Chapter 16
Experiencing Diversity: Complexity, Education, and Peace Construction

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16.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will adopt a broad definition of diversity, though I will focus especially on sociocultural diversity as experienced in the school context (e.g., Cangià & Pagani, 2014; Pagani, 2001, 2011a, 2011b, 2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2017, 2018, 2019; Pagani & Robustelli, 2005, 2010, 2011; Pagani, Robustelli, & Martinelli, 2011). The ideas and data I will present in this chapter will draw on a number of research studies I conducted with my collaborators. For readers who wish to follow up on specific topics related to the present chapter, the following may be useful: teachers and immigrant pupils in Italian schools (Pagani & Robustelli, 2005); children's attitudes to multiculturalism (e.g., Pagani & Robustelli, 2010) (age of participants, 9–18); the relationship between these attitudes and social cohesion (Pagani, 2014a) (age of participants, 15–19); the role of emotions in children's racist attitudes (e.g., Pagani, 2011a, 2014b; Pagani & Robustelli, 2011) (age of participants, 9–18); the relationship between complex thinking and children's attitudes to multiculturalism (e.g., Cangià & Pagani, 2014; Pagani, 2015a) (age of participants, 14–18); and the relationship between complex thinking and children's empathic attitudes (Pagani, 2015a, 2018).

The concepts and ideas presented in the present chapter are based on several propositions: (1) It is necessary to adopt of a broad definition of diversity; (2) diversity and complexity are interrelated; (3) competitive patterns of living, power relations, and hierarchical structures in human societies pose a challenge to peaceful relations; and (4) the school's potential to improve children's relationship with diversity and to foster complex thinking in the interest of peace construction is enormous.

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16.2 The Relationship with Diversity

The relationship with diversity is one of the basic aspects of human experience (Pagani, 2011a; Pagani, 2011b; Robustelli, 2000). Each individual is part of a reality where everything is diverse from her/him, and, indisputably, each individual's identity develops and evolves through the experience of diversity. Besides, sooner or later in the course of her/his life, each human being realizes that diversity is also *within* herself/himself. Indeed, people usually become aware of the continuous, numberless, sometimes imperceptible, physical, and psychological transformations they go through in the course of their lives.

Three points need to be clarified here: One has to do with the emotions that may be involved in our relationship with diversity, another is the context within which human relations take place, and, finally, I will touch on the question of tolerance for all kinds of diversity.

First, one of the emotions that has most often been connected with humans' relationship with diversity is fear. Some authors have maintained that fear in intergroup relations has some innate evolutionary explanation, thanks to its self-serving protective function (Kottak, 2002). In fact, in our studies on pupils' attitudes toward multiculturalism, we found that, as regards the young participants in our research, one of the emotions frequently connected with the experience of diversity is fear, which is the outcome of a perception of threat. Hence, we analyzed pupils' perceived threats and fears and developed a distinction between real and justified threats and fears (like coming across a drunk immigrant holding a knife in her/his hand late in the night) on the one hand and imaginary and unjustified threats and fears (like feeling that a group of immigrants who are talking together in their own language, which the pupil in question is unable to understand, are actually plotting something harmful against her/him) on the other hand. Thus, we did not distinguish between realistic and symbolic threats (e.g., Stephan, Ybarra, & Morrison, 2009), since we argued that, unlike the distinction between justified and unjustified threats, this specific distinction was not relevant for our research purposes.

Some authors (e.g., Magid, 2008) have pointed out that a child's experience of "secure attachment" with a caregiver can countervail this tendency toward unjustified fear of unfamiliar events and individuals. In addition, "secure attachment" can foster tolerance toward the unknown and interest in it. This means that the relationship with diversity "does not necessarily involve fear and rejection" and that "Curiosity, empathy and identification can occur instead" (Pagani et al., 2011, p. 338). And this introduces us to a second relevant issue.

Second, the main obstacle to a constructive relationship with diversity and, thus, to peace construction is the competitive life pattern, which now prevails all over the world and which is based "on a simplistic, rough, unsophisticated, coarse and unempathetic view on life" (Pagani, 2019, p. 74). In one way or another, the competitive life pattern affects all interpersonal relationships, which means that in most cases, people consider "the other" to be a rival, a competitor, an enemy, someone to be basically feared and who tries to overpower them and whom, in their turn, they may

try to overpower (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2007; Pagani, 2014c, Pagani, 2019, Pagani & Robustelli, 1998, 2005, 2010, 2011; Robustelli, 2007; Robustelli & Pagani, 1996). Fundamentally, this is because human societies are usually characterized by hierarchical structures, depending on the power each individual has over other individuals, with the weakest and/or most exploited, such as the poor, the elderly, the disabled, women, children, and animals, on the lowest rungs of the social ladder.

The role of competition in intergroup relations has been widely analyzed and debated in the social sciences. Sherif et al.'s "Realistic Conflict Theory" (1961) and Tajfel and Turner's "Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict" (1979) and "Social Identity Theory" (1986, 2004) have especially contributed to the debate in this field.

It goes without saying that these authors' theoretical considerations have developed in a cultural context where as a rule competition strongly affects people's thoughts, emotions, and behavior. A crucial point in complexity science is related to the role of the subject. The subject (also named the "observer," the "conceiver," or the "knower") is part of the act of observation, of conceiving, and of knowing (Morin, 2008), to which she/he participates with her/his "personal qualities in its communication with the object" (Morin, 2008, p. 107). This means that "the subject and the object are, and have to be, constitutive of each other and that the processes of observation and self-observation are integrated" (Pagani, 2019, p. xiii). In the social studies on competition in intergroup relations quoted above, this methodological perspective is not considered. In this regard, the following theoretical statements are particularly significant:

> [...] in-group bias is a remarkably omnipresent feature of intergroup relations. (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 38)
>
> The aim of differentiation is to maintain or achieve superiority over an out-group on some dimensions. Any such act, therefore, is essentially competitive. (Ibid., p. 41)

Clearly, these two statements could hardly have been put forth in a Buddhist-oriented context. Conversely, when the subject acknowledges her/his role as part of the research process, she/he is more aware both of the complexity of the object of study and of the uncertainty that unavoidably characterizes scientific investigation, which is another basic principle in complexity science. In other words, the subject becomes aware of the possible limits and deficiencies of her/his point of view and of the fact that other views and realities may be possible. The consequences of this change of perspective are enormous in all human domains, including, and most significantly, education and peace issues.

Finally, as regards the nature of a specific kind of diversity and tolerance, it goes without saying that not all kinds of diversities should be accepted, for example, the diversity of a Nazi, of a racist, or of a bully. The principle that should guide actions is whether or not the actions are harmful to others. However, we should learn to deal with harmful forms of diversity. This is a very important issue especially as far as education is concerned, which I will try to address later on when I discuss the relationship between diversity and complexity.

16.3 Diversity and Complexity

The idea of diversity is at the core of complexity theory. This is indicated by the main concepts on which complexity theory is grounded (e.g., systems, networks, hierarchies, nonlinearity, emergent properties, evolution, adaptation, context, multiplicity of causes, existence of a potentially infinite number of possible solutions) (e.g., Byrne, 1998; De Toni & Comello, 2005; Johnson, 2009; Mitchell, 2009; Prigogine & Stengers, 1984, 1997), which are all founded on the existence of diversity.

Indeed, complexity is a particularly useful epistemological tool in this research area, in that, among other things, it indicates the necessity of addressing human issues – like the relationship with diversity – through newly created and multiple perspectives (Morin, 2008). In other words, complexity is inherent both in the reality of diversity and in the observer of the reality of diversity itself.

Within this context, I will not provide a general overview of complexity science. The volumes quoted above are excellent instruments for this purpose. However, for greater clarity, I will quote a very short definition provided by Neil Johnson (2009):

> […] Complexity Science can be seen as the study of the phenomena which emerge from a collection of interacting objects […]. (p. 3)

In order to better illustrate my point, I will quote the concluding part of a short anonymous essay written by a 10-year-old girl, who participated in our study on youths' attitudes toward multiculturalism[1] (e.g., Cangià & Pagani, 2014; Pagani, 2014a, 2014b; Pagani & Robustelli, 2005, 2010, 2011) and who declares in the first sentence of her essay that she is not a racist[2]:

> *Our immigrant classmates maltreat us and we have to put up with them and if we react against them we will be put in jail, we have to defend ourselves!*
>
> *And if we do not do it, they will conquer us!*
>
> *Here at school, they are in a privileged position; they receive snacks and sweets and do whatever they like. Pupils should come to school to study. They shouldn't come to school to eat and get warm.*
>
> *When I was in the third year, the girls in my class teased me because my father is Sardinian and is short, but not only Sardinians are short.*

If we are knowledgeable about the situation in Italian schools, we can immediately realize that the picture depicted by the girl is unrealistic. No young Italian pupil would sensibly fear that she/he should be put in jail for any reason whatsoever. Nor the idea of immigrant pupils "maltreating" and threatening "to conquer" their Italian classmates is conceivable either.

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[1] Some of the extracts quoted in this chapter have been analyzed from partly different perspectives in Pagani (2014b); Pagani, 2019; Pagani and Robustelli (2011); and Cangià and Pagani (2014).

[2] In the quotations from participants' essays, we did not eliminate spelling, grammatical, syntactic, and lexical mistakes or any other "idiosyncratic" element in the form and in the content of the texts.

In this specific situation, a teacher might simplistically regard the girl's discontent and deep aversion to her immigrant classmates as the mere outcome of an attitude which she/he might generically define as "racist." Then the same teacher might decide, for example, to simply reprimand the pupil and, thus, close the book on the matter.

But if we look at the few sentences quoted above through a "complexity" lens, we can easily realize that the problem is multifaceted and "complex." Indeed it is a texture of many components, some of which are strongly embedded in the deep emotional substratum of the girl's story, as it has developed in the course of her life, particularly through her interactions with her family figures – notably with his father in this context – as well as with her teachers and the other pupils at school. She seems to be experiencing various intermingled emotions: fear (fear of her immigrant classmates, but also, and most notably, fear of losing her teachers' affection, on account of their supposed special attentions to immigrant pupils), anger, shame, hate, resentment, and envy. Various processes are involved in the formation of these emotions. We might even hypothesize a "hostility displacement" on the part of this pupil (from the girls in her class to her immigrant classmates[3]).

It is especially important to point out that all this complexity is displayed in the few lines of a very short essay written by a girl of 10. Indeed, even a short extract can be regarded and analyzed as a complex system, in all the various connections among its components. Moreover, in this specific system, there is a final component, which we might define as the "emergent phenomenon" – a typical concept of complexity science – that contributes to a sort of clarification, that is, to a higher-level comprehension of the essence of the situation itself, which is constituted by the interconnection of the various specific events and emotions in the girl's life. This special component is provided by the last sentence:

> *When I was in the third year, the girls in my class teased me because my father is Sardinian and is short, but not only Sardinians are short.*

In fact, these words can be regarded as a sort of climax that provides the ultimate key to the possible comprehension of the meaning of the situation itself. In brief, in our analysis, we have taken on a perspective whereby the girl's text is handled exactly as a living being, as a system in evolution, in sum as a complex system.

Interestingly, a British journalist from *The Guardian*, Richard Seymour (2014), in his considerations on popular racism in Great Britain, referred to one of the emotions I mentioned above regarding the girl's feelings, namely, resentment:

> The dominant sentiment of this racism is resentment. People are convinced that immigrants have taken something from them. Social resentment of this kind is integral to the competitive ethos of neoliberalism: given a vicious struggle for scarce resources, there is tremendous paranoia about "undeserving" people getting things unfairly.

However, we are well aware that, given its complexity, the issue of competition cannot be simply defined in terms of "a struggle for limited resources." Within this context, it is particularly important to point out that in the last few years there has

[3] For a deep analysis of the girl's emotions and the processes involved, see Pagani (2014b).

been an increasing interest in complexity and in the use of a “complexity lens” in the study of conflicts and in the efforts to address them constructively. Several authors (e.g., Coleman & Deutsch, 2001; Coleman & Vallacher, 2010; Kugler, Coleman, & Fuchs, 2011; Suedfeld, 2007) have addressed some of the most serious obstacles in the way of peace (like intractable conflicts, terrorism, and torture) drawing on the construct of conceptual/integrative complexity (Suedfeld, Tetlock, & Streufert, 1992) as opposed to a Manichean dogmatism (Suedfeld, 2007).

16.4 Diversity, Complex Thinking, Peace Construction, and School

Though I generally consider education in its broad sense, namely, as the sum of all the elements of reality that in one way or another affect human development (Pagani, 2000; Robustelli, 2003), here I will give a special emphasis to school. As I said above, school’s potential to improve youths’ relationship with diversity and to foster peace building is enormous. However, our research findings (e.g., Pagani, 2014b; Pagani et al., 2011; Pagani & Robustelli, 2010) indicate that “both teachers and pupils seldom perceive school as a place that can provide this positive and significant opportunity” (Pagani et al., 2011, p. 337). I will pick up on this point in more detail further on.

The conceptualizations regarding complex thinking, which have been especially elaborated by Morin (2008), are firmly embedded in the basic theoretical foundations of complexity theory and are particularly significant also from an educational and social point of view. In fact, in Morin’s view, complex thinking is considered the essential prerequisite of humans’ actions, thoughts, and emotions. More specifically, in his view, the unique possibility for mankind to survive lies in the application of complex thinking itself.

We defined complex thinking “as the combination of certain cognitive and emotional processes through which individuals try to understand themselves, the others, the world and, in general, all the aspects of reality they may be interested in” (Cangià & Pagani, 2014, p. 22). These processes include, among others, “self-awareness,” “multiple perspective-taking,” “acceptance of uncertainty and incompleteness,” “openness to experience,” “creativity,” and “emotional complexity.”

It is clear that the experience of diversity is at the base of these processes. Morin is not so familiar with the words “peace” or “peace construction,” but in his writings on complex thinking (e.g., Morin, 2001, 2008), he firmly underlines the unique and essential role played by complex thinking in supporting the construction of a less destructive world. His view is synthesized in these words:

> Complexity is situated at a point of departure for a richer, less mutilating action. I strongly believe that the less a thought is mutilating, the less it will mutilate human beings. We must remember the ravages that simplifying visions have caused, not only in the intellectual world, but in life. Much of the suffering of millions of beings results from the effects of fragmented and one-dimensional thought. (2008, p. 57)

In our research studies, especially in those where we used pupils' anonymous open-ended essays, one of the clearest and most obvious examples of mutilating thought was provided by the presence of logical contradictions characterizing participants' attitudes toward multiculturalism, of which the pupils themselves apparently were not aware (e.g., Pagani et al., 2011; Pagani & Robustelli, 2010). The example below, where a resentful aversion to immigrants coexists with a sincere affection for an immigrant friend, is an excerpt from an anonymous essay written by a boy of 11:

> *I hate immigrants who don't want to work, who steal and come here only to wreak havoc and kill.*
>
> *I am proud to be Italian!*
>
> *But I hate, in the truest sense, gypsies* […] *that swear at my God and despise my country.*
>
> […] *I may be a racist, a fascist,* […] *a rogue, a hooligan, a fool* […].
>
> *I met a Czechoslovakian named Martin. I was in Abruzzo. With him I had a lot of fun and in order to communicate we used to speak in English.*
>
> *He was a humble kid, with no fears and very friendly.*
>
> *It was a very significant experience for me.*

Our research findings (e.g., Cangià & Pagani, 2014) indicate that the presence of good or very good levels of complex thinking is related to a deeper, more refined, and more positive representation of cultural diversity. Instead, negative, stereotyped, and prejudiced representations of cultural diversity are characterized by a relative lack of complex thinking.

This is another example of the presence of a low level of complex thinking. It is an excerpt from an anonymous essay written by a boy of 16. Interestingly, this boy attends a high school specializing in scientific subjects, a kind of school that is generally attended by higher socioeconomic class students:

> *Then the most important question is: what do all these immigrants want? Do they want a job? Do they want money? Do they want to live in peace? Or rather they want our jobs? Do they want our money? And steal our peace earned throughout centuries of wars and of our ancestors' efforts?*
>
> *Instead, why don't they stay in their country to try to change something; do you want a job → look for it do you want money → earn it do you want peace → don't make war.*
>
> *I'll make some examples: the other day I was in my car with my father and at one point a Moroccan at the traffic signal started to wash the car front window, well before the light turned green we had to give him money, well and what if I had wanted to spend that money for something else instead? I mean, it's bad enough that you come here in our country and steal our job (and don't say that they do those jobs that Italians don't do because it's bullshit) and then you even invade my freedom? My rights? How dare you; stay in your country and fight wars with bamboo canes.*
>
> *Well, I think this way, maybe it is wrong but I think this way; I won't change my opinion until someone proves me wrong.*

Just two remarks on these lines. First, the boy does not seem to be aware of the burden and of the meaning of the emotions he is experiencing – a complex system which he does not recognize – especially as far as his feelings of rage are concerned. Accordingly, his thinking is low in emotional complexity as it shows a low level of "emotional granularity" (Lindquist & Barrett, 2008), namely, of the ability to identify and describe various emotional experiences in precise and differentiated

terms. It is also low in "dialecticism," a term which refers to the presence of different emotions and of their reciprocal relations within a single emotional episode (Lindquist & Barrett, 2008).

Second, his thinking is fragmented, mutilated, simplistic, dogmatic, and authoritarian. It is not open to other perspectives and to other experiences ("I won't change my opinion") and is characterized by a nonacceptance of a certain degree of uncertainty and incompleteness, by a lack of creativity, and by an almost nonexistence of self-awareness, which means it lacks those qualities that are inherent components of complex thinking.

In the closing lines of the first section of this chapter, I referred to the necessity of constructively dealing also with negative kinds of diversity and suggested, as examples, the diversity of a Nazi, of a racist, or of a bully. In this context, school should play a major role. According to some authors (e.g., Cangià & Pagani, 2014; Ezekiel, 2002), there is a sine qua non, an essential prerequisite in peace education and education against racism: pupils' mutilating and fragmented conceptualizations and emotions should be analyzed and properly discussed in class. For example, Ezekiel (2002) very clearly states:

> I would suggest that education about racism should begin with respect for the constructs and emotions that the students bring with them into the classroom. The students have ideas and emotions about race that are the product of their own lives. They have heard their parents, their neighbors, and their friends, and they have had their own experiences. To ignore their emotions and constructs around race is to ignore the sense that they make of their own experiences. (pp. 65–66)

This is equal to saying that when children's thought is mutilated, fragmented, and not sufficiently complex, this thought should be an object of attentive – and benevolent, I would say – analysis on the part of educators as well as, in my view, on the part of children themselves, in an educational context.

Now I would like to provide an example, chosen from the texts written by our research participants, which perfectly illustrates the components of complex thinking as they can be identified in a very short essay written by a boy of 14, who is presently living in Rome[4]:

> *As I came from a little town, I was scared and intrigued by a multi-ethnic city. I was scared by the rumors on immigrants and intrigued by the many cultures I was coming across. As I started living here I found out that the rumors were all wrong, instead the opposite was true* […]. *As I was born in a big city and then moved to a little town, the people there saw me as a stranger but then, as I came here people coming from other states became the strangers, I can say that the definition of stranger depends on the perspective from which someone sees the situation so I cannot express a real opinion on this subject.*

The essay is very short, as it contains only 159 words. Interestingly, in the last line, the boy states that he is unable "to express a real opinion" on the subject. As a matter of fact, the pupil perfectly expresses his view, and he does so in a fashion that is both synthetical and analytical: only few emotions and considerations are expressed, but they are essential, deep, profoundly personal, and they are presented with great

[4] For a more detailed analysis of this essay, see Cangià and Pagani (2014).

clearness and precision. By the phrase "a real opinion," he implicitly means a "yes or no opinion," namely, a clear-cut distinction between, in this case, native and immigrant, familiar and stranger, and ingroup and outgroup. It is a fact that in the boy's view, which is a perfect example of complex system and of complex thinking, the "emergent property" is the realization on his part that in different ways, he belongs to all these categories. Thus, his identity is complex, as it embraces more than one category, and he is knowledgeable about it. Besides, he compares his view as regards immigration with the more general view in society and analyzes his own feelings and considerations on this subject as they were elaborated in different circumstances. Hence, diversity and complexity are unambiguously expressed here. Also the interconnections of his emotions contribute to producing the sense of complexity. His essay shows a high level of "dialecticism," as the presence of the two adjectives "scared" and "intrigued," both referring to the boy himself in the same context, clearly indicates. Interestingly, also Gillespie, Kadianaki, and O'Sullivan-Lago (2012) mention individuals' identity transitions from being a "local" in their home culture to being a "foreigner" and "immigrant" in a new culture, the same feelings that the young boy experienced when he moved from the big city to the little town and from the little town to the big city.

16.5 Promoting Complex Social Identities

The role played by school as far as cross-cultural relations are concerned is also indicated in this short passage from the autobiographical novel *My Place* (2006), written by the Australian writer Sally Morgan. In these lines, an Aboriginal child – Sally Morgan herself as a child – reports to her mum a request that has been made to her by her non-Aboriginal schoolmates, namely, the request to be thoroughly and precisely informed about Sally and her family's origins. Here, the concept of identity, which I mentioned above, comes to the foreground.

> The kids at school had also begun asking us what country we came from. This puzzled me because, up until then, I'd thought we were the same as them. If we insisted that we came from Australia, they'd reply, "Yeah, but what about ya parents, bet they didn't come from Australia." One day, I tackled Mum about it as she washed the dishes.
>
> "What do you mean, 'Where do we come from?'"
>
> "I mean, what country. The kids at school want to know what country we come from. They reckon we're not Aussies. Are we Aussies, Mum?"
>
> Mum was silent. Nan grunted in a cross sort of way, then got up from the table and walked outside.
>
> "Come on, Mum, what are we?"
>
> "What do the kids at school say?"
>
> "Anything. Italian, Greek, Indian."
>
> "Tell them you're Indian."
>
> I got really excited, then. "Are we really? Indian!" It sounded so exotic. "When did we come here?" I added.
>
> "A long time ago," Mum replied. "Now, no more questions. You just tell them you're Indian."

> It was good to finally have an answer and it satisfied our playmates. They could quite believe we were Indian, they just didn't want us pretending we were Aussies when we weren't. (pp. 38–39)

It goes without saying that in Sally's school, the issue of cultural diversity, not to mention the true history of the formation of the Australian state, has not been addressed during lessons. It is also clear that the opinion on Sally and her family's identity that Sally's non-Aboriginal schoolmates have elaborated is strongly affected by the social macro-context, that is, by Australian society at large, which both implicitly and explicitly has "negated" the reality of the Aboriginal culture, so that the Aboriginals are the people who come from *the outside* and who *pretend* they come from *the inside* and the British are the people who believe or pretend to believe they come from *the inside*! Consequently, Sally's sense of her own identity changes, following her classmates' questions and suggestions and her mother's brilliant solution, as she understands that an Indian, not an Aboriginal, identity can suit the other schoolchildren's expectations. Hence, the modification of Sally's sense of her own identity has occurred on account of powerful social forces, which have transformed a sense of sameness ("we are the same as them," "we are all children") into a sense of diversity.

Ezekiel (2002) has claimed that the issue of cultural identity should be thoroughly addressed in educational contexts:

> Young people, regardless of race or ethnicity, should be helped to see where their own sense of identity comes from and how it affects their own lives. And to see its many different facets. Only then can the student begin to acknowledge that other people also have a sense of identity, and that it also had multiple roots. (p. 66)

This way, the multiplicity of roots, of facets, and of dimensions that constitute an individual's identity in the course of time provides this identity with the components and characteristics of a complex system. It is an *open* system where "sameness" and "diversity" in multiple ways interact. The awareness of this complexity on the part of children should be the fundamental aim of education.

Henceforth, children should be encouraged to concretely and fully analyze and understand the various meanings which are attached to the concept of identity and which underline the importance both of sameness and of diversity. In particular, two quotations might be helpful here, the former especially focusing on the individual and the second also focusing on the role of society.

In these lines, in his presentation of the three principles of identity, Morin (2008) illustrates the second principle, which focuses on the individual:

> There is a second, and quite fascinating, principle of identity which maintains the invariance of the I-subject despite the extraordinary modifications constantly taking place at the physical, molecular, and cellular level. This is apparent not only in the fact that, every four years, the greater part of the cells that make up my organism have disappeared to be replaced by others – which is to say that, biologically speaking, I am no longer the same being that I was four years ago. There are also enormous changes which accompany the shifts from childhood through adolescence to old age. And yet, when I look at a childhood photograph of myself, I say: "That's me!" And yet, I am no longer that child, and I no longer have that

body or that face. But the occupation of this central site of the I, which abides throughout all these changes, establishes the continuity of identity. We even live in the illusion of possessing a stable identity, without really being aware of how different we are according to our moods – whether we are angry, loving, or hating – and due to the fact […] that we are all double, triple, and multiple personalities. (pp. 74–75)

In the next quotation, the role of “external” forces is more salient:

How one identifies oneself – and how one is identified by others – may vary greatly from context to context; self- and other-identification are fundamentally situational and contextual. (Morin, 2008)

Another basic distinction is between self-identification and the identification and categorization of oneself by others. Self-identification takes place in dialectical interplay with external identification, and the two need not converge. External identification is itself a varied process. In the ordinary web and flow of social life people identify and categorize others, just as they identify and categorize themselves. But there is another key type of external identification that has no counterpart in the domain of self-identification: the formalized, codified, objectified systems of categorization developed by powerful, authoritative institutions. (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, pp. 14–15)

16.6 Conclusions

The main assumption of this chapter is that complexity, diversity, education, and peace construction are intimately interrelated. As I said above, our research findings stress the importance of fostering the development of complex thinking so as to strengthen youths’ capability of building a more personal, autonomous, and complex outlook on their relationship with cultural diversity and with diversity in general. This capability is also intimately related to the achievement of what has been defined “social identity complexity” (e.g., Brewer, 2010; Brewer & Pierce, 2005; Miller, Brewer, & Arbuckle, 2009), which implies the recognition of the diversities of the various interior and exterior components of our identity and the ability to reconcile them. This requires cognitive strategies and resources (Brewer, 2010), which school can and should provide. As I said above, our research findings show that good or very good levels of complex thinking are associated with a more elaborate and positive representation of cultural diversity, while a low level of complex thinking is correlated with negative and prejudiced representations of cultural diversity. Interestingly, Brewer et al.’s research data (Brewer, 2010; Miller, Brewer, & Arbuckle, 2009) indicate an association between high scores on complexity and “need for cognition.” Accordingly, school’s efforts should be especially directed toward the development of this need.

Peace construction can only rest on these bases. Indeed, the “complexity approach” – which includes both cognitive and emotional abilities – can help find more constructive solutions to conflicts and, thus, can countervail violence, which is basically grounded on an irrational and shortsighted analysis and interpretation of reality (e.g., Pagani, 2015b; Robustelli, 2005).

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