Editorial Preface

Fred Dervin, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Regis Machart, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Malaysia

Julie Byrd Clark, Western University, London, Ontario, Canada

O teach me how I should forget to think.
(Shakespeare, Romeo & Juliet, 1.1.224)

DIVERSITY AS A CONTEXTUAL SUBSTITUTE FOR MULTICULTURALISM

The word *Diversity* (in the singular form) has been *en vogue* in politics, the media, advertising and education during the last decade. The term and its imagery have been slowly replacing, overtly or covertly, the worn-out concept of *multiculturalism*. When German Chancellor Angela Merkel declared that multiculturalism "utterly failed" in October 2010 (*BBC*, 2010), *The Economist* (2010) reacted with the following question: *Is Multi-kulti dead?* The article concluded with a set of questions which remain unanswered in 2015:

Will they [Muslims] be told to embrace the German Leitkultur ("leading culture"), as some conservatives demand? That sounds like a reasonable request, but to many immigrants it smacks of arrogance. Will Muslims be forced to choose between practising their religion and adopting a German identity?

In this excerpt Germany is perceived as uniform, the expression of a "Leitkultur" occulting all variations across (amongst others) gender, social status, space, age, ethnicity, political inclination or identification. Similarly, Muslims are put into a single box ("practising" individuals), which is said to be incompatible with 'the German essence'. *Multi-kulti* is thus intrinsically linked to cultural *others* as if the term implied a dichotomy between *Us* (i.e. German people of all sorts of background) and *Them* (i.e. immigrants or people of immigrant background). The other is always the cause for multiculturalism…

The waves of refugees from Syria, Eritrea and, to a lesser extend, Iraq and Afghanistan in Europe in 2015 led the European Union to yet another identity crisis amongst its 27 members (*The Guardian*, 2015): How should Europe deal with these mainly Muslim migrants? Demonstrations for or against the arrival of these 'visibly different' populations took place in most EU countries, forcing political leaders to address the question of national identity, from Hungary insisting on its "Christian roots" (*Reuters*, 2015) to Finland where a bus full of refugees was attacked with rocks and fireworks and even 'welcomed' with a Ku Klux Klan outfit (*BBC*, 2015). A former French minister generated uproar and reprobation when she declared that France is "white race" (*The Mirror*, 2015), forgetting about the long history of *mélange* and mixing of the country and about French citizens from overseas

such as the West Indies, the French Guyana, and the Reunion. Interestingly, the fate of non-Muslim (Christian, Yazidi) migrants from the very same countries was more consensual (*ABC*, 2015; *RFI*, 2015). If *Multikulti* is not 'dead' for everyone, multiculturalism is clearly not welcome in European political discourses. The main culprit? An artificial sense of togetherness and oneness amongst and within EU countries.

In other parts of the world, with a different history and agenda, *multiculturalism* is still part of national policies. For example, Australia integrated the term in its social services policy[1] and it became a leitmotiv at the federal level[2]. In Canada it has become a *raison d'être*[3] (Razafimandimbimanana, 2015). And in Malaysia, multiculturalism and its avatars (multiethnic/multiracial state) are at the center of most academic and political debates (Lim, 2008).

In the world of global academia, the term is still very much vivid as well: *Google Scholar* counts 25,600 contributions with the word multiculturalism since 2014. It is however much less popular than its quasi-synonym, *cultural diversity*, which generated 164,000 publications during the same period.

The meaning of *cultural diversity* is not foreign to the idea of *multiculturalism*. Both concepts work hand in hand and the evolution of the number of scientific articles containing these terms is parallel as can be noticed in Figure 1. Similarly, when it comes to their visual representation, they often appear as equivalent.

WHO IS DIVERSE? WHO DECIDES? QUESTIONING BIASES

The idea of diversity is multifaceted and ideological. Let us share an example. While waiting for a flight back home to Finland, one of the editors of this journal (Fred) recently found himself in an overcrowded waiting area full of 'white people' (most of them Finns?) ready to show their boarding passes to get access to the plane. On one of the walls of the room a very large piece of art depicted a group of people from around the world holding hands in harmony, with a rainbow and planet earth in the background. Typical of a multicultural patchwork of different 'skin colours' and 'worldviews' symbolizing peace and harmony, the piece of art seemed to represent a fascinating contrast to the

Figure 1. Number of articles listed by Google Scholar with the entry multiculturalism/ cultural diversity
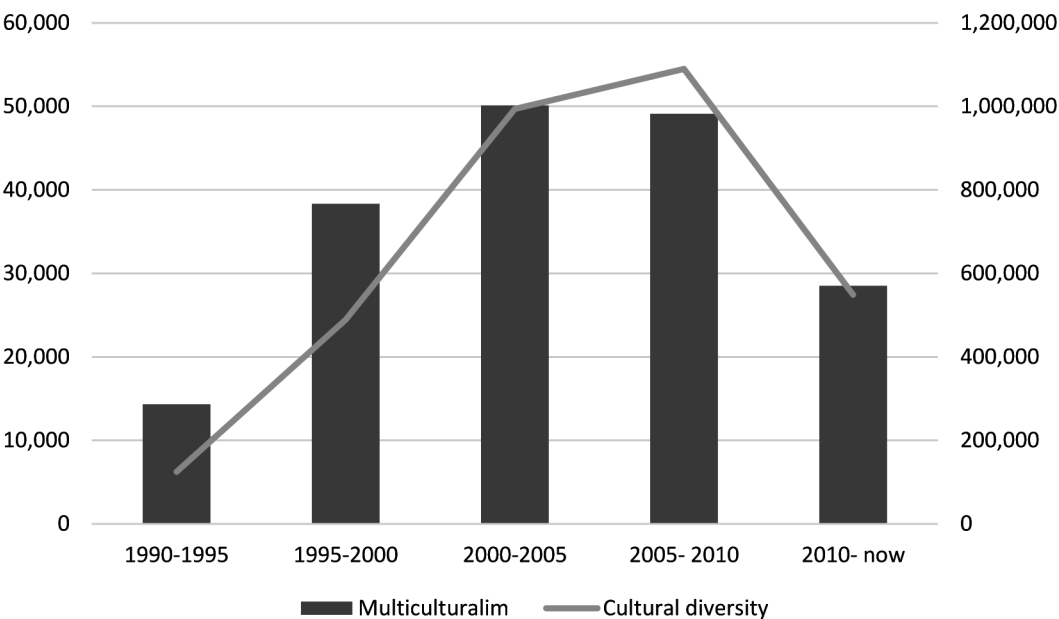
apparent homogeneity of the crowd gathered in the waiting area. This representation of diversity is of course not recent, as it has been used in e.g. advertising since the 1990s. Fred started to examine the people around him: there were people of different genders, potentially straight, gay, and bisexual, rich and less rich, old and young, blondes, brunettes, purple-haired, tanned and white-skinned, quiet and noisy, healthy-looking and unhealthy-looking, etc. Weren't these *diverse* people too? How come their bodies were not then reified as signs of diversity in the piece of art like the people from India, China, or Africa from the painting? Why was diversity in the context of an airport presenting a hierarchy between skin colours/worldviews and the aforementioned markers of diversity? The contrast represented by the work of art at the airport and its false assurance of diversity from a mostly racial and religious perspective leads us to ask several questions: How many of the Finns present in the waiting area would actually consider themselves to be very similar to their Finnish compatriots? Would they really have much in common? Would they feel contented if one claimed that they were just 'normal' and 'typical' Finns? Would they vote for the same politicians? Would they really share the same values? The reified images of the 'diverse' individuals on the wall reified at the same time those waiting to board the plane… The other is said to be diverse but not the self.

We believe that by separating diversities and fighting different battles, such hierarchies can lead to frustration, ignorance, patronizing attitudes and disinterests in others. *Diversity* needs to become *diversities*. There are several reasons for making this apparently perverse suggestion. We all need to fight to be recognized, to construct respect, to face some form of rejection and discrimination, to fight against essentialism, etc. It is of course much easier for some than others. But, in times like ours, even the powerful can find themselves in powerless positions because of some of their identities, changes in life circumstances, illnesses, etc. As Ricoeur (2004, p. 43) stated: "the shortest path from the self to itself is through the other". Our duty is then to discuss these different forms of diversities together rather than separately. We believe this could help us thinkers, researchers, practitioners and decision-makers to sympathize and identify with these different (but yet potentially similar) diversities.

The way the very idea of diversity is approached today is thus highly problematic and biased. While the word diversity should refer to multiplicity it often means difference and 'oneness'. Research in social psychology notes a tendency to homogenize people perceived as belonging to a 'different group', whereas members of in-groups are seen as enjoying greater differences (Lacassagne, Salès-Wuillemin, Castel & Jébrane, 2002). The word diversity is often an ally to the integration of individuals diverging from the mainstream/the "Leitkultur". While the other is often imprisoned in the straightjackets of a homogenized 'diversity', the majority can freely claim to be 'normal', 'not visible' and thus not needing special attention.

The editors of this journal consider that this represents 'artificial' and 'concocted' diversity, to borrow Peter Wood's words (2003, p. 29, p. 37). As such this kind of diversity divides the world into neat categories of self and other, the *non-diverse* and the *diverse*. It also leads too often to "pinning down and labeling" and imprisoning the powerless (Wood, 2003, p. 38). Even worse, especially in education, simplistic and categorizing discourses of diversity can lead to even more injustice – even if social justice might be the proclaimed main value of our systems of education. Wood (2003, p. 4) explains: "Pursued as social policy, diversity is a form of systematic injustice and it makes us accomplices to injustices. To treat people as objects, as though they are the residuum of their race, class, gender and other such superficialities, and not individuals who define themselves through their ideas and creative acts – that is injustice". Although the word may appear as neutral and well-intentioned, diversity can easily hide unequal power relations (Who decides? Whose voice can be heard in decision-making?) but also forms of racism. The biased and flawed discussions around the 'migrant crisis' in Europe in autumn 2015 showed how 'easy' discourses of diversity can lead to 'a terrible fiction' (Kureishi, 2015, p. 3). Considering the recent history of our nation-states and the creation of national borders we are in a sense all refugees and migrants…

In order to be useful the editors believe that the notion of *diversities* should work hand in hand with that of identity (they are two sides of the same coin). Identity is a much-discussed concept in

research. Most scholars have now moved away from the idea of identity as an iron cage to that of identity as a construct, something that is 'done' between subjects in specific contexts and that depends on power differentials (Bauman, 2001; Holliday, 2010; Dervin, 2015; Machart & Lim, 2013). The fact that every single person is multifaceted (e.g. Fought, 2006), unpredictable and inconstant (e.g. Hottola, 2004) and behind whom "lies a complex, more or less held together network of people and things" is increasingly accepted (Prout, 2011, p. 11). Furthermore the omnipresent phenomena of hybridization, disjuncture and heteroglossia have given new meaning to the concept of identity (Starn, 2015, p. 26). Yet when one thinks of diversity in education, such a 'liquid' identity (Bauman, 2004) does not seem to apply to everyone. Some students are labeled lazy, hard-working, clever, poor, migrant, special needs, etc. in our schools. While some students are entitled and enabled to leave these categories or be included in several 'boxes', others remain imprisoned. For some pupils, their culture and/or language (Zoïa, 2010) take over their agency. They are often asked to 'perform' these aspects to please us. This journal thus also wishes to liberate the other by allowing him/her to choose their own diversities and identity and to force researchers to treat them as they treat other 'postmodern' individuals (the majority). We wish to stimulate, help formulate and elaborate new and alternative discourses on identity and diversities in education and to question our biases as *homo hierarchicus.*

The International Journal of Bias, Identity and Diversities in Education follows up from the former *Journal of Education for Diversities* which was published by the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Helsinki (Finland). It calls for reconsidering the meanings of the word *diversity* in the field of education: Who is diverse? Who decides? How can we lower the hierarchies established between the 'diverse' and the 'normal'/'homogeneous'? Can education help us to diversify practices, attitudes, values beyond the façade of certain (limited) diversity markers? The journal publishes pieces on the social and pedagogical aspects of education. With Foucault (1988, p. 155) we believe that critique should consist in "pointing out on what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices that we accept rest". We strongly believe that if diversities are not just reserved for certain people, they can join forces to make the concept stronger and more useful for researchers, decision-makers and educators. Identifying similarities in experiences of diversities is an important step in shifting away from the usual problematic approaches to diversity. We have been indoctrinated in education to believe in the power of difference when it comes to diversity (culture, language, worldview) while we believe that working on a continuum of difference-similarity can help us to give a more realistic, critical and enabling picture of diversities in education.

We recently noted a twitter account description that said "Diversity excites her". The motto of this new journal is *diversities excite us*.

Fred Dervin
Regis Machart
Julie Byrd Clark
Editors-in-Chief
IJBIDE

REFERENCES

Bauman, Z. (2001). *Liquid modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

BBC News. (2015). Refugees attacked with fireworks in Finland [Video]. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34356154

Dervin, F. (2015). Towards post-intercultural teacher education: analysing 'extreme'" intercultural dialogue to reconstruct interculturality. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, *38*(1), 71–86.

Evans, S. (2010). Merkel says German multicultural society has failed. *BBC News.* Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11559451

Foucault, M. (1988). Practicing criticism or is it really important to think? (May 30-31, 1981, Didier Eribon interview). In L. Kritzman (Ed.), *Foucault, politics, philosophy, culture* (pp. 152-158). New York, NY and London: Routledge.

Fought, C. (2006). *Language and ethnicity: Key topics in sociolinguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Henderson, A. (2015). Syrian migrant crisis: Christians to get priority as Abbott faces pressure to take in more refugees. *ABC News Online.* Retrieved from http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-09-08/christians-to-get-priority-in-syrian-refugee-intake/6757110

Holliday, A. (2010). *Intercultural communication and ideology*. London: Sage.

Hottola, P. (2004). Culture confusion: Intercultural adaptation in tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *31*(2), 447–466. doi:10.1016/j.annals.2004.01.003

Kureishi, H. (2015). *Love + Hate: Stories and essays*. London: Faber & Faber.

Lacassagne, M.-F., Sales-Wuillemin, É., Castel, P., & Jebrane, A. (2001). La catégorisation d'un exogroupe à travers une tâche d'association de mots. *Papers on Social Representations/ Textes sur les représentations sociales*, 10, 7.1-7.11. Retrieved from http://www.psr.jku.at/PSR2001/10_7Lacas.pdf

Lim, D. (Ed.). (2008). *Overcoming passion for race in Malaysia cultural studies*. Leiden: Brill. doi:10.1163/ej.9789004168152.i-184

Machart, R., & Lim, S. N. (2013). Identity and language vs. identification through language: a historical perspective. In R. Machart, C. B. Lim, S. N. Lim, & E. Yamato (Eds.), *Intersecting identities and interculturality: discourse and practice* (pp. 22–44). Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Prout, A. (2011). Taking a step away from modernity: Reconsidering the new sociology of childhood. *Global Studies of Childhood*, *1*(1), 4–14. doi:10.2304/gsch.2011.1.1.4

Razafimandimbimanana, E. (2015). Beyond "culture": Nationalistic and monolinguistic ideologies in Quebec. In F. Dervin & R. Machart (Eds.), *Cultural essentialism in intercultural relations* (pp. 121–152). London: Routledge.

Reuters (2015). Refugees threaten Europe's Christian roots, says Hungary's Orban. Retrieved from http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/09/03/us-europe-migrants-orban-idUSKCN0R30J220150903

RFI (2015). French mayor says only wants Christian refugees. Retrieved from http://www.english.rfi.fr/africa/20150907-french-mayor-says-only-wants-christian-refugees

Starn, O. (Ed.). (2015). *Writing culture and the life of anthropology*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. doi:10.1215/9780822375654

The Economist (2010). The integration debate in Germany: Is multi-kulti dead? Retrieved from http://www.economist.com/blogs/newsbook/2010/10/integration_debate_germany

The Guardian (2015). Migration crisis: Hungary PM says Europe in grip of madness. Retrieved from http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/03/migration-crisis-hungary-pm-victor-orban-europe-response-madness

The Mirror (2015). French politician says country is 'white race' and immigrants should adapt or leave. Retrieved from http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/french-politician-says-country-white-6528611

Wood, P. (2003). *Diversity. The invention of a concept*. San Francisco: Encounters Books.

Zoïa, G. (2010). Faut-il avoir peur de l'ethnicité? *Anthropologie et Sociétés*, *34*(2), 199–223. doi:10.7202/045713ar

ENDNOTES

[1]   https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/publications/the-people-of-australia-australias-multicultural-policy

[2]   http://www.australia.gov.au/information-and-services/culture-and-arts/multicultural-australia

[3]   http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/multiculturalism/citizenship.asp