

## Chapter 2

# Mosaics of Cultural Identity: Mundializing the Self on the Arena of Education

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Traditional Senegalese fabrics. Courtesy of © L. Haunhorst

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## A New Look: Dialogical Self Theory

Hubert Hermans has systematically built up his Dialogical Self Theory (DST) on the basis of the ideas of James and Bakhtin (Hermans et al. (1992). Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010) argue that dialogues do not only exist between units, such as individuals or groups, but also within the self of one and the same person. Searching for a deeper understanding of the self, they examined the connection between the self and environment. Instead of considering the external and the internal as different—even contrasting—parts (James 1890), they debate the interconnection between both: “the dialogical self is not based on any dualism between the self and other: the other (individual or group) is [...] an intrinsic part of a self” (Hermans and Hermans-Konopka 2010, p. 7). The authors follow as well Bakhtin’s (1986) perspective describing non-hierarchical dialogical relationships. Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010) mention a particular reason why and under which condition their Dialogical Self Theory is constructed in these years. Focusing on the dialogical nature of the self at the end of the twentieth century includes a new feature. In contrast to James (1890) and Bakhtin (1986), the DST needs to take into account a new phenomenon: the rapidly increasing globalization.

## Globalization, Mundialization and Cultural Identity

The complex term *globalization* has diverse definitions. Most of them take into account the flows of goods, people, ideas, and information (Dreher 2006). The Dialogical Self Theory considers globalization as an important factor for the expansion of the self (Hermans 2001; Hermans and Hermans-Konopka 2010). A closer look at the possible interaction between globalization and identity should be taken.

Cha (2003) goes deeper into the consequences that globalization has for the self. She thinks that globalized ideas from other societies do only become a part of the new culture if they get connected with the own cultural value system, what she calls *mundialization*. It entails

“mundialization of the lifeworld signals a transformation of the lifeworld by making what is strange and alien in the schemata of others familiar through experiential mediation” (Cha 2003, p.6).

Ortiz (2006) agrees that globalized cultures are not uniform cultures. Indeed, according to him the globalization of products is different from the globalization of cultural values.

And that is the reason why it is useful to establish a difference between the terms globalization and mundialization. The first may well be applied to the economic and technological spheres; the second adapts itself better to the cultural universe. [...] Its [mundialization’s] transversality reveals modern life’s globalization, its mundiality expresses the cultural diversity that is inherent to the process. (Ortiz 2006, p.402)

In this order of ideas, mundialization is a notion that describes how cultures deal with global influences, in a more extended way than the one of globalization. But as the term is relatively new, other authors with valuable research and theoretical frameworks, described in the following, use the more general term globalization.

Arnett (2002) wrote a pioneering article about the importance of globalization (mundialization) on the psychological functioning. He states: “The central psychological consequence of globalization is that it results in transformations in identity” (Arnett 2002, p. 777). This is similar to Cha’s (2003) notion of integration of concepts. Arnett (2002) showed that globalization can on the one hand create bicultural identities and global consciousness, but he also warns that, on the other, there is an increased risk of identity confusion. This bicultural identity refers to a local identity (I-position) that is rooted in the culture of origin as well as to a global identity (I-position) that emerges as individuals adapt to the demands of an emerging culture of multiculturalism. Identity confusion, in contrast, describes the negative response to this challenge of handling the discrepancy between two (local/global) cultures, for example through internet experiences making young persons unsatisfied with their real life according to him.

The consequences of identity confusion are psychological and social, such as violence (Hermans and Hermans-Konopka 2010) or acculturative stress (Chen et al. 2008).

## Colonialism and School

When entering the school, children are confronted with a different value system that they are expected to learn from and adapt to. Valsiner (2003) states that formal education in whatever society is a means to distance the learners from their immediate knowledge bases, and to make them accept the knowledge and values that authorities with social power convey them. Regarding former colonies, he says that school education contrasted (and eventually still contrasts) to local forms of education, e.g. to value transmission during circumcision ceremonies. He discusses whether or to what extent the Western school system stood in a contrast to home education during colonialism. As the present study is conducted in 2016, I considered the contemporary post-/neo-colonial situation and modern school system.

There is an ongoing discussion between anthropologists and comparative educational scholars on the one hand and sociology’s “institutionalists” and world culture theorists on the other, whether there is one single global culture of schooling or rather many (Anderson-Levitt 2003). The former argue that every country has a very unique culture of schooling (e.g., Schriewer 2005). The latter ones claim, first, that the model of modern mass education was and is Western, and second, that even beyond Westernization, education systems are constantly becoming more similar. The present study will examine how students perceive school, if local or global issues arouse their interest and what effect this has on their cultural identity.

## Nationality and Educational Background

The goal of the present study is to explore the dialogical processes regarding local and global I-positions. Its aim is to understand how young people would perceive and handle these potential opposites being part of their cultural identity and what role school plays in this. The study was conducted in Senegal and France.<sup>1</sup>

In brief, there is no consensus about a universal definition of “culture” that is accepted by all scientists. According to the Oxford dictionary, culture (2016) means “The ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society”. It is obvious that a *particular people or society* is not necessarily a nation, as for example in West Africa, where nations are patchworks of several peoples. Nation is an artificial, yet often used separation of cultures into these groups. This approach is “limited to national cultures, excluding cultural differences between groups within nations; such as, those based on regions, social classes, occupations, religion, age, sex, or even families” (Hofstede 1983, p. 77). Yet, Hofstede (1983) explains that for political, sociological and psychological reasons, nations have an important impact on persons. Being aware of these limitations, in this study the term “local” will be used to talk about a person’s identification with traditions, practices, social norms and language perceived as national in contrast to those perceived as non-local and thus, “global” or international.

Apart from the nationality, it is important to take the educational background into account. As shown before, the formal education is expected to underly western and global influences (Fiala and Lanford 1987). Thus, this study explores the question of how the cultural self is holding the balance between local and global concepts such as experiences, values or habits, how does school context mediate it.

## Empirical Analysis – Approaching Diverse Voices

To examine the local and global I-positions, a qualitative questionnaire and an audiotaped-focus group were used. I developed and piloted two versions of a qualitative questionnaire—a Senegalese and a French one, and its validity was assessed by an expert researcher. For dialogical self research, qualitative data derivation is useful, so in order to search for in advance defined I-positions and interactions,

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<sup>1</sup>France colonized Senegal, so that school language and systems show certain similarities up to today. I decided to conduct this study with participants having grown up in Thies, Angers and Rouen. In Thiès, Senegal I have lived during part of my youth, I learned Wolof, and I spent 3 years with the Senegalese diaspora in Luxembourg. To Angers I went for a student exchange and only in Rouen, another city in West of France, I have never been. I was in constant exchange about this study with Senegalese persons. Nevertheless, the reader of this paper has to keep in mind the limitations (see empirical analysis).

direct questions can be helpful. Thus, an asynchronous method of digital research was chosen (Gnambs and Batinic 2010). As this questionnaire was based on the idea that participants autonomously structure the answers having enough time to think about, the questionnaire was filled in by the participant independently (exception: problems in typing on the computer keyboard). The main content that I extracted from the questionnaire and further analyze in this chapter are the participants' social roles, educational experiences, the individual's subjective perspective on local and global habits, products, etc. The inspiration for this part of the questionnaire was a bicultural questionnaire (BIQ-S; Szapocznik, Kurtines, & Fernandez cited in Guo et al. 2009). Finally, I focused on the less personal side of cultural preferences, so the common sense phenomenon globalization.

Fourteen participants (18–30 years old, 10 men and 4 women) from Senegal (Thiès) and France (Angers and Rouen) responded to the questionnaire. The following educational categories were used: (*still*) *average educated*, i.e. still in high school (two participants), *low educated*, i.e. with jobs which do not require a higher education (five participants), and *highly educated*, i.e. attending or having attended an institute of higher education (seven participants).

The focus group was added in order to gather more thick data about the materials of the qualitative questionnaire. Here, the participants entered a discussion with the researcher about preliminary results, personal experiences and general opinion about both national cultures. I analyzed the results using a directed (theory driven) content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon 2005; Mayring 2010) with two categories: local and global I-positions.

The focus group was conducted with participants who currently reside in Europe. As Przyborski and Riegler (2010) state, it is important that the difference and similarity of realms of experience in a focus group are carefully chosen. These participants have similar educational backgrounds (*highly educated*) and practical knowledge about France and Senegal. Nevertheless, they were dissimilar in personal experiences and connection to the countries. Aissatou (accountant) has two Senegalese parents. She went to school in Ivory Coast for 6 years and (after migrating with her parents) 15 years in France. She referred to have seven Senegalese friends and five French friends and she had a Senegalese partner. Maimouna (Master student) has two Senegalese parents and grew up in Senegal. She went to France to pursue university studies. She indicated having Senegalese as well as French friends, but more Senegalese ones and she had a Senegalese partner. Stephan (banker) has two French parents and grew up in France, where he completed his education. He declares having Senegalese as well as French friends and his wife is Senegalese. All names are pseudonyms.

This study was created and analyzed by a white, German, originally working class, but now highly educated woman who having lived in Senegal during a part of her adolescence, has the perspective of being between cultural worlds herself.

Moreover, the French as well as the Senegalese participants answer consciously or unconsciously towards a kind of person they expect me to be. As explained in the Dialogical Self Theory, one and the same person can speak out different I-positions (Hermans et al. 1992). Situation and dialogue partner are determining factors

influencing the choice of I-positions (see also Bakhtin 1986). These remarks do not make the study invalid, because a Senegalese researcher would not have *no*, but just *another* influence, but they should be kept in mind, while drawing conclusions or conducting following studies.

## How Young People Consider *Culture*

To remind the reader about the participants' background initial letters of the four different groups will be added behind the pseudonyms. S stands for *Senegalese*, F for *French*, h for *highly educated*, l for *low educated* and a for *(still) average educated*.

## Interest in Cultural Artifacts: Books

Asked to complete the double blank sentence *My favorite books in school were... because...*, all Senegalese participants named Senegalese authors in all three blanks. One book mentioned by three Senegalese participants of different educational status (Nanou [S, h], Jude [S, l] and Amadou [S, l]) was Mariama Bâ's *Une si longue lettre* (Such a long letter). This novel concerns sociopolitical topics such as polygamy, feminism, and cultural conflicts in a time of post-/neo-colonialism (see Guèye 1998; McElaney-Johnson 1999). Jude (S, l) wrote in another blank "History book: Achievement of Sunjata Keita". This story about the founder of the medieval Mali Empire told by Mandingue griots is well known in West Africa (Finnegan 1976). One last example of these local books is Ferdinand Oyono's *Vieux nègre et la médaille* (Old negro and the medal) mentioned by Dymen (S, h). Oyono is a writer of the movement of *negritude* (Ndiaye 1995), a world known period of black philosophy, the founder being the first Senegalese president, Léopold Sédar Senghor. Even though no reasons for these preferences were expressed, it becomes obvious that greatest interest in schoolbooks concerns their own history and culture, indicating an existing relation between school and the local I.

French participants only mentioned few French authors like Voltaire and Molière (Francois [F, l]), but also the Austrian psychologist Freud (Anastasia [F, h]), the Greek history Odyssey (Charlotte [F, h]), comics (Zozo [F, l]) and the French theater plays *Le père Noël est une ordure* (Noman [F, h]) were cited. They shared some reasons linked to culture, as Francois (F, l) wrote "Baudelaire as it is developing our cultures" and Anastasia (F, h) wrote about Freud's book "It made me think, raise questions about our society". All other argued that these books were good, funny or made them dream. The relation between school and local I is present, but less absolute than for Senegalese participants.



Nevertheless, asking about interest in school subjects, nearly no participant saw connections between school subjects and society or history. Mainly interest and personal success were reasons to like a certain subject.

## Interest in One's Own History

In the focus group, Stéphan said that the First World War was the most interesting topic for him at school, because it affected France strongly, and for most of the students there was a direct link to a grandfather having fought in the war. Maïmouna said that despite growing up in France, where African history was rarely taught, she had a strong personal interest to learn about it. Aïssatou, who grew up in Senegal, said that the story of Lat Dior (king of a Wolof state and resistance hero against the French colonialists in nineteenth century) was easier for her to understand than Napoleon's (French conqueror) one because she knew the places better. When the interviewer asked her about *Une si longue lettre*, she answers:

Aïssatou: "This I liked a lot. I liked a lot this book, in any case. I, in any... I like African literature, because we identify ourselves more with African literature than with other things. [After a while] These books teach us what we live. I don't know if it is because... these books teach us at the same time what we live and it is written in French. I don't know if it is because of this. In any case, when I read *Une si longue lettre* I am eager to finish this book. When I read *The Cid* [French opera in nineteenth century], sometimes there are words I cannot understand; I don't really understand the story. But you can more identify yourself with *Une si longue lettre*."

Later on, in the focus group she and Maimouna criticized that too much French history and literature is taught in the Senegalese curriculum and they wish to have more Senegalese or African ones:

Aïssatou : "[...] It is a French way education."

Stéphan : "But, wait, it was colonial, so see... This leaves traces."

Aïssatou : "But they didn't change neither. Because: First, we are scared to change. Why? Because we are bound to France."

Maïmouna : "Well, the Francophonie, it is the new colonial power to me. [...]"

## Nationalism Versus Americanization and Post/Neo-Colonialism

The Senegalese participants described the feelings about the own nationality six times with the word "proud", three times with "strong and active", and it was rated as *very important*. In the French sample only two times "proud" was written, but

three participants stated to be privileged or lucky. Noman (F, h) writes: “Privileged compared to other nationalities. I am free and enjoying advantages. I know I am lucky to be French.” Julien (F, h), for whom it appears to be of *average importance*, observes the same, but values it differently: “Free and happy to be in a developed country, but I feel a responsibility towards the planet to not waste this opportunity”.

When asked about the negative points of globalization (section “[Interest in Cultural Artifacts: Books](#)”), five French participants regardless of the educational background, mentioned the criticism of poverty, exploitation and inequality. While discussing the question whether the own values and realities in a country or the global development should be a benchmark for politics, all participants took a middle course using various arguments and tendencies. Francois (F, l) talked about exporting knowledge without exploiting poor countries. Anastasia (F, h) said it is important to follow the globalization, but slowly and thoughtful; she warns: “If the globalization invades all the countries, there will be no more own identity of a country compared to another one, of a people compared to another one, of a town compared to another”. Charlotte (F, h), who wished to have more “European unity”, also added: “Having patriotism, values, French traditions are important and we have to conserve them. [...] they [tourists] do not want to see Americanized Europeans”. The criticism of too much American influence was mainly present being asked about the influence other countries have on the own country and the evaluation of this. Besides Charlotte (F, h), Anastasia (F, h) criticized the American influence on culture such as capitalism. Others confirmed the influence on the French “culture – life style – economy” (Noman [F, h]), but see positive and negative points, whereas Julien (F, h) judged the “cultural and economic influence (American Dream)” as positive.

In the focus group, Maimouna said that the French are not that much open towards this influence of the USA and calls this the “French cultural exception”. Stéphan thinks the same and answers:

Stéphan: “No, because we in France are strong enough vis-à-vis this. Except of having McDonalds and KFC, we don’t have... I mean these, these dates back to de Gaulle who said: That is it, after the Second World War, dear Americans, thank you, but you can go home now. So, ... uh... that’s it, we never let them dominate us [...]”

The Senegalese participants mentioned the USA five times as an influencing country. The positive aspects of it seemed to be help in the fight against terrorism and the importation of products (Lemzo [S, l]). All the others criticized either the influence on culture, especially concerning the pushing towards a position pro homosexuality (current topic in media in 2016), or resource exploitation.

There was a gap between highly and low educated Senegalese participants regarding the influence of French politics upon their country. All Senegalese participants with a high educational level criticized this influence. Mamie (S, h) wrote “As we have our independence, I think we can get along in our own, we can



have relations with France, but they shouldn't impose what they want". Dymen (S, h) simply writes the word "dictatorship" to describe his personal opinion. Low educated participants saw influences far more positive and highlight material benefits. Jude (F, l) said concerning France "good to help financially" and Lemzo (S, l) mentioned the following influence: "clothes, cars, also culture a bit, not a lot politics".

### *Language, Media and Cultural Clothing*

The personal preferences of national or international consume in daily life were very mixed. They appeared to be strongly connected with specific habits instead of a general pattern. For French participants, a tendency for French TV becomes obvious, mainly arguing to understand better the langue and culture. But, international TV was liked because of "Cultural Openess towards the world" (Julien [F, h]).

The Senegalese preferred Senegalese TV shows in order to learn about the culture (Mamie [S, h]), to watch traditional wrestling (Amadou [S, l]), to listen to the news (Lemzo [S, l]), or to learn about the national development (Mika [S, a]), whereas French TV is preferred to know and learn what happens beyond the country as mentioned by six participants.

When it comes to clothing preferences, French participants did not have any consistent definition for actual traditional French clothes. Whereas some participants define French clothes as those created by French marks, others define them as those manufactured in France. Contrary to this, all Senegalese participants prefer Senegalese clothes (exception: Mika, who has no preference) and they even see values represented in wearing them. Jude (S, l) said: "traditional, because it is a sign of responsibility and magnitude", Amadou (S, a) writes "Senegalese [clothes], because it is the tradition, we cannot deny it". Mamie (S, h) and Nanou (S, h) said they are just pretty and good and Lemzo (S, l) felt comfortable in it.

During the focus group clothing becomes a topic as well. Aissatou said that she prefers wearing traditional fabrics from Senegal (referring to the designer Aïcha Awa Ba, who combines traditional fabrics and modern cuts) because she wants to identify with her country of origin. The participants said that especially those who do not know the "reality" (Aissatou) prefer Western influence.

Maimouna: "[...] the majority do not reject the modern society as such, neither the cultural influence. Because they take it! They take a little bit...well... a little bit the traditions, a little bit Western society actually. But... for example, the comeback to values and all this, not everybody is concerned. I think it is mainly a phenomenon of the intellectuality and elite in Senegal who tries to make a comeback of these things."

## Discussion

### *The Connection Between School and Culture*

The Senegalese participants are especially interested in learning about their own culture and history in school. The book *Une si longue lettre* and other Senegalese books, historical happenings or persons (Sunjata Keita, Lat Dior) were mentioned several times in questionnaire and focus group showing interest in local sociopolitical topics. This interest is created and/or satisfied at school, influencing how these participants judge their colonial past and the current post-/neo-colonial political relations. Regarding cultural identity and education in post-/neo-colonial Senegal, Guèye (1998) highlighted the resemblance between a traditional storytelling and *Une si longue lettre*. According to him, it is a work about African identity. This idea offers enormous possibilities of connecting past traditions with the current post-/neo-colonial reality. Sharpe (2013) wrote about the Canadian context:

“Overcoming the centuries of colonialism and assimilation will be a long, slow process. It involves unlearning Western concepts, including narrative structure, and reinventing and re-living the language, culture and identity which has been lost” (p.267, Sharpe 2013).

His idea is closely connected to the Canadian organization Idle No More (2016). Using traditional methods of Native Americans in national institutions, the organization tries to revitalize a “destroyed” culture, and to empower people again—an idea, which can easily be transferred to the Senegalese case.

In the present study participants revealed the problem that in a globalized country the own national institutions are not the only ones deciding about influence on young people. Considering participants’ citations such as “dictatorship” or “new colonial power” and other criticism of foreign and especially French influence on the country, it seems obvious that concerning the cultural identity the feeling of proudness is overshadowed by the wish to see more of their own culture in their own country. Education seems to produce different outcomes in post-/neo-colonialism than during colonialism, when it was an instrument of forced assimilation by the oppressors (Valsiner 2003). Highly educated Senegalese participants criticized Western influence more than low educated Senegalese participants did. Latters saw positive points in the financial and material importations. They also confirmed that foreign experience and education increase the criticism towards Western products and lifestyles. In this aspect, the *defense* of the local I-position is more important for the former than for the latter ones. These findings suggest that (originally Western brought) education enhances local awareness and thus, could be a means to return to the own culture: in the hands of Senegalese like the author Mariama Bâ, who used the traditional educational style of storytelling in combination with the French style of books, letters and the French language, and about sociopolitical topics which are relevant for the local youth.

## ***Global Consciousness***

The local I-position seems to be also strong and positive for the French participants. They are proud of their nationality, language and observe with different feelings the influence from USA. Whereas, colonial past and present post-/neo-colonialist inequalities were often mentioned by Senegalese participants, none of the French participants mentioned these topics to be of interest at school neither did they talk about post-/neo-colonial responsibility or the resulting hierarchical status of France, when asked about globalism. However, an awareness of these questions shows up, when French participants felt not only proud, but privileged to be French. This matches Cabecinhas' and Feijó's (2010) findings when they examined the collective memory of the former colonial power Portugal and the former colony Mozambique. It shows, that critical thoughts are existing, but not in the foreground.

This awareness corresponds to the awareness Arnett (2002) describes to be part of the global identity young people develop, when they develop a rather bicultural identity than an identity confusion. According to him, this awareness allows young people to identify "the events, practices, styles, and information that are part of the global culture" (p.777, Arnett 2002) as well as the relation between global and local currents in cultural histories of varied kinds. Following this thought, I claim that young people in Senegal and France are mainly not suffering from identity confusion, but are aware of the globalization's or Western influence in their lives and adapt their lifestyle (e.g., preferring local clothing in Senegal). This could refer to a stable cultural identity able to *integrate* different influences. Though, it seems that concepts aren't clearly differentiated into global and local, but take the form of a mosaic.

## ***Mosaic of Cultural Identity***

Contrary to dividing awareness, some decisions between local and global habits or values were not relevant to the young people's belongingness to global or local culture (e.g. TV-show preferences). Observing with interest, which concepts were perceived as foreign (e.g., clothing) and which not (e.g., TV shows), which integration was problematic, and which not, one could question about the *actual* foreign or global influences French and Senegalese integrated into their culture. Even when the participants did not describe certain global influences, there are clearly present. It is obvious that the words or the existence of a *citizen*, a *TV show* and the *church* are not merely of Senegalese origin, but they were colonial influences years ago. Also the today so called "traditional" fabrics<sup>2</sup> came as European imports in the 1950s and were adapted (Nielsen 1979). Similar to this *French clothing marks* are

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<sup>2</sup>The pictures in the ornament band of this chapter (taken by myself) show these fabrics.

produced in Asia and most *French TV shows* are based on US-American prototypes. But this does not mean that participants still perceive them as a foreign influence. Participants found an answer and explanation for their preference as well as for the justified exception of everyday preferences. The answers were strongly depending on situations and the justification rarely linked to emotions or values. I conclude, that the (by the researcher) constructed opposite of international and national habits—being the internalization of global and local concepts—is not always existing in subjective reality (in contrast to a historical analysis, which could define more and other cultural influences). Consequently, I assume that the (subjective) cultural value system in a mundialized society is an emerging *mosaic of cultural identity* constructed with little pieces from everywhere, forming a new congruent picture. In other words—repeating Cha’s (2003) statement from the beginning—mundialization is “making what is strange and alien in the schemata of others familiar” (p. 6). The integration of different ideas, materials or concepts makes them invisible. Most of these integrated concepts will be perceived as part of the own culture and an outsider asking to differentiate between local and global remains misunderstood. One example of this integration is the creation of traditional clothes in modern style (Figs. 2.1 and 2.2) as mentioned in the focus group.



**Figs. 2.1 and 2.2** Traditional clothes in modern style [Design by Sira & Bandeerabe (Aïcha Awa Ba)] (Baye 2015)

## Conclusion

In the present study, it was found that young people are mostly aware and concerned about global influences on their local culture, which goes along with Arnett's (2002) idea of increasing global consciousness. At the same time certain influences are integrated (Cha 2003) into their everyday life forming a *mosaic of cultural identity*. This process, also called mundialization makes it impossible, to detangle the origins of these ideas, materials or concepts. School education can develop the young person's global consciousness and knowledge about global structures. Especially in non-Western countries the wish to learn more about the own culture seems to be present in students having diverse educational backgrounds. Higher education was found to increase critics about negative impacts of globalization and neocolonialism. Based on these results intervention programs or comparisons of different school curricula could show the effect on psychological and social problems, school achievements and society as a whole, when certain issues about globalization, tradition and nationality were more included in school education.

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