aerial view of a metropolitan area and an aerial view of a small village. Indicates areas where the subject wishes to live.
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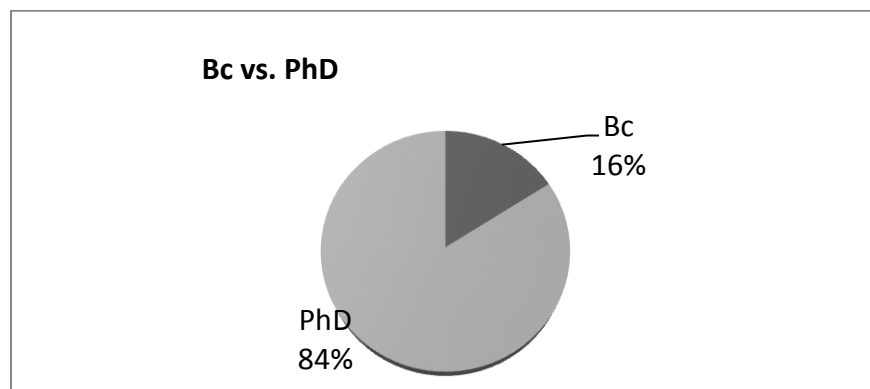
Even though most respondents want to work in the big city few want to live there. These two aerial photos show a metropolis and a very small town. The Political Science department prefers the big city (but only the women, as more men indicated a preference for smaller towns). From the age of 19-20 to 21-23 there is a fairly rapid increase of conservatism as adult roles are taken on, and interest in the smaller town increases. Eventually, the dazzle of the big city gives way to the idyllic concept of small-town Europe with quaint homes and gardens.



This does beg the question why few people like the farmer when presumably they would be living close to him in a small community, as the results show that 63 percent of the students pick the community surrounded by farm fields. Thus we can see a conflict between the need to go to the metropolitan area to gain employment and a desire for a smaller community — evidence that all is not lost in the disadvantaged areas.

Part 3 - Slide 15

Q. 20 Diploma A  Bc B  PhD	1st Response- Diploma-Bachelors 2nd Response- Diploma- PhD Trade-off Determine the preference for ending school early to start work vs. staying in school longer. (Note that the middle Master's degree is not given as a choice).
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This question was designed to find if there was any significance for a bachelor's degree. Ideally, a bachelor's degree should provide enough knowledge to enter the workforce with enough security and purchasing power for adulthood. The extra two years in the workforce should adequately compensate for the less-than-master status. However, a Bachelor's is seen to have such little utility that it is as little more than a halfway marker through university. This is in sharp contrast to the United States where roughly 30.4 percent of the population have a bachelors, 8 percent master's, and 3 percent PhD.[19] Roughly half of the Master's degree go to teachers in Education. This is a product of the teacher certification system in the US, as school teachers must do post-graduate work (while they are teaching). Thus, few people outside of education faculties go on to get a master's or higher and fewer are willing to pay for it.

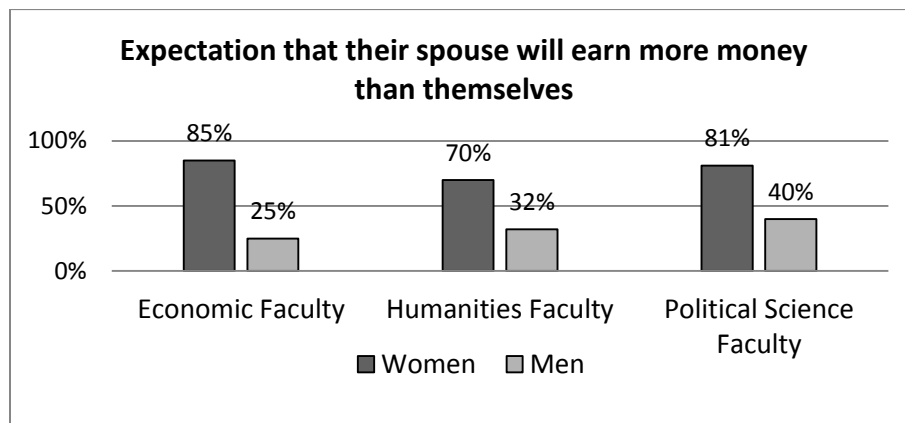
According to the OECD, the graduation rate in Slovakia is now higher than in the United Kingdom.[20] A bachelor's degree in the US is also a longer process with a minimum of four years needed for completion and with roughly 40 percent more class contact time than in Slovakia. Slovakia also has an external study programme under which students can attend classes on weekends further diminishing the contact time.

From the response to this questionnaire, the bachelor's degree is seen as just a weigh station towards obtaining a master's. With no option for a master's degree, students overwhelmingly feel that a PhD is necessary (few have any idea what a PhD entails). Today's Bachelor's degree is yesterday's high-school diploma.

Part 3 - Slide 22

Q. 27 My future spouse.... <i>Môj budúci manžel/-ka...</i> A....will make more money than me <i>...bude zarábať viac peňazí ako ja</i> B....will make less money than me <i>... bude zarábať menej peňazí ako ja</i>	Response measurement To gauge the value the respondent places on spousal earning potential.
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This question measures the expectation of earning prowess for potential partners. As much as the politically-correct world argues for gender equality for pay, the expectation is still that men will make more money than women, even with both sexes having the same education. With both male and female, the expectation was that men would make more money than women. As the onus of the primary caregiver for children fall to women, there is the historical precedent that men make the money at least to cover for the time that women are caring for small children (between infancy and three years of age). When men are unable to make more money than their spouse, the question arises—what then?



In regard to economic migration, the advantage goes to women with high marital potential. In contrast, men need to find higher level work and, as a migrant making a basic pay, would not be as easily able to compete. This too, becomes a factor in obtainment of identity capital and choices about where to live.

6 Identity impact on education

This research has demonstrated that social, cultural, and identity capital can be more important than economic capital, especially for young people. This has an important impact on education as University education of all stripes provide the necessitated status that our society demands. In this regard, the Universities are providing a valuable service and it cannot be dismissed as frivolous. This, however, creates a quandary for society as trades education become an afterthought. The following anecdote illustrates the point.

One day, during a conference, a high level education official was extolling the values of higher education and its absolute necessity in life when a tenured university professor asked: “If that were true, then why does my plumber make so much more money than me?” One could ask: if plumbers were so highly paid, then why does nobody want to be one?

The plumber lacks the identity capital that has now become an expectation today. An ideal solution would be to find a way to incorporate certain skill sets into the university education system. Currently, education becomes an either/or proposition with choice between trades and University education. Trades schools can give certain people skills for a life-time of gainful employment, but do not provide the status desired at the appropriate time of life, when it is so important.

Many students entering university are in danger of gaining an education that is out of balance with the reality of the work force leading to structural unemployment (jobs are available, but only to people with the right skills). Newspapers are filled with examples of unpopular, but necessary jobs calling for specialists in technical fields, yet, socially, these jobs do not feed the need for status, especially in the appropriate age of when one is considering their educational choices. In this regard, the Bachelor’s degree, no matter which study programme one chooses, is still a valuable asset and from the point of view of this research should not be restricted.

Many have called upon universities to change their mission, but it cannot be seen as elitism (turning humanity majors into plumbers will never be a saleable marketing strategy). It needs to be recognized that a certain amount of cerebral challenge is expected from society, and it is here that universities are fulfilling this goal even though it may not be directly transferable to the current or future job market. Slovakia is currently reviewing the higher-education structure with a stricter guideline on what can be considered a university—the accreditation process. Slovakia now has 23 universities. The new guidelines, however, could leave the country with just four, mostly the universities that deal with technical subjects. [21] The remaining university could be demoted to the status of *vysoká škola*, or college. Potentially, this could have the effect of elevating interest in STEM subjects, but the opposite is not likely to occur regarding the skilled trades. The main effect will likely be a clearer delineation between higher education and their subjects (STEM courses will be taught at universities while other subjects will be taught at colleges). This proposal is already facing opposition, as many are opposed to its premise.

What is certain is that no changes should be made that could be seen as punishing a whole section of society. Higher education is an expectation, no matter, the subject. What is clear is that higher-level trades must be given a higher status in society and this is not necessarily a market-driven decision. In terms of Anthony Giddens’s thoughts on modernity, the individual must be given a chance to create a narrative for themselves that is in keeping with their expectations. Education, be it trades, college, or university, needs to reflect this challenge.

CONCLUSION

This paper has established the importance of identity capital for young people in choices that will shape their future. It has presented the notion that status is more important than money. Most individuals try to define themselves in a way that is in keeping with society's expectations. In doing so, we write our life narrative that defines who we are. In terms of what we choose to study or where we choose to live, this narrative is paramount. If a field of study is to be successful, it is important that it provides the tools for writing this story. If a city, town, village, or a part of the country wants to be successful, they must provide the opportunities for writing this story. Only then, can a rebalancing take place.

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