Identity Formation and Identity Strategies among Ethnic Minority Adolescents

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Abstract

The rich empirical material accumulated during community research enables the specification of some basic identity strategies of students participating in our project. By constructing a typology of identity strategies we wanted to demonstrate that adolescents’ vision about their future life is deeply embedded into their present situation: family background, location, families’ relation toward traditions, religion, peer-relations within and outside school, possibilities concerning further education – all these factors influence future plans in terms of identity strategies. Considering the key dimensions relevant for the whole research, the main criteria in determining these basic types include the maintenance, as opposed to the trivialization or negligence, of ethnic difference, on the one hand, and the involuntary or non-conscious, in contrast with the voluntary or conscious, assumption of ethnic belonging, on the other. Along these two axes, the resulting typology forms a two-by-two diagram in which four basic types can defined: “Ghetto-life”, “Ethnic (or religious) pride”, “Underclass”, and “Assimilationism / Cosmopolitanism”.