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Identity capital, social capital and the wider benefits of learning: generating resources facilitative of social cohesion

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This paper reviews theory and research pertaining to the acquisition of identity capital and social capital, and applies it to the changing nature of learning in late-modern societies, where the ability to undertake individualized life courses is becoming an increasingly important divide in the fortunes of the young as they make their way to adulthood. The identity capital model is elaborated in terms of the importance now placed on choice-making in managing the individualization process and balancing the immediate appeal of default individualization with the long-term gains of developmental individualization. This model points toward the need to institute an 'education for choice' in curricula to enhance the wider benefits of learning for both the individual, in terms of identity capital accumulation, and for the community with respect to intergenerational social capital building.

Introduction: the theoretical basis of the identity capital model

The perennial concern in sociology with social cohesion has found renewed vigour as societies have entered the late-modern period. This paper takes up this issue in reference to the wider benefits of learning associated with identity formation in the context of intergenerational cohesion. In this context, a major challenge facing late-modern societies is how to protect upcoming generations from potentially corrosive economic influences while at the same time providing institutional platforms for positive identity development. However, a major gap is evident in the nature of socializing institutions that ostensibly guide the young through the transition to adulthood, namely, the lack of support for the acquisition of key resources associated with optimal identity development. To set the stage for understanding these

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protective and nurturant factors, and the sources of this gap, it is useful first to discuss two characteristics of late-modern societies: cultural destructuring and individualization. With this conceptual basis laid, this paper then explores the resources associated with effective identity formation and suggests ways in which these resources can be nurtured through educational efforts that teach people how to make effective choices.

Cultural destructuring

One way to understand the challenges affecting identity formation in late-modernity is in terms of the cultural destructuring that takes place in response to market influences on local means of livelihood and cultural reproduction. In general, capitalism thrives on cultural destructuring because it paves the way for new social patterns conducive to the consumption of new commodities (see Heath & Potter, 2004). When cultures are in the process of destructuring, traditions (norms, values and beliefs) have less influence on individual members. When this happens, the intergenerational social capital of communities can decline, as parents can provide fewer networks for their children to make the passage to a productive adulthood. Such societies usually become more anomic and individualistic, and experience what Robert Putnam (1995, p. 73) calls 'social de-capitalization'. In extreme forms, unregulated individualism can be deleterious for both the person—in the form of identity problems—and the community—sometimes manifested in crime and economic decline. But, in general, market influences can set in motion forces that put the onus on the individual to compensate for diminished parental guidance to adult roles by adopting their own values and identities—the individualization process—which can range from default and passive to developmental and active (as elaborated below; see Evans & Heinz, 1994).

Cultures also restructure, as in the case of developed countries that are in a 'late-modern' or 'postmodern' phase (Côté, 2000). However, it is apparent that much cultural restructuring is taking place around a corporate-driven agenda in which instrumental bonds based on the consumption–production cycle trump expressive bonds not predicated on hedonism and narcissism (Côté, 2000).

We can list the following among the more corrosive manifestations of destructuring that interfere with the individualization process during the transition to adulthood: the wage exploitation of the young (including those in their 20s); the flight of capital from local to global (leaving corporations with few local responsibilities, eroding tax bases which in turn undermine local community services and educational resources); marketing strategies that are designed to 'brand' children and adolescents as lifelong consumers of certain products (see Quart, 2001; Linn, 2004; Schor, 2004); advertising designed to teach young children how to 'pester' their parents to buy certain products for them (Nader & Coco, 1999; Bakan, 2004); and an unrelenting corporate-driven youth culture that has become increasingly predatorial of the young (Frank, 1997; Klein, 2000; Schlosser, 2001).

Individualization

The most obvious economic influence is the collapse of the youth labour market in many countries, making it difficult for those in their late teens and early 20s to secure employment that is sufficiently well paid to help them make the transition to adult independence. Consequently, many young people over the past couple of decades have found themselves in the paradoxical situation of needing parental financial support at the same time that their parents are less able to provide normative guidance. This happens to the extent that neo-liberal economic policies have eliminated well-paying jobs for young people (by shifting production to developing countries where the labour is cheaper) in conjunction with the effects of cultural destructuring in undermining parents' ability to provide meaning normative guidance to their offspring. As a group (and there are obvious variations and exceptions), parents have become more of a financial 'safety net' than a strong normative influence, at least with respect to many issues that are key to identity formation, like career choice, political and religious beliefs, lifestyle preferences and the like (Côté, 2000).

If the above analysis is valid, the challenge that late-modern societies now face is how to simultaneously increase the intergenerational social capital in their communities along with the resources made available for adult identity formation—what I call identity capital. This requires, on the one hand, the *proactive* provision of social and identity resources and, on the other hand, the provision of *protective* measures to guard young people from the more corrosive forms of individualism such as the exploitation of children by marketers. Only when these two measures have been provided can we expect to see a critical mass of young people make the move from locally based, parochial identities to more globally connected and universalistic ones that are increasingly necessary for effective participation in the late-modern societies (cf. the distinction between the sustaining and transformative functions of learning in Schuller *et al.*, 2004b).

Part of the complexity that young people must face and attempt to master as market influences have reduced local bases of livelihood, is how to move from the local contexts in which they were raised and feel most secure, to more impersonal contexts in which they function with a certain degree of confidence and competence. This transition from a locally based identity to an identity that can incorporate demands from a large number of sometimes-distant sources represents a relatively new challenge for more and more members of upcoming generations to face. As the old, locally based sources of livelihood and community disappear, so too do the bases for adult identities predicated on them. Unless the person can learn how to take steps away from the comfort zones of the local, often only found in family and peer circles, their lifecourse prospects can be very limited and they may live their lives among the growing number of impoverished people found within most countries. The concern explored below is that as corporations interfere with the socialization process and replace parental normative guidance, the young will not be prepared for this challenge cognitively, emotionally, or moral-ethically. However, if

people are to effectively undertake these individualization tasks, they will need certain resources for doing so that are not derived from more traditional forms of socialization.

Resources

Recent thought on human development has recognized the importance of various resources for positive forms of functioning in the areas of social adaptation, economic productivity, self-actualization and agency (see Benson, 1997; Leffert *et al.*, 1998; Lerner, 2000; Côté & Levine, 2002). Social scientists have tended to conceptualize resources in terms of metaphors based on the idea of 'capital', which literally refers to sources of profit, advantage and power, as well as net assets and resources. To date, the more popular conceptualizations of capital refer to human, cultural and social capital (see Schuller, 2004). Some scholars prefer not to speak in terms of any such metaphors, while others use just one capital concept, such that all personal resources are called cultural capital or human capital or social capital (see Catan, 2004). My preference is to recognize that each concept has its focal point, but outside that point, its ability to explain phenomena diminishes. This focal point is defined in terms of context, based on the assumption that resources are context-specific. For example, the value of financial capital—currency—is highly context-specific, both in terms of time (depending on its market value on a given date) and space (currencies do not exist in some cultures) or place (e.g., Canadian money has less value in other countries than it does in Canada, and certainly cannot be used in face-to-face commodity purchases in most other countries). Correspondingly, there is no reason to expect that any of the other resource-metaphors should be characterized by trans-contextual universal laws. The differences among the various forms of capital and definitions of their focal areas will be briefly presented to illustrate this.

Human capital and identity capital

The concept of human capital is a metaphor introduced by economists to account for characteristics of people that are productive in some economic context like educational attainment or specific technical skills (see Becker, 1964). Although some scholars feel that the concept of human capital is all that is needed to account for the wherewithal necessary to function in industrial–capitalist societies, it is really unnecessary and ill advised to 'rubber sheet' the concept like that because it reduces both it conceptual clarity and scientific utility. It is also a concept developed to account for conditions in 'modernity' more so than in 'late-modernity'.

Thus, for example, if we reserve human capital to refer to skills that are relevant to the workplace, we can preserve its focal utility in economic contexts, and utilize additional concepts with focal utilities elsewhere. In this respect, I have suggested the concept of identity capital to refer to more general contexts where identity

negotiation and maintenance are paramount, many of which are outside the workplace. (Note in this respect that in many countries only about two thirds of the working-age population are actually in the labour force.) For example, in undertaking the individualization process, people are confronted with the task of planning their own life courses, which includes determining their own values and beliefs (religious, political, secular, and the like), group affiliations, leisure time pursuits, as well as intellectual and aesthetic preferences. These are now primarily identity tasks, which may or may not have to do with the task associated with human capital, namely, forming an occupational identity. Moreover, a human capital analysis would not provide a basis for formulating research questions to examine these aspects of late-modern functioning. Space precludes dealing with this issue further here, but see Côté and Levine (2002) for further discussion of the conceptual differences between these two types of metaphorical resources.

Social capital and identity capital

As noted, 'capital' refers to net assets and resources. Some assets are tangible in the sense that they are 'socially visible' or relational (contingent on interpersonal relationships rather than being the exclusive property of persons). These include such things as group memberships and various statuses (age, gender, race, etc) that can function as 'passports' into different social and institutional spheres. These are the types resources associated with Putnam's (2000) social capital, which in their pure forms constitute networks based on unconditional trust and reciprocity among members. The more specific concept of intergenerational social capital (see Zhou, 1994; Edwards, 2004) refers to the quid pro quo between parents and their progeny and the ability of the parental generation to transfer functional values and facilitative networks to the offspring generation. Optimally, the bond of the quid pro quo is unconditional. However, as argued here, this unconditional bond is threatened by the corrosive market influences like forms of predatorial marketing that set children against parents for the sake of commodity consumption.

While useful, what is missing from social capital analyses is that people sharing these social bonds can benefit from each other's personal psychosocial competencies in negotiating their way through the late-modern world. Accordingly, while social bonds and networks are extremely important, it is helpful to understand the attributes of the people potentially sharing the bonds, in part because those attributes can determine who is allowed to share the bonds, especially as these attributes relate to social identities based on race, gender and the like.

Identity capital represents attributes associated with sets of psychosocial skills, largely cognitive in nature, that appear to be necessary for people to intelligently strategize and make decisions affecting their life courses (i.e., to individualize), especially in the absence of cultural guidance and societal norms, as in the case of destructured late-modern societies. The process of identity capital acquisition describes how the individual invests in a certain identity (or identities) and engages in a series of exchanges with others in a variety of contexts (only some of which are

economic). Engaging in reciprocal exchanges in individualistic social milieus requires certain social skills and psychological attributes, because normative structures for reciprocal exchanges are often deficit or non-existent, eliminating any default forms of exchange that might have existed prior to late-modernity. These personal resources involve agentic capacities such as an internal locus of control, self-esteem and a sense of purpose in life, all of which can help people reflect on their life circumstances, and plan courses of action (Côté, 1997; Schwartz, 2000; Schuller, 2004). Together, these personality strengths enable people to cognitively understand and behaviourally negotiate the various social, occupational and personal obstacles and opportunities that they are likely to encounter throughout an individualized life course. The obstacles can range from outright discrimination through to institutional voids, while the opportunities can range from the emergence of new social norms allowing for diverse lifestyles to new educational prospects among people who previously would not have obtained higher credentials.

In understanding how these identity capital resources are acquired, it is important to first note that they can be developmental in both cognitive-structural (Piagetian) and psychosocial (Eriksonian) senses. Thus, it should be emphasized that the *development and use* of such resources needs to be understood in terms of how social environments influence them. Moreover, these resources can have an inoculation quality in the sense that they can enable people to reflexively *resist and/or act back upon* certain social forces impinging upon them (see Schuller *et al.*, 2004a, p. 182), like corrosive market forces. In this way, people should be more likely to develop senses of: authorship over their own biographies, taking responsibility for their life choices, and creating meaningful and satisfying lives for themselves and their significant others (as opposed to the consumer identity foisted by predatorial marketers). When developed in this way, there is a moral–ethical component to identity capital resources involving obligation and reciprocity that links them with social capital bonds, especially intergenerational ones.

The concept of identity capital can thus help us understand how individuals can contribute to social cohesion in the global community where involvements are not at the first order of 'bonding social capital' (which requires personal involvements in a 'place'), but rather at higher orders of involvement similar to 'bridging social capital' (Putnam, 2000; through 'space', as in professional and academic associations). In these involvements, people located around the globe can create and sustain communities that involve very little face-to-face interaction, but which provide many of the benefits of concrete communities (e.g., career advancement, the generation of new knowledge, mutual senses of accomplishment, and so forth). Scholarly societies, now aided by instantaneous Internet communications, are a good example of this. For example, I am writing this article as a result of email communications stimulated by the social capital of local networks in England that bridge to the international (global) networks of which I am a member. And, I am a member of those networks because of my identity capital as a researcher and theorist. In turn, one objective of the conference from which this paper grew was to generate more social capital among the global academic and

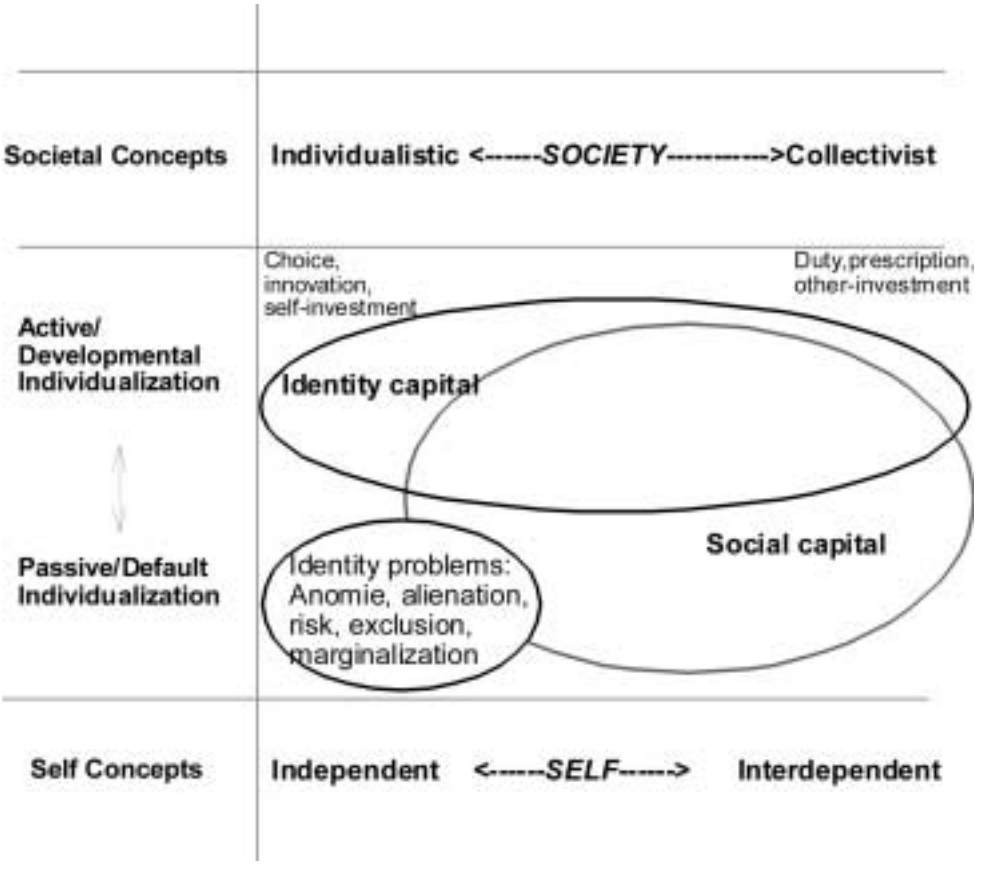
policy communities by informing future research projects and government initiatives to enhance community responsibility for education, generating more social capital in local communities around the globe, and hopefully more identity capital among the world's citizens.

In sum, the concept of identity capital helps us to understand: the mental wherewithal that people can possess as part of an agentic personality; the ability to move, both concretely and abstractly, among groups and networks with diverse interests; and the adaptive ability to combine diverse resources as the situation dictates. These resources can include assets defined as human capital (occupational skills), social capital (reciprocal networks) and even cultural capital (taste and preferences), that can be deployed from a person's portfolio as growth-enhancing and/or community-building opportunities arise. In addition, identity capital has a potential to be value-added to social capital when it has a moral–ethical component in the form of a sense of reciprocity in obligation to contribute competencies to group goals, if only indirectly. Putnam (2002, p. 17) makes a similar observation with the statement: 'The more interesting question is not whether leaders affect the stock of social capital, but rather what affects the stock of leaders'.

With this conceptual clarification and focus, we can now examine the model represented in Figure 1, where the 'societal' concepts representing the range of individualistic–collectivist societies define the horizontal dimension while the individualization process is represented vertically along an active/developmental and passive/default range. The juxtaposition of these two dimensions shows how identity capital and social capital overlap. On the one hand, identity capital resources can involve choice, innovation, and investments in one's personal development if the individual undertakes developmental individualization. This is what one would expect to occur more frequently in individualistic societies. On the other hand, identity capital resources can comprise duty, following norms, and investing in symbiotic relationships with others. This is what one would expect of people in more collectivist societies.

With identity capital mapped in terms of these two dimensions we can see that the concept can be applied equally to both types of societies, but is found mainly with the more active forms of individualization. We can also postulate that while social capital tends toward the collectivist side, it can span the range of passive-active individualization. In addition, those without sufficient identity capital or social capital are apt to experience identity problems associated with alienation, marginalization, and the like. Thus, this figure also helps to clarify a problem facing societies where individualism is combining with passive forms of individualization to the point where a significant proportion of the population is adversely affected in significant ways (Côté, 2000). This is precisely the situation that seems to happen to many young people who are successfully branded by corporations, encouraging them to define themselves in terms of superficial commodity displays associated with popular youth culture (see Quart, 2001).

In view of the above analysis, the challenge for individualistic societies is how to regain some of the intergenerational social capital lost during the twentieth



Adapted from: Côté and Levine (2002).

century, at both the first-order level of mutual cooperation (which is of immediate importance to new members of a group, like children and adolescents), and higher-order levels of reciprocity represented by the notion of 'space' discussed above. The concept of identity capital can help in this regard, by linking active forms of individualization with increased social dividends from which larger communities benefit. For example, a person's identity capital can contribute to a larger, more global community by adding bridging value to local social capital, with identity capital operating in a manner analogous to the way in which personal economic investments in a local business enterprise can benefit a community. Much of the work on social capital and its benefits is at the first order of 'place,' which is of limited benefit to the human species as a whole, because groups tend to look primarily to their own interests to the exclusion of the interests of others (see Portes, 1998). However, 'bridging social capital' (Putnam, 2000, 2002) would involve identity capital invested and utilized across 'space' through networks with other groups.

Capitalizing on resources

The tyranny of choice

Schwartz (2000, 2004a, 2004b) provides convincing arguments that highly individualistic societies have been so determined to provide unlimited choices through the market economy that they have created a 'tyranny of freedom' and 'a paradox of choice' for many people that actually decreases their quality of life and happiness, and to some extent, diminishes their life chances. Although some people may flourish with the choices available, others suffer from indecision or a sense of being overwhelmed, which can lead to feelings of stress, regret, anxiety, depression and self-blame. For example, product research shows that too many choices of a product line can actually reduce sales, as people walk away unable to select a product from shelves stocked with dozens of choices. People avoid choices for a variety of reasons. Paramount is the fear of being wrong and the ensuing anxiety about missing opportunities because the wrong decision was made. When choices are more limited, the fear and anxiety is mitigated because the person does not have to accept as much blame for the wrong decision. To the extent that intergenerational social capital is diminished and parents are therefore not involved in the choices their offspring make (in a benign fashion, as in authoritative parenting; Steinberg, 2001), the task of individualization can become that much more challenging and a prime area for targeting by predatorial marketing.

Furlong and Cartmel (1996) have approached the same problem from a perspective that argues that free choice is an illusion that bolsters a false sense of equality in schools and the society as a whole. They refer to this as the epistemological fallacy, in the sense that illusions of equality related to consumer and educational choices mask old inequalities that stubbornly persist but which are massively denied. To the extent that students and their families are now given greater responsibility for choices made in educational paths, negative educational outcomes can be blamed on poor choices on the part of students and parents, even when the negative outcome is a result of hidden social class obstacles.

There is ample evidence that many schools are doing a poor job of preparing their students in general terms, but especially to make choices, at least in countries like Canada and the US, which also boast having among the highest educational participation rates in the world (although official figures are misleading). Part of the problem is that students are left to choose for themselves and are 'over-promised'—told that their choices are unlimited. To make matters worse, they are given little guidance and structure concerning where these choices might lead. In Canada, for example, research shows that about 90% of those in the first year of secondary school expect to go onto higher education, while less than 1% expect not to finish secondary school. The reality is that 30% will drop out of secondary school, and only 45% will go to some form of higher education (OSSTF, 1994). In this example, something is dreadfully wrong with the relationship between the beliefs students adopt as a basis for future choice-making and the realities they face. As a result, over half of young people drift into the labour market without having made realistic

choices about where they are going. Among the more fortunate half who go on to higher education, research shows that more than half either drop out or take up jobs that do not require higher credentials. The reality is that only 16% of jobs in the Canadian economy require university credentials (Statistics Canada, 2003). If students in the early years of secondary school knew this, they might make different, and more meaningful, decisions about how to invest their time in education and learning (cf. Schuller, Hammond, and Preston, 2004, concerning a comparable situation in the UK).

Schwartz (2004a) similarly argues that college students in the US experience 'choice overload' in their curriculum to the point where they find it more difficult to finish college, and to even have an idea of what to do with their lives if they do graduate. In both Canada and the US, where 'accessibility' has been part of the political rhetoric for years, college and university students are taking longer and longer to finish their studies and many are finding that they eventually drift into occupations anyway, with no grand plan to direct them. Stress levels, depression, anxiety and eating disorders are all on the rise among these student populations.

In approaching this problem, the distinction between default and developmental individualization is useful when formulated in terms of the decision points that are faced on a daily basis. Each decision-point can represent the difference between taking a more difficult, effort-based, potentially transformative, growth experience or the easier path of least resistance and effort that merely sustains existing levels of development (see Schuller *et al.* 2004b). Of course, people do both, but what is needed to undertake the developmental route of individualization is to choose more of the growth-enhancing options over the least-effort ones. This sort of choice training is lacking in many educational systems today. In fact, there is evidence that public school systems in some countries, notably in the US, actually facilitate the path of least effort for many of their students and are therefore in effect training them to engage in default individualization. The culprit here is a lack of benign guiding structure in conjunction with a reliance on the individualistic ideology that promotes the belief that 'everyone can be whatever they want in life'. Schools may encourage default individualization for a variety of reasons, ranging from poor funding and overcrowded classes, to trying to cajole students not to drop out by not presenting them with any challenges that might produce a sense of failure. The dumbing down that has occurred in some educational systems is perhaps a sign of the times where we do not need the full productive contribution of the young but do not know what else to do with them (except to keep them in school as long as possible in the hopes of keeping them out of trouble, and that they will eventually use that education to secure a job).

From the perspective of identity capital acquisition, this is exactly the wrong approach to take because it simply fosters default individualization, leaving young people vulnerable to attempts to manipulate their identities. What schools need to do is to provide some sort of training for choice-making and life-project planning, both of which are central tasks of individualization. This requires that guiding structures be put in place to facilitate choice-making, in part by showing the realistic limits to the choices available. Given that the high school diploma in the US has recently been

called no more than an 'attendance certificate' (American Diploma Project, 2004), it is clear that there is room in the curriculum to include these as part of the knowledge-set of every young person coming of age in late-modern societies. Both choice training and life-project planning techniques would be essential building blocks of identity capital acquisition. If young people received, as part of their education, the skills to self-reflect and strategize about their lives and roles they will play in their communities, this should help widen the radius of the person's experience and thinking from the local toward the global in a moral-ethical manner.

I argue this in full recognition of the social-structural and economic obstacles that many people face, including social class, gender, race and age (Allahar & Côté, 1998). However, as I argue elsewhere (Côté, 2002), in addition to better understanding the role of agency in overcoming these persistent obstacles, we need to understand the identity capital acquisition strategies within each category of inclusion-exclusion (like social class) if we are to make recommendations regarding how best to benefit from available educational opportunities. For example, among the largely middle class population of university students, we know that there are different outcomes for students that cannot be attributed to their class background because class background is more or less constant in this population. However, we do not really understand what differentiates those who go on to construct meaningful life-projects or embark on rewarding careers when their class background and IQs are basically the same. This is where the identity capital model should be most useful in practical terms.

Education for choice

The argument thus far points to the desirability of instituting an 'education for choice' in curricula to enhance the wider benefits of learning for both the individual, in terms of identity capital accumulation, and the community, for social capital building. It would be the goal of such a programme to enhance social cohesion through both individualistic and collectivist forms of social action. The phrase 'education for choice' comes from Margaret Mead's seminal and controversial *Coming of age in Samoa* published in 1928, which contains a surprising amount of insight that prefigures concerns today such as those raised by Schwartz with his work on the 'tyranny of choice' (2004a).

Mead wrote that in comparison to modern western societies (of the 1920s), in pre-westernized traditional Samoan culture, young people had far less choice as they came of age regarding the specific content of their future adult identities and she noted that this had the effect of eliminating much conflict from their lives: they did not have to choose among competing religions, political philosophies or from among a bewildering array of adult occupations. In contrast, Mead noted there was a virtual *requirement* in the US that young people choose for themselves among the myriad of religious, political and occupational options. This requirement was based on the American ideology at the time, as it is still, namely, that life involves endless possibilities that must be preserved by an unconstrained freedom of choice.

Aptly noting that 'the need for choice [is] the forerunner of conflict' (p. 202), Mead predicted that the introduction of choice into the lives of Samoans coming of age was going to have dramatic implications. Given that Samoa now has one of the highest youth suicide rates in the world today, Mead appears to have been right (Côté, 1994). Of course, the answer to our educational problems today is not to revert to earlier social forms, which have their own sets of problems, but to advance to new ones that can realistically help us deal with these problems. What Mead's analysis does suggest is that we need to think of contemporary challenges in terms of a baseline found in tribal societies where identities are ascribed, rather than based on choice and individualization, because it appears that humans do not have an inherent capacity for make propitious choices (Côté, 2000). Rather, it appears that we need to be taught how to do so. Moreover, we now have little guidance for making even default choices because the traditional models of adulthood have been eroded by economic changes, especially the more recent ones associated with neo-liberal market policies.

Mead advocated the development of critical thinking skills and tolerance among young people as a way of making the freedom to choose more of a reality than an illusion. As it was in 1920s America, even in a society where freedom of choice was a sacred value, the reality of the situation was that it was often an illusion that the average citizen could not see through. In Mead's words, young people 'must be taught how to think, not what to think' and they must be 'unhampered by prejudices' that cloud their thinking about the choices that might be available to them and others (p. 246).

Choices based on unreflective thought limit the effectiveness of those very choices in making a difference in a person's life; and choices based on prejudice limit the effectiveness of choices in other people's lives to the extent that those choices create obstacles to others' life chances. In making these recommendations, Mead prefigured later thinking in educational and developmental psychology concerning post-conventional morality (Kohlberg) and ethical identities (Erikson). The likelihood of agentic action that overcomes social structural obstacles is diminished if choices are based on lower-order levels of cognition, morality and ethics. Accordingly, we cannot expect the disadvantaged to rise above adversity if they are not equipped with the personal resources for doing so. And, even if social structural obstacles were suddenly magically eliminated, those who have lived their lives under constrained conditions would not have the agentic resources for functioning in unconstrained environments.

Unfortunately, since the time of Mead's writing, we have not developed the educational means by which to teach young people critical thinking skills and tolerance on a mass scale, even as the ideology of free choice has spread throughout societies around the world. Instead, only a small percentage of (young) people today develop these attributes, and then largely on their own and sometimes as part of a rebellion against the obtuseness and bigotry that they perceive in the adults who are ostensibly teaching them about life. While these advances in educational wisdom and technique did not come to fruition in the twentieth century, perhaps they will in

the twenty-first century. If they do, we can look forward to advanced societies where social cohesion is created and maintained among competent, goal-oriented, and ethically responsible citizens.

One major obstacle to be faced is the apparent fact that people differ according to how they process identity-related information. Berzonsky (1989) proposed that there are three general *identity-processing orientations*, representing the ways in which people interpret and approach identity-related issues and dilemmas. Those predominantly utilizing the *informational orientation* tend to consider multiple alternatives and to adopt an open-minded approach when faced with identity-related decisions. Others using the *normative orientation* tend to conform to social and familial expectations, and to seek closure as soon as possible when confronted with identity-related life choices. A third group adopts a *diffuse/avoidant orientation* whereby they tend to procrastinate or avoid confronting identity-related decisions.

Obviously, the informational orientation is the one we would want to nurture, particularly as an identity capital resource. Indeed, there is considerable empirical evidence that this produces the best identity formation outcomes and is most facilitative of identity capital acquisition (Schwartz *et al.*, 2005). The normative orientation is adequate for many identity formation 'sustaining' tasks (see Schuller, 2004), but encourages a more locally focused identity. However, the disuse/avoidant orientation is least conducive of most forms of identity formation, especially occupational identity, and is most associated with default individualization (Schwartz *et al.*, 2005).

Just where these orientations come from—whether from temperament and/or socialization is not known at this time—but we would certainly want to direct educational efforts toward nurturing the informational orientation, perhaps learning more about transformative educational experiences, and discouraging the diffuse/avoidant one. It is possible that much of the diffuse/avoidant orientation is produced by those punitive grading systems based on zero-sum grading practices which are structured to produce as many 'failures' as 'successes' along bell curves. Other systems, like those based on mastery learning, where everyone is brought to a certain skill level in each course, would likely not create as many people who automatically avoid opportunities and who associate learning with negative outcomes and assaults to their self-esteem.

Conclusion: fostering resource acquisition through education

To return to Figure 1, and given our look at the issue of identity formation and the role of choice in the development of competent citizens, I would argue that a primary goal of educational efforts to nurture more advanced forms of identity formation need to be with the development of a versatile self/identity capacity for *both* independent and interdependent relations with others. When the two are combined in one person, we are much more likely to have a person who does not function at either extreme—the selfish individualist or the self-less collectivist. When people are given the opportunity to engage in unconstrained choice-making, and they do so with the intellectual capacity to think critically about prejudices, they may

well choose to enhance their relationships with others and to facilitate the actions of others rather than constrain them through their preconceptions.

If we learn how to institute a choice-enhancing curriculum in our schools, or at least specialized courses in life course skills, we should be able to enhance the ability of the person to function in contexts that combine the best of individualism and collectivism, and to develop forms of identity capital necessary to contribute to their own community's social capital in the emerging global village. People who combine both should also be able to cope with the vicissitudes of individualistic societies (like institutional disjunctures and voids) while establishing and maintaining meaningful bonds with others at the first-order level of 'place' as well as the second-order level of 'space'. And, people who combine both should be more likely to be autonomous, but moral–ethical, contributors to civil society, both locally and globally.

The means to achieve this on a mass scale are not immediately evident, but unless we look in this direction, such change is unlikely to occur. Schwartz (2004b, pp. 222–236) makes a number recommendations by which people can adjust their psychological states, while Heath and Potter (2004) call for political reforms that incorporate social justice concerns to curb abuses of excess associated with neo-liberal policies. However, if governments and policy-makers were to take a broad view of the youth period and develop comprehensive youth policies that provide the resource bases for as many young people as possible to become self-determining, ethically responsible agents, we should be moving in the right direction. This view should also include the explicit recognition of the reality that young people must now engage in the individualization process and therefore need support for this task. Local educational efforts could be bolstered with state policies that protect the young from the more corrosive market influences *and* provide the basis of the resource acquisition and developmental individualization.

One country is already making headway in this respect. Sweden is a world-leader in its proactive and protective measures regarding youth education and personal development. For example, it has taken measures to protect its young people from the corrosive influences of individualism, as in the legislation limiting advertising to children (which provides children a 'safety zone', protecting them 'branding' while protecting parents from 'pestering'; Jacobsson, 2002). More recently, Swedish youth policy has been updated based on the assumption that young Swedes 'should enjoy the same rights and opportunities to participate in society as other groups and they should have good living conditions in all areas', with the following three main objectives:

- Independence. Young people shall be given the preconditions for living an independent life. For example, the right to good education and the possibility of getting both a job and accommodation.
- Influence. Young people shall have genuine opportunities for influence and participation. For example, in their municipality and in their school through access to public discussion.
- Resource. Young people's commitment, creativity and critical thinking shall be seen and utilized as a resource. (Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs, 2004, p. 2)

The final point to be taken here is that the wider benefits of education need to be not only recognized by academics, but also supported by the state in its youth policies and educational policies. Youth and educational policies now need to be integrated to recognize the necessity for young people to develop identity capital if they are going to effectively function in this late-modern world. From an educational standpoint, this requires that we institute an 'education for choice' in the curriculum at all levels, with advanced training for those in their late teens and twenties who now most need it as they face the challenges of effective individualization. Much of this curriculum can be taken from what is now reserved for university-level courses that undertake critical analyses of existing the social and economic conditions of late-modernity.

It may be a cliché to say that knowledge is power, but self-knowledge is empowering when it comes to making life-altering choices, and the citizens of late-modernity need to be empowered to know how to mediate the more corrosive market influences for themselves and their progeny. Moreover, given that individualization is now a lifelong process, we need to look to forms of lifelong learning geared to helping adults make the critical choices they face in both their own life course and the life courses of their offspring (e.g., the study circle model developed by Swedes; Oliver, 1987). Late-modernity presents both challenges and opportunities, both of which have made the world far too complex to be left to a few school lessons.

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