

Ethnic Encounters in the Academic Space: The Ethiopian Sigd Festival as a means of Negotiating the Rules of the Game

Research on immigrants, including the literature on immigrants of Ethiopian origin in Israel, has focused extensively on marginalizing social mechanisms. In recent years, however, such research has also begun examining the attempts and successes of individuals and groups to mobilize their social status. The aim of the present article is to contribute to this literature. The study is based on a celebration of the Ethiopian Sigd festival that was organized by students at an academic college in Israel. Presenting the ethnic symbols of their culture in the academic space was the Israeli-Ethiopian students' way of negotiating the meanings of their unique identity and its acceptance within the social microcosm of the campus. This study contends that alongside exclusion and discrimination processes, whose existence in academia cannot be denied, there are also processes through which students attempt to change their experience on campus. Through these processes they often succeed in making the transition from social exclusion to inclusion.

Keywords: Israelis of Ethiopian origin, exclusion and inclusion, ethnicity, academia, intercultural discourse