AUTHOR(S):

TITLE:

YEAR:

Publisher citation:

OpenAIR citation:

Children's use of multiple categorisations in practice in a multicultural setting.

Short title: Children's multiple multicultural categorisations

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Biography

Ruth Woods is a lecturer in psychology at Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen, Scotland. She specialises in describing and theorising children's social development as simultaneously psychological and cultural. She is particularly interested in understanding morality, ethnic identity and peer relations in this way.

Abstract

Little is known about whether and how children combine categories of race, ethnicity, language and religion in multicultural settings where more than one of these dimensions is salient. Ethnographic data from a multicultural London primary school found that children usually organised multiple categories congruently (e.g. 'If you're Indian you are Sikh'), despite strong opposition from teachers. This congruent organisation may originate in an undifferentiated experience of categories in the family, and/or represent the best 'fit' with a local population in which categories were correlated. Children used congruent organisation to infer peers' group membership, which may amplify intergroup contrasts.

      Keywords: children; multiculturalism; multiple categorisation; ethnicity; religion

Children's use of multiple categorisations in practice in a multicultural setting.

Introduction

Increasingly, we live in complex societies affording many possible dimensions of categorisation (Deaux & Burke 2010). Most theories (e.g. Turner and others' 1987 self-categorisation theory) and research in this domain have focused on situations in which people use a single dimension to categorise (Blanz et al. 2005; Crisp & Hewstone 2006; Smith 2006).[1] While people do sometimes use just one dimension (such as gender) to categorise in a complex setting (Oakes, Haslam & Turner, 1994), there is evidence that people can and often do use more than one dimension simultaneously (Stangor and others 1992; McGarty 2006).

One domain in which multiple simultaneous categorisation is particularly likely to occur is multicultural communities (Crisp & Hewstone 2006), where the dimensions of ethnicity, religion, language and/or race may be salient, as well as other dimensions such as gender and age. From a young age, children attending multicultural schools can categorise one another by a single dimension of difference, whether that be race, ethnicity, religion or language (Connolly 2000; Devine & Kelly 2006; Healy 2006; Van Ausdale & Feagin 2001). However, in many multicultural schools, more than one of these dimensions is salient. Children over eight years are cognitively capable of considering more than one category simultaneously (Abrams and others 2009; Barenboim 1981), raising the question of whether, and how, children in multicultural settings combine multiple categories in practice (McGarty 2006)—in other words, how they go about utilising multiple dimensions simultaneously to categorise one another.

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[1] For clarity, this paper uses the term 'dimension' as the generic name for a category (e.g. gender), while 'category' refers to specific items within that dimension (e.g. male, female).

Social psychologists have explored several possible ways in which multiple categories may be combined. One possibility is hierarchical organisation, whereby several categories of one dimension are wholly subsumed within a single category of another dimension (McGarty 2006). Many theories of social categorisation assume that people organise multiple social categories in this way (McGarty 2006). However, hierarchical organisation may not always work well in practice, given the messy reality of overlapping categories, shifting membership and numerous exceptions that cannot be absorbed at the superordinate level (McGarty 2006; Sloman 1998).

A second way of combining multiple categories is to intersect, or cross, the dimensions involved. This creates a larger number of unique category combinations, known as conjunctive categories. For instance, crossing social class and gender in the UK typically produces four conjunctive categories, representing class-specific ways to be male and female—or gender-specific ways to be working and middle class (Hey 1997; Stirratt et al. 2008). There is evidence that people often combine categories in this way in experimental situations which usually make two dimensions salient to participants (Blanz and others; Crisp & Hewstone 2006; McGarty 2006).

A third way of combining multiple categories is to conceive of the dimensions as congruent with one another, also known as 'superimposed classifications' (Deschamps & Doise 1978; Blanz and others 2005). Congruence entails that the categories of two different dimensions are conceived to map onto one another. For instance, 'parents' and 'children' (along a dimension of family roles) would map onto older versus younger persons (Blanz and others 2005). Congruence could take several different forms. Categories on different dimensions might be considered as synonyms, with terms used interchangeably without any difference in meaning. Alternatively, categories on different dimensions might be considered distinct, but connected via

inferences, such that one category membership implies another. Finally, one category might be preferred, with the other typically treated as redundant (Blanz and others 2005).

As yet, we know relatively little about how people combine categories in these various ways in order to make sense of a complex social environment. Research on multiple categorisation has focused mainly on how participants organise two dimensions selected by researchers, in controlled experimental settings (Crisp & Hewstone 2006; McGarty 2006). Because the setting to which participants apply categories is contrived by the experimenter, findings tell us relatively little about how people engage with multiple categories in the real world. There are two features of the real world in particular which it is difficult for experimental research to address.

Firstly, real world settings include other people who are also categorising those around them on the basis of multiple dimensions. These acts of categorisation are frequently public, and may be contested, ignored or supported by others, such that categories are constructed in a dialectic process as well as being private cognitive acts (Brubaker and others 2004). Moreover, this dialectic process of category construction takes place between people of varying levels of status and power vis-à-vis one another, aiding the formation of hegemonic category boundaries and meanings (Jenkins 2008). These acts of categorisation serve to elucidate and constantly recreate boundaries between categories and, thus, between people: 'us' and 'them' (Brubaker and others 2004; Jenkins 2008).

Secondly, real world settings provide a population to which the categories in question are routinely applied. This is important because the deployment of categories is informed by the perceived fit of the category with the setting (Bruner 1957; Oakes 1987). In the case of multiple categorisation, it is likely that the distribution of category

membership in the population concerned informs the way in which people typically combine multiple categories. For instance, imagine a school at which the main dimensions along which children categorise one another are age and gender. We would expect that there would be similar numbers of older female, older male, younger female and younger male children. Such a distribution in the population seems to fit an intersecting category combination. Multicultural categories will often not be distributed in this way. For instance, most children with a certain ethnicity may also speak the same language. Such a distribution may better fit congruent or superimposed multiple categorisations.

The current study uses ethnographic data gathered at a multicultural primary school in London, in which ethnic, religious, racial and linguistic identities and categories were all locally salient (Woods 2005, 2017). I ask whether and how children combine multicultural categories in their everyday school lives, paying particular attention to two aspects of multiple categorisation which are inevitably sidelined in experimental research: (1) the social processes by which multiple categorisation takes place, and (2) the fit between the way in which children combine categories and the distribution of those categories in the local population.

Method

I conducted 16 months of participant observation at Woodwell Green, a large primary school educating 4 to 11 year olds in Woodwell, an economically deprived area of west London, in the early 2000s, when religious and other multicultural categories were highly salient in Britain (McGhee 2005). All participants (and children's parents) gave informed consent. Pseudonyms are used throughout, including for place names. Ethical approval was granted by Brunel University.

To assess the distribution of multicultural categories in the school population, I used school records of individual pupils' ethnicities, religions and home languages (which are also provided for children included in extracts). According to these records, 38% of Woodwell Green's pupils at the time of the research were of Indian ethnicity, 25% English, 8% Somali, 8% Pakistani, and 21% various others, including substantial numbers of refugees and asylum seekers. School records accorded pupils' religions as 27% Sikh, 26% Muslim, 22% Christian, 11% Hindu, 13% nonreligious, and 2% 'other', 'unknown' or 'refused'. As for home language, English was most common (34%), closely followed by Punjabi (32%), then Somali (8%), Urdu (8%), with smaller numbers of numerous others (18% in total).

These categories were not, of course, objective, but reflected the British hegemonic ethnic and religious classification system at the time of the research, and a social process by which parents' claims were fitted into that system by school administrators. This process was sometimes contested, especially for ethnicity. School administrators worked with a definition which emphasised parental origins. Hence, although most children at Woodwell Green were born in the UK and were British, they were not considered English if their parents or grandparents were born elsewhere. There were sometimes disputes around the definition of 'origins', for instance for parents who themselves came to Britain from one country (e.g. Afghanistan) but whose ancestors came from another (e.g. India).

Regarding the distribution of these dimensions relative to each other, of the Sikh children, 97% spoke Punjabi and 93% were identified as Indian ethnicity. Among Christian children, 86% spoke English and 67% identified as English ethnicity, with smaller numbers of African, Caribbean, Indian and other ethnicities. The Muslim population at Woodwell Green was more diverse; 32% were identified as Pakistani,

29% Somali, 13% Arab, 8% Indian, 18% others, and home languages of Urdu, Somali, Punjabi and Arabic were all common.

My approach to participant observation with children followed Thorne (1993), in that I sought to relate to children as a peer rather than an authority figure as far as possible (see Woods 2013 for discussion). I took notes discretely during the day, which I expanded into detailed fieldnotes as soon as possible thereafter. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with individual children on the role of ethnicity, language, religion and race in their lives.

If I were to be categorised as the children were, my ethnicity would be described as English (I was born in England, as were my recent ancestors), speaking English at home, and nonreligious. My own combination of categories had an impact on the data, and I sought to use this impact positively, to explore children's assumptions. Since many children were baffled by my claim to be nonreligious, I began to name the religion of my childhood instead, Christianity.

As was typical of British primary schools at this time (Baumann & Sunier 2004), teachers often drew children's attention to their ethnic, religious and linguistic differences, for example in assemblies and a display representing pupils' countries of origin. Skin colour differences were relatively silenced by comparison, but their significance as a dimension of difference was affirmed in the head teacher's definition of racism as `to be horrible to someone to do with their religion, the language they speak, or the colour of their skin'. Children were very interested in multicultural categorisation, frequently asking newcomers their religion and/or country of origin, and (less often) what language(s) they spoke.

All extracts in which participants referred to more than multicultural dimension

were collated, yielding 46 extracts, and described further below. In eight extracts, it was not clear how participants organised the multiple categories mentioned, so these were not considered further.

Analysis

How children combined multiple categories

In five extracts, children showed signs of organising multicultural categories hierarchically, as in this example:

> A year 4 class (8- and 9-year-olds) has just finished a dress rehearsal in the hall of their assembly, which is an Indian version of *Cinderella*, with the children wearing Indian costumes. As we return to the classroom, the children still dressed up, best friends Amandeep (Indian Sikh) and Farhan (Pakistani Muslim) have their arms round each other. 'We're the Asian boys!' they exclaim. 'Cos he's a Paki and I'm Indian,' says Amandeep, and Farhan says something similar using the same terms.

Here Amandeep and Farhan use 'Asian' strategically as a superordinate term embracing lower level ethnicity terms 'Indian' and 'Pakistani', thus placing them in the same group. However, hierarchical organisation like this was much less common than congruent organisation, which occurred in 33 extracts. Children either inferred from one category to another, or treated categories on different dimensions as synonyms. The first example involves a 9-year-old Indian Hindu girl:

> I am at Sarina's house helping her with some schoolwork, when Sarina asks me, 'What's your religion Miss?' I tell her that I was brought up as a Methodist, which is a kind of Christian. Then she says some words 'in her language', and asks me if I know what they mean, and I laugh and say I don't know any except the word for 'dog.' 'Kootha,' Sarina comments. Then she asks, 'How do you say hello in your language?' 'Hello,' I reply. She doesn't realise that I'm just saying the word in English and pronounces it hesitantly and questioningly after me. I repeat it, stressing the word and smiling. 'Oh, your *Christian* language,' she requests,

thinking I've misunderstood. I tell her that I don't have a Christian language, that Christianity doesn't have a special language. She says nothing.

Sarina's search for 'your Christian language' reflects both her assumption that the religion and language dimensions are congruent, and her use of this relationship to make sense of me as someone with a religious identity different from her own. The second extract is from an interview in which I had asked 6-year-old Karan (Indian, Gujarati-speaker) about the languages he could speak. Having answered my questions, he asked me:

> **Karan:** What language are you?
> **RW:** English.
> **Karan:** Are you? I really thought you were Zain's language.
> **RW:** Why did you think that?
> **Karan:** Cos of your skin.
> **RW:** What about my skin?
> **Karan:** Cos it's smooth, like Zain.

Karan inferred that since my skin tone was similar to his Arabic-speaking classmate Zain, I probably also spoke (or rather, *was*) Arabic. As with the previous extract, Karan inferred between categories (in this case skin colour or race, and language) to make sense of me in relation to those around him.

This final example, involving 8- and 9-year-old children (year 4), demonstrates the social, contested nature of multiple, multicultural categorisation:

> I am in the playground with Navneet (Indian Sikh girl) and Zena (Afro-Caribbean Christian girl). Ayesha, Farah (both Pakistani Muslim girls) and Sohaib (Pakistani Muslim boy) are nearby. Navneet tells me in an amused tone that Farah has pulled off Ayesha's headscarf. We stop and see Ayesha hastily putting it back on. She looks upset. Zena asks me why Ayesha always wears her headscarf. 'I don't know, ask her,' I reply. Ayesha, Sohaib and Farah approach Zena, Navneet and me. Sohaib and Farah are jubilant and amused, but Ayesha looks fed up. I tell Farah

that she shouldn't have pulled it off. 'Why not, she doesn't have to wear it, she's only a little girl,' replies Farah feistily. Zena is cross now. 'It's for her religion Farah, you shouldn't disrespect her religion.' 'I know, I'm the same religion as her,' Farah retorts in a spiky loud voice. 'No you're not,' Zena responds hotly. 'Yes I am, how do you think that Mohamed [their classmate] and me are cousins if we're not both Muslim?' 'But you're not even from the same country!' Zena exclaims in surprise. 'Yes we are, I'm from Pakistan, and Mohamed is from Pakistan.' 'No, Ayesha,' Zena says. 'Yes I am,' says Ayesha, regaining her composure.

In the course of this heated exchange, Zena criticises Farah's act of removing Ayesha's headscarf, on the grounds that it 'disrespect[s] her religion'. Respect for the beliefs and practices of other religions was a core message which school staff disseminated to children (Woods 2013). Zena, convinced that Farah is not Muslim, thus understands her mocking of Ayesha's religious practice as offensive. Farah's defence is that she is a religious in-group member with insider knowledge—hence the school edict to respect other religions does not apply. Zena's surprise upon learning that Farah and Ayesha are both Muslim seems to arise from her belief that they are from different countries. Her inference from ethnic identity (being 'from the same country') to religious identity was, in this case, contested by both Farah and Ayesha, demonstrating the social process of multiple categorisation.

Discrepant instances

The clearest evidence that children inferred between multicultural categories was elicited by children who represented 'discrepant instances'. I borrow this term from Ervin and Foster (1960) to describe a person whose combination of multicultural categories was locally unusual. In the following extract, I was with 9-year-old Farah

(Pakistani Muslim) in the playground when she commented on Endrit (Kosovan, Muslim), who was playing football nearby.

> Farah comments with interest, 'You know Endrit, what religion does he look like?' 'What do you mean?' I ask. 'I mean, what religion do you think he is, by his skin colour?' she replies. 'You tell me, what religion do you think he looks like?' I say. 'He's Muslim Miss,' Farah says. 'But I didn't realise he was Muslim cos he's got white skin.'

Encounters with discrepant instances encouraged children to articulate their between-dimension inferences. In the extract above, Endrit defied Farah's expectation that Muslims do not have white skin—an expectation likely based on the fact that most Muslims at the school were Pakistani (like herself), Indian or Somali. The arrival of several Eastern European Muslim children, including Endrit, during my fieldwork posed a challenge to the congruency Farah perceived between dark skin colour and Muslim religion.

As a second example, 8-year-old Maria arrived in London from Pakistan during my fieldwork. Maria spoke Urdu, which was typical of Pakistani children at Woodwell Green, but she was Christian, which was very unusual. About ten weeks after Maria arrived, the following incident unfolded in the classroom.

> A few children complain that Maria (who has beautiful handwriting) is the only child in the class permitted to write in pen, and a couple comment that she 'talks funny'. 'Miss, why are they *jeal*ous?' Maria asks me. 'You're *jeal*ous,' repeats Simran, imitating Maria's accent, and some children laugh. Then Kiran asks me, 'Miss she's got an accent, where's she from?' 'Why don't you ask Maria?' I reply. 'Maria, where are you from? Why have you got an accent?' Kiran asks. 'I don't have an accent,' replies Maria. 'You do,' insists Kiran. I suggest that it's because Maria hasn't been in England as long as Kiran, and is used to speaking another language. Kiran asks her what language she speaks, adding, 'Can you speak Indian?' [This term was widely used at the school to refer mainly to Punjabi.] Maria replies that she speaks Urdu. Kiran asks her to say hello. 'Hello,' Maria

says. I encourage her to say it in Urdu, and she does. 'Are you Muslim?' Kiran asks. 'No, I'm Christian,' says Maria. 'You're not Christian,' counters Sohaib. 'I am,' Maria replies. 'You don't look Christian,' says Kiran. Navneet, sitting next to Kiran, is listening. 'Louise's Christian,' she notes, smiling at me.

Kiran's (Indian Sikh) and Sohaib's (Pakistani Muslim) inferences between linguistic, racial and religious categories lead them to challenge Maria's self-ascribed identity as an Urdu-speaking Christian. Their agreement suggests that children in this community from different backgrounds make similar inferences between multicultural categories. Meanwhile Navneet's (Indian Sikh) brief contribution, with her smile to an adult suggesting superior knowledge, supports Maria by referring to another classmate who had recently joined the school, Louise, whose identity as an Indian Christian was also quite unusual. When I mentioned this incident to Navneet two years later, when she was in year 6, she recalled that when her Christian friend Zena joined the school in year 4, she (Navneet) had thought she was Muslim, 'Because she was the same colour as Zak,' a Somali Muslim boy in their class. Navneet also commented that in year 6 children still often inferred from one category to another, adding that she recently challenged another classmate who told her friend Joanne that because she was English she must be Christian.

Teachers: Multicultural categories as incongruent

While children routinely connected categories, their teachers took precisely the opposite stance. When I discussed this topic with teachers, several furnished me with additional examples of congruent category organisation, and described the children involved as 'confused' and 'muddled'. My fieldnotes include several examples of teachers attempting to 'correct' children, as in the following example from a year 1 class of 5- and 6-year-olds:

A child tells Miss Hart that she attended the gurdwara on the weekend. Miss Hart says, 'The gurdwara is a special place for…' Jagpal (Indian Sikh) puts his hand up, and when chosen by Miss Hart, responds, 'Sikhs.' 'And Indians,' Nayna (Indian Sikh) calls out. Miss Hart starts to explain that it's to do with the Sikh religion, and as she does so Nayna exclaims, as if realising her mistake, 'Sikh *is* Indian.' Miss Hart says that not all people in India are Sikh; some are Hindus or Muslims. Navjot (Indian Sikh) suggests 'Christian,' and Miss Hart agrees, adding it to her list. Nayna tries again to get it right: 'If you're Indian you are Sikh.' 'There's a part of India—is it the Punjab?' says Miss Hart. 'Yeah,' says Nayna. Miss Hart explains that most people there are Sikh, but in other parts of India there are more Hindus, and so on. 'Are all Indians Sikh?' she asks her class. 'Noo,' chorus a few children, but many are silent and some look confused.

Nayna saw ethnicity and religion as synonymous (`Sikh *is* Indian'), and many of her classmates seemed to struggle with their teacher's effort to challenge this. Exchanges like this were not confined to the younger children at the school. In the following example, Mrs Henderson (a teacher), Miss Brooks (deputy head teacher), 9-year-old brothers Ayyaz (Pakistani Muslim), and I discussed a new, as yet incomplete display of the school's linguistic diversity, which featured speech bubbles with 'hello' written in various languages represented by pupils' families.

Ayyaz points to three different speech bubbles, reading what each says in that language. Miss Brooks asks curiously how he can read them all. He labels them in turn as 'Hindi', 'Punjabi' and 'Sikh.' At the latter, Mrs Henderson comments, 'But that's not a language dear.' Ayyaz continues that he can read another of the speech bubbles 'because that's my religion'. Mrs Henderson suggests that he's getting mixed up. Miss Brooks and Mrs Henderson start to discuss which other languages could be included in the display. Ayyaz suggests Jewish, mentioning his classmate Grigore. Mrs Henderson agrees that Grigore is Jewish, but tells Ayyaz that his language is Albanian. 'Jewish isn't a language,' she says; 'Different Jews speak different languages.'

Ayyaz repeatedly connects languages and religions in this extract, perhaps considering them synonyms, and the teacher repeatedly 'corrects' him. This final

example, set in a year 6 classroom of 10- and 11-year-olds, demonstrates that similar dialogues take place even with the oldest children at the school. During a Religious Education lesson, Miss Lock told the children that she was a Christian, prompting the following discussion:

> 'But you're from France!' exclaims Jaskaran (Indian Sikh boy). Miss Lock asks the class which religions you get in France, and the children make various suggestions. `Exactly, you have the same ones as here,' says Miss Lock. She goes on to claim that in most if not all countries in the world, all these different religions can be found now, it's just that different ones predominate (she defines this term). She says that being in a country doesn't mean you have to take on that religion. 'If I was to go and live in India I wouldn't suddenly become a Sikh!' There is much laughter at this, which the children seem to find very incongruous. Miss Lock adds that she could change if she wanted to though. 'Could you Miss?' Jaskaran calls out. 'That's weird!' Miss Lock asks Ayush (Pakistani Muslim boy) for an example of the presence of all religions in all countries. 'Um some Chinese people live in Asia Miss?' suggests Ayush. 'Who can tell me what's wrong with what Ayush just said?' asks Miss Lock. 'China is in Asia!' responds a child, and some of the children laugh at Ayush. After a few minutes on other topics, Jaskaran asks, 'If his mum's Asian and his dad's Muslim, can he be Chinese?' Miss Lock repeats this, and asks the class, 'What's wrong with Jaskaran's statement?' Jaskaran quickly throws up his hand. 'Miss Asians *are* Muslims.' 'Muslims are Asians,' calls a girl. 'That's what Jaskaran said!' someone else says.

Jaskaran's question, `If his mum's Asian and his dad's Muslim, can he be Chinese?' suggests that he saw Asian, Muslim and Sikh identities as categories along a single dimension, while the comments, `Asians *are* Muslims' and `Muslims are Asians' imply that many older children still see religion and ethnicity as congruent. Miss Lock responds by telling the children that there are no necessary links between country and religion; 'You can be any religion in any country'. Like Miss Hart and Mrs Henderson, she is teaching the children not to view multicultural categories as congruent.

The fact that even many of the oldest children in the school continued to infer between categories despite teachers' efforts, suggests that the congruent organisation of these categories is quite compelling for them. Indeed, some adults who had grown up locally also organised multicultural categories congruently. For example, when I asked a local friend of Indian ethnicity what children meant by 'speaking Indian' (a common expression in the playground), she wrote: 'When the children say they are swearing in Indian, I think that does cover the Indian religions, e.g. Sikhism, Hinduism, etc. I think they just can't bother saying that we are swearing in Gujarati, Urdu, etc. They find it easier saying Indian.' This explanation suggests that the speaker assumes some congruency between languages and religions.

Discussion

While the children in this study occasionally organised categories hierarchically, congruent organisation was far more common, such that categories of one dimension (e.g. ethnicity) were superimposed onto those of another dimension (e.g. religion). Congruent organisation would seem to provide a better fit (Bruner, 1957; Oakes, 1987) with the setting than other ways of organising categories, in two ways. Firstly, for most children at Woodwell Green, their entire family and perhaps social circle outside school would share all multicultural categories. This may encourage children to consider these categories as synonymous or at least closely linked. Secondly, the distribution of categories across the school population also encourages congruent category organisation. For instance, 94% of Sikh children at the school had Indian ethnicity, and 67% of Christian children were English (although Muslim children were more diverse ethnically). Insofar as school records reflect pupils' self-identifications, there is a statistically sound basis for treating some categories as congruent. Moreover, extracts

showed that in practice, children used congruencies to infer flexibly from one category (e.g. ski colour) to another (e.g. religion), thus enhancing their knowledge of one another. Thus, congruent connections between multiple categories represented a useful heuristic which may have increased children's tendency to organise multiple categories in this way. Schools in which multicultural categories are distributed differently may encourage children to organise multiple categories in other ways.

The precise form of congruent organisation varied. In some cases (such as Farah commenting on Endrit's locally unusual race-religion combination), children clearly separated categories on different dimensions and were aware of the inferences they made between them. In others, the children seemed to view categories as synonymous (e.g. Ayyaz on religions and languages). It may be that younger children inevitably treat categories as synonymous, because of their inability to consider more than one category simultaneously (Abrams and others 2009; Barenboim 1981). However, extracts showed some older children doing this too. Perhaps some older children had had insufficient experience with multicultural category labels to be able to organise them on separate dimensions in the first place, or perhaps they do consider each dimension distinct, but treat them as synonymous in certain situations. Additional research is required to understand the conditions under which congruency takes the form of synonyms versus inferences.

Further research is required to establish the extent to which category distribution at other multicultural schools also supports congruent category organisation among children. It may be that in some settings, hierarchical or intersecting categories are more appropriate to make sense of the distribution in the local community.

This study shows that children's acts of multiple categorisation involve social processes, in two ways. Firstly, they were frequently contested, most notably by

teachers. Teachers' obvious discomfort at children's congruent category organisation may arise from their efforts to promote religious freedom (Woods 2013) or in an effort to undermine the widespread assumption that to be British is to be white and Christian (Short & Carrington 1996). As holders of symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1984), teachers are in a position to assert their views over those of the children they teach. It is striking that children persisted in organising multicultural categories congruently despite their teachers' instructions, suggesting that they found this organisational structure compelling. Further research should investigate more closely the dialectic process by which teachers and children attempt to organise multicultural categories, and its implications for children's understanding over the longer term.

Secondly, children inferred between categories to establish the lines of similarity and difference that have been so often demonstrated in single-category research (e.g. Jenkins 2008). For instance, Karan inferred from racial to linguistic categories to conclude that I must be an Arabic speaker like his classmate Zain. Similarly, Farah expected that as a *racial* outgroup member, Endrit would also be a *religious* outgroup member. Between-category inferences may lead children to assume that a peer who differs from themselves on one category will differ on them all, thus amplifying the contrast between in- and out-group. If this is the case, then congruent organisation of multiple categories may increase inter-group differentiation. This possibility contrasts with the finding that when adults utilise multiple *intersecting* categories, inter-group differentiation is attenuated (Deschamps & Doise 1978), and dehumanisation of out-group members is reduced (Albarello & Rubini 2012; Prati and others 2016). While they did not focus on congruent category organisation, Hall and Crisp (2005) found that multiple categorisation reduced inter-group bias only when the categories involved are understood by participants to be unrelated, and note that multiple *related* categories may

actually *increase* inter-group bias. Further research on the implications of congruent category organisation for inter-group perceptions and processes is required.

Children's inferences between categories led them to challenge discrepant instances (Ervin & Foster 1960); peers who represented locally anomalous category combinations. These children, then, experienced much more dissent and resistance when they asserted their identity, compared to those whose category membership was locally typical. Moreover, self-categorisation theory would predict that these children would be considered less 'good' group members, in that they were not as distinctive from other groups as their more typical peers (Turner and others 1987). The possibility that these children experience more conflict and rejection around multicultural identity and belonging than other children should also be investigated further.

In conclusion, while children in complex multicultural settings can organise categories hierarchically, they prefer congruent organisation if categories are correlated in the local population, even in the face of opposition from teachers. Children frequently inferred from one category to another, such that category congruence was a powerful tool for making sense of one another, in ways that may exaggerate intergroup differences and create difficulties for children whose identities comprised locally unusual category combinations.

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