Identity Formation and Identity Strategies among Ethnic Minority Adolescents

Mária Neményi
Institute of Sociology, HAS
## Identity strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Maintenance of difference</th>
<th>Trivialization of difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Involuntary / Non-conscious</strong></td>
<td>Ghetto-life</td>
<td>Underclass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voluntary / Conscious</strong></td>
<td>Ethnic pride</td>
<td>Assimilation / Cosmopolitanism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Ghetto-life”

„We live in the landfill. Recycled material, copper, aluminum, beer canes… they are giving a better price, 20-30 per day. It is when you can do more or less. I think having children in the house you only get problems and trouble. If one day there will be shortage, how to give them what they need? But you do tomorrow the same as you do today, as the wheel spins. … When I was little, I wanted to become a doctor. I wanted to change my house, human vision, discrimination against Gypsies. I thought if I had a high position, I could help the poor. If I had where to stay, where to work, I would do better… Of course you have three options: to steal, to beg, or to prostitute yourself.”
“Ethnic (or religious) pride”

- „....for us, the Muslim community, religion plays a very important role... If he simply respects religion, it means that between the ages of 10 and 12 he will know the way to the Mosque. So if he knows that way, there won’t be any problem. Just with his lessons at the Mosque, leaving the national education aside, we’ll see that that child will be well educated compared to a child who doesn’t even know about religion... My friends are Muslim like me, an Algerian, a Tunisian, a Mauritian, it’s mixed. That’s why I say the country doesn’t count.”
“Underclass”

• “I feel like an Eritrean because I look like one. It is very obvious with my dark skin and dark eyes. If I meet someone in the street, they don’t look at me like a Swede, they think I am an African or an Eritrean. Therefore I feel like an Eritrean. …I want to move to another country because I don’t think my opportunities are that many here. For instance, my brother is an educated machine engineer but gets no job and has to work in the subway. The same with my father. When I look at my family, I see how it works here.”
“Assimilationism / Cosmopolitanism”

• “Pride isn’t really my thing. I mean, I see a lot of people who claim their country: « I represent this, I represent that », while the guy doesn’t even have papers from his country. He’s got French papers and all. Frankly, it’s not something I take to heart. I feel neither French, nor Moroccan, nor American. For me, representing a country without having a good reason to do so is stupid. A president, if he represents a country OK, he’s a president, it’s normal. But a guy who goes once a year to his country and who says he represents it, it’s stupid. They just do that to make trouble and to look down on others, to give themselves some pseudo-superiority.”