ABSTRACT

The dissertation explores the dynamics of social marginality and dominance in educational settings. It explores social distance dynamics among pupils in elementary school, and its impact on their position in social hierarchy. I focus on social interaction in a group of children, and record the context in which the inclusion or exclusion of non-dominant identities take place. Special attention is paid to the role of schools in the process of boundary constructions. Larger framework of the research is integration, segregation and assimilation tendencies of school systems. The dissertation is based upon long-term qualitative inductive and ethnographic fieldwork. The central method of my fieldwork is observation. To some extent, the research was conducted in the framework of goffmanian interactionism. The data for this study have been collected over a period of ten months in twelve elementary schools located in various regions of the Czech Republic and Slovak Republic. The dissertation is structured in four parts: (1) Introduction, referring to the aim and structure of the dissertation; (2) Methodology, presenting the research process, strategies and methods as well as data analysis, theoretical and methodological discussions, reflexivity and ethical aspects; (3) Elementary schools in the Czech and Slovak Republic, providing insights about children lives in elementary schools; (4) Conclusions, discussing situations within school walls, interrelations among various sociodemographic categories, and the process of social inclusion and exclusion in educational settings. The results draw attention to many aspects of social exclusion in educational institutions and point to the obstacles of educational process. The thesis is based upon educational anthropology approach and brings into dialogue various views on education, social inequality and interethnic relationship. The dissertation is aimed at anthropologists, education specialists, teachers, policymakers, and the general public.