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A Qualitative Study of Multicultural Identities: Three Cases of London's Inner-City Children

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Abstract: Metropolitan areas present opportunities for persons from all over the world to form multicultural relationships and raise their child in a third culture. How do these children make sense of who they are? Multicultural identities have often been described as being in "crisis"—the individual does not feel fully accepted in any culture and is depicted as "on the border" or "an outsider within." While the "identity crisis" should be taken seriously, the ability to create a space in between cultures, to form a novel self-concept is equally, if not more important.

Children growing up in London with the immediate influence of more than two cultures—mother and father originating from diverse cultures and raising their child in the third (England)—and how they start to make sense of themselves is analyzed from a social representations perspective that emphasizes the marking of different cultural *I*-positions within the person's dialogical self-construction.

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1. Introduction

Children growing up in multicultural environments is an unprecedented research subject. The acceleration of globalization has increased the interconnectedness of multiple cultures acting and reacting with each other, intertwining and giving rise to novel cultural forms. Rapidly growing individual mobility (through the ability to travel faster and cheaper further across the globe), moving diasporas and the ability to keep in close contact with "the culture back home" (through new technologies) has enabled individuals to mix, match and move around the world (HALL, HELD & McGREW, 1992). Hyphenated individuals—for example Asian-British, African-American, Turkish-German—have been of increasing interest in various disciplines of the social sciences (see for example the interview with Hülya, a Turkish-German woman, presented in a past *FQS* issue). Yet, the focus has remained on persons with *two* cultural backgrounds. Drawing on theories postulated by HERMANS, KEMPEN and VAN LOON (1992) and MOSCOVICI (1988), the aim of the study discussed here is to show how children with *multiple* cultural backgrounds construct a self. How do children, with a mother from culture x, a father from culture y, and growing up in interconnected cultural metropolis z, make sense of who they are? This paper discusses from a social representational perspective (MOSCOVICI, 1988) the marking of cultural "*I*-positions" (HERMANS et al., 1992) of ten-year-old children in London with parents representing diverse cultural backgrounds. [1]

1.1 The dynamics of culture and novel identities

Within the social sciences there has been a trend to discuss multicultural individuals and surrounding cultures as static and independent entities (HERMANS & KEMPEN, 1998). Yet, as the mobility of individual persons increases due to globalization, such a static view becomes highly questionable. HERMANS (2001a), for instance, argues that the effects of globalization (on societies and individuals) require a new conception of the self: one that is dynamic and permeable. Examples of individuals creating an identity that is not yet defined by already existing social representations, but rather represent novel combinations, are slowly emerging (see e.g. BACK, 1996; BADAWIA, 2002). VALSINER (2002) asserts that in order to account for the formation of such new and novel selves it is necessary to conceptualize culture as an open dynamic system. Open dynamic systems allow for the emergence of novel structures out of the combination of already existing structures. [2]

1.2 BAKHTINian and JAMESian influences

According to HERMANS and KEMPEN (1993) dialogism is necessary for conceptualizing the self as dynamic and permeable. For this conception the authors draw on the Russian scholar BAKHTIN. When BAKHTIN read DOSTOEVSKY, he came to the conclusion that DOSTOEVSKY created a new form of artistic thought, the polyphonic novel. BAKHTIN, according to HERMANS et al. (1993), argues that the principle feature of the polyphonic novel is that it has been "composed of a number of independent and mutually opposing viewpoints embedded in characters involved in dialogical relationships" (HERMANS et al., 1993, p.40). Furthermore, DOSTOEVSKY himself represents just one such character. Each character in the story is perceived as the author of his or her own legitimate ideological position, narrating with his or her own voice a world that is distinct to that character. Yet, each character has the possibility of entering into a dialogical relationship with any other character or/and any imaginary character. Thus, dialogicality is not necessarily restricted to the interaction of two distinct persons. Rather, a person enters into dialogue as soon as thought occurs. A thought is never formed in isolation, it is always addressed in anticipation and in reaction to some circumstance in time and space (HERMANS et al., 1993). [3]

In order to conceptualize and form a theoretical understanding of the self, HERMANS et al. (1993) translate the notion of the polyphonic novel into JAMES' distinction of the *I* and the *ME*. According to the authors JAMES, in discussing the self, argued for two main components in the self: the *I* as the self-as-knower and the *Me* as self-as-known. Each of these two components has three constituting features: the three features characterizing the *I* are continuity (a sense of personal identity and sameness over time), distinctness (an existence separate from others), and volition (a continuous appropriation and rejection of thought, an active processor of experience). The *Me*, the empirical self representing all the person can call his or her own (including all extensions such as cloths and material belongings) is constituted of material characteristics (body and possessions), spiritual characteristics (thoughts and consciousness), and social characteristics (relations, roles, fame) (HERMANS et al., 1993). [4]

1.3 The dialogical self

Built on the intersection between the JAMESian distinction of *Me* and *I,* and the BAKHTINian polyphonic metaphor, HERMANS et al. (1992) describe the dialogical self as a dynamic multiplicity of relatively autonomous *I*-positions. The *I* has the ability to move from one spatial position to another according to changes in context and time, moving from different positions which may even be opposing each other, yet need not be. It has the capacity imaginatively to endow each position with a voice which then enables dialogical relationships between positions. Drawing on BAKHTIN's notion of "polyphony" these voices function like interacting characters in a story. The voices, as is typical for characters in stories, are involved in processes of question and answer, agreement and disagreement. Such interactions may, but need not necessarily, result in challenging in-between

areas or threats to identity amongst multicultural identities (e.g. TIMOTIJEVIC & BREAKWELL, 2000). [5]

The metaphor of the polyphonic notion transcends JAMES' conception of the self by allowing an individual to live in a multiplicity of worlds with respective authors telling a particular story about that world. HERMANS et al. (1993) express that

> "[i]n the polyphonic translation of the self there is not an overarching I organizing the constituents of the Me. Instead, the spatial character of the polyphonic leads to the supposition of the decentralized multiplicity of *I*-positions that function like relatively autonomous authors, telling their stories about their respective Me's as actors" (p.47). [6]

Tying back this open and dynamic conception of the self to VALSINER's (2002) assertion of novel selves rising from already existing forms, it is important to note that transactional relationships between the different *I*-positions may lead to the emergence of meaning that is not yet given to one of the available positions. [7]

1.4 Beginning stages of dialogues: children, self and society

The establishment of psychological autonomy entails the development of intentionality, i.e. goal-oriented flexible actions and self-motivation. The intentionality, the will, consists out of setting goal orientations, constructing short- and long-term goals, re-setting these goals as necessary, and deciding on specific actions in certain situations (VALSINER, 2000). And these tasks, VALSINER (2000) argues, are made possible through intra-psychological *reconstruction of the social structure* of the demand setting *within the collective cultural field*, through semiotic mediation. In order to capture the demand setting of each child, and to therefore grasp a deeper understanding of how children start to make sense of who they are, the theory of social representations (MOSCOVICI, 1988) will be helpful here. Social representations theory is a theory of every-day knowledge within a social and interactive framework (MOSCOVICI, 2000). It considers social knowledge to be dynamically and symbolically mediating, while deeply rooted in the public sphere (DUVEEN & De ROSA, 1992). Moreover, social representations must be conceptualized as an environment in which individuals position themselves in relations to the group and are positioned by them, necessarily linking the theory to identity formation (DUVEEN, 1997). JOVCHELOVITCH (1996) has termed this process "structuring structure." [8]

1.5 Guiding, constraining and enabling

The "structure" presents the environment into which the child is born, the culture that pre-exists the individual, the beliefs, ideas, and "facts" that the individual will be exposed to while developing. This symbolic knowledge system functions not only as mediator between the social and the self, it serves as semiotic repertoire that individuals draw on when constructing both the world around them as well as their own position within it (DUVEEN & LLOYD, 1986). When individuals appropriate and interpret the world around them, they re-interpret beliefs and knowledge presented to them, thus "re-presenting" them in novel ways which are

specific not only to their community, but also to individual needs (HOWARTH, 2005). [9]

"Structuring" is the process by which the individual is guided and constrained by representations. The act of positioning oneself (within the "structure") and at the same time being positioned ("structuring") is what intertwines social representations with identity construction. As HERMANS et al. (1993) have put it themselves: "[…] the potential range of *I*-positions [...], is organized not only by the person himself or herself, but also by the social environment" (p.62). Further down, in the same text, the authors assert that as soon as children have reached "the stage at which they are able to talk and think about themselves, in JAMES' terms, as *I* about *Me*, they have reached a period in which society begins, more than before, to influence and organize their world." (p.72). [10]

The internalization of social representations, and therefore the constant dialogical negotiations of cultural *I*-positions, can take place on either a macro or micro level (VALSINER, 2000). The micro levels refer either to the acquisition of knowledge through reconstructing symmetrical social relations between peers or through a social transmission characterized by an asymmetry of power so that knowledge is reproduced because of the influence and prestige of the source (DUVEEN, 1997). The macro level refers to knowledge acquisition through collective symbolic systems which can be communicated to the child either though propaganda and other media related sources, or through implicit social constructs surrounding a particular situation. [11]

In summary, this study aims to show how children (ten-year-olds) mark multiple cultural *I*-positions through internalizations (at both the macro as well as the micro level) and re-constructions of social representations held by their parents (family environment) and their teachers (school environment). [12]

2. Research Question

People from all over the world with various cultural origins mix, match and raise their child in yet another country. Inner-cities, such as London, have a growing population of multicultural individuals. The study discussed here focuses on the process of identity construction in children who have parents originating from diverse cultures while growing up in a third. More precisely, how do ten-year-old children growing up in London, attending a multicultural junior school, with parents representing multiple cultural origins make sense of who they are? In what way do children in such a fusion of cultural diversity make sense of their interconnected cultural environment and thus of themselves within it? How do they position themselves and mark multiple cultural *I*-positions within cross-cultural families? [13]

3. Methodology

3.1 Qualitative case studies

As the theory of social representations (MOSCOVICI, 1988) suggests, in order to understand children we need to understand their social world (DUVEEN & LLOYD, 1993) and thus we need to allow them to teach us about their world (CHRISTENSEN, 2004). SKINNER, VALSINER and HOLLAND (2001, p.30) point out that "knowing the figured world means knowing the kinds of people (or generic actors) who populate it, their relationship to one another, recognized motives for action and the plots or storylines available for linking actors and events in these worlds." Such a close focus on the child's social setting, while analyzing the child within it is best accomplished with a qualitative case study (DE VAUS, 2001). [14]

The theory of social representation does not, as FARR (1993) points out, elucidate guidelines as to which method is most appropriate. Nevertheless, there are important aspects that should not be dismissed and need precise explications, such as the content of the social representations and the social milieu of what is in question (BAUER & GASKELL, 1999). Individual case studies highlight not only the child's perspective of his or her world, but also allow for multiple angles of the child's world to crystallize by incorporating views of significant social others (JAMES, JENKS & PROUT, 1998). FLICK (1992) discusses the extra richness case studies have proven to reveal in relation to the multi-variedness of the phenomenon in question[1]. As the conducted study aimed to capture the dynamics of a dialogical self—the dynamic permeability of the self within the society, using a large sample would only homogenize more than aid description. The theory of social representations promises to reveal more about the underlying mechanisms of psychological phenomenon (VALSINER, 2003). By closely examining three individuals and their social environment this study seeks to reveal such mechanisms, their multi-variedness, and gain extra richness (FLICK, 1992) without homogenizing and broadly generalizing a phenomenon specific to each and every individual. [15]

3.2 Three cases

In the research project discussed here I analyzed three cases—three children, a parent of each child, and three of their teachers. As I had been working part-time in the school previous to the study, I was able to observe some relations between pupils and their teachers, between peers in the playground and between parents picking up their child after school. This gave me an opportunity to grasp a rough understanding of the figured worlds of each pupil who then participated in my study. Here I use the term rough because the school surrounding is, of course, simply a fragment of what the whole social environment is composed of.

1 Through comparing and contrasting single case studies, FLICK (1993) was able to show systematic variations in "how the client and his situation, the counselor's own scope and action, the situations and the constraints for working with clients and so on are constructed in the subjective theories and how these factors were dealt with in counseling" (p64).

Nevertheless, for the purpose of this study, the focus of the school environment will suffice for showing how multicultural children begin to mark cultural *I*-positions within social representations. [16]

The junior school chosen for this study was situated in the heart of London. The three children participating were part of a class of 24 which had 27 diverse nationalities represented in it. Having so many diverse nationalities present in one classroom provided an excellent opportunity to conduct case studies on the construction of identity within a multicultural environment. As social representations may vary from one community to the next, it was important to conduct this study in one school, and for further precision, in only one classroom. Capturing the social representations and showing their "structuring work" within the self-construction process of children (and avoiding homogenization) is best done by focusing on one setting. [17]

The wider range of research concerned with the construction of multicultural identity has mostly focused on youth of twelve and up into adulthood (see e.g. HALL, 1995, CONDOR, 2000; CHANDLER, 2000). However, individuals finishing junior school and slowly becoming a teenager are in a special place in society. They are still children, and yet, they are becoming increasingly aware of social representation of various cultural issues and thus present an interesting age that has received little attention so far. As HERMANS et al. (1993) have put forth that socialization begins as soon as the child is able to talk and think about her- or himself (and therefore influencing and organizing their world), I was not uncertain about the ability of children in my study constructing and organizing a self-concept. Conducting a study with ten-year-old children would allow me to look at precisely how children *begin* to make sense of who they are within *their* social environment. [18]

Due to time constraints and encountering difficulties with parental approval while recruiting subjects (many parents were reluctant and did not like the idea of a "stranger flying into the child's world and dropping a bomb in the middle and then taking of without taking care of the consequences," as one parent explained his disapproval) I was not free to choose the gender of the children and thus, coincidently, all of the three children taking part in this study were girls[2]. Amanda has a mother who is half Italian half Nigerian and a father who is half South African half Nigerian. Nadine has a mother who is Austrian and a German father and Gabriela is half Italian and half Lebanese (the mother being Italian and the father Lebanese). Besides interviewing the three girls, their mothers, the school's Headmaster, a Year Four Teacher and Year Five Teacher were interviewed as well. While I had asked the parents if I could interview one parent (not specifying whether mother or father) the mothers of these three children were the ones who were available and thus took part in my study. [19]

2 To protect the anonymity and the confidentiality of the participants all the names and various characteristics have been changed.

3.3 Procedure

In-depth interviews were conducted with teachers, parents and children to compare and contrast representations and discourses of all three groups (FLICK, 1993). Interviews with the parents and the teachers were semi-structured, and a method triangulation was used for interviewing the child (FLICK, 1992). [20]

After explicating the procedure of the interview the child was informed of participant's rights and that the interview was confidential. The child then was asked to draw a picture of herself as an adult, serving mostly as icebreaker (GREIG & TAYLOR, 1999). After briefly discussing the drawing, the child was asked a set of questions moving from being personal (describe yourself in the future, describe yourself and your family today, what makes you special compared to others in your class?) over more general family questions (questions about relatives and family holidays) to questions about their culture (what does culture mean to you, what is your culture, what do you like most about your culture?). Between the set of questions about their family and their culture, vignettes were introduced and discussed with the children (see Appendix 1). [21]

Corresponding roughly with the child's interview guide, the interview topics of the parents' interview moved from personal information (where the particular parent is from, how long they have been in England, etc.) to more general information about the family (what languages are spoken, what celebrations are most important, how often do they see relatives?) and then to specific questions about the child's identity, what the parent did to promote a certain cultural aspects (if at all) and how the parent viewed the child's development (see Appendix 2). [22]

Topic guides designed for the teachers differed slightly between the Headmaster and Year Four and Year Five teachers. While both moved from a personal (How long have you been at this school, how aware of multiculturalism are you?) to a more general (what is unique about this school, how would you compare it to other schools?) and back to the specific (how do children in this school come to terms with the presents of various different cultures, do you have an incident of when a child expressed a positive/negative view of the various cultures being present in the school?), the interviews with the two classroom teachers were much more specific. The interview with the Headmaster focused more on the school and representations of multiculturalism in general and compared to other schools in London, whereas the interviews with the two teachers centred more on the children at this particular school and how the students make sense of themselves in this particular environment, specifically within year five (see Appendix 2). [23]

All interviews were scheduled according to the subjects' convenience and thus took place at various locations and times. They were recorded on a mini disc recorder and transcribed as soon as possible. Transcriptions took place while interviews were still being conducted, enabling me to listen to the answers more attentively, analyzing them and revising topic guides where necessary. [24]

Once permission was gained from the parents, children were approached mostly after school (in the playground) and asked whether they were interested in talking to me about themselves for a research project. Interviews ranged between 30 min and 1 h. [25]

While the mother's interviews followed shortly after the child's (usually the next day) and lasted between 30 min and 45 min, interviews with the teachers were scheduled according to their time tables and took place in their office/classrooms. These interviews ranged between 20 and 30 min (see Appendix 2 for mothers' and teachers' topic guide). [26]

3.4 Coding and analyzing

WENGRAF's (2001) model of text structure sequentialization was applied to organize the data according to the DARNE Typology: Structuring the interviews in terms of five basic categories (*d*escription, *a*rgumentation, *r*eport, *n*arrative, and *e*valuation); this typology was designed to detect the case structure of the narrative told by the interviewee. More specifically, a differentiation between the life narration as told (as constructed) and the life narration as lived (as actually experienced) is made. Organizing the data according to the five categories above allows the researcher not only to understand past experiences in a present horizon and in a horizon of future expectations; it further permits the researcher to analyze the connections between the lived through experiences and the told story. [27]

In this study the focus fell on particular incidences related to cultural matters. The distinction between what had actually happened (report, narrative) and how the participants perceived these incidences (description, argumentation, evaluation) were helpful in analyzing the precise turning-point of simple facts (so and so was laughed at for speaking a funny language with his or her parents, the headmaster said it is not nice to make fun of someone) and representations and beliefs about these and similar facts (making fun of someone because they speak a different language is not nice [evaluation] because this person will feel bad [argumentation] and the world is much more interesting with people speaking different languages [description]). Thus distinction between what had actually happened and how children organized representations, and ultimately their cultural *I*-positions in relation to not only what had happened, but, more importantly, in relation to social representations around these issues (e.g. it is interesting when others speak several languages, other people think it is special to have that ability, I speak several languages, thus I am interesting and proud of my diversity), was easily recognizable. [28]

Based on the theories employed in this study (the dialogical self and social representations), the aim of this study was to closely analyze the social environment in which the child grows and the story told by the child about this world (especially about how they understand themselves) simultaneously. The text structure sequentialization was chosen for the analysis of the three cases in this study not necessarily to categorize the child's narrative into the above

mentioned categories, but rather, as a means to highlight pertinent connections—the dialogue—between the social environment and the self-concept. [29]

The text structure sequentializations were then used to generate main topics—fields—according to WENGRAF's (2001) thematic field analysis. By staying close to the central research question (how do multi-cultural children make sense of who they are) and the specific research questions (how do children mark cultural *I*-positions within social representations) the themes become apparent from analyzing what each subject talks about in relation to multiculturalism and in which category (description, argumentation, report, narrative, evaluation). The five categories not only help determine the thematic fields, they also help to organize them into a complete overview of general pertinence. Generating specific thematic fields from all interview and viewing their prominence in each person's discourse (e.g. pride), the various categories helped determine whether this theme was only used as reference (e.g. a report about how the teacher or parent support the notion of pride in diversity) or whether the child has incorporated representations into her own world-view (e.g. creating their own argumentations and evaluations about why they should feel proud of where they are from). Once the thematic fields are detected and organized they can then be compared and contrasted within as well as between the three sets of data. [30]

Once themes and topics had been compared and contrasted according to frequency as well context, GEERTZ's (1973) concept of "thick description" was employed to re-present multiple I-positions the child represented throughout her interview and to highlight how these positions were guided and guarded by representations held by the mother, the school, and the wider society. For example, in reviewing the teachers and parents interviews, the concept of pride reoccurred in various categories (reporting how teachers promoted the notion of pride in diversity, describing how the concept was integrated into the school curriculum, arguing for the importance of such efforts, narrating personal experiences, ...) and was then found within the child's discourse as each of them exhibited a great deal of pride in relation to where they were from. In this case the representations containing pride in diversity guided the children in constructing a positive cultural I-position, which each child readily expressed throughout their interview (e.g. it is cool to be from different countries, I can speak two languages, I feel at home there and here, other people admire where I am from because it is not just English). [31]

4. Results and Interpretations

Before discussing an analysis of the multiple *I*-positions the girls in my study have marked in relation to and in dialogue with social representations, I will discuss some of the main social representations of culture and multicultural issues identified in the teachers as well as the parents discourse. A brief description of the nature of some of the representations about multicultural individuals will set the stage for the internalization processes. These descriptions are part of what JOVCHELOVITCH (1996) term the "structuring structure." Once these repre-

sentations are clarified I will trace them within the child's discourse and her conception of the world. [32]

4.1 The teachers' discourse

In analyzing the teachers' interviews it quickly became apparent that as a means to an end the celebration of diversity occurs within a triangulation of unity, pride, and respect; the end goal representing the aim to learn. These three themes, representing the teachers' motives for their actions (note the importance of the motive behind actions as discussed by SKINNER et al., 2001) govern each teacher's interview, complement values and morals mentioned by parents and are found again in dialogue with the child. [33]

Within the junior school social representations of multicultural individuals emphasized the positive contribution these children were able to make (pride of diversity) to the school as a whole (unity). In order to maintain a sense of unity within the school, individuals are expected to treat each other with respect. Thus, children from all over the world are embraced, accepted and incorporated into the curriculum. Moreover, children are given a chance to express themselves freely, as this quote from the head teacher demonstrates:

> "I just saw some parents this afternoon with their child and, ah, I noticed that she could speak Farsi, and I asked her, can you speak Farsi, yes I can, and I said, oh *I am so jealous*, and I give that whole ethos over […] And I think that that works its way around the school because they know that I feel like that and that other teachers who don't speak other languages feel like that and *they feel very proud of their achievements*. They *are recognized and used in the classroom when teaching*. For example, when I have been teaching RE (Religious Education) and have been talking about the Koran, I have asked children to bring in their favourite versus of the Koran and to read them in Arabic and to share them with us and how to handle it and all the other uses around that, to show that *they are a real positive contribution to make* and *that then causes those peer comments of respect and understanding and um, openness* I think, which is important." (Emphasis added) [34]

Representations of unity, pride, and respect were not distinctive characteristics of only the Headmaster's discourse. The three themes governed all three teacher interviews. Each teacher mentioned the world map (a map with photos from students on it, showing all the different 47 nationalities represented in the school) close to the beginning of the interview, proudly pointing out that this school had children from 47 different countries. All of the teachers talked about international poetry day as a chance for the children to read poems in their own language and, thereby, show their extra talents. [35]

Teachers themselves were very proud of their students and the reflection of this pride was visible throughout the interviews. While discussing international poetry day with one teacher she reflected on all the various languages and on the opportunity it gave the children to be proud of their language while smiling radiantly the whole time. Another teacher was eager to tell me about the

embracing manner with which children in his class welcomed other children and that this was a characteristic he had not encountered in any other school:

> "They embrace the cultures and they seem to enjoy being a part of it as well … they all seem to be very accepting of each other, which is great. In the schools I have worked in before children were not this open to other cultures, they usually would stick to their own. This is what makes working here so special." [36]

According to teachers the children are sensitive to other children's need (especially when they do not speak English), are very accepting of each other and "have their eyes wide open." They "enjoy being amongst a nice big crowd of different people" and "don't see the difference between us and them" (relating to cultural differences). In this junior school every one is the same while being different and is encouraged to be proud of it. As the first English troops were sent to Iraq the headmaster's message in assembly was:

> "Wouldn't the world be wonderful if it was like [our school]? Every one is different, everyone has different religions, different faiths, different beliefs, but we all are one community." [37]

Such an all-encompassing and at the same time distinctive environment enables to mark multiple *I*-positions and express each one while still belonging to the overall whole. As one of the teachers reflected that:

> "They are very, very proud, and the thing that I think is really nice is that most, a lot of them see themselves as being English as well, being British as well." [38]

4.2 The parents' discourse

The two themes pride and respect reoccurred in the mothers' discourse. All three mothers assured me that it was very important for them that their daughters knew where they were from, that their heritage is something to be proud of and that this was the reason why respecting others was so important. They wanted their child not only to know about where they are from, but to accept their heritage with pride, teaching them the benefits of having a diverse background as this mother's quote clearly demonstrates:

> "I am not nationalistic but I think one should be able to be proud of wherever you come from. Every country, which ever, has to offer different things and different qualities, it is just like with human beings and I think first of all, you know, you should be able to be proud of that." [39]

The same mother goes on to talk about nationalism, racism, and various other derogating comments that might arise on the bases of someone's culture, nationality or race. She asserts that pride should not incorporate hatred towards anyone else:

> "Not in the sense that you are so proud of it that you consider everything else shit, because that then is nationalism. No, I would make sure that that is corrected and I would also make sure that this person gets to know that it actually is hurting somebody when they make such a comment." [40]

All three stressed that their child was taught about the consequences of racism and the wrongness of it. They use personal examples to clarify the absurdity of disrespecting someone for their culture, nationality, or race, as this mother's comment shows:

> "I mean my mom is white, so what do you want to say? Where do I stand, black or white? And your grandmother is white, where do you want to stand? It's not as if you are not, you have white blood in you, that is not to say, because you are classified as black, you look black anyway, you still are both, so where do you want to stand?" [41]

Discourses like these agree with the teachers' discourse of respect and pride. They send a message to the child that says they should be proud of where they are from, where their family came from, proud about their cultural beliefs and practices and that this pride should be respected in every individual, regardless of *their* cultural beliefs and origins. [42]

The theme of unity in the teachers' discourse was replaced in the mothers' discourse by a theme of balance. As all mothers stressed that they wanted their child to know where they are from without being nationalistic or racist, their solution was to find a balance. Amanda's mother in particular commented several times that to "take the best of both worlds really, that is what I want for her," "taking the best and throwing the rest," and "you always remember where you are from, you are here but there should always be something, so it's really trying to find a balance." All three mothers saw such benefits in growing up in multiple cultures and wanted their child to take the best of all and healthily balance them in their everyday life. [43]

4.3 The girls' representations

In reconstructing the parents' as well as the teachers' discourse the children's culturally mixed *I*-positions are in dialogue with each other. Throughout their interviews representations of unity and difference quickly crystallized in a slightly modified version which fit into their own belief system. They have internalized representations about their specific culture held in society and re-present them in dialogue with me. They are proud of where they are from, feel one with the school, are happy to share extra talents, which make them distinct, and respect others cultural differences. The girls have constructed a social world in which all of their various cultures have a specific (and hierarchically structured) *I*-position and thus present themselves as simultaneously English and for example German-Austrian, part of a whole and their own individual person with a unique combination of cultures. [44]

All three girls assured me that while they were half this and half that, a quarter here and a quarter there they nevertheless considered themselves English. At the same time, all three went into great detail as to what their heritage is and which countries various family member were from, representing both diversity and unity simultaneously. In addition, they were proud to find their origins in various countries while at the same time being English, they were respectful towards other children and their cultural heritages and were happy to take the best from all of their cultural backgrounds to then form their unique combination. [45]

I will discuss the four representations identified in the teachers' and parents' discourse (unity, pride, respect, balance) in relation to the children's various *I*-positions. I will point out at which level various bits of representations were internalized as well as which cultural *I*-positions are dominant over others. I will explain the dialogue between various *I*-positions as well as *I*-positions and the social, showing how the three girls in my study used representations on both macro and micro levels and are in constant negotiation with the social as well as with other *I*-positions, which may be either in agreement or in disagreement while making sense of who they are. [46]

4.3.1 Unity and balance: agreeing cultural I-positions

The reconstruction of the teachers' representation of unity is most vividly expressed by Nadine. Nadine's heritage is German-Austrian. Upon asking her where she is from she explains:

> "Well I was born here, but my mum is from Austria and my dad is from Germany. So I'm mixed." [47]

She describes herself as a whole (mixed), and yet, towards the end of the interview I ask her how she feels when she is in Austria and she replies:

> "I don't feel English. I feel more like I have kind of lived there more, like for a few years. And I know myself around and I know where to go and I know where everything is." [48]

Even though Nadine thinks of herself as one, experiencing continuity, in this instance it becomes clear that her *I* moves from one spatial position to another, depending on context and time, each position is endowed with a respective voice experiencing a distinctness. Once she is in Austria the prominence of her English cultural *I*-positions is suppressed and her Austrian *I*-position becomes the dominating voice accompanied with a sense of volition ("I know where to go and I know where everything is"). [49]

Nevertheless, the various *I*-positions are in agreement with each other due to the unity of diverse cultures represented by both her mother and the teachers. As her mother asserted that:

> "I think one should be able to be proud of wherever you come from; every country, all the different ones, they all have to offer different things and different qualities. One should see the many enrichments different cultures can offer." [50]

Nadine explains to me how she defines *her* culture:

> Nadine: Cool!
>
> Amrei: How do you mean cool? Can you explain what you mean?
>
> Nadine: It's just kind of nice that you can, it's nice … it's hard to explain.
>
> Amrei: Ok, um, what do you like most about your culture?
>
> Nadine: That it is not only one culture, like just England, or just Austria, or just Germany, that it is mixed and that I can go all over the place and that I've got lots of family everywhere and it's fun because lots of people, like, um, they admire it, kind of. [51]

Even though it is rather difficult for Nadine to explain what exactly it is about "her culture" that is "cool," she recognizes that there is a unity in herself constructed by a multiplicity. Further, she considers her culture as being cool (showing pride in it) because "lots of people […] admire it." This quote shows not only that Nadine is unifying her cultural mix, she is internalizing what her mother as well as her teachers think about a person with multiple cultural backgrounds. Finding a balance is what the mothers wanted their children to do and finding a balance is what Nadine is doing by stating that her culture is cool since it is not just one. Note also the reference of "other people" admiring her position. The dialogical thought process of reflecting not only on what Nadine thinks about a culturally mixed background but, more importantly, on what Nadine thinks others think about it becomes apparent in the above quote. It also shows Nadine having internalized on a micro level (via an asymmetry) what her teachers are promoting throughout school:

> "Children who speak more than one language should be celebrated because they are an extra richness above and beyond." (Headmaster)
>
> "To show the children that it is indeed an extra talent and that it is something that they can be proud of. That is the ethos in this school and I think that the children really feel it. They definitely feel it from the top." (Year Four Teacher) [52]

The above quotes are an example of how Nadine has acknowledged representations of having various cultural backgrounds and the enrichment these bring. She draws on representations in school as well as at home to mark multiple cultural *I*-positions within one repertoire. She has an Austrian *I*-position, a German *I*-position and an English *I*-position in negotiation with each other as well as with the social. The hierarchy of these *I*-positions is modified to context and time. Yet, they are in agreement with each other and can all be represented at the same time with the help of the internalized representation of unity. [53]

4.3.2 Conflicts and pride: disagreeing I-positions

While Nadine's culturally diverse I-positions seem to be complimenting each other, not all multicultural children experience such harmony. As the theory of the dialogical self (HERMANS et al., 1992) predicts, various cultural *I*-positions may be in disagreement with each other. Gabriela presents such an example. When I asked her whether she was Muslim she replied:

> Gabriela: I can't really say. Well, not that I don't know, but I can't, to be honest, my dad wants me to be Muslim, um, yea, if I say no to him, he's got a bit of a mentality, that if I say no to him, to be a Muslim, he says that, I don't know, that he won't look at me.
>
> Amrei: Is your mum Muslim?
>
> Gabriela: No, she is Christian, to be honest I prefer to be Christian.
>
> Amrei: Ok.
>
> Gabriela: But at the end of the day, it is my choice what I want to do at the end of the day. [54]

The prominence of Gabriela's Christian *I*-position is clearly visible. While she does not want to let go of her Muslim *I* ("I can't really say"), her Christian *I* is who speaks out louder ("I prefer to be Christian"). [55]

Further, while the two religions might stand in opposition, it is interesting to see how Gabriela internalized and reconstructed the representations held by the parents and incorporates them in herself. Gabriela lives with her mother, who is Christian and who tries to teach her honesty and independence:

> "Well, it can be tough with different religions, I try to tell her the truth and be honest and teach her to be independent and make her own decisions. But it can be very difficult." [56]

Thus Gabriela has reconstructed her mother's teaching of independence and internalized them on a micro level as "at the end of the day" being able to choose which religion she will affiliate with. Gabriela's quote above demonstrated the dialogical interaction between her Muslim *I*-position, her Christian *I*-position and her social environment. She cannot say whether she is one or the other and while trying to clarify this struggle (a disagreeing dialogue between her two religious positions) she refers back to her parent (demonstrating the dialogical interaction of both positions with her environment). [57]

Despite Gabriela's difficulty of incorporating both a Muslim *and* a Christian *I*-position she is rather proud of her diverse background and her ability to speak an extra language. While talking to her mother on the playground she makes comments exclusively in Italian, loud enough for other children to hear them. Her mother tries to speak to her in English since I do not understand Italian and Gabriela insists on Italian. Upon asking her where she was from she was eager to

tell me (with a very proud voice) that while she did consider herself English she actually is from somewhere else:

> "Well, um, I am English but my dad's Lebanese and my mom is Italian, so I am half Lebanese half Italian." [58]

Besides exemplifying disagreeing religious *I*-positions Gabriela shows through her actions and attitude that she nevertheless is proud of where she is from. Even though her parents are divorced, she hardly spends time in Lebanon and does not speak Lebanese she is in no aspect inclined to simply dismiss her Lebanese *I*-position. Gabriela was just as proud of her Lebanese heritage as she was of her Italian while simultaneously being English. [59]

So far I have described Nadine's internalized representations of unity and balance, providing her with a belief system in which her various cultural *I*-positions can be in agreement. Gabriela exemplifies a case in which religious *I*-positions do not necessarily agree with each other. She nevertheless has internalized the teachers' and her mother's representation of pride in diversity. As the teachers treat multicultural children as extra enrichment and a source of pride, Gabriela's mother asserted a similar view: "I just want her to be proud of where she is from, it is important to know where you are from." [60]

4.3.3 Dominance: hierarchies and internalizations on two levels

Gabriela's Christian *I*-position dominated her Muslim *I*-position. Amanda exhibited even more vividly the hierarchy of her various cultural *I*-positions. When I asked her where she was from she replied:

> "Nigeria, I am half Nigerian, quarter Italian and quarter South African. Sometimes I say I am mostly Nigerian." [61]

This domination by the Nigerian *I*-position is explicable through the family's representations of what "back home" means. Discussing various topics such as celebrations, promotion of cultural identity, and languages with the mother, she exclusively talks about Nigeria. Without me asking she states in the very beginning of the interview that:

> "[…] we are quite in touch with what is happening back home, and there is a Nigerian TV station here so I tend to switch onto it sometimes so they see, you know, the music, all of that, and like, I get films as well, you know, for them at least to have an idea of what it is, make outfits for them, so, they are quite in touch with what is happening, food wise, all of that …" [62]

Amanda reconstructs representations of Nigeria and its people not only through a dyadic relationship (on a micro level), but also on a large scale (on a macro level), as this quote shows her making sense of what is written on a website:

> "[…] um well, on the Internet there is this thing, and they said that we are a bunch of happy going, merry making people. Yea, and I think that is quite true, cause we party basically every day there is a party and everybody knows about it. Like on the street, you know there is everybody, oh hi, and yea." [63]

Amanda recognizes the source of information as something "out there" ("on the Internet there is this thing"), makes the abstract concrete by projecting the information onto imagined social others ("they say") and finds a comfortable position within that representation ("I think that is quite true, cause we party basically every day"). Amanda is thus re-presenting (HOWARTH, 2005) representations of Nigerian culture and herself through these constructions (DUVEEN, 1997). [64]

4.3.4 Respect and admiration: I-positions in dialogue with the social

Having shown how Amanda internalized cultural values on both the macro and micro level, how various *I*-positions may be in disagreement without conflicting with Gabriela's pride, and how Nadine balances her cultural *I*-positions, I would like to turn to a theme identified in both the teachers' and parents' discourse—respect. [65]

Respect was a characteristic found again in discussions of the vignettes I asked the children to complete. One short story dealt with Anthony and his Spanish speaking mother (see Appendix 1). When he is picked up from school Anthony speaks Spanish with his mother. I asked Amanda what other children might think about this and her first reaction was: "they might say, that's a silly language." And Anthony would then feel "disappointed." I asked her why she thought Anthony would feel this way and her reply was:

> "Yea, cause he thought like, people would, you know, cause I am sure most of them have their own language they speak at home. So, they should take it a bit more serious." [66]

Here Amanda asserts that the other children ought to show respect to their peers when speaking a different language since they most probably have their own language as well. If they would not respect that, Amanda further expresses, they would be racist:

> Amrei: Do you think it is Ok to make such comments about Anthony's language?
>
> Amanda: No. Cause it's being racist really. Cause everybody is being different. If we were all the same, would all speak the same language it would be a bit boring. It's nice to hear a change sometimes. [67]

Nadine had similar reactions. Yet, what is interesting about Nadine's answer is that she derives her assertion of how children in her school act directly from the teachers. Nadine makes a distinction between "nice" people and "horrible" people, letting the stories end in two ways (one how nice people might react and

one how horrible people might react). When discussing Anthony's story Nadine's thoughts were:

> Nadine: Nice people would be impressed and think it is quite cool, like they might say wow, how did you do that, can you teach me and stuff. Horrible people probably would make fun of him because they are jealous or maybe they think it just sounds like gibberish.
>
> Amrei: Ok, how would you describe this school, are there many nice people, are there many horrible people?
>
> Nadine: Most of the people here are nice.
>
> Amrei: Do you think it is different from other areas?
>
> Nadine: Yea.
>
> Amrei: Yea, do you know why?
>
> Nadine: um, no, um, I think it is just because maybe the teachers are better, I don't know. [68]

The interesting aspect about this little excerpt of Nadine's interview is that it shows her assumption of her interaction with the social. She makes a distinction between horrible and nice people, by which she categorizes desirable vs. undesirable behavior. In this case, she is of the opinion that the desirable behavior is to admire Anthony's ability to speak another language. She further asserts that within her school most children behave in a similar manner because "maybe the teachers are better." Nadine shows not only her awareness of the teachers representations (how one ought to behave towards others), but also her awareness of the importance of a "structuring structure" (JOVCHELOVITCH, 1996), her awareness of them affecting how she and other members of her school thinks. [69]

5. Discussion

In an attempt to explicate how children with various cultural backgrounds come to an understanding of who they are, I have analyzed three cases in the light of social representations (MOSCOVICI, 2000) while focusing on the dialogues of *I*-positions (HERMANS et al., 1994). Looking at multicultural individuals it has become apparent that while the theory of the dialogical self has great potential and explicates various important features in need of clarification when discussing the construction of multicultural selves, it is equally necessary to justly describe the figured world in which *I*-positions have been marked. In this study, the theory of social representations was employed for such descriptions. Closely analyzing social representations will help understand how various *I*-positions are marked and in which hierarchical order. Describing these positions with the help of social representations may clarify why some children experience difficulties when developing within a multicultural background and others do not. Before discussing exactly how the children in my study have used various social representations to mediate their sense of who they are, I will discuss some important features of the

theory of the dialogical self which have proven to be especially helpful in analyzing the construction of the self of multicultural persons. [70]

5.1 Multiculturalism and the dialogical self

The permeability and dynamic nature of the dialogical self enable the child to act and react according to the situation and time. The openness and fluidity of a person (as discussed by VALSINER, 2002, 2003) is of great importance when discussing multicultural children, as they are often confronted with shifts of cultural *I*-position dominating over others. HALL (1995) has brought forth an exemplary paper discussing Sikh girls in London. Here a shift between "when to act English" and "when to act Sikh" (switching from English cultural *I*-position to Sikh cultural *I*-position) occurs each time the child leaves and returns to her home environment. [71]

Remembering Nadine's explanation of not feeling English when she is in Austria, the dynamic and fluid nature becomes prominent within this study as well. Nadine is able to make a clear distinction according to context, as to which situation calls for which *I*-positions. When Nadine is in Austria, she "feels as though she knows everything and has always been there." Her Austrian *I* temporarily takes on a more prominent position. Important here is the ability of the dialogical self to move from one spatial position to another. [72]

The permeability and dynamic nature make it possible for these girls to all feel English as well as originating from various other cultures, creating a novel "in-between" area. The dialogical openness allows the child to mark an English position. Yet, they are all exposed to "their culture back home" as well and therefore internalize values and beliefs originating from other cultures, re-presenting themselves as part of that culture too. [73]

This is where the multiplicity and polyphony, drawn from BAKHTIN, deserves mentioning. The ability to endow each *I*-position with a voice that tells its own story allows Nadine to feel English and German at the same time. They are separate voices occupying diverse positions. HERMANS et al. (1992) theory nicely explicates the ability to belong to more than one culture without necessarily feeling fractured and negatively in-between, belonging neither here nor there. Yet, it is also this feature, heteroglossia in incessant dialogue, in processes of questioning and answers with other *I*-positions as well as the figured world, which may lead to conflicting self-concepts (e.g. TIMOTIJEVIC et al., 2000). The two examples from the passages discussed above would be Nadine's ease of feeling different in Austria (enable through agreeing *I*-position) and Gabriela's disquiet of which religion to belong to (presenting two conflicting *I*-positions). [74]

While the above example highlights two of the three components discussed in relation of the characteristics of voices (continuity and distinctness), it also illustrates the novel construction which has developed from already existing structures. The concept of being English is well established, as is the notion of

being Austrian[3]. Nadine has understood this and yet comes to the conclusion that while she is part of both ("I was born here, but my mother is from Austria"), she is not really either. Instead, she is something else ("mixed"), something that in the later part of our interview she characterizes as "cool" because it is novel ("other people kind of admire it because it is not just one"). Again, I would like to stress the importance of the ability to construct novel structures out of already exciting structures when forming a self-concept. It is what enables persons to be of mixed heritage without experiencing a sense of fracturedness or being an outsider. Such a novel construction is only possible if a person and culture is conceptualized as an open dynamic system (VALSINER, 2002). [75]

Having discussed two of the three components' characteristic for each voice (continuity and distinctness), I would like to turn to the third: volition. While Gabriela is telling me about her religious preference, two *I*-positions are struggling to maintain their importance within her *I*-positioning repertoire. It is the volition of her Muslim *I* that, at this moment, does not allow her Christian *I* to completely reject the Muslim position. No matter what her preference at this moment is, her Muslim *I* maintains to occupy an important stance in her figured world (as she expresses her father will not look at her if she decides not to be Muslim). Simply by maintaining a position in Gabriela's life this position is exerting volition, it refuses to be rejected. Likewise, the Christian *I*-position clearly shows its volition by dominating over the Muslim *I*. [76]

The possibility of the dichotomy of continuity and discontinuity HERMANS (2001b) discusses is of relevance as well. All three girls expressed that since their parents were from somewhere other than England, they too were not fully English. The example HERMANS discussed concerned the differentiation between *my* mother and my *mother.* This little sentence represents continuity with the former (my) and a discontinuity in the acceptance of whatever is *mine* is not me, but rather someone else: *mother*. The girls are aware that they were born in England and distinct from their mother (Nadine: "Well, I was born here"). And yet, they realize the importance of the heritage of their parents (Nadine: "but my mum is from Austria"). And thus the dichotomy flourishes (Nadine: "So I'm mixed"). [77]

Making this differentiation between being English and being something else relates back to the JAMESian distinction of *I* and *ME.* As this research project focused on social interaction and influence on the child's development of a self, I will only point out one of the three features constituting the *ME* as known by the *I*: social relationships. The spiritual and the material possessions will not be elaborated here, even though they are important features of constructing a self-concept. The social relationships of the children are crucial in conceptualizing a self as shown above. The parents are part of the child's identity in all three cases (remember all three discussing their heritage in terms of their parents heritage). Each child emphasized various *I*-positions endowed with their parents' voices, their *I's* were telling stories about respective *ME's*. [78]

3 As the aim of the paper is to show the construction process of the self and not to discuss what a concept of being from a certain culture might be, I will provide no further discussion as to what the established concept of "being English" might be.

Variations of voices have been pointed out so far in relation to specific *I*-positions (e.g. religious). The theory of the dialogical self exerts that each distinct voice may have several possibilities of what that voice is part of. Voices may be part of the world "out there," as the Internet represents for Amanda. A voice can be classified as the "imagined other" (MEAD, 1934), as Nadine explains that people (the imagined other) envy her for her background. They may be part of the extended self, as in all three cases with the parental heritage. Or they may be classified as the "inside" world of imagination (discussing the drawing of the children as an adult, an image of herself in the future, would be classified as part of the imagined world "inside"). [79]

Before turning to the theory of social representations and how it may aid to clarify some aspects of multicultural identity construction, I would like to mention that the above points discussed in relation to multicultural identities do not, by themselves, do justice to the whole theory of the dialogical self. Many features of the dialogical self would deserve more elaboration. Yet, for the purpose of this article the above mentioned point are sufficient, or rather, when discussing multicultural selves the above discussed features are necessary. Nevertheless, the figured world (SKINNER et al., 2001), needs precise analysis as well and thus I will now turn to the benefits of employing the theory of social representations. [80]

5.2 Structuring *I*-positions

Cultural *I*-positions children mark, are by no means random. The hierarchical structure can be traced by analyzing social representations which are part of the semiotic repertoire available to the children and through which they mediate their sense of who they are. Describing what the figured world of the child looks like helps to determine whether cultural *I*-positions are in agreement or disagreement with each other and it helps to define the structure of marked *I*-positions, as children mark them within and according to this repertoire of symbolic resources (DUVEEN et al., 1986). [81]

In this particular study I focused on the discourse of the teachers and mothers specifically related to multicultural issues. For precision I further focused on the school setting. The aim was to capture some of the social representations about culture that children in this particular school utilized while making sense of their world and of themselves. The aim of the teachers was learning and that of the mothers successful child-raring and in both discourses four themes reoccurred: pride, respect, unity, and balance. The aim as motive for action is directly related to the storylines available to the children (as discussed by SKINNER et al., 2001 [30]). The teachers repetitively stressed the importance of showing the child that the feature that made them different (being a different color, speaking a different language, having different customs) was something special, enriching, and to be proud of. They incorporated this ethos into their school curriculum and thus combined sensitive cultural issues in a positive manner with the achievements children were able to make. [82]

All three children demonstrated pride in diversity in a slightly modified way; (remember Nadine's expression of her culture being "cool"). Likewise respect was found again in the discourse of all the girls participating in this study; they had not only understood the concept and the importance of it, but internalized and reinterpreted it according to their own belief system (e.g. Amanda, while discussing the vignettes, explained that since most probably everyone had their own language at home, other children should take issues like these more seriously and not make fun of someone for speaking a different language). While not making a distinction between cultures or any other related issues when asked who they preferred to play with, talk to, or work with in class, all three children were aware that each and every pupil belonged to the overall whole—their school (as Nadine even pointed out that people in this school were nicer than in others). The children all gave off a sense of unity. The theme of balance is best discussed with Gabriela's case. While the other two girls seemed to be rather content with their cultural backgrounds and the combination of them, Gabriela struggled with finding a balance between her Muslim *I*-position and her Christian *I*-position. She has not yet found a balance between them and therefore the issue became more prominent in her discourse than in the others' conversations. [83]

Finding all the main themes represented within the child's discourse shows how each child has interpreted what is going on around her while at the same time adjusting her understanding according to her own world and needs. She has made sense of certain issues and used this sense to understand where she stands according to what is said by, in this case, the teachers and the parents. Both the parents' and the teachers' discourse about cultural issues was highly motivated to assure the children that not being "fully English" was something positive and to be proud of (enabling the child to develop a healthy self-esteem), something that is an enrichment to the child as she can choose the best from all "and throw the rest" (encouraging them to find a balance), and something that did not distinguish them in any negative way form the rest of the school. Rather, "being different" was the norm in this particular junior school and this difference was what unified all the various nationalities to one community (giving the children a sense of belonging, rather than a fractured understanding of the self). [84]

Social representations about multicultural individuals and problems such individuals may encounter are usually not as positive as they were within this school. In fact, most multicultural literature discusses fractured selves (e.g. TIMOTIJEVIC et al. 2000), not belonging here or there (MARSHALL, STENNER & LEE, 1999), low self-esteem (MIRZA & REAY, 2000), poor achievements and higher criminality related to hyphenated individuals migrants (HALL, 1996), to mention just a few. It is because the school in which I conducted my research is open and welcoming to diverse nationalities and cultures that the children are allowed and able to mark cultural *I*-positions that are in agreement with each other rather than in oppositions. Of course the school is no isolated environment and not the only environment the child grows in. Thus, some social representations cannot be overridden with the open ethos that would like to also allow conflicting cultural positions to be in agreement (e.g. Gabriela's struggle between Christianity and Islam). Nevertheless, this study does show that social

representations do guide and constrain the construction of a self as HOWARTH (2002) has discussed. It is the reconstruction of the social structure which either enables children to feel proud of where they are from or guides them to experience a fractured sense of self and neither belonging here nor there, depending on the representations within the figured world (VALSINER, 2000). [85]

Analyzing social representations present within the figured world of the child helps understand why some children experience difficulties when growing up "between" multiple cultures and why others do not, it leads the researcher to understand which cultural *I*-positions are marked and to grasp which of these marked positions is of prominence and why. A generalization of the findings to a wider population would yield no results. Each person needs to be carefully analyzed according to the social representations governing their personal figured world (SKINNER et al., 2001). Instead of homogenizing individuals and thereby neglecting depth and accuracy, the theory of social representations was employed to highlight the dialogical relationship between the individual and the social and for contextualizing the individual (VALSINER, 2003). [86]

5.3 Future research

The three cases in focus here were of three girls in their beginning stages of making sense of their cultural *I*-positions. A follow-up study would be of great interest as it would demonstrate further developmental stages of each child making sense of who she is. To see how the child positions herself when she is 14, 16 and 18 would yield important data on how beginning stages of cultural *I*-positions are further negotiated until adulthood. [87]

This research project has focused on verbal interaction (due to time constraints), yet, DUVEEN (1997) has pointed out that social representations are not necessarily communicated to the child in a dyadic relationship, they may simply be written into the code of the collective symbol system. In addition, the theory of the dialogical self also asserts that "dialogue" is not to be understood as purely verbal interaction. Rather, the dialogical interaction begins with eye contact between the infant and the mother (FOGEL, 1993). To form a more detailed understanding of how children construct a sense of who they are, it is important for future research to conduct field-studies over a longer period of time with in-depth observations focusing on non-verbal interaction. By conducting an ethnographic study subtle interactions can be considered and incorporated into the analysis and the negotiation processes over a longer period of time can be observed (e.g. it would be interesting to see how Gabriela will negotiate her religious positions in future) (DUVEEN et al., 1993). As not all aspects of the theory of the dialogical self (due to spatial and time constraints) were discussed here (e.g. the two remaining features of the *ME*; spiritual and material possessions),conducting an ethnographic study would provide the opportunity to discuss more features of the dialogical self in greater detail. [88]

It is important to conduct this type of study with more participants and especially also with male participants. Unfortunately the time limitations and difficulties with

parental agreement did not allow for an analysis of boys within this school. Nevertheless, in order to rule out gender differences within the identity construction process such a research project should definitely be conducted with boys as well. [89]

Research projects that incorporate more social environments of the child's world will be of interest as well. In this particular study I focused on social representations within the school environment and how these affected the child's marking of cultural *I*-positions. Yet, observing the child at home, on the playground, in the company of relatives, or even "back home" would be highly beneficial for analyzing the constant negotiation of the dominance of certain *I*-positions over others. Further, observing the interactions of the child in novel situations (e.g. encountering difficulties because of the heritage) and noting their coping strategies would clarify some of their dialogical relationships between their *I*-positions. [90]

6. Conclusion

According to MOSCOVICI "[t]he biological equipment of human beings, which is its reference point, does not vary from culture to culture. But representations are envisaged on a scale where cultural differences do matter in shaping the human family and its world" (1988, p.234). [91]

And so representations matter for individuals making sense of themselves. In conceptualizing a person and how he or she makes sense of him- or herself, he or she must be analyzed in relation to social representations present in *his* or *her* world while the multiplicity of various *I*-positions should not to be neglected. [92]

I showed how social representations held by teachers and parents can be found again within the child's discourse, presenting a part of who they are and how children with a fusion of a diverse cultural background and growing up in a multicultural environment mark multiple cultural *I*-positions. The theory of the dialogical self is a useful tool in showing how children *are* able to create a novel space "in-between" which is not necessarily a negative one (as so often discussed by multicultural social researchers). It is important to realize the ability of children to form a healthy and positive self-concept regardless of the number of cultural influences. It is also necessary to understand the highly influential feature (the structuring structure) of social representations that play such an immense role within the open and dynamic dialogical process, the never-ending negotiations, of the construction of a self-concept. [93]

Appendix 1: Topic Guide and Vignettes for Interviewing the Child

Topic guide

Please draw a picture of yourself when you are an adult, you have about 10 min.

Can you tell me why you drew this picture?

Where are you in this picture (in what country)?

What are you doing?

Are you married/do you have a family?

I) General questions about yourself:

How would you describe yourself?

And in relation to other children in your class?

What is unique about you (do you have something that other children don't, what makes you special)?

If I ask you, "where are you from," what would you say?

If someone from a different country asked you, would you say the same thing?

Where were you born?

Is there a difference for you between where you are from and where you were born?

II) General questions about your family:

Can you describe your family to me (where are your parent's from/how many siblings do you have/who do you live with)?

What language do you speak at home?

What language do you speak with your brothers or sisters?

How would you describe your sisters or brothers?

How are they different from you?

Where do most of your relatives live?

How do your relatives (aunt/uncle/cousin) differ from you?

III) General questions about your friends:

How are you friends?

Do you often go to their house?

What sort of games do you play with them?

Who do you like the most and why?

IV) Vignettes

V) General questions about your culture:

Can you describe to me what "culture" means/is? (background, tradition, customs, ethnicity)

What does "culture" mean to *you*?

How would you describe your culture?

Is your culture the same as that of your relatives?

Can you describe something (anything) that is typical for your culture?

Can you describe a typical holiday/celebration that you and your family celebrate?

Does that belong to your culture? Why or why not?

What do you like most about your culture? Why?

What is unique about your culture?

Vignettes

1) Laura is new in the school. She is 9 years old and is starting year 5. Laura moved to England, Liverpool, 5 years ago with her two brothers and her parents. Laura's mum is from Russia and her dad is from America. After living in Liverpool for 5 years her family decided to move to London. On her first day of school Laura feels …

2) Anthony has lived in London all his life. But his parents have moved to London from different countries. His mum moved to London from Columbia, South America, when she was 18 to go to college. In college she met Anthony's dad. His dad had also moved to London when he was 18, but he had moved from Spain. Anthony does not have an accent when he speaks English, but both his parents do. When they are at home they speak Spanish. When Anthony is being picked up from school other children sometimes say something about the language that he speaks with his parents.

3) Rachel and her friends are having lunch. They are talking about a program all of them have seen last night. When the girls start unpacking their lunch Rachel takes out the pancakes her mother makes at home and uses them to scoop up some spicy sauce. Even though the food might be hot and Rachel uses her fingers to eat it (as they do in Ethiopia, Africa). When the other girls see Rachel eating with her fingers they …

4) Thom is playing football with his friends after school. Because it is Ramadan he has to go home to pray soon. Thom is not fully Muslim, only his father is Muslim, but he still has to participate in all of the religious practices, just like his older brother. There are many Muslims in Thom's school, but none of his friends

are Muslim. Thom would like to stay outside with his friends and play some more football, but he knows he will get into trouble if he does.

Appendix 2: Topic Guide for Mothers and Teachers

Topic guide for mothers

I) General questions about you:

Where are you from?

Where is (the child's) father/mother from?

How long have you been in England?

II) Questions about your family:

What languages do you speak at home?

What language do you prefer to speak to the child?

Where do you go on vacation?

How often do you take the child to your homeland? How often to the other parent's homeland?

Can you describe a typical family vacation?

Approximately, how much time do you spend with other relatives? Where and when?

What kind of holidays do you spend at home?

Can you describe a typical family holiday that you celebrate with your family every year? Who is present, what foods do you eat, what kind of cultural practices do your holidays involve?

What kind of meals do you eat at home on regular days?

III) Questions about promoting the child's identity:

What kind of issues were you concerned with when thinking about having a child?

Is it important to you that the child knows "where he or she is from"?

Do you consciously contribute to it, in what way?

IV) Questions about dealing with the child's identity:

Why did you send your child to [this school]?

Can you tell me something about [this school] that you particularly like that is unique about the school?

Have you looked at other schools? What would you say is unique about [this school]l?

How do you respond to racial name calling in school?

Would you respond differently if the child had been teased about something else?

How would you respond when you hear about the child teasing someone else about their culture/race?

Can you describe an incident of when your child made a comment about when he or she was proud of where he/she was from?

Can you describe how you think the child benefits from growing up in a multicultural environment?

What are some of the characteristics that you think the child will acquire in such an environment?

Do you think it is difficult for your child to grow up in a mixed cultural environment? Why or why not?

Topic guide for teachers

I) Questions about you and the school

How long have you been at [this school]?

Where were you before?

How would you compare the schools in terms of multiculturalism?

Is [this school] unique? In what way?

I have talked to the Headmaster about what this particular junior school does to promote multiculturalism, can you briefly describe what you think the school does for it?

II) Questions about multiculturalism

How aware of multiculturalism were you before coming to [this school]?

Afterwards?

Have you further educated yourself? In what way?

III) Questions about the students and incidences at school

How do you think that children perceive the many different cultures present at [this school]?

Can you recall a particular positive incident with children either commenting or acting on multiculturalism being present at [this school]?

Overall, how would you describe the experience that children have at [this school] in relation to multiculturalism?

Do you think it is an issue for children to be exposed to so many different cultures when growing up? In what way?

Do you have a particular negative incident of children and multiculturalism?

Are there differences in terms of nationality? Do some children have a harder time than others? Which ones and in what way?

Is there a difference between pure race and mixed race children in terms of how they perceive multicultural aspects?

Are there more problems in general with mixed children? Would you differentiate?

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