

**CHILDREN'S VIEWS OF DOMESTIC
WORKERS IN CYPRUS**

Spyros Spyrou
Director, Center for the Study of Childhood and Adolescence

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The Little Critic Versus The Little Boss [POWER POINT]

Boy A: “I know homes, I should not mention, which exploit them very harshly, let’s say, ‘go and get me that’ which they do not feel like getting themselves. She should be doing everything. Should they be doing everything?”

Boy B: “Ok, he is somewhat right, but what is mainly their job? To do those things. We pay them, why shouldn’t we order them?”

Αγόρι Α: Ξέρω σπίτια, να μην αναφέρω, που εκμεταλεύονται τες πολύ σκληρά, ας πούμε ‘πήγαινε φέρμου το τσίνο’ που βαρκέτε να πάει να το φέρει. Ούλλα τσίνη να τα κάμει. Εν ούλλα τσίνη που να τα κάμουν;

Αγόρι Β: Εντάξει έσση τσιαί λίο δίκαιο αλλά παραπάνω ποια εν η δουλειά τους; Να τα κάμουν τσιαί τσίνα. Πληρώνουμεν τους γιατί να μεν τις διατάξουμεν;

The Little Strategist [POWER POINT]

Spyros: Tell us about your domestic worker.

Boy: When my mother brings a woman I cooperate with her so she will cover me up. Let’s say, if I do not eat my lunch, I am not allowed to eat potato chips. I eat chips, however, and she covers me up. And I cover her up too.

Spyros: How do you cover her up?

Boy: When she eats something too.

Spyros: So, you share secrets with each other.

Boy: Yes, so that my mom does not beat me up.

Spyros: So, the domestic worker hides the chips so your mom can’t find them?

Boy: No sir, listen. We have a cupboard with chips for the guests in the kitchen. She [i.e., his mom] tells me that if I do not eat my food, I cannot eat chips. I eat chips and if it happens that the Filipino sees me, she does not tell her [i.e., his mom].

Occasionally, when she feels like it she tells my mom, and my mom takes the chips and hides them.

Σπύρος: Πέμας εσύ για την δική σας την οικιακή βοηθό.

Αγόρι: Εγώ άμα φέρει καμιά κοπέλα συνεργάζομαι μαζί της να με καλήφκει. Ας πούμε αν δεν φάω φαήν μεσημεριανό εν γίνεται να φάω τσιπς. Εγώ τρώω τσίπς τσιαί καλήφκει με. Τσιαί καλήφκω την τσιαί γω.

Σπύρος: Πως την καλήφκεις εσύ;

Αγόρι: Ε αμαν τρώει τσιαί τσίνει κάτι.

Σπύρος: Δηλαδή έσιετε μυστικά ο ένας με τον άλλο.

Αγόρι: Ε ναι για να μεν με τοπουζιάσει η μάμα.

Σπύρος: Δηλαδή χώνει τα η οικιακή βοηθός να με τα βρείσκει η μάμα σου;

Αγόρι: Οϊ κύριε, άκου. Στην κουζίνα έχουμεν ένα αρμαράκι που έσση τσίπς μέσα για ξένους. Λαλεί μου αν δεν φάω το φαή μου εν γίνεται να πιάσω τσίπς. Εγώ τρώω τσιπς τσιαί αν τίχι τσιαί δείμε η Φιλιπινέζα εν της το λαλεί. Μια φορά άμαν της δώζει λαλεί το της μάμας μου, η μάμα πιάνει τα τσίπς τσιαί χώνει τα.

The Little Jean-Marie Le Pen [POWER POINT]

Boy: [Referring to Sri Lankan domestic workers] “They are not the group of foreigners that I like. Let’s say I do not like blacks.” “. . . let’s say we dress in the

winter and wear shoes, they walk around with sandals, I do not like this. We should not be a country like the United States which hosts people. Let's say Canada hosts a lot of foreign people, they have their own customs but I do not think we are that country." "I mean we are a different country. In Canada they might see things differently but most of us Cypriots do not like them [i.e., foreigners] coming."

Αγόρι: Εν είναι η ομάδα ξένων που μου αρέσουν. Ας πούμε οι μαύροι δεν μου αρέσουν." ". . . ας πούμεν εμείς ντυνούμαστεν το χειμώνα, φορούμε παπούτσια, τσίνες κυκλοφορούσιν με τα σάνταλα, εν μου αρέσει τούντο πράμα. Να μεν είμαστεν η χώρα όπως τες Ηνωμένες Πολιτείες που φιλοξενούν κόσμο. Ας πούμε, ο Καναδάς φιλοξενά πολύ ξένο κόσμο, έχουν τες δικές τους συνήθειες, αλλά νομίζω δεν είμαστε αυτή η χώρα." "Έννωώ είμαστε διαφορετική χώρα. Στο Καναδά μπορεί να τα βλέπουν αλλιώς τα πράγματα αλλά εμείς οι παραπάνω Κύπριοι δεν τους αρέσουν να έρχονται.

The Little Prince(ss) [POWER POINT]

Girl: [Referring to her Sri Lankan domestic worker] I love her and she loves me.

Κορίτσι: Την αγαπώ, κι αυτή με αγαπά.

INTRODUCTION

What I will present here today are some of the preliminary findings of a study that the Center for the Study of Childhood and Adolescence has recently conducted.

The study is qualitative and aims to understand Greek Cypriot elementary school children's perceptions of, knowledge about, and attitudes towards Sri Lankan and Filipino women who are employed as domestic workers in Cyprus. We conducted

both in-depth interviews and focus groups with children and included in our sample both children whose families employ domestic workers as well as children whose families don't.

The study was conducted with support from the Bi-communal Development Programme funded by USAID and UNDP and executed by UNOPS and its aim is to raise awareness about the whole issue. We very much thank UNOPS for this.

SO WHO ARE THESE WOMEN?

When I asked the children to tell me what comes to mind when they hear the word "Sri Lankan" and "Filipino" in the feminine (Sri Lankeza and Filipineza), the pattern which emerged was very much the same. The overwhelming majority of children pointed out "domestic worker" (οικιακή βοηθός) suggesting a clear identification between the national category and the particular profession.

A second set of characteristics which most children pointed out focused on appearance. Both Sri Lankan and Filipino domestic workers were described as "black" (μαύρες) or as having a different skin color from "us": "Their color is black, ours is white" ("Έν μαύρο, τσιαί μας εν άσπρο"), as one child explained.

In fact, some of the children in their attempt to understand who Sri Lankans and Filipinos are imagined them as radically different from "us." For instance, one boy imagined Sri Lankan food habits as exotic and weird: "They eat snakes, they are poor people, they do not eat the kinds of food we eat (Τρών φίδια, έτσι φτωσιοί ανθρωποι, εν τρών φαγά όπως τρώμε). Another boy pointed out that the Filipino domestic worker his family employs has six brothers to which a girl added that "because they have nothing much to do, they have children" (επειδή εν έχουν τίποτε να κάμουν γεννούν).

But the children did not only see differences between "us" and "them"; they also identified similarities. The most common similarity pointed out was "character" which children saw as being similar between Sri Lankans and Filipinos on the one hand and Greek Cypriots on the other. Chrysostomos (11), for example explained that the character of Sri Lankan domestic workers is like "ours" and that they behave the same way "we" do: "They are like us . . . like our mother takes care of us, she takes care of us the same way . . . like we clean our houses, she cleans the same way too" (Έν όπως εμάς . . . όπως η μάμα μας προσέχει εμάς προσέχει μας τσιαί τσίνη . . . όπως καθαρίζουμεν εμείς τα σπίθκια μας καθαρίζει τσιαί τσίνη).

BUT HOW GOOD ARE THESE WOMEN?

Most of the children described Sri Lankan and Filipino women as good or very good, as having a good character, and as being polite. Other characteristics mentioned were: friendly, sensitive, loving, obedient, hardworking, and helpful. Yet, for some of the children their positive evaluation was based on their understanding of these women as passive, obedient, and non-complaining. Minos, for example, made it a point to tell me that the character of Sri Lankan domestic workers is good because "Let's say they can't even get upset with you if you do something wrong to them" (Άς πούμε ούτε να σου θυμώσουν μπόρουν αν τους κάμεις κάτι). For Minos, the quality of their character is measured by their ability or inability to react to

those who do wrong to them. In other words, being subservient, non-reactive, and compliant is a sign of good character. And one more example from another boy, Michalis, to reinforce this understanding. He said: “I had myself a Filipino in my house, she was relatively good, she obeyed me, she was good” (είχα και γω μια Φιλιπινέζα στο σπίτι, ήταν σχετικά καλή, με υπάκουε, ήταν καλή). Michalis here speaks from his position of authority, as an employer himself, and his evaluation of the domestic worker mainly depends on his understanding of how their respective social roles were fulfilled: “She obeyed me.” What is interesting also here is that it is mostly boys who express this understanding; it would be interesting to consider to what extent masculinity shapes boys’ understanding of the relationships they have with their domestic workers.

When I asked children whose families do not employ domestic workers in a focus group discussion to tell me what they like or do not like about Filipino domestic workers the following exchange took place:

[POWER POINT]

Girl A: Because we are not like them. When we see them we feel a bit uncomfortable. We are all Cypriots, our color is white, they are black.

Spyros: Do you feel uncomfortable?

Girl A: No that much.

Boy A: Yes but they might also feel the same way. They are black, we are white. They might feel uncomfortable because we are white.

Boy B: Sir, we also have black people in Cyprus. There is one [student] in our class who is black like tar (κατράς).

Κορίτσι Α: Επειδή δεν είμαστε εμείς σαν αυτές. Όταν τις βλέπουμε νιώθουμε κάπως άβολα. Εμείς είμαστε όλοι Κύπριοι, το χρώμα μας εν άσπρο, τσίνιοι εν μαύροι.

Σπύρος: Εσύ νιώθεις άβολα;

Κορίτσι Α: Οϊ τόσον.

Αγόρι Α: Ναι αλλά τσιαί τσίνιοι μπορούν να νιώθουν το ίδιο. Τσίνιοι εν μαύροι, εμείς άσπροι. Μπορεί να νιώθουν άβολα που εμείς είμαστε άσπροι.

Αγόρι Β: Κύριε τσιαί εμείς στην Κύπρο έχουμε μαύρους. Έση ένα στην τάξη μας εν κατράς.

In the above exchange it is clear that physical difference—in this case difference in skin color—is used as an assumption of discomfort in an encounter between Cypriots and Filipinos. Having a different skin color becomes for these children a potential obstacle to intercultural communication. Boy B’s comment that there are Cypriots who are black problematizes for the children who spoke earlier their own assumptions about how Cypriots and Filipinos differ in skin color. Ultimately, Boy B’s comment comes to challenge notions of color differences at the same time that it is, in itself a problematic construction of color since the use of the word ‘katras’ (κατράς) which means ‘tar’ and implies a very dense, black color is derogatory and suggests a sense of inferiority for those who are dark. Skin color as not simply a marker of difference but also an evaluative criterion suggests its significance in constructions of otherness. In other words, *people who have a different skin color must necessarily be substantially different from “us,”* hence, the assumed or expected discomfort which could result from an encounter. Color identifications are rarely simply descriptive even among children; the children consciously or unconsciously and over time come

to associate blackness with a series of images which focus on violence, poverty, famine, lack of education, and general underdevelopment. In much of the Western world, the color itself has been symbolically linked with death and evil. There is of course no single reading of blackness and we should avoid overinterpreting its significance but I still think that it is a potent symbol for evaluating others and positioning oneself in relation to them.

For other children like Elpida, there is a question of trust, that is, whether you can trust the raising of your children to a Filipino domestic worker. In her own words: “Most people trust them. I think we should not because she might, let’s say, if she takes care of a child, teach him their [i.e., Filipino] religion, the manners and customs of their country, so that your child will grow up differently” (Οι περισσότεροι εμπιστεύονται τους. Εγώ νομίζω εν πρέπει γιατί μπορεί, ας πούμε, αν προσέχει ένα μωρό να του μάθει την θρησκεία τους, τα ήθη και τα έθιμα της χώρας.

Similarly, other children expressed mixed feelings or a sense of mistrust towards Filipino domestic workers. Chrysostomos (11), for example, said he likes Filipino domestic workers “a little.” When I asked why, he explained that it is “because they are not from our country, but we like them” because they are “goodhearted” (καλόκαρδες). Yet, as he added, what he does not like is that they too get upset: “They might get angry one day” (Μπορεί μιαν ημέρα να θυμώσουν). For Chrysostomos, the possibility of a domestic worker getting angry is a negative quality of her character. Such a view is suggestive of how an idealized image of the domestic worker is constructed, that is, one where the person exhibits only certain kinds of behaviors and emotions rather than the full range of human behaviors and emotions. In other words, a domestic worker should never get upset. Being upset, presumably with her employer, constitutes a challenge to the established social order where a subordinate is expected to be submissive rather than reactive to her boss.

THEY ARE NOT ALL THE SAME

Here I will provide a rather lengthy dialogue which I think is particularly interesting however for understanding the hierarchical classifications that children construct in relation to various groups of domestic workers.

[POWER POINT]

Spyros: Do you speak with your parents at all about Sri Lankan women?

Boy A: When my mother plans to bring a domestic worker, when her visa expires [i.e., of the current domestic worker], there are many countries in the European Union from which they [i.e., domestic workers] can come to Cyprus, she will ask for my opinion, and for my brother’s opinion, if it is a Bulgarian or English [woman we want], I do not know.

Spyros: Does your mother ask you who you want?

Boy A: Yes.

Spyros: What do you have to say? If she asked you now what would you say?

Boy A: Filipino.

Spyros: Why?

Boy A: She makes good rice, cleans well, she knows how to make good curry, she also knows karate and she teaches me.

Spyros: Karate?

Boy A: Yes, they know good (karate).

Girl A: Sir, I do not like very much the fact that we entered the European Union. I like the fact that it is better. I do not like the fact that Russian, Bulgarian women will come to our home.

Boy B: Yes sir.

Spyros: Where do you think the problem is?

Boy B: Everything is changing.

Girl A: It is different to have a poor girl in your house who has . . . if she is 40 – 45 years old, in our case Melanie [pseudonym] has 5 children and another three in the house [i.e., from his own family], it is like having 8 children. So she knew how . . . when they get sick she knows what to do. But if you bring a Russian woman she won't know anything.

Boy B: Yes.

Girl A: She will dress very . . . yes with high heels in the house. I do not like it very much as an idea. But if we had a Russian and then Filipinos came [to Cyprus] again I would not like it. We got accustomed this way.

Boy B: It will change because it has been like this for many years, we had Filipinos, Sri Lankans even before we were born and we got used to these countries. Now that we have entered Europe we will have women from other countries working [here] who will be coming in greater numbers only to see the place and to work in order to earn a little money. It is different [now].

Boy A: If they asked me to choose between a Bulgarian and a Filipino or Sri Lankan I would choose a Filipino or Sri Lankan. Because Filipinos and Sri Lankans dress differently and they do not care what kinds of clothes they wear, and they do their job. While the Bulgarian will be dealing with her lipsticks, she will be wearing her high heels, [she will be thinking about] what kinds of clothes she will wear, things like that.

Girl B: And they do not even do their job well.

Boy A: Yes, and they also call [i.e., all the time].

Girl C: In my opinion, it is not all Russians who are rich, there are some who are poor.

Σπύρος: Μιλάτε καθόλου με τους γονείς σας για τις Σρι Λανκέζες;

Αγόρι A: Η μάμα μου άμαν εν να φέρει μιαν οικιακή βοηθό, άμαν τελιώσει η βίζα της, στην Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση έση κάμποσες χώρες που να μπορούν να έρχονται στην Κύπρο εν να ρωτήσει την γνώμη μου τσιαί του αδελφού μου αν'ναι Βουλγάρα ή Εγγλέζα εν ηξέρω.

Σπύρος: Ρωτάσε η μάμα σου ίντα που θέλεις;

Αγόρι A: Ναι

Σπύρος: Εσύ ίντα που λαλείς; Αν σε ρώταν τωρά τι θα λάλες;

Αγόρι A: Φιλιπινέζα

Σπύρος: Γιατί;

Αγόρι A: Κάμνει καλό ρύζι, καθαρίζει καλά, ξέρει τσιαί κάμνει καλό κάρι, ξέρει τσιαί καράτε τσιαί μαθαίνει μου.

Σπύρος: Καράτε;

Αγόρι A: Ναι ξέρουν καλό.

Κορίτσι Α: Κύριε εμένα εν τσιαί αρέσκει μου τσιαί πολλά που μπήκαμε στην Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση. Αρέσκει μου που εν πιο καλά. Το ότι εν νάρτουν στο σπίτι μας Ρωσίδες, Βουλγάρες εν μου αρέσκει έτσι πράμα.

Αγόρι Β: Ναι κύριε.

Σπύρος: Που θεωρείς ότι εν το πρόβλημα;

Αγόρι Β: Αλλάζουν ούλα.

Κορίτσι Α: Άλλο να έσης σπίτι σου μια φτωχή κοπέλα που έση . . . άμαν είναι 40 – 45 χρονών, εμάς η Πρέντα έση 5 παιδιά τσιαί άλλο 3 σπίτι εν σαν να έση 8 παιδιά. Ε ήξερε πως... άμαν αρρωστήσουν ξέρει ίντα πον να κάμει. Ενώ τωρά να φέρεις μια Ρωσίδα εν θα ξέρει τίποτε.

Αγόρι Β: Ναι

Κορίτσι Α: Εν να ντύνεται πολλά . . . ναι με τα τακούνια μες το σπίτι. Εν μου πολλο-αρέσκει σαν ιδέα. Αλλά αν είχαμεν Ρωσίδα τσιαί έρκουνταν Φιλιπινέζες πάλε εν θα μου άρεσκεν. Εσυνηθήσαμεν έτσι.

Αγόρι Β: Εν να αλλάξει γιατί έση τόσα χρόνια, ακόμα πριν γεννηθούμεν είχαμεν Φιλιπινέζες, Σρι Λανκέζες τσιαί εσυνηθήσαμεν που τούντες χώρε. Τωρά που μπήκαμεν στην Ευρώπη εν νάχουμεν άλλων χωρών κοπέλες να δουλεύουν οι οποίες εν νάρκουνται πιο πολλά μόνο τσιαί μόνο για να δουν τον τόπον τσιαί να δουλεύουν για να πίνουν λία χρήματα. Εν διαφορετικό.

Αγόρι Α: Κύριε αν μου λέαν να δκιαλέξω που Βουλγάρα τσιαί Φιλιπινέζα, Σρι Λανκέζα ίσιεν να δκιαλέξω Φιλιπινέζα, Σρι Λανκέζα. Γιατί οι Φιλιπινέζες τσιαί οι Σρι Λανκέζες εν διαφορετικές στο ντύσιμο τους τσιαί εν τους κόφτει ίντα ρούχα εν να φορούσιν, τσιαί κάμνουν την δουλειά τους. Ενώ η Βουλγάρα εν να μάσιετε πας τα κοτσιλιάκια της, να φορεί τακούνια, ίντα ρούχα εν να φορήσει, έτσι πράματα.

Κορίτσι Β: Τσιαί ούτε καλά εν κάμνουν την δουλειά.

Αγόρι Α: Ναι, τσιαί πίνουν τσιαί τηλέφωνο.

Κορίτσι Γ: Εμένα η γνώμη, εν ναι ούλες οι Ρωσίδες πων πλούσιες, έση κάποιες πων φτωχές.

In the excerpt above from a focus group discussion with children whose families employ domestic workers we get a sense of how children think about the various groups of women who come to Cyprus for work. From the discussion among the children, it becomes clear that there is a hierarchy of preference based on ethnic and to some extent class criteria. Filipinos and Sri Lankans are preferred over Russians and Bulgarians who are not perceived as being good at domestic work. Russians and Bulgarians are identified with other kinds of work—mainly work in cabarets as artistes/dancers and in bars as barmaids—and are imagined as having a different outlook, that is, as being primarily interested in how good they look physically. Hence, they are not suited for domestic work which requires that someone knows enough about homes and families to do her job well. Being poor becomes a qualification for domestic work in the children's imaginations. On the other hand, being better off, physically attractive, and involved with the outside world (i.e., the public arena of cabarets and bars) is a perceived weakness for domestic work.

When it came to comparing Sri Lankan with Filipino domestic workers many children expressed their clear preference for Filipinos because as Michalis explained “they do not steal like Sri Lankans.” Moreover, as one girl explained: “They do their work better, they understand Greek better, they dress better.”

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CHILDREN AND THEIR DOMESTIC WORKERS

Many of the children whose families employ domestic workers described their relationships with them as “good” or “very good.” For some of the children the relationship is extremely important. Niki (12), for example, was very clear about her feelings towards their Sri Lankan domestic worker: “I love her and she loves me” (Την αγαπώ, κι αυτή με αγαπά).

The way that children perceive the character and behavior of the domestic worker is key to how they understand the relationship. Chrysostomos (11), for instance, likes their Sri Lankan domestic worker because she is goodhearted and does what he asks her to do while Kyriakos (12) appreciates the fact that their domestic worker is always polite and never moody, always smiling (Εν ευγενική πάντα, ένναι μουτρωμένη, πάντα εν χαμογελαστή, πάντα). Once again being obedient and appearing to be happy are preconditions for some children to like their domestic worker. The social role of the domestic worker is defined in terms of her ability to satisfy her employers by consistently presenting an ideal character. Her “proper” behavior and character, her happy personality are necessary to build a “proper” relationship between herself and her employers who will then feel content about their decision to hire the particular domestic worker.

For some of the children, their relationship with the domestic worker depends to a large extent on how they evaluate her character in relation to her work performance. Efi (10.5), for example, likes her Sri Lankan domestic worker because “She always cleans. When she does not have anything else to do, she calls my mom on the phone to ask her ‘what else do I have to do?’ (Πάντα καθαρίζει. Άμαν έν έση τίποτε να κάμει πιάνει την μάμα μου τηλέφωνο για να της πει ‘τι έχω να κάμω άλλο;’) Now compare this with what a boy had to say about his domestic worker: “One time when I was sick and did not go to school, I understood how much she supposedly works. When my parents are not home she constantly has her mobile phone on her ear and pretends she is making the bed. She lies on the bed and listens to songs comfortably, she does not even care. She forgets, let’s say, to clean, she forgets to clean my room and when we are away she constantly forgets [to clean] (Μια φορά που ήμουν άρρωστος τσιαί εν ήρτα σχολείο εκατάλαβα πόσον πολλά δουλεύκει στο σπίτι μίσημου. Όταν λείπουν οι γονείς μου έση συνέχεια το κινητό τηλέφωνο στο αυτί της τσιαί κάμνει ότι στρώνει το κρεβάτι. Ξαπλώνει στο κρεβάτι τσιαί ακούει τραούδκια με την άνεση της, ούτε που την κόφτη. Ξυχάνει ας πούμε να καθαρίσει, ξυχάνει να καθαρίσει το δωμάτιο μου τσιαί όταν λύπουμεν συνέχεια ξεχάνει). These children align themselves fully with the interests of their families as employers of domestic workers and adopt themselves the role of the employer defending these interests.

But how would these children feel if their domestic worker decided to leave or if she had to leave because her visa expired? Most of them said they would feel sad or very sad. One reason which some children brought up is that the domestic worker has been with the family for many years and they feel a connection. As Nasia (12) explained, “I would feel sadness because we are very connected and I would not want her to leave” (Θα ένιωθα λύπη γιατί είμαστε πολύ συνδεδεμένοι μαζί και δεν θα ήθελα να φύγει). Children described this closeness between themselves and their domestic worker in different ways. Some children saw the domestic worker as being almost a

family member, a member of the house, a friend, or more like a mother though not all children felt this way.

CONCLUSION

How children position themselves in relation to these women is central to their understanding of who they are. Different children have different access to cultural resources: to discourses of race and color, ideologies of nationalism, conceptions of equality and inequality. Their social positions (as members of the majority group, as sons and daughters of these women's employers, as economically more well off than the people they hire) influence how they come to relate to these domestic workers in their everyday lives or, in the absence of direct encounters with them, in their imaginations. The children's social positions are reproduced in their everyday social practices, among other ways, by the way they use language, that is, by the way they claim privilege and entitlement (as my example of *The Little Boss* showed), by the way they negotiate the social distance between themselves and these women (as my example of *The Little Critic*, *The Little Jean-Marie Le Pen*, and *The Little Princess* showed), and by the way they align with them to achieve their aims (as my example of *The Little Strategist* showed).

To use the ideas of one of my favorite social theorists, Mikail Bakhtin, the children have access to diverse voices which are socially inscribed with meaning and they have to orchestrate them, to put them together if you wish, and to author their own identities as they move through their everyday lives. This process is of course full of tensions and contradictions and the understandings they construct reflect that. The children say that they like their domestic workers, that they have a good character, but at the same time they objectify them by constructing them as compliant, submissive, and passive; they tell jokes which stereotype these women but they are also fully aware that these jokes can be offensive to these people; they criticize one another's positions about color and race only to fall themselves back into the trap of reifying color. The children partake into the larger cultural discourses surrounding the presence of Sri Lankan and Filipino domestic workers in Cyprus but they also develop alternative understandings which give rise to what Bakhtin again would call "heteroglossic" selves. In this ambiguous space where the familiar and the strange, where the "self" and the "other" encounter one another the children orchestrate the various voices they encounter and craft their own responses to the world, even if such responses are far from clear and consistent.

