Practices of Othering in Multiethnic Schools and Communities

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Abstract

This presentation will focus on practices of “othering” in multiethnic schools and communities from the perspective of immigrant youth and their parents as well as teachers and community representatives. In the first part we will present the main results from the project as a whole. In the second part we will give illustrative examples from the Swedish case study. We will begin with giving a brief description on the structural constraints that limit and obstruct contact as well as peer relations between immigrant and minority youth on the one side and the majority society on the other. We would like to bring forward two crucial factors: social and ethnic residential segregation and school segregation.

However, the rich empirical data shows that the lack of interethnic peer relations, and the content and social consequences of these relations, can not be explained solely and sufficiently by structural factors. Many examples from the participating countries highlight the importance of culture, ethnic differences and practices of “othering”. Regarding the practices of “othering” the data reveals similarities as well as differences between the EDUMIGROM countries. We will focus on two subsets of issues. Firstly, issues close to the students’ personal experiences of “othering” including teachers’ attitudes; differential treatment; conflicts around the school’s relation to the students’ family life and private sphere and finally different values and norms. Secondly, more general issues such as racism and discrimination; media discourses and cultural and religious traditions. The performative aspects of “othering” include verbal conflicts or insults, ethnically or racially framed teasing and jokes, avoidance or downplay of ethnicity and showing-off of a collective self in ethnic or racial terms.