

*Paper for Conference on: “Young people and societies”
Bologna University, Forli, 26th -28th March 2009*

Sven Mørch & Helle Andersen
Department of Psychology.
Copenhagen University

Draft.(contact: sven.moerch@psy.ku.dk)

Ethnic minority youth as cultural agents between family and individualisation

Young people with migration or ethnic background (ethnic minority youth¹) are as all other young people in a most differentiated late modern world faced by a challenge of social integration.

In this paper ethnic minority youth are analysed as all other young people, as agents of their lives or as cultural agents in the process of social integration. Therefore, it is the youth perspective, which comes first and the migrant or ethnic cultural background, which comes later. Especially youth individualisation and family support is analysed according to different forms of late modern family development.

The ethnic picture in Europe is in a change. More and more people are drawn to Western European societies. Many of these new immigrants are well integrated in Western European everyday life. Ethnic minority youth are educated or engaged in education and therefore they take up jobs and political engagement as other local ethnic citizens. At present, however, small parts of ethnic minority youth have taken the front pages in many newspapers all over Europe. Gang behaviour escalates. In Scandinavian countries also shooting and gang wars between ethnic minority youth gangs and established Hells Angels' groups seem to become everyday news. “Gang behaviour” therefore does not only follow ethnic minority youth. It seems to be a more broad behaviour pattern in late modern societies. However, especially ethnic minority youth problems have reached the front pages and focused the attention on “young people with non European cultural background”. In analysing and understanding the special ethnic minority youth situation in Denmark and also in other European countries many different issues have been discussed. Firstly, the situation of ethnic minority youth is seen as a special individualisation challenge caused by a family socialisation, which is not directed toward living in a new and late modern society. Secondly, the late modern

¹ The concept of ethnic minority youth is both a scientific and everyday concept which of cause is not clear and maybe even not useful. In everyday understanding, it mostly refers to young people with a non-western cultural background. All young people are agents of their local community and as such, they will have differing cultural backgrounds. The point of this paper also is to develop a more useful concept of young people as cultural agents.

youth life is seen as discriminatory to ethnic minority youth and difficult to engage in for ethnic minority youth because of low expectations of social integration. So, ethnic minority youth are often seen as disintegrated or as victims of “cultural and social migration”.

Media and politicians who explain what is happening often have a more “problem specific” attention and may therefore neglect the challenges of understanding or framing the problem in a broader scope. They look for practical explanations of “ethnic gang behaviour” which point directly towards intervention strategies. Especially politicians seem to go for quick solutions. And their first solution seems to be that problems should simply be taken care of by the police or maybe more social workers. For the time being a Danish nationalist party (Dansk Folkeparti) argues for the creation of a special “gang-police” to solve the problems. The close connection between problem understanding and intervention policies often makes it difficult to see, which one comes first. So the political responses to “ethnic minority” youth problems hide both the complex issues of ethnic minority youth life as well as the fact that gang behaviour is a broad societal and not especially ethnic issue.

In this paper, we therefore turn the understanding around. Instead of looking at the issue of ethnicity as culture and then investigate its implications for young people we will start looking at the challenges of late modern youth life and then look for the specific issues which become challenges to young people with a migration or ethnic minority background.

These perspectives, which will be set fourth in this paper, have been developed in the UP2YOUTH project: “Transitions to work of young people with an ethnic minority or migrant background” (Mørch et al 2008).

Perspectives of understanding

When we try to understand young people’s behaviour we have to be aware, that many different perspectives and theories exist which we may lean to. And each perspective or theory may give us important information. In analogy, we may think of the ways we may try to find out what goes on inside a house. We may look through the different windows, and dependent on which window we choose we will observe quite different things. Living room, kitchen, and bedroom will give us different ideas of what is going on. Young people may be understood, for example, from biological, psychological, social, and economical perspectives, and all these perspectives may be informative. The interesting aspect of this analogy is not however, which window should be seen as the right window, but to be aware, that each perspective may have specific personal and social consequences. Besides this, in research it is often forgotten, that we may also choose to look at the world from inside the house. We may try to see and understand how young people as agents try to manage their everyday challenges. We should see ethnic minority youth as intentional agents of their life.

In order to understand ethnic minority youth activities it therefore seems important to understand the challenges they face in youth life and education in late modern societies, and the role of family and peers in supporting youth agency. Maybe the popular understanding, that families are causing troubles for ethnic minority youth is not right. Maybe they are trying to support their kid’s social integration into a different and often problematic integrative position.

In this paper, different perspectives are chosen, but our main point is to understand ethnic minority youth as agents of their lives, as cultural agents. In our view this demands a critical reflection on the issues of culture, socialisation and also of youth as transition.

Ethnic minority youth are of course faced by the challenge of becoming cultural agents as all other young people in a most differentiated late modern world, and maybe it is not cultural differences, which are important, but rather the social construction of being an ethnic minority young person.

An activity theory perspective

To frame this analysis of why and how ethnic minority youth behave as they do, an activity theory shows how young people's cultural agency may be understood. An activity theory may be seen as a tool for analysing individual behaviour.

The main issue of activity theory is often seen as acknowledging human activity as intentional. According to Parsonian theory, people act "normatively intentional" (Layder 1994); according to ethnomethodological theory, people act "contextually intentional" (Heritage 1987); and in Giddens' theory, people are intentional in "making a difference" (Giddens 1987).

An awareness that people in some abstract sense act intentionally, however, is not the only central aspect of an activity theory. Rather, an activity theory should focus on activities as people's *intentional engagement in social challenges in individual lives*. Activity should not be isolated from its social contexts and embeddings in more broad societal relations. Activity points to a mixture of thinking, feeling and acting in demanding social contexts (Mørch 2007).

This active use of societal, social and individual conditions in the development of intentional activity is more understandable when we look at an example. If we are standing outside an open window to a 9th grade classroom, we might observe that the students are speaking English. Then the bell rings. The students rise and leave the classroom. Ten minutes later, the bell rings again and the students come back, sit down and start speaking French. This change in their behaviour is mostly non-understandable from a psychological point of view. However, it is quite simple to understand if we look at the behaviour as activity. What the students are doing is acting both according to the school demands in English and French and to their own facility with language. They act within a context or situation that presents them with a task or challenge.

Therefore, the individual uses societal conditions or acts within conditions as organised possibilities and constraints of action. Conditions, then, should not only be seen as "rules and resources of action", but as demands for activity (Mørch 1993). Conditions as historically developed tasks, possibilities and constraints of human activity are often contradictory and diffuse. For this reason, the individual will have both to make active use of and change societal conditions in his activity. Societal conditions exist in social contexts. They are organised within social contexts and organise social contexts, for example, in the case of the school system and school curriculum. School, as a social context of youth, exhibits contradictory possibilities and constraints of learning and youth life, but at the same time, youth is part of the process of changing the school.

Also, the individual uses his/her own previous experiences and personal capacities as his/her individual tools or conditions for action. In the actualisation of societal conditions, the individual uses him- or herself and actualises his/her own potentialities in the situation and according to the conditions of the situation. Through this process, the individual develops further capacities, and also self-awareness, self-understanding or a personal identity, which may work both as a force and as a restriction in later activities (Andersen & Mørch 2005).

In actualisation, the individual's understanding of societal, social and individual conditions plays an important role. The particular conditions the individual finds important in the specific situation are crucial to the mastering of actual problems or tasks, and the conditions the individual finds important in understanding his or her own life are important to the engagement in actualisation. Nevertheless, the understanding of being a group member and part of a social context influences the activity. Therefore, knowledge and knowledgeability, a sort of sense making, about both social life and oneself, are very important qualities in human life and also a challenge to everyday coping.

The development of activities, knowledgeability and self-understanding takes place in the social relationship in the context. Social relations and interaction are crucial in actualisation. In this way, social relations are important for understanding individual activity. Youth cultures, for example, should be seen as representing common forms of activity patterns. Youth cultures are activities

made by youngsters in mastering youth-life. Therefore, cultures are both activities and values of activity, which develops in social contexts.

The broad idea of activity theory can be summed up like this (Mørch 2005):

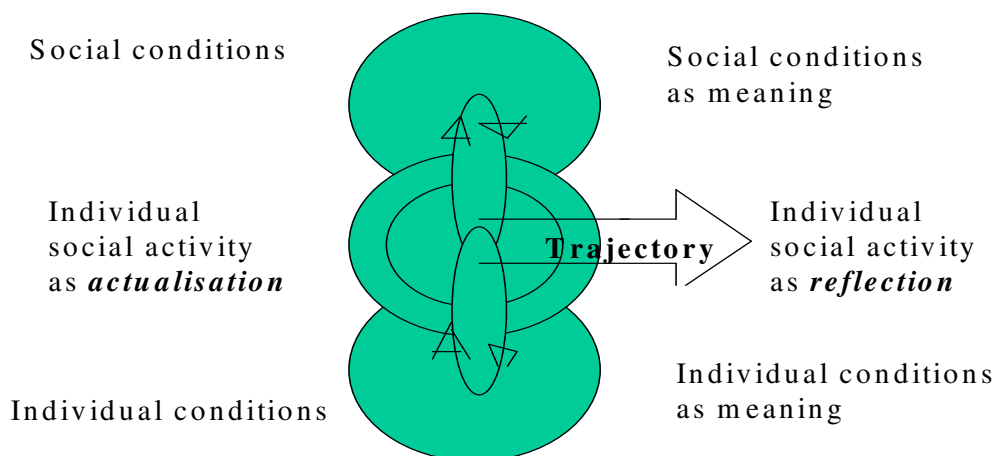


Fig. 1: The general activity theory

Individual activity is reflective actualisation of societal and individual conditions within a space or context. Therefore, the individual understanding of conditions, the way they are made meaningful to the individual, is important. The context is social, involves more individuals, and becomes influential in the sense making of conditions and in the construction of the individual trajectory (2). The individual participates in developing the activities in the context or space and is at the same time a “user” of the activities, which already exist in the space. In this way, “structuration” becomes an important aspect of individual activity and the challenge of developing ones own trajectory or biography becomes the individual developmental issue.

An important consequence of the model is that standing outside and looking at behaviour of cause gives ground for theoretical reflections about why things happen. However, to use the activity theoretical perspective means that activities are seen from the individual agent perspective and therefore looks at the agent as placed in both societal and individual conditions and located in social contexts.

This activity theory refers to all social activities but for the understanding of youth development, the model seems particularly helpful. Youth development is about individualisation and the development of agency, and it takes place in specific constructed contexts.

Individualisation and the youth development.

Ethnic minority youth are becoming agents of a late modern youth life. Youth life however is a social construction, which is basic to social integration. If we look at European youth development it have been shown, how youth life was constructed in the bourgeois society, which took its form from the start of the 19th century. Youth seemed to follow the development of a bourgeoisie, which should take over both productive and political demands in society. Youth therefore became a transition phase between family life and adult productive society, and this transition was formed by inclusion into different forms of education. As all other young people ethnic minority youth are

² The concept of trajectory refers to the path people take in different situations, also as a life story. It comes from ballistics and is used by Asplund (1983). An interesting perspective is that tracks can be seen as existing before they are used. The trajectory concept points to the construction of the trajectory in activity.

placed in today's challenge of youth, which in late modern societies is formed as a life phase which is oriented to the development of an individualisation which would guarantee social integration in late modern society. The main tool for this integrative development is education. Therefore, ethnic minority youth are challenged by the problems of "individualisation in biography" (fig 2) (Mørch 2005).

This challenge may take different forms according to the construction of youth life as a biographical opportunity of individualisation in a local process of social integration. To understand ethnic minority youth therefore focuses at the challenges of biography development and the demands for individualisation in local contexts. And both challenges vary across Europe and also may contradict traditional and cultural expectation from especially family life, and here especially for migrant ethnic minority youth.

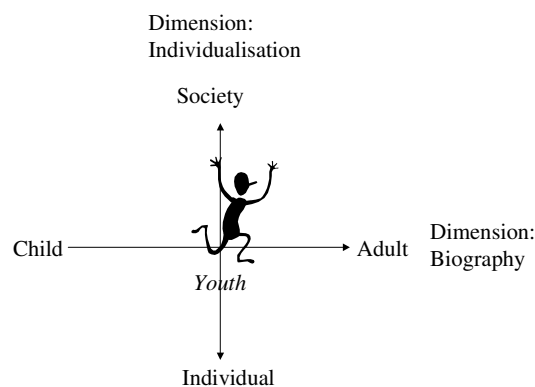


Fig. 2: Youth theoretical dimensions

The youth picture of social integration in biography therefore has changed historically. Both the individualisation challenge and the organising of biography have changed.

In the former and also traditional, basically agricultural, societies a specific youth life or youth biography did not exist. Here some clear differences existed between children and adults, and the training for becoming an adult took place in everyday farming life under the lead of the adults.

In the modern society a phase of transition developed. Family life had developed a childhood and therefore a necessary transition from being a child to becoming an agent of modern bourgeois society (Andersen 1986, Mørch 1985). The demands for qualifications according to productive life and political engagement created a long educational life. Therefore, educational institutions organised a youth biography according to social class belonging and individualisation demands, and the individuality phase was often taken care of by teachers.

Today late modern society is challenging the social construction of youth. Youth and, therefore, social integration concerns all young people. The development of individual competence does not only take place in educational institutions but in many different social contexts. Individual learning trajectories are becoming life long. At the same time, the popularity of youth life has invaded both childhood and adult life making both disappearing. This has also changed the biographical perspective. Youth is no longer a transition time between childhood and adulthood, but maybe more a consumer time involving all citizens. Therefore, youth life is maybe not as much an organised time of individualisation and integration into an adult world as it is an integration into the consumer world. Today maybe youth biography seems to be an individual life style choice much more than a social and structural construction (Baumann 2001).

We may therefore point to three possible scenarios, which have historical roots, but which may also exist as youth forms today:

- A short - if any- youth life dominated by adults. This transition model comes from the agricultural society model.
- An educationally formed youth life, or institutional biography formed by teachers. This transition model comes from the modern society model:
- A personal or individual choice biography supported by media, peers, parents and teachers. This “transition” model is the model of the late modern society.

These perspectives make it obvious that the creation, construction and challenges of youth are dependent on the changes along the two dimensions of individualisation and biography. The process of social integration changes with the changing of societal production and political reorganisation, as it is discussed in post- or late-modern literature (Mørch & Andersen 2005). For understanding the ethnic minority youth situation, therefore, it becomes important to develop a further understanding of the forms of late modern challenges for individualisation and family support in youth educational life.

Late modern individualisation and biography challenges.

All young people are in their youth life in late modern western societies confronted by the demands of late modern individualisation (Mørch 2003, Giddens 1991, Beck 1992, Baumann 2000).

The overall challenge of social integration points to two different perspectives of individualisation: At the one hand an institutional individualisation process existing at an institutional level and at the other hand an individual individualisation formed by the way the individual develops his/her individual biography in individual life. And because late modern development “de-institutionalises” the institutional practices and therefore the institutional individualisation process, the “individual individualisation” and “individual societalisation” have become more important but also much more an individual challenge and choice (Mørch 1988).

The two aspects of individualisation both point to changing societal relations and to two different historical constructs: The development from the early modern society to the late modern society is among other things about the challenge of deinstitutionalisation. We may talk about a shift in an individualisation modus from an early “modern” modus where “institutional individualisation” was central, to a late-modern modus, where “individual individualisation” has become focused. The late modern development has underlined the new situation in which the individual life has become deinstitutionalised according to space and rules and unsecured according to biographical trajectory development. Life has become “episodes” and individual trajectories have become a biographical subjectivation, as it is called by Leccardi (Leccardi 2006, Baumann 2001 & 1995).

These changes have influenced youth development (Mørch 2007). As the model (fig.3) shows, youth as placed inside the individualisation process has been involved in a change from a modern individualisation process (modus 1) to a late modern individualisation process (modus 2).

Challenges of modernisation

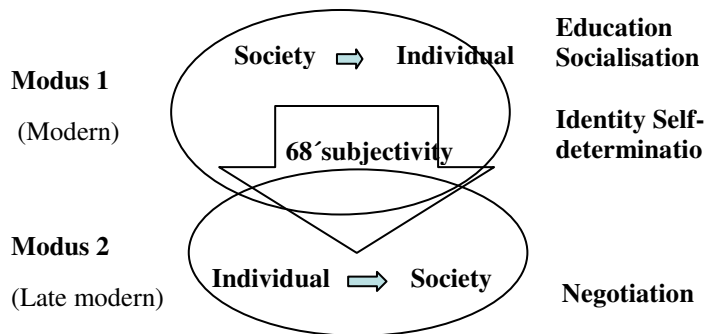


Fig 3. The changing modes of individualisation from
The modern society to the late modern society

In early modern society, individualisation was a process, which was guided by social institutions of society, especially family and educational institutions. Therefore, youth was formed by family life and educational participation. Institutional individualisation was rather strong and authoritarian. In 'modus 1', the family and the school were responsible for the development of the individual. Qualifications, normative learning, upbringing, and socialisation were central parts of the modern individualisation. At the start of the 2000s, this institutional individualisation had spread from the middle classes to all social classes. In the 1960s and 1970s, this individualisation process was criticized and attacked by young people. They had through school life and family life developed an individual subjectivity, which made them able to criticise authoritarian adults. Especially young people who experienced this new subject status (the 68's) were demanding equal rights and change. Schoolteachers and parents should no longer decide what young people should do; instead, they should support the development and individual individualisation of the young people. Adults and children/youth should be seen as being equal. The resulting political and popular interest in supporting equality and a democratic relation between adults and children/youth particularly found its way into the field of pedagogy, where it democratised the view of children and youth and created a new "child-view" or child-understanding in late modern western world.

Today, the late modern "modus 2" view of the individual as a subject is generally acknowledged in both political and scientific arguments in late modern societies. Late modern society is based on unique, autonomous, and self-attentive individuals, and therefore society must support the individuals' social qualities, but more importantly also their societal qualities, the individual's sociality (Andersen & Mørch 2005).

Some adults have a hard time to see their own roles in connection to children and young people. To be equal involves an anti-authoritarian attitude which can result in a situation in which children and young people are left to themselves and maybe causing them to become individualistic and even egocentric. At the same time, individualistic and egocentric youth find their social network among peers, a peer culture, which may threaten society, and on the other hand, such youth also may jeopardise their own individualisation and socialisation process. They may position themselves in opposition to a process of developing into society to face societal responsibilities. Sociality can fail. The new anti-authoritarian, democratic, and subjectivist society produces both winners and losers. In the new liberal western world, the new individualisation demands are often difficult, challenging, and contrasting (Beck 1992; Giddens 1991; Bauman 2001, 2002).

Demands of self-managing and finding ones own answers pose many young people with unsolvable challenges in a changing world. In addition, a growing inequality in lives makes the differentiation process of developing into society an individual challenge. At the same time, the antiauthoritarian or “democratic” society makes the difference between being young and adult very unclear. Also, the braking down of institutionalised biographies makes the difference between young and adult uncertain. Instead, we all become “consumers of modernity” Family life is dominated by shopping and consumption, and in political life, we have become consumers of politics. Late modern political life makes voters to consumers of politics. The logic of consumerism also penetrates into our personal lives, e.g. it has become normal for young people to present themselves as a form of product offered at the youth market. They may do this in many ways e.g. consuming and by establishing a self-promoting profile on a dating website or by creating a personal website, where they can display themselves. In addition, especially media presents individualisation as an individualistic competition, which asks for individual talents and looks and not very often for education and competencies.

Individualisation is changing and so is the biography. In the late modern world, there are no transitions. We are all consumers, and we move in different contexts, which are all fragments of a greater late modern life style challenge. Biography is formed in individual trajectories (Mørch 2003). Youth is no longer a clear-cut transition phase as it was in the bourgeois society. Instead, youth has almost become the aim of your attention. Today everybody wants to be young. Young people appear in the media, commercials, music etc. The Peter Pan-dream of staying young is a theme for adults, and children’s wishes to become young as fast as possible are encouraged by parents and pedagogues in terms of clothes, sexualisation, singing contests etc.

The “prolonged youth phase” or “consumer life” and particularly the vanishing adult life affect the education system and young people’s future plans. When the clear-cut educational paths become blurred and the adult life becomes invisible or perhaps even non-existing (Cote 2000), young people are forced to make decisions without being able to assess the consequences. Young people are therefore forced to act upon their own reading of the world and by this process form their own futures. They are forced into a structuration or configuration process (Bechmann et al 2008), where they themselves are continuously creating the conditions for their coming actions but without being able to predict the end goal (Giddens 1987, Layder 1994, Mørch 1993). In this situation, the peers have become the most influential reference and social network. Not only are peer relations constructed in children’s and young people’s lives, but also peers are in the same difficult situation and in this situation, they become the most strong support group. Peer life therefore becomes the solution to challenges of self-responsibility, but at the same time also creates a situation of peer control.

The socially organised trajectories have disappeared and left young people with a demand of developing their own individual biography. A special development seems to be, that many young people who do not experience success in educational life do not look for work or adult life. They look for friends and jobs and opportunities which will keep them inside their peer relations network and therefore able to “stay young”. Especially young people who have few opportunities in educational systems therefore look for new ways of making a living or to become societal actors. As they experience both differentiation and – especially ethnic minority youth - discrimination in their everyday lives, they try to find other social contexts and societal opportunities in society. And maybe gangs may be seen as new opportunities to many young people.

Ethnic minority individualisation

Ethnic minority youth are placed in late modern society. As such, they are being individualised in the biography in the same way as other local youth. They are placed in the same educational and social challenges as all other. In most cases, this is not a specific problem, though for some ethnic minority youth problems may show. Ethnic minority youth experience challenges in many ways. The knowledge of norms and social expectation, language problems and late modern practices (e.g. in sexual relations) are part of their family upbringing and therefore cultural or family background becomes important. In addition, biographical perspectives seem challenging. It is not easy to draw future perspectives if adult perspectives are weak and they mostly experience discrimination in everyday life. To become an agent of late modern youth life may be difficult. As the late modern society has become a complicated consumer society and also individualisation therefore includes development of late modern individualisation competencies, youth life is not only about youth lifestyles or cultures. Youth life is based on education and therefore the – often hidden - logic of late modern youth life could be seen as a training of competencies for colonising the future. This means that young people in their youth life overcome childhood and become consumers of late modern youth life but with the perspective that all learning points to the future challenges of being able to organise the future with the help of late modern qualities as reflexivity, knowledge and values.

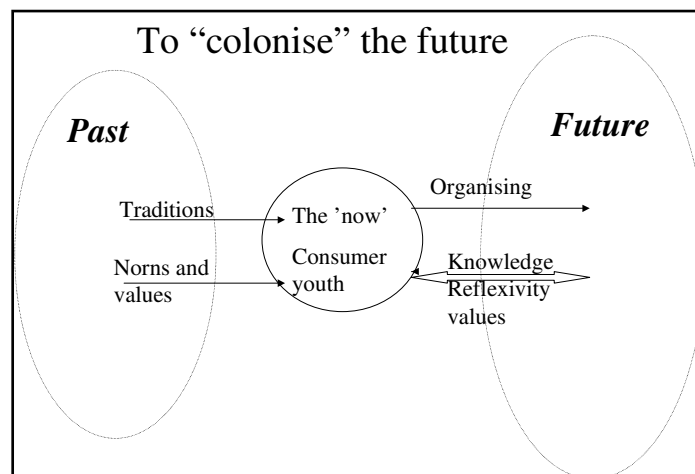


Fig 4: Late modern youth challenges

The challenge for ethnic minority youth is of course the same as for all other young people in western societies. They, however, may be caught in a cultural change situation. At the one hand they may build on or try to adapt their cultural background to late modern societal life or they may at the other hand give up their cultural background and engage in the general competition for the future.

This means that they are under a pressure to become individualised in biography according to the forms, which exist in late modern local society. This pressure is often seen as a normative acculturation pressure and an attack on the individual person. Especially the analysis of ethnic minority family background points to difficulties for engaging in late modern child and youth life – especially for girls.

The question of cultural or social problems of integration:

The understanding of the role culture plays in social integration is depending at a broader understanding of the relation between the individual and culture. Traditionally culture is understood as values and practices, which function as tools for integrating individual and society. In the terms

of Talcott Parsons, culture informs the socialisation process between individual and society. In this way, it tells that individuals must learn to function inside the societal conditions. This model has been criticised in more respects, especially as a model for integrating new and minority ethnic groups. The model points to a normative assimilation of all individuals in society. Therefore, another model has been popular which looks at culture as a general aspect of identity. In this identity–culture model, culture and identity are seen as internally connected. This means that a change in one of the elements also causes changes in the other. The model does not reflect the relation between culture and society. All cultures is seen as having the same value, and is not connected to societal life. In this way culture is not seen as culture in a changing society. The model opposes any social change. To try to influence or change culture implies an attack at the member’s identity.

To overcome the problems in these models and to find a way of understanding the relation between cultural and social integration in late modernity with an individualised social integration we may point to a third model. In this model, the process of individualisation is seen as contextual agency supported by cultural values. Here the adaptive aspect of the Parsonian theory and the conservative outlook in the identity/culture model is overcome. Instead of discussing culture, this model points to the challenges of developing individualisation as cultural agency. In the drawing, it is illustrated like this:

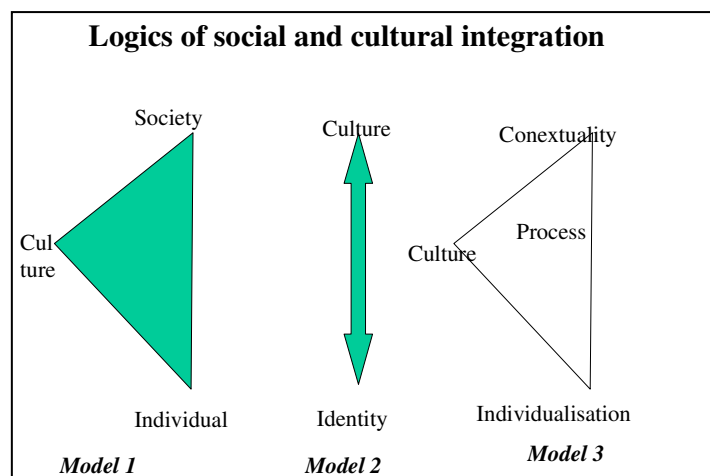


Fig 5: Different culture perspectives

To understand difficulties for young ethnic minority youth in competition for the future it seems important to clarify different challenges according to family and school life, which follow the process of becoming a cultural agent.

Many children in e.g. Denmark come from families, which are not very well integrated, which have little money and no education. They have low social economical background.

Also late modern societies have become more and more differentiated. Especially educational systems therefore differentiate students according to future job possibilities in a most differentiated society. Youth with an ethnic or migration cultural background therefore, will often experience individual defeat in school life caused by social background. And as Furlong and Catmel have documented in the analysis of ethnic youth in UK, the combination of social inequality and social differentiation may lead to marginalisation for young people (Furlong and Catmel 1997).

This marginalisation situation not only affects a growing part of e.g. the local or Danish population, but especially ethnic minority youth.

Though many ethnic youth come from families with the same socio-economical and educational background as ethnic local youth, a greater proportion has parents who are uneducated, unemployed, on social welfare etc. Therefore ethnic youth in a higher proportion are marginalised e.g. according to education and job opportunities. And for young people experiencing marginalisation, it seems obvious to engage with peers and to “marginalise” themselves in an opposition to a society, which marginalises them.

This logic gives some perspectives on ethnic minority youth. They are in many ways dependent on their family background, but maybe not for cultural but a mixture of cultural and social reasons.

Family perspectives

The role of families in supporting young people therefore points back to a complex mixture of family life, youth life understanding, culture and socio/economical resources. In addition, the inclusion in a late modern youth life with growing influence from peers also changes the role of the family socialisation perspective.

At the same time as the family seems to loose its influence to peers, we however experience that family background seems most crucial for young people’s development. Family life influences children’s and young people’s educational opportunities (Stølan & Mørch 2004).

To get a first grip on family influence and family support in youth life we may focus how families could be analysed according to how they take care of their functions, or how they become families. From a family historical perspective (Anderson 1980, 1980, Donzelot, 1979), we see that three basic structures of family exist, both as they have developed in history and also as they function today. First is the traditional, kin-orientated family, which we may call *the reproductive family*, both because it reproduces family forms from farming societies and makes the family in the sense of “kin” the agent of history, but also because it “reproduces” children. Children are brought up towards being as the adults were before. This does not mean, of course, that the family does not try to “modernise”, or that the parents do not want their children (especially boys) to be better qualified, for example, than they themselves are. However, in this type of family, the family comes before the individual. Family “honour” is more important than individual – developmental - freedom. In this family, the children may have problems keeping up with the many demands of late-modern life and education and, at the same time, engaging in their more traditional family life patterns. Not surprisingly, these types of problems may be most characteristic during youth, and especially among young immigrants whose families come from rural areas.

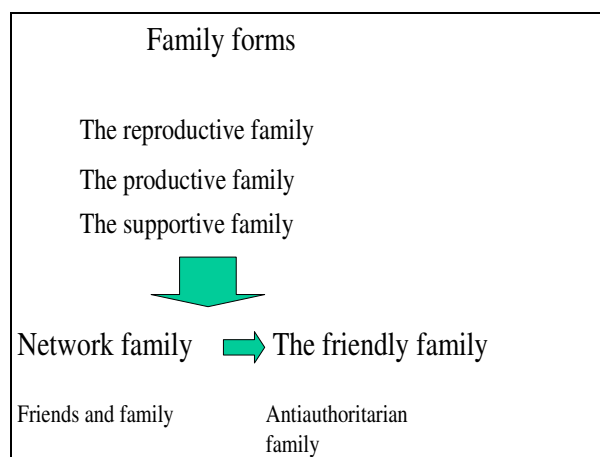


Fig 6. Family forms

The second type is *the productive family*. It still has a traditional perspective, and the perspectives come from the bourgeois family. Today it is understood as the middle-class nuclear family or housewife family (Frønes, 1994, Frønes & Brusdal 2000, Andersen & Mørch 1986). This family is no longer based on “kin“, but more on a close relation between parents and children. As such, it socialises children or produces children. It creates children and gives them prerequisites for a later individualisation in youth and educational life. At the same time, however, this family form can produce personal problems for children and young people. The challenge of being “good enough” and fulfilling parents’ expectations may create psychological distress or disturbances for the young people.

The third type of family is *the supportive family* in which the parents try to function as friends or maybe peers of their children. This family is trying to forget traditional family patterns in its orientation towards late modern individual challenges. It is a transition from the modern family to a modernistic family, in which all family members are individuals in their own right (Beck 1992, Mørch & Andersen 2005). This family may become a form of network or association that competes for influence with other networks that the family members engage in. The late modern family is both a result of a changing world and also a partner in this societal change towards modernisation. One of the central objectives of the late-modern family is its emotional support of its members and its support for children to exert themselves in society. The central objective is to further the development of the children’s individuality as an inherent quality. The concept of “children as a project” is an example of this orientation (Ziehe, 2001, Ziehe & Stubenrauch 1982). Obviously, the concern of the adults is not that children should be brought up to be strictly like their parents, or that the children are just adults to be. The children are seen as unique persons from the very beginning, strangers so to speak, whom the parents have to get to know and who have a claim on receiving support from parents and other adults for engaging in their future life. This situation of course also often creates problems. Children may be misguided or – maybe more often – they may not be guided or supported at all. They may not be given conditions for developing “ontological security” (Giddens 1991), or they may be unable to participate competently in different institutional developmental practices. Some of these potential problems may be most visible during youth.

In any way, the supportive family may become an active player in developing late modern individualisation. Not only in the sense that it “produces children”, but because it becomes able to support young people and also because it adapts to shifting conditions of individualisation in modernity. It creates new forms of social and organisational “answers”. Thus, the modern developments of youth individualisation and youth life also influence the life of the modernistic family. The family becomes a supportive network like other sorts of networks.

In this family parents may see themselves as friends or comrades to their children. Therefore, only the supportive or “friendly” family seems able to support the late modern youth life development. By becoming friends or even peers to their kids, the family will still have the ability to help and support their young kids.

The construction of youth differentiation and ethnic differences.

Both the socialisation process and the family function influence youth development. And especially the ways the different aspects of upbringing and family life cooperate seem to become most important.

The Danish Social Research Institute in more research reports has shown the importance of family life (Olsen 2005). This research operates with three variables or risk factors: 1) Parents on social welfare, 2) parents not having a vocational education and 3) children or young persons not living

with both father and mother. From their research, they are able to show, that even that the single factors influence the children's educational success, especially if two or more risks are present simultaneously the risk for non-success in education increases seriously.

In the model, we have included a maybe extra risk, which refers to the ethnic minority situation: Families having a non-local cultural background.

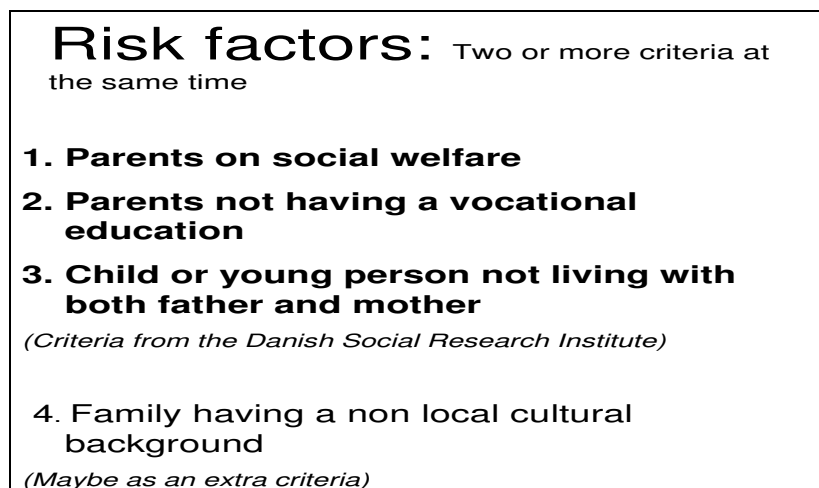


Fig. 7: Family and risk factors

The risk factors point to difficulties in individualisation. And they tell that successful individualisation is very much influenced by family life.

If this perspective is combined with our understanding of family forms and socialisation practices, some perspectives seem to develop. Young people today live in a peer world, but they are also dependent of family life. However, they may be made dependent on peer relations. Very much influence in everyday life comes from the peers. However, family influence is important in forming the way peer life unfolds. Families are not only influential as families in their own right, but also influential according to their ability to support late modern individual individualisation. And this is exactly what the analysis tells. *Families in a late modern world should be able to support individual individualisation as an "equal" or "democratic" process.* Parents should be able to become friends with their kids. The results from the Danish Social Research Institute are very clear. *Families are important in the social integration process, but their success depends on the family's own social integration.*

The family today

Though families today vary all over Europe the late modern development and its challenge of individualisation influences all family development. Families are under pressure to "modernise". Not necessarily to become the supportive family, but to support modern individualisation in children and young persons. The picture may not be unambiguous, but all sorts of family life are under pressure to support youth individualisation and the development of youth subjectivity.

What we can observe today is that the "fragmented contextualisation" (Mørch 2007) or the "biographical subjectivisation" (Leccardi 2006) of individualisation leads to a network construction, which includes family life. Families are under pressure to become contexts like other contexts. This means that all aspects of life are influenced by the challenge of individualisation. At the same time, we can see that the institutional biography is changing. Individualised youth life has become the centre of individualisation and tends to be seen as a primary aim to practise not only for persons

from certain age groups, but for all kinds of persons. This focus on individualised youth life has influenced all parts of society. The role of the family seems not any longer only to be to prepare for adult individualisation, but to be an active partner in the construction of individualisation. Therefore, families are in the midst of a comprehensive change. They are changing according to socialisation goals, to personal relations and to authority structure. But as families, they often have difficulties in both understanding and acting within these new developments and the new challenge of individualisation in the family. Children and youth may become strangers to parents; they become unique projects, who should find their own trajectories, which are far different from the trajectories of their parents. Parents feel they are needed but not what they are needed for. Therefore, parents maybe see children and youth as “friends” and “equals” but have difficulties in finding ways of both securing value- and normative support, but also in taking on their new role as counsellors for their children. They may easily support there children’s cultural agency as a very private subjectivity.

However, families who are able to place themselves inside the late modern socialisation process by being friends with their children are able to influence children’s and young people’s development. In our research project “FATE” (Families in Transition in Europe) we found, that especially this “friendly” relation between parents and kids seems to follow societies where families had turned into supportive families while more “productive” or even “traditional” families functioned quite differently. E.g., it became visible that the late modern Danish family is able to be an anti-authoritarian family (Stølán 2002, Stølán & Mørch 2004). They are friends with their children and in this way able to give help, support and advice. Therefore, the great quality of family life seems to be to be able to use all qualities of family relations in creating a family life. Late modern families may be both “a productive family” and at the same time able to change to a supportive family and in this way find a place in young peoples peer constructed youth life where they may help young people to become late modern agents.

Ethnic youth and individualisation perspectives

The challenging situation for young people may be helped if children and young people can have family support. Therefore, the forms of family support become important for the individualisation process, and in this respect, especially late modern individualisation demands a supportive family. Not only should the family be an integrated social family but also its relations to the kids are important.

If we focus the ethnic minority youth situation many factors are influencing the situation. However, ethnic minority youth is on the road to late modern individualisation as other young people even though they may meet more obstacles to becoming successful. One of those is the family life and family support to manage youth and educational life, late modern individualisation challenges and the process of individual individualisation. It seems obvious, that even though many ethnic minority youth come from well functioning families, more ethnic minority youth – compared to ethnic majority youth - come from families, which are “risk families”.

In line with all other young people in late modern youth life, ethnic minority youth will be influenced by the form of family support. The reproductive family perspective and the risk families are not very qualified in supporting late modern youth. The productive and well-educated family will be able to support individualisation in youth and therefore educational life as long as the youngsters accept the authoritarian relation and have the same life perspectives as the parents. The supportive and well-educated late modern family will be able to support a more individual biography and therefore new life perspectives among young people.

This picture therefore shows that “ethnic youth gang issues” are both an ethnic and not ethnic issue. In addition it shows that the ethnic issue is a social issue and only partly an ethnic issue. Many ethnic minority young people are not supported by their family according to late modern individualisation and they are not successful in educational competition. They may come from “traditional families” which by immigration have become “risk families” in late western societies. One or both parents often are uneducated and on social welfare and also they either do not know or do not like the practices and values of their “new” culture. They do not support late modern individualisation of their young kids. Young people - and especially the boys - in this situation are caught in a double social and cultural conflict, which they maybe can only escape by giving up family and take part in different forms of gang activities. At the same time, they easily become marginalised in education. They have social problems and meet a most differentiating educational system, which marginalise them in youth life. They are especially the new generation of a differentiating society. A marginalised youth.

However many ethnic minority youth are well functioning in Western European societies. They may have non-risk family background and are coming from “productive families”. They may be supported in the individualisation process especially according to participation in education. For girls from productive families this situation seems very successful. By taking part in education, they emancipate themselves into late modern Western society. Girls from more reproductive or risk families however are in more troubles. They have difficulties in breaking family influence and finding ways into late modern individualisation.

By looking at ethnic minority youth as cultural agents of late modernity, it becomes clear that they are agents of modernity as all other youth. Therefore, they are trapped in the same challenges as other young people in a differentiating and marginalising society. However, their cultural practices as agents may give them a personal support for coping late modern challenges, but also cause discrimination and challenges. Especially, they seem vulnerable if they need network and family support to find ways of social integration into late modern individualisation.

Back to the intervention perspectives

As argued, intervention follows the understanding of the problems, and as this analysis has shown, obviously some very serious challenges exist in late modern youth life, which may create a new youth lifestyle, a new youth generation. This new youth generation both consists of ordinary ethnic majority youth and ethnic minority youth. They are at risk in a society in which individual individualisation has taken the lead in social integration. Especially they are at risk because the liberalistic policies, media influence and liberal everyday life create a society, in which youth life is differentiated between losers and winners and in this way connect social inequality with differentiation in the creation of a marginalised youth generation.

Youth urban unrest therefore should not only be seen as criminal activities. Young people have become cultural agents in a society, which marginalises parts of young people. They manage as best they can.

Intervention therefore should work against differentiation in educational and youth life. It should give opportunities for young people to engage in a trajectory, which leads somewhere.

Especially for ethnic minority youth much more energy should be canalised into both the development of integrative trajectories and individual support.

References.

Andersen, H & Mørch, S. (1986): Metode og teori i familieforskningen. I Udkast nr 2.

- Andersen, H & Mørch, S. (2005): The challenged subject. In: Identity. An International Journal of Theory and Research, 5(3) 261-285 New Jersey – London.
- Andersen, H. (1986): Kvindeværd. Copenhagen: Rubikon.
- Anderson, M.(1980): Approaches to the History of the Western Family 1500-1914.London. The Macmillian Press
- Asplund, J. (1983): *Tid, rum, individ och kollektiv*. (Time, room, individual and community) Stockholm. Liber förlag.
- Bauman, Z. (2000): *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge. Polity Press.
- Bauman, Z. (2001): The individualized society. Cambridge. Polity Press.
- Baumann, Z. (1995): *Life in Fragments. Essays in Postmodern Morality*. Oxford. Blackwell.
- Bechmann Jensen, Torben, Sven Mørch, Brian David Hansen & Marlene Stokholm (2008): Transitions to work of young people with an ethnic minority or migrant background. Draft report sept. 2008. Up2Youth. Egris.
- Beck, U. (1992): *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London. Sage
- Brusdal, R & Frønes, Ivar (2000): På sporet av den nye tid. Bergen. Fakkbokforlaget
- Côté, James (2000) *Arrested adulthood. The changing nature of maturity and identity*. New York: New York University Press.
- Donzelot, J. (1979): *The Policing of Families*. N.Y.: Pantheon Books
- Frønes, Ivar (1994): *Den Norske barndommen*. Spydebjerg: Cappelen Akademisk Forlag
- Furlong, A. & F. Cartmel (1997): *Young people and social change. Individualisation and risk in late modern society*. Buckingham. Open University Press.
- Giddens, A. (1987): *The Constitution of Society*. Polity Press. Oxford
- Giddens, A. (1991): *Modernity and Self-identity*. Polity Press. Cambridge
- Heritage J. C. (1987): *Ethnomethodology*. In A. Giddens and J.H.Turner: *Social Theory Today*. Cambridge. Polity Press.
- Layder, D. (1994): *Understanding Social Theory*. Sage Publications Ltd, London.
- Leccardi, C: *Facing Uncertainty* (2006). in Leccardi, C. & Ruspini, E. (eds.): *A new youth? Young people, generations and family life*. Cambridge: Ashgate.
- Mørch, S. & Andersen, H. (2006): *Individualisation and the changing youth life in: Leccardi, C. & Ruspini, E. (eds.): A new youth? Young people, generations and family life*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Mørch, S. (1985). *At forske i ungdom*. Rubikon. Copenhagen
- Mørch, S. (1993): *Handlingsteorien*. København. Udkast nr. 1
- Mørch, S. (2003): *Youth and Education*. In *Young* vol. 11(1):49-73. Sage London.
- Mørch, S. (2007): *Learning to Become Youth*. *Outlines. Critical Social Studies*. Vol 8 No. 1. University Press of Southern Denmark. Odense.
- Olsen, Lars (2005): *Den nye ulighed*. København. Gyldendal.
- Stølan, L.O. (2002): *FATE – Families and Transition in Europe. Qualitative Survey – Young people*. Draft Report Denmark. Copenhagen. Dep. Of Psychology.
- Stølan, L.O.& Mørch, S.(2004). *Youth Transitions and Family Support*. Research Report 3. Copenhagen. Copenhagen University, Dep. Of. Psychology.
- Sven Mørch, Torben Bechmann Jensen, Marlene Stokholm, Brian Hansen, Axel Pohl. (eds.): *Transitions to work of young people with an ethnic minority or migrant background*. Thematic report. Deliverable No. 20 of the project ‘Youth – Actor of Social Change’ (UP2YOUTH) Contract no. 028317. October 2008
- Ziehe, Thomas & Herbert Stubenrauch (1982): *Plädoyer für ungewöhnliches Lernen, Ideen zur Jugendsituation* Reinbek. Rohwolt
- Ziehe, Thomas (2001): “De personlige livsverdeners dominans“(The dominance of personal life world. Stencil