

Abstract

Inte samma lika. Identifikationer hos tonårsflickor i en multi-etnisk stadsdel (Not the same alike. Teenage girls' identifications in a multiethnic neighbourhood). ISBN: 91-7139-632-2. Dissertation at the Department of Ethnology, Göteborg University. Written in Swedish with an English summary. Author: Åsa Andersson. Brutus Östling Bokförlag Symposion, 2003.

The thesis is about narrative identifications relating to place, gender and ethnicity described by a group of teenage girls in a multiethnic and socially stigmatised neighbourhood in Gothenburg. For the purpose of investigating ongoing processes of understanding and production of meaning – processes of making sense – the most important analytical concepts used are narrativity, difference and identification. The empirical basis of the thesis consists of interviews conducted over a period of three years with 24 girls (14–17 years old) with different ethnic backgrounds.

Ethnicity attracts different meanings depending on the place to which it relates. Gothenburg has a long history of marked social segregation, which today also has obvious ethnic and possibly racist elements, and the social reproduction is shown to have strong ethnic and place-related elements. In forming certain strategies for handling the circumstances of living in a neighbourhood with low status, a certain degree of disidentification stands out as a partly gendered marking made by the interviewed girls.

In terms of conceptualisation, it is crucial to see occurrences like racism, ethnicity and multiculturalism as multiple occurrences. In the case of racism, mainly two levels of experienced racism emerge in the girls' accounts; one of these is structurally social, relating to issues such as segregation in the housing and employment markets, and the other consists of face-to-face situations between people. The two levels are mutually dependent, but they do not always coincide in predictable ways.

Multiculturalism is a circumstantial and influential discourse in public debate, and in popular accounts and thereby also present in the girls' narratives. Their accounts of ethnic identifications often consist of attempts to break with and to mark a distance from closed ethnic categories. The girls' critique of ethnic closure possibly infers a critique of the gender order, which is often expressed in ethnic terms but can also often be shown to have transcultural functions. The indication of an open and sometimes inconsequential attitude towards the deeply contradictory circumstances in which the girls sometimes find themselves do not provide guidance for clarification of the definition of multiculturalism as a political programme, but demonstrates an ability to challenge totalitarian and repressive social orders.

Keywords: youth, youth culture, place, gender, sexuality, identity, identification, difference, ethnicity, multiculturalism, racism, urban studies, class, social status, segregation, social reproduction, respectability, private and public space, narratives, narrativity, interviews, reflexivity.

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