

Abstract Template

TITLE: Is the sense of belonging a strategic resource for adolescent identity? A comparison between rural and urban communities

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Abstract

It is important to analyse the correlation existing between the phenomenon of youth and the notion of generation because prevailing perspectives (psychosocial, demographic and economic) still hold that young people experience transition. This approach has been criticized by recent sociological studies which, availing of generational perspectives in order to focus on the young, show that youth is a condition marked by economic, social and political issues. In agreement with Why and Woodman's analysis, the radical transformations that occurred after 1970 have led to profound changes in the post-1970 generation, something that has significantly affected the subsequent cohorts. Of this change in lifestyle, in subjectivity and in processes of adaptation, it is interesting to analyse how the most recent cohorts, born into the digital era, relate to the dimension of membership. In the light of these assumptions a (qualitative and quantitative) pilot study was carried out among adolescents in three Italian cities with a view to investigating the nature of the link between adolescent development and a sense of belonging, in order to understand if and to what extent it may prove a strategic resource for identity studies. The results of the research outline two important considerations. First, that, the prevalently symbolic cultural dimension (Durkheim) of subjectively perceived (Weber) belonging coexists with a (less important) ascribed dimension (Tonnies). This multi-dimensionality also implies the existence of multiple affiliations (Simmel) where the relational and a-spatial dimensions are linked to the symbolic-cultural one. Secondly, analysing the formation of identity in relation to values, belonging and otherness, it is clear that cultural membership and relationships are associated with values of solidarity, universality and greater tolerance, creating an open, porous kind of identity while, where the ascribed dimension is related to particularist and familistic values, a strong sense of intolerance fosters the formation of closed-localist identities.