

Family Models in Contemporary Multicultural Society: Exploratory Study Applied to Immigrants of Second and Third Generations

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Abstract : A qualitative research based on twenty-eight semi-structured interviews of students in Social Work, in Brussels (Belgium), showed specific results for the Arab and Muslim students: second and third generations immigrants build their identity on the basis of a mix of differentiation with and recognition of their parents' culture of origin. Building a bridge between Modernity and Tradition, they claim active citizenship; at the same time they show and live by values and religious beliefs which reinforce the link to their parents' origins. But they present those values and beliefs as their own rational choices among other choices, all available and rich for our multicultural society. The way they speak of themselves is highly modern. But, they still have to build a third way to find a place for themselves in society: one allowing them to live their religion as a partially public matter (when the Occidental society leaves no such place for religion) while ensuring, at the same time, the development of independent critical thought. On this basis, other semi-structured interviews are being laid with Social workers working with families from diverse ethnic backgrounds. They will verify the reality of those identity and cultural bricolages when those young adults of second and third generations build their own family. In between the theoretical models of traditional family and modern family, shall we find a new model, hybrid and more or less stable, combining some aspects of the former and the latter? The exploratory research phase focuses on three aspects of building a family life in this context : the way those generations play, discursively or not, in between their parents and the society in which they grew up; the importance of intercultural dialogue in this process of building; and testing the hypothesis that some families, in our society, show a special way of courting Modernity.

Keywords : family models, identity bricolages, intercultural, modernity and tradition

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