

Identities, Cultural Capital and Educational Choice of Georgian Youth – An Ethnographic Study

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The proposed project will study possible factors affecting educational choices that young people make, their academic achievements, and the mechanisms through which these factors work. The study will specifically attempt to answer the following questions: Why and how do particular groups choose certain educational careers? What impact does an individual's different identities have on his/her decisions regarding education and his/her subsequent success? How are these identities, in turn, formed and influenced by formal schooling practices?

The key theoretical concept explored in the study will be cultural capital, which, as suggested by a number of prominent scholars (a detailed overview appears in the next section), may be crucial in determining educational choices and success. The study will also attempt to explore the process of ethnic, linguistic, social and religious identity formation and examine these identities as builders of cultural capital in the transitional society of Georgia.

Educational choice is defined here as an individual's decision to move to the next level of formal education or withdraw from it entirely. Educational success is defined as self-reported formal educational achievements at school.

The method selected to explore these issues is ethnography: an in-depth study of four different groups of young people in four different locations in Georgia will be conducted over a period of twenty-one months. Data collected through participant observations and interviews will not only help generate new knowledge pertaining to the above-mentioned questions, but will also produce a number of new questions and research agendas in this relatively unexplored field in the region.