

Psychologization in talk and the perpetuation of racism in the context of the Greek school

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Abstract It is often argued that the rise of psychological sciences has offered a new way of constructing subjectivity. Although this framework was used by institutions for regulatory and administrative purposes, soon it became part of common sense and psychological language and notions began to constitute an interpretative resource for social actors. Researchers argue that often discourses of psychologization have been used both by theorists and lay people to account for intergroup conflict, relegating intergroup processes to interpersonal or intrapersonal issues. In this paper, we examine how parents mobilize psychological notions to account for the behavior of children of immigrants within Greek schools. It is argued that psychological discourse was often used to frame “problematic” behavior as the result of interpersonal or intrapersonal processes. These constructions allowed participants to account for the children of immigrants’ behaviour avoiding accusations of prejudice, while at the same time the role of the Greek dominant group (both as a school institution and as the majority of the school population) in shaping intergroup relations within schools was omitted.

Keywords Critical discursive social psychology · Intergroup relations · Migration · Prejudice

1 Introduction

Researchers often argue that psychological sciences have offered a new way to understand and construct subjectivity. Far from innocent, this new way, according to [Rose](#)

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(1989), was closely linked to concerns over the regulation of the behavior of citizens in order to act in accordance with the “modern” political regime. The discourse of psychologization offered a new perspective over the human relations in different domains such as work, government, and schooling (Rose 1989). Of course the “psy” sciences did not remain simply an administrative tool but came to inform everyday understanding of human relations both in the public and in the private domain. This new discourse, that often bears the marks of individualism (Danziger 1990; Prilleltensky 1994), was occasionally used as a psychological exegesis in order to account for intergroup phenomena (Billig 1976). For example, Mugny and Papastamou (1980) have demonstrated that psychologization can be used as a bulwark against minority influence, discrediting minority members who are attributed negative psychological traits. This paper examines how Greek parents psychologize the behavior of children of immigrants at school. It is argued that the discourse of psychologization allows participants to disavow possible accusations of prejudice, while at the same time denying that the behavior of their own children might be the result of intergroup processes.

1.1 Psychologization, subjectivity and intergroup relations

According to Rose (1989), the rise of the psy-sciences signifies a new way of understanding subjectivity. Monitoring and regulating people’s lives were the main contributions that were offered by these sciences to the modern state. Calculations, statistics, and personal records were used in order to classify people into discernible categories, in order to find the best “potential” of each person aiming at assigning him/her to a different task so as to maximize their productivity. At the same time, interventions were designed for those who did not fit the patterns of “normalcy” as defined by the new sciences. Of course it has to be stressed that this new way of understanding the subject was not just an administrative tool imposed on people. It soon became part of common sense, informing the way people understand themselves and each other. In Rose’s own words:

These new ways of thinking and acting do not just concern the authorities. They affect each of us, our personal beliefs, wishes and aspirations, in other words, our ethics. The new languages for construing, understanding and evaluating ourselves and others have transformed the ways in which we interact with our bosses, employees, workmates, husbands, wives, lovers, mothers, fathers, children and friends. Our thought worlds have been reconstructed, our ways of thinking about and talking about our personal feelings, our secret hopes, our ambitions and disappointments. Our techniques for managing our emotions have been reshaped. Our very sense of ourselves has been revolutionalized. We have become intensely subjective beings (Rose 1989, p. 3).

This form of psychologization also affected how people view childhood and family life. Therapists who practice family therapy often reformulate patients’ accounts of what constitutes a “problem” in order to adapt it to the therapeutic discourse (Buttly 1996). Other researchers analyzing therapy talk demonstrate how people’s talk is restrained to fit the institutional logic of the psy-sciences (Bartesaghi 2009). The psychopathological discourse is often adopted by people who mobilize it in family

therapy sessions (e.g. Avdi 2005). In relation to children, psychologization meant that within schools psychological tests could be employed for an assessment of their abilities, while the family was attributed a special role in the development of the child: A “normal”, caring, love-giving family was seen to foster “healthy” individuals, while families who did not meet those standards seemed to be prone in raising “problematic” children (Rose 1989). As Moscovici (1982, 1984, 2008) argues, scientific knowledge and ideas eventually become a property of common sense. Social representations of psychology and psychological phenomena are widely diffused within society. Diffusion takes place through communication, resulting in the simplified forms of psychological notions being spread within society at large.¹ Various researchers following the social representations paradigm have demonstrated how psychologization is a widely shared form of cultural representation. Rose (1998) has examined how popular representations that link madness to violence are disseminated through the media in the UK. In India it has been documented that new representations of the causes of mental illness may coexist with representations that support traditional forms of treatment (Wagner et al. 1999). In the UK school context Howarth (2004) argues that representations of black pupils as essentially violent contribute to their exclusion from school.

Psychology seems to be one of the most popularized sciences. TV shows, radio programmes and magazines often feature psychologists who give advice to people who seek help (De Vos 2011; Prilleltensky 1994; Rose 1989). TV shows in the Netherlands and the UK present therapists who monitor parent–children interaction and intervene in order to correct parents’ behavior that fails to conform to “correct” psychological standards (De Vos 2011). Through these processes common sense adopts a psychological understanding and also a psychological discourse of family relations and child development.

Theorists have often criticized this psychologization which focuses on the individual and its psychological well-being, not taking into account societal and institutional arrangements that may constitute the main reason behind people’s distress (Farr 1996; Prilleltensky 1994; Sampson 1981). Prilleltensky (1994) argues that when emphasis is placed on the psychologization of the children and how through psychology he/she can achieve his/her best potential, the question whether better education, institutional arrangements or state provisions could help children slips our mind. In this respect psychologization is considered a serious problem in examining social phenomena. Doise (1980) claims that frequently interpersonal explanations are preferred over intergroup explanations in accounting for group phenomena. In a similar vein, Billig (1976) claims that in conflict research, psychological explanations are favoured in contrast to explanations that pay attention to the material inequalities between groups. Even in one of the key socio-psychological experiments, that of Stanley Milgram, it has been claimed that psychologization played a pivotal role in how Milgram addressed his participants in the interviews following his seminal experiment (De Vos 2009). His

¹ Certainly social representation researchers argue that the reified universe of science, where ideas and thoughts become “truths”, and the consensual universe of everyday life, where meaning is acquired through communication and is context-dependent, are intrinsically linked to each other. Not only scientific ideas pass to common sense. Also common sense understandings of the world inform scientists and their practices in a dialectic relationship (Moscovici 1984; Howarth 2011).

question “how do you feel?” seems not only to impose a reading of personal feelings to the experimental situation but also to invite his participants to a type of introspection that is very widespread in psychological theorizing and discourse.

Even though researchers have paid attention to psychologization as a means to account for intergroup relations in psychological reasoning, scant attention has been paid to the way social actors themselves may psychologize in their explanations for intergroup relations. [Mugny and Papastamou \(1980\)](#) were the first social psychologists who examined the role of psychologization in intergroup phenomena and, more specifically, in minority influence. In a line of research on the effects of psychologization, they examined the conditions under which the phenomenon of minority influence could be undermined ([Moscovici and Personnaz 1986](#); [Papastamou 1986, 1989](#); [Papastamou and Mugny 1990](#); [Prodromitis 1996](#)). Within the context of the aforementioned research, psychologization is defined as the establishment of a causal relationship between the psychological characteristics of the source of minority influence and the ideology it stands for, or the behavior it exhibits. Results seem to suggest that when people psychologize a minority, they tend to resist the influence it exerts. For [Papastamou \(1989\)](#) the process of psychologization has certain ramifications for intergroup relations and especially for minorities:

We do not psychologize someone who complies with the ruling norms, nor someone whose discourse or action (especially the political one) matches the standards, in other words, who complies with the doctrines of the authority or the political party one belongs to. In everyday life we probably psychologize those whose behavior deviates from what is considered “normal”, or those whose attitudes seem dangerous for the common good ([Papastamou 1989](#), p. 222, my translation).

The above seems to suggest that minorities might be especially vulnerable to psychologization and that psychological discourse can potentially be used in order to downgrade the position of a minority group. In this research, following a discourse analytic perspective, we examine the psychologization discourse that parents mobilized in order to account for the behavior of the children of immigrants who are classmates of their own sons and daughters.

1.2 Critical discursive social psychology and the language of psychologization

Discursive Psychology has offered a different view to psychological phenomena. Rather than searching for internal mental states or emotions Discursive Psychology pays attention to the way psychological language is articulated in talk. It adopts a critical stance both to cognitive theory that searches for mental states of an individual and to theories that considered psychological states deep rooted in the human psyche ([Edwards and Potter 1992, 2011](#); [Potter 1996](#)). What it proposes instead is the examination of the way people mobilize psychological states in talk and of the rhetorical tasks that such a mobilization might serve. Of course psychological states may not be labeled as such in talk. People may build psychological states indirectly by providing descriptions of events, actions, persons and so on, in order to avoid the stigma of

having a stake in presenting psychological states in a certain manner (Edwards and Potter 1992, 2011; Potter 1996). The focus is on the performative aspects of language: different constructions of events, psychological states, and attributions allow people to achieve certain local interactional goals.

Nevertheless, this approach lays emphasis on the local micro-social context of verbal interaction overlooking the role the socio-historical contexts plays in the linguistic resources that are made available to people. Critical discursive social psychology (CDSP) adopts the concern for the micro-social analysis that Discursive Psychology advocates, yet adds that sequences of talk can only be considered as embedded within some kind of historical context (Bozatzis 2009; Edley 2001; Wetherell 1998, 2008). When people mobilize their repertoire of linguistic resources, its' origin can only be the historical context that informs people. This leaves people with a variety of linguistic options when they have to construct a version of events, a description, or a story. CDSP though, argues that not all options carry the same force. Using the notion of "hegemony" taken from Gramsci's theory (Gramsci 1971), researchers within CDSP argue that certain understandings of the world become hegemonic, in other words they have the power over alternative descriptions since they are taken for granted or considered more accurate (Edley 2001).² A central aim of this critical form of Discursive Psychology is to shed light on whose interests are served by this process of normalization/naturalization.³

This approach seems to fit best the purposes of the present article. The discourse of psychologization, as it was stated in the beginning, has been developed through a certain historical process, especially in the Western world, and it has been diffused to common sense, constituting a hegemonic discourse in accounting for people's actions. Our aim is to examine how people mobilize these discourses, for what interactional purposes and what seem to be the interests that are served by these constructions. Discourse analysis, drawing on speech act theory, argues that discourse is used to do things (Potter and Wetherell 1987). Using pre-existing linguistic or cultural resources people actively construct versions of events in order to achieve certain rhetorical tasks. In this sense it could be sustained that the discourse of psychologization can be used by participants in order to help them achieve various interactional tasks.

2 Methods

2.1 Background to the study

In our study we examined how participants talk about pupils of immigrant descent who are classmates of their children. Greece became a destination for immigrants over the past 20 years due to the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe,

² Social representation theorists also argue that certain social representations have a hegemonic-dominant role within a culture supporting the dominant cultural and social order (Howarth 2011; Moscovici 1984).

³ Of course it could be argued that CDSP as a strand of psychology is not outside the discourse of psychologization. After all it uses its own jargon and arsenal of technical terms. Nonetheless, it has to be stressed that a basic concern in CDSP is the examination of people's own orientation and a restraint from imposing a certain theoretical framework upon the data.

which was followed by social and economic turmoil. In 2004 it was estimated that 1,150,000 immigrants reside in Greece, which represented 10.6% of the total population (Baldwin-Edwards 2004). According to more recent estimates immigrants' numbers amount to around 839,000 (Maroukis 2012). Most of them came from neighboring Albania (about 56% of the immigrant population) while the second biggest group came from the ex-Soviet Republics (Baldwin-Edwards 2004). Some of the immigrants who came from Albania and the ex-Soviet Republics were considered to be of Greek ethnic (co-ethnics) descent and were granted certain privileges in comparison to other immigrant populations (Cavounidis 2002; Kokkinos 1991). It follows that the numbers of pupils from immigrant descent in Greek schools started to rise as well. Older estimates calculated that about 10% of the student population in Greek kindergarten, primary schools, gymnasium, lyceum, and technical schools are foreign and co-ethnic pupils (Baldwin-Edwards 2004). It is interesting that in these older estimates, 10% of the foreign and co-ethnic pupils stated that Greece was their country of birth. In recent estimates the percentage of foreign and co-ethnic students seems to be almost the same (10.29%, Triandafyllidou 2011).

Researchers argue that although the Greek educational system attempted to develop intercultural education curricula in order to help immigrant pupils' adaptation, these programs remained highly ethnocentric promoting an assimilationist policy for children of immigrants (Faas 2011; Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2011). Research within Greek schools has focused mainly on the acculturation attitudes or strategies that immigrant students prefer (Besevegis and Pavlopoulos 2008; Besevegis et al. 2010; Pavlopoulos et al. 2009; Sapountzis in press). In a recent study, Sakka (in press), using semi-structured interviews and applying a thematic analysis, found that pupils of Greek ethnic background often used psychological explanations—among others—to account for the alleged violence and hostility often attributed to immigrant pupils. In this paper we examine how parents of Greek ethnic origin whose children attend school psychologize immigrant pupils' behavior. Our emphasis is on the way parents mobilized psychological accounting and on the rhetorical ends this accounting seems to serve. We do not consider psychologization as necessarily carrying negative ramifications for minorities. Nevertheless, we want to uncover how intergroup phenomena can be potentially downgraded to matters of interpersonal psychology with the use of the discourse of psychologization.

2.2 Research site and participants

Research took place in Thessaloniki which has about 836,000 inhabitants. It is estimated that 7% of that number are immigrants and co-ethnics. Most of them originate from the ex-Soviet Republics (Katsavounidou and Kourti 2008).

Participants were fourteen people of Greek ethnic background who were not immigrants and had children that attended Greek primary schools. The first participants were personal acquaintances of the second author and then snowballing techniques were employed in order to expand the initial sample. Their age span ranged between 37 and 56 years and the mean age was 45 years. Most of them were women (12) since mothers in Greece seem to have a closer link to the schooling issues of their children.

The majority of participants reside in the Western municipalities of Thessaloniki where immigrant numbers are higher compared to the other municipalities (Katsavounidou and Kourti 2008). Their professional background varied and their societal status could be characterized as being middle class.

2.3 Data collection and analysis

Semi-structured interviews were used in order to collect data from our interaction with the participants. All interviews were conducted by the second author, Kalliopi Vikka. The research was presented as a general discussion about the schooling experiences of participants' children. When participants mentioned the presence of children of immigrants at school they were asked specific questions such as whether their children have friends of immigrant descent, how the teachers seem to deal with cultural diversity, whether cultural diversity seems to constitute an issue at school and other related questions. The decision to introduce the interview in this way was taken in order to start the interviews in a subtle way avoiding any negative connotations that would have probably risen had the interview been introduced as a discussion about the education of children of immigrants. Of course, this decision carried some shortcomings, since a discussion on the schooling experiences of children frames the interview context in interpersonal terms because it omits the fact that compulsory education is organized by a national state, and in this case by the Greek nation-state, which aims to promote the education and the needs of a certain national group. Of course the potential impact of this framing on the interviews is acknowledged in the analysis of the extracts.

Several researchers (e.g. Edwards and Stokoe 2004; Potter and Hepburn 2005) have advocated the potentially problematic nature of interviews when used in discourse analytic studies especially in relation to the omission of the role of the interviewer in the construction of data. The way racist discourse can be an interactional achievement between interviewer and interviewee has already been demonstrated in discourse analytic studies (Condor 2006b; Howarth 2009). We appreciate that the interview process is an interactional activity that involves at least two persons and thus we are paying attention to the way interaction evolves in the process of discourse production.

Interviews were tape-recorded with the consent of participants and data were transcribed mainly for content and most of the paralinguistic elements were omitted (see "Appendix"). Data analysis started with a thematic analysis (Boyatzis 1998; Braun and Clarke 2006) to identify the different ways in which parents accounted for the behavior of immigrant children. From the beginning it became obvious that participants used psychologization in various ways to account for immigrants pupils' behavior or to account for the actions of "Greek" children towards the children of immigrants. The extracts that are analyzed below were selected on the basis that they are representative of the different uses of psychologization in the data corpus.

For the analysis of the data we employed the framework of the CDSP. Within this framework our analytic target is two-fold. Firstly, it is to examine how psychologization is locally mobilized in verbal interaction in order to help people manage accountability in talk. People, according to Discursive Psychology, have to manage the dilemma of interest in their talk on various issues: on the one hand, they obviously have to support

a certain view of things, but on the other hand, they have to show that they do not have a vested interest in constructing their views in a specific way (Edwards and Potter 1992; Edwards 1997; Potter 1996). Of course we do not claim that we “jump” into our analysis in the absence of any expectations about the different stakes that participants may face in a discussion about migration. It is well demonstrated that when people talk about minorities they often face a “dilemma of prejudice”: they may want to articulate views that can be considered racist but at the same time they have to disavow any possible accusations of prejudice, xenophobia or in-group bias (Billig 1988; Billig et al. 1988). This dilemma according to Billig (1988), Billig et al. (1988) originates in the liberal ideology of the Enlightenment which is prevalent in Western societies.

Our second analytic concern is broader: to scrutinize how psychologization as a culturally shared representation of a scientific field, embedded within the historical context of the development of the discipline, and its diffusion to wider society, can, through its mobilization in discourse, empower or disempower certain social categories. Such an approach attempts to bridge the divide between micro and macro approaches within the turn to language in social psychology (Bozatzis 2009; Edley 2001; Wetherell 1998, 2005, 2008; Wetherell and Edley 1999; see also Gibson 2011).

In this paper we will try to illustrate: 1. how psychologization is mobilized in order to provide accountability to participants, 2. the culturally shared representations of psychology that are mobilized and 3. the implications these carry for intergroup relations.

3 Analysis

The following extracts were selected as representative of the different types of psychological accounts participants mobilized in order to account for the behavior of children of immigrants. Pseudonyms have been used in the place of the names of participants. The interviews were conducted by the second author.

Before the following extract Marielen argued that migration may lead children of immigrants to aggression due to the hardships they go through. She argued that in order to overcome these hardships the teacher might have to devote more time helping children of immigrants and she referred to two specific cases of children of immigrants.

3.1 Extract 1

Aggression as a ‘cry for help’

- 1 Ka: You wouldn’t mind her to spend some more time with these cases?
- 2 Ma: I wouldn’t like the educational level to drop (.) I mean for my own kid
- 3 just like everyone else I guess (.) in order to get a better education.
- 4 Ka: Yes this is why I asked.
- 5 Ma: But of course she has to show some special interest for that kid (.) he needs
- 6 help (.) and this action the aggression when they attack these are (.)
- 7 according to me the kid cries out “I need help” (.) this is why he does it (.) I have
- 8 spoken with a colleague (.) they have one of those kids in school and indeed he is

9 very aggressive (.) apart from hitting the other kids and stuff (.) he takes their stuff
10 and throws them to the garbage can ehh but this is a case a very special case his
11 mother died of drugs (.) his father is involved in drugs as well (.) his grandmother
12 has his custody the grandmother cannot look after him and it's a mess.
(Marielen, public sector employee)

This extract starts with a question posed by Kalliopi who asks whether she would mind if the teacher spent more time on the education of children of immigrants. The word “cases” she uses may be seen as prompting Marielen to consider the question involving assumptions of interpersonal psychology. Marielen, having established earlier in the interview a link between children of immigrants and aggression, uses a contrast structure (Edwards and Potter 1992) (I wouldn't like. . . But of course. . .), on the one hand, claiming that children of immigrants need more attention, on the other hand, arguing that this will lead to poorer education since the teacher will have to dedicate more time to them. This seems to be a common theme that parents mobilised in relation with to immigrant pupils' education. On the one hand, it is acknowledged that immigrants need to educate their children, but on the other hand, it is argued that this may lead to a deterioration of education since the teacher will have to help the pupils that seem to lag behind (cf. Sapountzis in press). In this way parents disavow prejudice, while at the same time they maintain that possible objections to the education of immigrants are grounded on concerns over the efficiency of the educational system. Vivid images (they attack, the kid cries out, lines 6 and 7, Wooffitt 1992) and active voicing (“I need help”, line 7, Wooffitt 1992) are used to sensationalize the link between children's aggression and inner psychological states.

In the lines that follow Marielen refers to the widely shared representations within the Greek context that immigrants are involved in criminal or illegal acts (Figgou et al. 2011). The parents' illegal or self-destructive activities are depicted as having an effect on children's psychological well-being. She uses an array of rhetorical devices such as corroboration (Edwards and Potter 1992), vivid images (apart from hitting the other kids and stuff (.) he takes their stuff and throws them to the garbage, lines 9–10), extreme case formulations (this is a very special case, line 10, Pomerantz 1986) and empiricist accounting (his mother died of drugs (.) his father is involved in drugs as well (.) his grandmother has his custody the grandmother cannot look after him and it's a mess, lines 10–13, Edwards and Potter 1992) to strengthen the link between the observable aggression of children of immigrants and inner psychology.

In this extract the use of psychologization helped the participant to manage various levels of accountability. First of all, psychologization allowed her to present the problems that children of immigrants may face within schools as an issue of interpersonal psychology and not a matter of intergroup relations. Quite on the contrary, the role of the Greek dominant group is not addressed at all and, in this extract, it is presented either as a victim of aggression, or as hindered in their effort to get a better education by the presence of immigrants in schools. Secondly, psychologization allowed the participant to provide accountability for the Greek educational system, which was presented as struggling due to the presence of children of immigrants who are mal-adjusted. In this way the crucial question whether the educational system may have to adjust to the needs of the new population is never posed (cf. Xenitidou and Greco

[Morasso 2014](#) on the reverse argument along the lines of: parents have to take matters in their own hands as teachers cannot do anything).

Before the following extract Helen was arguing about the benefits of having children of different ethnic backgrounds attending Greek schools, claiming that these children seem to be more “down to earth”, they are not spoiled due to wealth and they have better personalities. Due to its length the extract is analyzed in two different pieces.

3.2 Extract 2

Aggression as the result of lack of communication and name-calling

- 1 Ka: So you don't believe they behave badly
- 2 He: No (.) not at all (.) I have heard of some (children) that are more aggressive but
- 3 this is because they don't know the language well the other kids do not understand
- 4 them and I believe it is the others kids' fault because they make fun of them.
- 5 Ka: they make fun of them?
- 6 He: yes (.) Some Greek kids yes they make fun so they]
- 7 Ka: [have you seen something
- 8 like that in school?
- 9 He: No (.) I just have heard and I have seen sometimes not within our school
- but in general
- 10 I have seen that so that is why I believe they become more aggressive.
- 11 Ka: They make fun with nasty comments?
- 12 He: ehh (.) yes (.) ehh “you Albanian” “you Russian”.
- 13 Ka: Why do you think this happens?
- 14 He: Because on some occasions these kids (.) not the Greek ones (.) may have a
- 15 better performance in physical education class.
- 16 Ka: Hm.
- 17 He: And this bothers some Greek kids.
- 18 Ka: Yes.
- 19 He: So they get an inferiority complex.

Kalliopi poses a question whether Helen thinks that immigrant pupils behave badly in school. The interviewer seems to draw upon the widely held stereotype that children of immigrants are aggressive at school. As a result Kalliopi seems to import a psychological reading to the children's behavior. Helen denies any personal experience of children of immigrants' aggression which she presents as something she has heard (line 2) adopting the role of the relayer ([Goffman 1979](#)) creating a distance between what she endorses and what she says. Although she does not seem to endorse necessarily the stereotype of immigrant pupils' aggression, she uses empiricist accounting ([Edwards and Potter 1992](#)) to illustrate the reasons behind aggression. This is attributed to the lack of communication which exists because children of immigrants do not speak Greek well. Having said that and in order to avoid any possible accusations of prejudice she argues that Greek children make fun of children of immigrants. When Kalliopi again asks her whether she has witnessed something like that, she claims that she has

but not in the school that her children attend and she subsequently constructs name-calling as the main reason behind aggression. Then Kalliopi asks about the nature of the comments, which she characterizes as nasty. Helen hesitates and pauses, a possible sign that the discussion touches upon some delicate issues (van Dijk 1999). The reason seems to be that in conjunction with the word “nasty”⁴ used by Kalliopi, the name-calling is related to the ethnic categories that the children belong to. The reason behind the ethnic name-calling is presented as the better school performance of the pupils of immigrant descent. This results in a psychological complex, the well-known “inferiority complex”.

In this extract Kalliopi imports a psychological understanding of the behaviour of children of immigrants, mobilizing the stereotype that children of immigrants are aggressive at school. Helen picks up on the psychologization introduced by the interviewer developing further a psychological account to provide accountability both for the aggression of children of immigrants (lack of communication) and for the children of the Greek dominant group since the ethnic name-calling is not presented as being caused by prejudice but due to psychological mechanisms that are triggered by events in the everyday lives of children. As in the previous extract, prejudiced manifestations are not presented as a matter of intergroup relations. This account is further worked up in the continuation of the extract.

3.3 Extract 3

Name-calling as typical children's behavior

20 Ka: yes but if a Greek kid does well in gym class doesn't this happen (.) this
21 confrontation?

22 He: Yes (.) I believe it starts somehow like this (.) eh (.) just like kids you know (.)
23 like kids “come on you Albanian” (.) “come on you Russian”.

24 Ka: So (.) they enter a confrontation with kids that are different (.) not with]

25 He: [No (.)

26 they do that with other kids as well (.) it is simple (.) each one hit where it

27 “you are Albanian” (.) “you wear glasses” (.) “you are fat” but this is what all kids
28 do.

(...)

52 Ka: So they do not segregate at all.

53 He: No (.) not at all.

54 Ka: and what do you think could be done in order not to have this antagonism.

55 He: Eh (.) the antagonism and conflict will always exist (.) I don't think it will ever
56 end (.) this is how kids act this is their nature you cannot change some things (.)

57 one kid is fat (.) the other kid is Albanian (.) the other one has pimples (.) It doesn't
58 it doesn't change (.) now I do not know what could be done in order to (.) I believe

59 this is how they grow up (.) this is what they become (.) that is life.

(Helen, housewife)

⁴ Researchers have demonstrated how prejudiced discourse may be co-constructed by the interviewer and the interviewee (Condor 2006b; Howarth 2009).

Kalliopi sets a new hypothetical question in which she wonders whether the same kind of animosity with the ethnic name-calling and the inferiority complex happens when the Greek children outperform the children of immigrants, reinterpreting animosity in ethnic terms. This formulation seems to force Helen to mitigate any negative behavior on behalf of children of immigrants in order to avoid the stigma of prejudice. She employs a formulation arguing that this type of aggressive behavior and name-calling is typical of the specific age and not an intergroup phenomenon, elaborating further the line of arguing she initiated in line 12 in the previous extract. In line 22 Helen argues that this behavior starts as Kalliopi suggests, but she then claims that they do “just like kids”. The word “just” constructs the normality of the behavior which is presented as childish and not prejudiced, in combination with the use of active voicing (“come on you Albanian” (.) “come on you Russian”, line 23). Kalliopi seems to try to elaborate on that argument asking whether this type of behavior is provoked by any kind of difference implying ethnic difference (line, 24). Helen resists this implication and interrupts Kalliopi in an emphatic way (No, line 25). She argues that this happens to all children irrespective of ethnic descent. The word “simple” in line 26 and the extreme case formulation (Pomerantz 1986) in line 27–28 (this is what all kids do) further constructs the normality of this type of behavior. What is of particular interest here is the three part list (Jefferson 1990) which is uttered in active voicing (Woolfitt 1992) in line 27 (“you are Albanian” “you wear glasses” “you are fat”). Jefferson’s (1990) point is that three part lists are often used to provide a summary of a general class of things. As a result, this type of behavior is presented as apposite to children. In addition, since three part lists consists of similar sets of things, this construction serves another task: the three different categories (Albanians, people who wear glasses, fat people) are presented as similar, as having the same ideological significance, or none at all. It follows that ethnic name-calling is not presented as a sign of prejudice but a childish behavior which is addressed to whoever is different in any way. A similar three part list is offered in line 57 (one kid is fat the other kid is Albanian the other one has pimples), which is further reinforced with the use of extreme case formulations (will always exist, line 55, I don’t think it will ever end, lines 55–56) in order to argue that this is an inevitable part of children’s psyche (note also the utterance “this is their nature”, line 56). The end of the extract comes in the form of another three part list which emphasizes the above point (this is how they grow up, this is what they become, that is life, line 59) and presents any possible attempts to change children’s behavior as futile.

In the above extract psychologization served a double purpose. It accounted for the frustration immigrant pupils may experience, since they cannot communicate well because some of them do not understand the language plus the fact that Greek children make fun of them. What’s more, psychologization provided accountability for Greek majority children since their behavior stems from an inferiority complex they develop due to their poor performance. Most importantly psychologization, in the form of attributing intolerance to any difference due to the children’s psyche, reframes intergroup conflict not as such but as a general categorization process. As a result, Greek majority children cannot be blamed of prejudice since they exhibit a behavior which is typical of their age and their way of thinking. This argument also carries important ramifications in relation to combating prejudice in schools. If this type of aggressive

behavior is inevitable and it is not triggered by racism, there seems to be no point in trying to implement policies in school to reduce prejudice.

Before the following extract, Sakis claimed that there are communication problems between children of immigrants and Greek majority children.

3.4 Extract 4

The role of TV: social learning accounts of aggression

- 1 Ka: Yes (.) were there any disagreements between kids of different descent and
 2 local kids?
 3 Sa: Yes there were disagreements and fuss (.) eh but this does not have to do with
 4 it is not the descent that causes fuss I believe (.) it is the education they get the TV
 5 they watch for many hours (.) the violent programs (.) and they behave like this (.)
 6 they become very aggressive.
 7 Ka: That plays a part for sure.
 8 Sa: Of course (.) back then the TV programs we used to watch and your generation
 9 I imagine eh had nothing to do with the contemporary ones (.) they destroy
 10 childhood (.) when the kid spends six hours in front of the TV and watches and
 11 you do not control him I mean and you do not know and the kid watches non-stop
 12 all the programs that are on TV and eh watches on the kids show the hero with a
 13 club that hits the other guy and knocks him down and he gets up right away
 14 smiling and he is OK (.) yes but in reality if you hit someone with a club (.) he will
 15 be hurt and he won't be smiling (.) the kids cannot realize that when they are in
 16 front of the television all day (.) they follow the role model (.) eh (.) I have seen
 17 very aggressive behaviors (.) they are all the time (.) they fight a lot "someone
 18 grabbed my hair" ah "he threw a book at me" they are aggressive (.) and on some
 19 occasions yes eh our kids fought with foreign kids but I believe that it was clearly
 20 a matter of communication (.) the one could not understand what the other meant
 21 (.) I mean it is not (.) I haven't spotted any animosity between them due to their
 22 descent (.) but they are all very aggressive irrespective of their descent.
 (Sakis, sports instructor)

Kalliopi poses a question regarding animosity between children of immigrants and Greek majority children. Although Sakis accepts that there is animosity, he denies that differences in ethnicity might play a part in it, arguing that violent TV shows and inadequate education are the real causes of the problem which is constructed as acute with the use of an extreme case formulation (very aggressive, line 6). Too many hours of TV as well as the lack of vigilance are constructed as a mechanism that transmits violence to children. The use of the vivid image (Wooffitt 1992) of the hero with the club (lines 12–14) helps Sakis to mobilize a contrast formulation between the fictitious cartoon shows and reality to argue that a psychological mechanism is at play where children cannot tell reality from fiction and therefore they follow the role model that is promoted in the TV shows. The excessiveness of this behavior is constructed with several extreme case formulations (all day, line 16; very aggressive, line 17; all the time, line 17) and the active voicing in lines 17–18. The lack of communication

is again mobilized in lines 19–21 to account for the animosity between children of different ethnic descent. Nevertheless, in the end, with the use of two extreme case formulations (they are all very aggressive irrespective of their descent, line 22), ethnic descent is presented as completely irrelevant to aggression.

In this extract the participant mobilized a formulation where TV shows provide role models that children follow and lead them to aggressive behaviors. It bears certain similarities to social learning theories. This psychological mechanism allowed Sakis to do two different things. On the one hand, with the use of several rhetorical devices such as extreme formulations, he denied that aggression within the school might be ethnically motivated. In addition, this allowed him to place the reasons behind children's aggression outside school and into their home environment. This formulation again downgraded an intergroup phenomenon to an issue of interpersonal psychology. The implication this carries also precludes the school as a place of intervention for the reduction of prejudice, since, firstly, aggression at school is not racially motivated and secondly, the causes of aggression are not within schools. As a result, the material or symbolic reasons behind intergroup tension can be easily overlooked and programs aiming to improve interpersonal relations might be prioritized over programs that try to alter intergroup relations.

4 Discussion

In the extracts presented above, parents accounted for the behavior of children of immigrants and Greek majority children using various psychological mechanisms which they argued to be at play in school and at home. On occasion problems at home were seen as the cause of the aggressive behavior that children of immigrants may display at school. This type of psychological mechanism seemed to be closely linked with a widespread cultural representation in Greece that immigrants are involved in criminal or illegal activities (Figgou et al. 2011). Other lines of argumentation attributed aggression to violent television programs which were seen to promote aggressive behavior to all children. These arguments seemed to be informed by some type of lay social learning theory, attributing violent behavior to social factors that are common for all children. In other instances, the lack of communication due to insufficient language skills on behalf of children of immigrants were seen as the main reason behind their aggression. When Greek majority children demonstrated similar behavior towards immigrant pupils, this was explained in terms of the psychodynamic process of inferiority complex which was triggered by the better performance that immigrant children had in certain school classes. In addition, name-calling was constructed as a typical childish behavior not constrained to ethnic categories but to every category that children can use to typify their classmates.

The analysis attempted to show the different rhetorical strategies, and the role of psychologization in particular, in managing the dilemma of stake. Discursive Psychology postulates that when people talk about a specific topic they have to present their opinion not as stemming from any personal interest but as an objective assessment of the facts at hand (Edwards and Potter 1992; Potter 1996). The question of course is what kinds of interests participants seemed to disavow. It is well demonstrated in

research that in talk concerning relations between ethnic groups disavowing racism is of paramount importance (Billig 1988; Wetherell and Potter 1992). In the analysis that preceded, participants used various psychological mechanisms to account for the problematic behavior in schools that was often associated with the behavior of children of immigrants.

Papastamou's seminal research using experimental designs (1986; Papastamou and Mugny 1990; Papastamou 1989) has placed emphasis on how psychologization in the form of ascribing personality characteristics to minority group members can be used to weaken the effects of minority influence. It does so by creating a link between the psychological characteristics of the minority influence source and the content of the message. In this way psychologization creates an ideological barrier which prevents the majority of endorsing any changes that the minority suggests. However, discourse analytic work has demonstrated that ascribing psychological characteristics to a minority in the form of stereotypes can be associated with prejudice and thus participants may be quite reluctant to use them (Condor 2006a; Sapountzis et al. 2006). For that reason participants did not invoke psychological characteristics of minority children: they argued that general psychological mechanisms may be responsible for the negative behaviors observed in children, which were triggered either by the situation they may face at home or by a generic developmental process, irrespective of their ethnic descent. This also allowed participants to manage another stake which seemed to be important, namely, to place the reasons behind the negative behaviors outside schools. In previous research placing the causes of negative behavior outside school appeared to be an important rhetorical concern for participants (Sapountzis in press).

Of course, for CDSP discourse is a collaborative task which involves both the interviewer and the interviewee. In our analysis we tried to demonstrate how psychological assumptions were introduced and managed rhetorically both by interviewer and interviewee in the course of verbal interaction. The interviewer does not live in a lacuna of ideological references, which are therefore expected to inform his interactional practices in an interview context. The analytic task, as it was developed in the analysis section, was to demonstrate how psychologization was jointly developed in this context. CDSP does not only examine the management of accountability in micro-social contexts, but assumes that people's discourse draws upon representations that are historically constituted and form bonds of power/knowledge, seeking to unravel whose interests are served by the mobilization of these representations (Bozatzis 2009; Edley 2001; Wetherell 1998, 2008). The analysis seemed to reveal that through psychologization people constructed the issues that have arisen with the presence of immigrant pupils not as a matter of intergroup relations but a matter of interpersonal relations and thus an issue for interpersonal psychology. Of course it has been already advocated some years ago that psychological theories often used the level of interpersonal psychology to account for intergroup phenomena (Billig 1976; Doise 1980). This was far from being an honest mistake, since explaining intergroup phenomena in this way did not raise the question of power relations within society or of redistribution of material or symbolic resources. The psychological discourse allowed participants to perform a similar move with certain ideological implications. Since the situation in schools can be accounted to individual psychology then it is questionable whether we need to redress intergroup relations, or design intervention programs in schools in order

to improve intergroup relations or redistribute resources in an equalitarian manner in wider society at large.

The rise of the psy-sciences, as Rose (1989) advocates, has brought to life new ways of understanding others and ourselves, and it has offered us new ways of understanding subjectivity. Of course this genealogical account does not imply that a certain understanding of the self is imposed from the new modernist state on the masses. It rather attempts to show how this new understanding opens up new options of subjectivity available to people. Nevertheless, it is beyond the scope of this type of argument to demonstrate how participants may use psychological discourse in everyday interaction. In this article we have tried to explore how participants reflexively use psychological discourse in their talk in order to manage their accountability in a discussion about the presence of children of immigrants in Greek schools. Although the school would seem an obvious context where this type of discourse might be used, taking the impact of dissemination of psychological discourse in the modern society under consideration, it would be useful to examine its uses in various rhetorical contexts.

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5 Appendix: Transcription notation

(text) Researchers comment

[Overlapping speech

“text” direct speech

(.) short pause

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