Imagined Futures: How Ethnic Minority Adolescents see themselves in Adulthood

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Abstract
Our research has collected rich accounts of how the targeted students from ethnic minorities project their adult lives to be. Since the students were in the age when they were urged to decide whether they continue their education or enter the labor market, the question of possible pathways into future carrier as well as perspectives was in the foreground. The presentation will claim that students of ethnic majority background imagined their future life in a nuclear family in which both of the adults have a solid but steady income and appeared to be optimistic. As opposed to the above, students of ethnic minority background saw their future as indifferent from their present (poor) circumstances and, both girls and boys, expressed their fear and anxiety concerning their future employment and subsistence. The latter underpins the fact that for those who belong to the lowest socio-economic positions in society any further social decline implies utmost existential fears. While education was in this sense attributed great significance as a source of individual success and a chance for upward mobility, the actual ‘choices’ of ethnic minority students have been very much controlled and restricted by such as: school performance or availability of resources like a supportive family network, role models of successful ambitions in the close environment, or teachers’ initiatives for the particular encouragement of otherwise disadvantaged pupils.