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Identity Education: A Conceptual Framework for Educational Researchers and Practitioners

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This article presents the concept of *identity education* (IdEd) referring to the *purposeful involvement of educators with students' identity-related processes or contents*. We discuss why educators may consider identity important to the realization of educational goals and choose to target aspects of students' identity in their pedagogical practice. We offer a broad theoretical framework that organizes and focuses the extensive yet scattered discourse on identity and education. Because IdEd is a concept that accommodates diverse educational perspectives and concerns, we outline several parameters that can assist educators in making sense of this diversity and provide a conceptual basis for pedagogical and curricular decision making. These parameters also provide researchers from different scholarly traditions a common framework for constructive dialogue and can serve as a basis for generating focused and productive research directions.

In this article we introduce the concept of *identity education* (IdEd). A detailed definition of IdEd is presented shortly. For now, we refer to IdEd as *the purposeful involvement of educators with students' identity-related processes or contents*. Educators' involvement is based on the premise that aspects of identity are instrumental to the realization of educational goals and thus worthy of engagement. We discuss the rationale behind this premise and demonstrate how this idea could have significant implications for educational research, curriculum, and teaching.

Presentation of IdEd as a topic for reflection and research is based on both theoretical considerations and previous empirical research that link aspects of identity to educational goals. However, the idea originated in our field-based experience as researchers and as teacher and counselor educators where we came to realize that many educators link identity and education implicitly, if not explicitly, and this affects how they practice their craft. Moreover, concern with student identity is often a significant factor that underlies their motivations as educators. This led us to begin formulating the conceptual framework of IdEd, which includes a definition outlining the boundaries of a field devoted to educators' involvement with identity, an explanation of the possible rationales that might motivate this involvement,

and an exposition of parameters that can assist in making sense of diverse educational approaches to involvement with identity.

This framework is intended to serve four purposes. First, a conceptual framework that recognizes that identity issues are relevant to educators' thinking can provide a powerful lens to observe, identify, and analyze aspects of teachers' classroom practice and of policymakers' and curriculum designers' deliberations and decisions. Second, delineating a field devoted to studying IdEd can facilitate scholarly efforts to conceptualize and evaluate empirical claims relating aspects of identity to the attainment of educational goals and to examine philosophical-moral claims regarding IdEd's desirability. Third, identity is a complex concept. Different aspects of identity might be addressed by educators in promoting preferred educational goals. However, addressing social identity in class is very different than addressing ego identity. Attending to identity content differs from treating identity processes. Clarity of communication and deep understanding necessitate delineating how different aspects of identity relate to educational processes.

A fourth purpose served by formulating the concept of IdEd is that it can provide a broad, vibrant organizing platform for previous and future scholarship. Identity has long been a topic of interest in educational psychology and related disciplines. Since Erikson highlighted identity formation as a developmental task in his classic works a half century ago

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(Erikson, 1950, 1968), his theory has become a staple in teacher education curricula (e.g., Meece, 2002; Sprinthall, 1998) and has generated substantial research (see reviews in Côté, 2009; Kroger, 2007; Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer, & Orlofsky, 1993; Schwartz, 2001; Schwartz, Luyckx, & Vignoles, 2011). Identity's intersection with education is now also extensively discussed from a variety of theoretical perspectives embedded in other research traditions (cf. Eccles, 2009; Levinson, Foley, & Holland, 1996; Rex, Murnen, Hobbs, & McEachen, 2002; Sfard & Prusak, 2005; Wortham, 2003). However, despite this broad interest, the identity-education interface has rarely been explicitly and comprehensively discussed as a topic important to educational research and practice (see Kaplan & Flum, 2009, and Roeser, Peck, & Nasir, 2006, for exceptions). Whereas many theoreticians and researchers have written on issues bearing on education and identity (e.g., ethnic identity: Banks, 2008; Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; religious identity: King & Roeser, 2009; Wardekker & Miedema, 2001; occupational identity: Flum & Blustein, 2000; civic identity: Youniss & Hart, 2005; self-esteem: O'Mara, Marsh, Craven, & Debus, 2006), those particular aspects of their work that might be relevant to a general audience interested in identity education are often difficult to identify as they are discussed incidentally to the specific identity contents that are of concern to these scholars. In some cases authors mention identity but do not explicitly highlight it as a central concept (i.e., character and moral education: Althof & Berkowitz, 2006; Damon, 2002; Lapsley, 2007; Nucci, 2006; feminist education: Noddings, 2003; Positive Youth Development: Lerner, Brentano, Dowling, & Anderson, 2002; social-emotional education: Cohen, 2006). Thus, due to the absence of a distinct area of scholarship, aspects of this work related to identity frequently go unrecognized.

Accordingly, it is important to outline an inclusive area of scholarship that transcends any specific identity contents or educational goals presumed to be served by educational involvement with identity, that creates a recognized meeting ground for discussing theoretical perspectives, and that provides educators and researchers with a more precise and differentiated terminology to analyze the interface of education and identity. To explicate IdEd, this article is primarily conceptual, based on previous theoretical formulations and empirical work. Possible research directions are also offered.

We emphasize that this article is *not* intended as a call for or against the practice of IdEd in any form. This can be a highly controversial issue, and debate is appropriate and important. A comprehensive discussion of this issue is outside the scope of this article, although we point to certain directions this discussion can take. However, because identity-related practices have important consequences for students and teachers, it is important to build a common scholarly foundation that can serve as the basis for coherent and productive study and debate.

IdEd: DEFINITION AND RATIONALE

In this section we define identity education and spell out the reasons educators might find identity instrumental in achieving their educational goals.

Definition

To define IdEd, it is necessary to clarify how we relate to identity itself. Scholars have long noted that identity is a multifaceted construct, difficult to conclusively define, and it has been discussed very differently in various scholarly traditions (Côté, 2006). For example, the concept has been used to refer to identification with ethnic, religious, and other social entities; personality traits such as the achievement of mature autonomy, self-sameness, or personal meaning; stories told about the self; and specific social positions or roles performed in social interaction (cf. Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004; Bamberg, 2011; Gee, 2001; McAdams, 1997; Sfard & Prusak, 2005; Waterman, 2004). The varying uses of identity to relate to different phenomena have been a source of confusion, leading some to suggest discarding the concept altogether (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). However, it is more reasonable to view the range of meanings attributed to identity as a natural result of the concept's authentic relationship to a variety of human phenomena. Rather than abandon the concept or limit ourselves to narrow aspects of identity, we choose an inclusive perspective regarding identity. When introducing IdEd as a scholarly field, an inclusive perspective has the advantage of enabling IdEd to serve as a meeting ground for diverse audiences that deem the education-identity interface significant and allow scholars and practitioners to benefit from diverse perspectives. Nevertheless, to prevent confusion, it is also necessary to carefully delineate how specific aspects of identity or particular perspectives regarding identity have distinct implications for educational practice. These latter issues are broached in the second part of the article.

Accordingly, we define *identity* as

the individual's dynamic self-understandings and self-definitions used to structure, direct, give meaning to and present the self, that are negotiated intra- and interpersonally across the lifespan within sociocultural contexts, along with the psychosocial processes, meaning-systems, practices and structures that regulate their continued development.

We then broadly define *IdEd* as

the deliberate active involvement of educators with the psychosocial processes and practices that are involved in students' identity development.

The Rationale for IdEd: Justifications for Educational Involvement With Identity

Earlier we claimed that educators who are engaged with aspects of student identity likely believe that this serves goals of importance to education. We point to five distinct aspects of identity that could justify this premise: identity's *definitional*, *self-definitional*, *integrative-holistic*, *cognitive-meaning* and *motivational* aspects.

The definitional and self-definitional aspects of identity. The first two reasons that educators might find identity instrumental to their work are linked to the dual recognition that *definitions* are important and that *the self's* involvement in its *own* definition is important (Roeser et al., 2006). To illustrate, consider two educators seeking to promote students' knowledge. The teacher *not* practicing IdEd teaches students knowledge and knowledge promoting skills. However, the teacher practicing IdEd might *also* be concerned with issues such as whether students will or will not be recognized by others as "knowledgeable" (i.e., *definition*) and will or will not recognize themselves as "knowledgeable" (i.e., *self-definition*), as these in turn affect subsequent learning experiences and later chances of success.

First, regarding the importance of definitions, educational involvement with identity can be justified by educators based on the well-established notion that any attribute, whether it be knowledge, a skill, a value, or a trait, will manifest differently depending on the way the attribute is defined—meaning how it is understood, recognized, and used, both internally and externally (Berkowitz, 1995; Kihlstrom & Klein, 1994; Leary & Tangney, 2003; Oyserman, 2001, 2007). Thus, regardless of whether a student meets the "objective" conditions necessary to be considered "competent," "attractive," "lazy," "moral," "Asian American," "athletic," or whatever, the psychological and social significance of this designation is dependent on the way the semiotic label is appropriated, understood, negotiated, assigned importance, and used (e.g., Rex et al., 2002; Sternberg, 2007). The distinction between the attribute and its meanings, and the significance of the meanings, was noted by Erikson. He described how a child who has learned to walk enjoys the walking itself but also "becomes aware of the new status and stature of 'one who can walk', with whatever connotation this happens to have in the co-ordinates of his culture's life plan" (Erikson, 1968, p. 49). Thus, focusing on the skill of walking without attending to the processes that give it meaning would yield an incomplete understanding of learning to walk.

Many educational movements endorse purposeful interventions intended to promote valued attributes, be they student cognitions, skills, values, traits, or behaviors (e.g., character education, social-emotional education, cognitive education, civic education). Successful interventions likely have some effect on students' life trajectories and who they eventually become. However, whereas such interventions

might *sometimes* be IdEd, they are not *necessarily* so. This would depend on whether the educator promoting such attributes attempts to target or harness processes related to how the students define themselves or become defined. Within the current educational literature, these interventions are typically not framed in ways that explicitly highlight the significant role played by intrapsychic and interpersonal mediating processes that are responsible for how these attributes become defined, recognized, maintained, and meaningful, or to how such definitions affect subsequent educational experiences. Nor does the literature typically address what might be the task of educators in these identity processes. It is this omission we wish to deal with by introducing the concept of IdEd.

Second, the importance of *self*-definition for education that can justify IdEd is based on the claim that the self is necessarily involved in its *own* definition and that individuals are active agents in defining their own selves and in presenting their selves in social interaction. An educator acknowledging this recognizes that students are active participants in selecting, organizing, and regulating the contents of education (e.g., cognitions, skills, values) targeted to themselves (Baumeister & Vohs, 2003; Roeser et al., 2006) and that identity processes are central in the way this is accomplished (Oyserman, 2007). Sociologists have certainly demonstrated that identities can be powerfully conferred through social structure and educational institutions (e.g., Côté, 1996; Stets & Burke, 2003). However, IdEd is based on the assertion that individuals also have a meaningful measure of initiative and autonomy vis-à-vis identity processes and contents (see Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; Lightfoot & Valsiner, 1992; Martin, 2007), that they can take part in negotiating and constructing their own identity, and that this self-defining agency can and should be mediated and strengthened in schools (Alexander, 2005; Harrell-Levy & Kerpelman, 2010; Kahne & Sporte, 2008; Youniss & Hart, 2005). Recognizing both the student's agency regarding self-definition and the influence of social structure through social institutions including schools is based on the understanding of identity as a psychosocial construct, a view endorsed by classic Eriksonian formulations of identity and by post-modern views of identity (Côté & Levine, 2002; Schachter, 2005b). Both positions recognize identity's co-constructed nature and note how identity develops through the ongoing interactions of an individual with other persons and with sociocultural institutions and with the meaning systems within which all are embedded (Côté, 1996; Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). Adoption of this complex view regards the individual as subject while acknowledging that identity is co-constructed with sociocultural agents. This view enables the field of IdEd to be sensitive to moral and practical issues of power relations in education while according students with agency and educators with a robust position as potential mediators of the interaction between student and social structures.

The integrative-holistic aspect. The third feature of identity that may be used to justify IdEd, the *integrative-holistic* aspect, refers to Erikson's (1968) idea that identity's essential psychological function is to foster personality integration. Erikson theorized that identity processes are naturally oriented toward creating a self characterized by integrity, coherence, self-sameness, continuity, and purpose. People participate proactively in creating and organizing their selves as objects. McAdams (1997) called this ongoing tendency *selfing*. The educational significance of this integrative disposition is that the meaning of any new experience will necessarily be related to how it is perceived, processed, and integrated in relation to the totality of the individual's existing meaning-making system (e.g., Derry, 1996; Richardson, 1997). Educators aware of this holistic aspect understand that students' new knowledge and experiences are related not only to their previous knowledge but also to their earlier identity constructions. Teaching is quite different when teachers make provisions for integrative identity processes whereby previous self-constructions influence the acquisition and integration of new knowledge.

The cognitive-meaning aspect. The fourth aspect of identity that can justify educators' involvement with identity is that identity serves its integrative organizing function by providing *meaning* (Bruner, 1990). Identities present personally and socially meaningful systematic ways of understanding the world and the self and prioritizing what is of value (Markus & Wurf, 1987). The definition of identity presented earlier emphasizes how self-understandings are embedded in meaning systems. An IdEd perspective recognizes that the disciplines of knowledge taught in school are also structured meaning systems that frequently have implications regarding the self and its relation to the world. Furthermore, promoting a certain relationship between the self and the world is often precisely the reason that educators deem the topics important enough to be taught. Disciplines can be taught in ways that accentuate identity implications, for example, by highlighting the worldviews espoused by the discipline and by engaging students to consider whether to adopt such worldviews as their own (Schachter & Galili-Schachter, in press). Research has also recently shown that engaging knowledge, if done in certain ways, facilitates identity formation (e.g., McLean, Breen, & Fournier, 2010).

IdEd's focus on *self-definition*, *holism*, and *meaning* suggests that a central value of teaching knowledge, in addition to mastering the knowledge itself, is related to the meanings emanating from the knowledge and the learning process that students adopt regarding *who they are and how these meanings relate to prior self-definitional conceptions*. This has profound implications for curriculum and teaching.

We illustrate with an example from the teaching of geography. Geography teachers who implicitly or explicitly adopt an IdEd perspective connect geographical knowledge with issues related to identity. In addition to instruction for knowl-

edge acquisition, these teachers might decide to engage students with diverse issues such as, "Where is 'home' and where do I belong?" "What places in the world are central and which are peripheral and why? Where am I in relation to them?" "What is 'local,' what are borders, and what does this mean about who 'we' are?" "How are others who live far or close to me similar or different from me?" "How am I dependent on the environment, and to what extent can I or should I manipulate it?" "Is what I am learning consonant with the beliefs prevalent in my ethnic or cultural group and what does this mean for me?" "Can I learn to find my way independently around different places?" "Am I a good (geography) student?" "Do others recognize me as a good student?" "Can I master difficult material?" "Do I like to do things a cartographer does, and can I become proficient in them?" "Am I willing to spend time and effort to become one?" These questions relate to identity aspects accompanying learning subject matter. Some are inherent to the meaning systems promoted by the discipline, whereas some are related to learning in general. Regardless, a geography teacher with an IdEd perspective would consider questions that relate study to the self as important, and these topics would not be considered tangential to teaching or obstructing knowledge acquisition. This teacher would likely choose to relate to self-related topics in interactions with students and plan lessons accordingly. A curriculum designer might choose to blend one or more of these themes in the design of a new textbook. It is important to note that educators choosing to treat these questions need not sacrifice an academic focus; however, it is quite likely that their pedagogical methods and interactions with students will differ from those of colleagues who focus exclusively on academic skills and knowledge.

The motivational aspect. The unique *motivational* aspect of identity is the fifth feature of identity that may appeal to educators. An IdEd perspective recognizes identity as an important motivational factor in students' educational engagement. In a recent special issue of *Educational Psychologist* (Kaplan & Flum, 2009) several researchers demonstrated that when subject matter and pedagogical methods engage students' developmental and social needs related to identity, educational engagement will be enhanced and more meaningful (see also Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2006; Paris & Paris, 2001; Ryan & Deci, 2003). Motivational aspects related to identity are varied. Identity development has alternatively been described as fueled by one's need for coherence, direction, and purpose (McAdams, 1997); by one's need to feel competent and masterful (Ryan & Deci, 2003); and by one's need for a sense of belonging (Faircloth, 2009; Newman & Newman, 2001). Scholastic study can be designed to accommodate such needs. For example, multicultural educators discuss how the "social identity" students attribute to curriculum contents triggers engagement or estrangement (Banks, 1995; Zirkel, 2008). Teachers recognizing this might inform their pedagogical decisions by their understanding of

the motivational processes stemming from student identities, or encourage the formation of student identities that foster motivations considered conducive to learning (Lee & Anderson, 2009).

The definition of IdEd stresses deliberate intervention and highlights intentional purposive acts directed at identity in the service of educational goals. Intentionality is stressed so as to distinguish IdEd from other scholarly efforts that focus on how identity is influenced inadvertently by school practices. For example, research has shown that the division of students from a heterogeneous school population into homogeneous study groups according to student ability or achievement may significantly influence students' self-perceptions (McLeod, & Yates, 2006; Oakes, 2005). However, we do not consider this IdEd, because this practice is usually not intended to establish among students a sense of belonging to a specific ability level group, nor is it intended to develop student's awareness of their place on the social hierarchy ladder. Stressing purposiveness also distinguishes IdEd from a branch of critical studies of identity and education (McLaren, 1995) that attempts to uncover processes whereby institutional social structures affect identity through schooling even if the social agents participating in these processes are unaware of their impact on identity and would be unwilling to retroactively justify them. Critical pedagogy might qualify as IdEd if educators intentionally act to empower students to resist imposed identities and to create self-chosen ones (Kincheloe, 2008). Intentional involvement with identity can also be implicit and be recognized as IdEd. Implicit intention means that if asked about the purpose of a certain practice, an educator would retrospectively justify the identity element of the educational practice as serving a valued educational goal.

To summarize the first part, the points emphasized explain IdEd's potential appeal as an intellectually fertile concept. IdEd accepts the central place knowledge acquisition has in education; however, it reframes and broadens the motives for knowledge acquisition and transmission. At the same time, IdEd does not belittle the importance of social, emotional, moral, or other aspects of education. Identity is conceptualized not as a specific area for discrete educational treatment in addition to others such as academic, social-emotional, and moral education but as an overarching issue related to all these aspects of education. However, IdEd is not *everything* a teacher does. Excluded are practices that foster student attributes without considering how they interact with student identity.

THE DIVERSITIES OF IDED

Under the conceptual umbrella of IdEd, one can find a broad spectrum of ways in which educators can think about and choose to enact their involvement in students' identity. In current educational literature, the general term *identity* is often invoked by different authors although they refer to different

aspects of identity. Two educators might think that identity is a worthy target of intervention yet have quite different views of what it is about identity that makes it so. True to their views, they may implement classroom practices that are antithetical to one another. A research article exploring career decision-making skills among high school seniors and an article discussing incorporation of cultural perspectives of elementary school children's families in the curriculum might both make reference to the concept of identity, but the meanings of identity in the articles may differ considerably. This diversity of meanings is bound to have detrimental theoretical, policy, and practical consequences if the individuals communicating mistakenly assume that the other's concept of identity means the same as their own or if important elements in the discussion are overly fuzzy. Therefore, the second major part of the conceptual framework presented here describes several fundamental parameters that can help educational researchers and practitioners organize, focus, and communicate their thinking about this broad and diverse phenomenon we call identity education. Reflecting on these parameters can assist educators and researchers to form a more precise understanding of what they mean and are trying to accomplish regarding their identity interventions or investigations. The major parameters we discuss are as follows:

- Overarching educational *goals*: Socialization, enculturation, or individuation.
- *Level* of identity: Social, personal, or ego identity.
- *Facets* of identity: Identity content, structure, or processes.
- *Processes* of identity formation: Identification, exploration, commitment, positioning, resistance, and negotiation.
- *Contexts* that affect IdEd: Macro, intermediate, and micro.

These various parameters are interrelated, and it is difficult to discuss one without relating to others. However, for analytic purposes each parameter is examined separately.

Overarching Educational Goal Served: Socialization, Enculturation, or Individuation

The first parameter examines the "why" of educating for identity. Earlier we asserted that many educators are involved in IdEd because they see identity as pivotal in realizing their educational goals. However, educators hold to many different educational goals and may attempt to foster very different aspects of identity to attain them. The "why" of IdEd is thus important because it helps focus attention on the specific aspects of identity considered relevant to the particular valued educational goal. The "why" is also important because judgments about the moral desirability of an IdEd practice need to be justified in relation to the ultimate educational goals the intervention is intended to promote, and in relation to the internal discourse of justification typically used when discussing such goals. For example, IdEd fostering minority

ethnic identity could be justified in relation to the philosophical discourse regarding multiculturalism, whereas IdEd that enhances career planning exploratory skills could be appraised in relation to the discourse regarding the school's mandate in promoting life skills and the examination of life roles.

Two prominent philosophers of education (Egan, 1997; Lamm, 1976) suggested independently a similar threefold typology of the ultimate metagoals guiding education and educators. We adopt this typology for heuristic purposes to demonstrate the importance of overarching educational goals in generating different approaches to IdEd. Other conceptions of purposes of education (e.g., Goodlad, 1984) might also demonstrate this point. Henceforth we use Lamm's terminology regarding what he called the three conflicting "logics of education": *socialization*, *enculturation*,¹ and *individuation*. Lamm posited that each term reflects ways in which educators throughout the ages talk about the ultimate purpose of education, that is, what they would respond if asked, "How do you justify what you do, and why is it important?"

Lamm (1976) explained that according to the *socialization* logic, education is a necessary tool to prepare the young to become efficient adult members of society and to guarantee the perpetuation and effective functioning of society. The child is seen as undeveloped because he or she has not yet learned the skills, norms, or attitudes required to participate constructively in social life or to assume significant adult roles. According to this logic, the primary purpose of education is to guarantee that the youngsters acquire these skills, norms, and attitudes. The second logic, *enculturation*, considers the ultimate goal of education as the inculcation of those values, dispositions, and bodies of knowledge that are deemed by educators to be true, moral, holy, or beautiful *regardless* of their functional value. Children are seen as undeveloped to the extent that they are not yet sufficiently knowledgeable about and appreciative of the culture's ideals. *Individuation*, Lamm's third logic of education, is guided by the proposition that the ultimate goal of education is to assist young people to develop their own unique personal potentials. Children are seen as undeveloped to the extent that they have not acquired the dispositions, attitudes, skills, and so on, that are necessary to advance toward fulfilling their freely chosen and personally expressed potentialities.

Whether these three overarching goals are compatible, complementary, or mutually exclusive can be debated. Lamm (1976) and Egan (1997) warned that attempting to implement the agendas of all three logics simultaneously in one institution will likely cause these goals to confound one another and prevent their full realization. Lamm further contended that the choice among the three is ideological in nature and not subject to scientific analyses. Yet these three educational

purposes do play a meaningful role in virtually all educational systems, and they wield major influence on educational practice, though they have been accorded different emphases in diverse eras and societies. Our central point is that because aspects of identity are instrumental in realizing all three meta-purposes of education, educators are drawn to deal with identity; however, each meta-purpose is served by different aspects of identity, and this translates differently into educational practice.

An educator championing the goal of *socialization* aims to promote those aspects of student identity that contribute to a functioning society. For example, he might focus on identity-related concepts such as "commitment" and "role" as he views his job as transforming students into citizens who are knowledgeable about and adept at performing particular social roles and who see themselves as committed to those roles. He educates students to identify with society as a whole or with a particular niche within society that is important to society as a whole and tries to inculcate them with the belief that committed individuals maintain society for the benefit of all members. This teacher might strive to teach students how to actively mold themselves to fit society's demands and to accept and even identify with this social outlook. He would exploit opportunities to educate students to be able and willing to choose from among the alternative roles that society offers, to make commitments, and to stand by them.

An example of the socialization perspective might be seen in inner-city school teachers who try to develop those skills and traits needed by their students for sustained commitment under adverse conditions, such as the ability to work persistently, or to accept authority and abide by rules, or to delay gratification—all traits for which developmental benefit has been underscored by research (Shoda, Mischel, & Peake, 1990; Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004). These teachers may try to convey the message that identification with a positive role and sustained commitment to achieving it while avoiding negative identities (Erikson, 1968) will ultimately be rewarded. They might have students meet role models who are positively engaged socially involved citizens and could invest effort motivating students to seek personal satisfaction in a socially valued niche (Eccles & Roeser, 2003). In some cases the sense of identity that a student brings to the educational setting does not mesh with the educator's view of desirable identities, thus possibly bringing about intrapersonal conflict or friction with school norms and authorities. Concerned socialization educators, however, might view this as an important opportunity to educate students to find ways to form reasonably satisfying identities that "work" in society. This obviously raises thorny ethical issues.

Idealist visions guide the *enculturation* view of education. The educator's goal in this perspective is to encourage students to seek out and become committed toward what is eternally truthful, virtuous, or any other standard as assessed by culturally embedded criteria. Education guided by the goal of enculturation stresses aspiring toward excellence, virtue,

¹In the English translation of Lamm's work from Hebrew, *acculturation* was used rather than *enculturation*. However, to avoid confusion with contemporary usage of *acculturation* we use the latter term.

ideology, and especially cultural erudition. Similar to socialization educators, enculturation educators view identity as instrumental, but the specific aspects of identity that are valued are different. These educators assert that enculturation goals are served by the student's inherent identity-motivated aspiration for integrity and meaningfulness (Wheelis, 1958). A prototypical example of IdEd in the enculturation goal would be inspiring students to *identify* with cultural ideals of excellence, virtue, or truth (see Nisan, 1996). The pedagogy of this approach might, for example, foster intellectual exploration and extol the virtues of the Socratic "examined life" (Nussbaum, 1997). Enculturation-oriented educators place cultural texts, debates, and ideals at the heart of the curriculum, whether these are deemed "universal" classics or materials specifically chosen to champion the ideals of certain ethnic, national, or religious groups or ideological camps. These texts are presented by educators as the common foundation upon which all other educational activities are built, the veritable stem cells of education; they are expected to become the standard for assessing what is good or valuable. For example, teachers at certain private (Van Pelt, Allison, & Allison, 2007) or charter schools (Bailey & Cooper, 2009) that advocate particular cultural, religious, or ideological positions might champion an enculturation agenda and emphasize activities that encourage students to identify with symbols, heroes, texts, concerns, and ways of thinking characteristic of the specific cultural, religious, or ideological group and to discuss current, historical, or existential issues through reference to such symbols and texts. Placing these texts at the heart of the curriculum conveys to students not only what a cultured person should know but also how he or she should relate to self, to others, and to whatever ideas and situations that arise in the future. Here too, the sense of identity that students bring to the educational setting might not be congruent with the view espoused by the curricular materials presented by the educator. However, the educator may exploit this discontinuity to challenge students to seriously encounter new ideas and to collaboratively enter the ongoing cultural discussion regarding these ideas.

Educators in the *individuation* tradition are interested in promoting growth according to the individual's personally determined standards. Again, the specific aspects of identity considered important here are different. The individuation approach holds that the individual should be encouraged to explore identities of his or her own personal choosing leading to personal growth. Waterman's (2004) eudaimonic model of identity development, for example, describes the essence of identity development as the individual's increasing ability to decide about life commitments in a personally expressive manner, developing one's best potentials and pursuing intrinsic goals, based on self-guided exploration. This, he claimed, ultimately contributes to an individual's psychological thriving. In this tradition, educating for identity involves assisting young people to realize their full potential by, for example, facilitating exploratory activities in which they practice making

reflective choices based on personal standards and wishes. Teachers might see an important purpose of education as fostering students' capacity to be self-directive and autonomous by making decisions based on thoughtful exploration and sustained reflection based on their self-determined needs, desires, and dreams. These educators might champion educational programs that allow students substantial autonomy to choose academic and personal avenues fostering personal growth. An *individuation* educator follows the students' lead in creating identity and might choose not to challenge students' prior identities. This is not a widespread approach. Research has shown that many teachers may be quite reluctant to support students' authentic efforts toward achieving autonomy (Reeves, 2009). However, research among college students based on Waterman's model (Schwartz, Kurtines, & Montgomery, 2005) has also demonstrated the efficacy of emotionally focused intervention strategies in affecting self-discovery identity processes. Another example of the individuation perspective can be seen among critical-minded educators (Freire, 1970; Kincheloe, 2008) for whom a primary educational purpose is to develop among students a critical stance toward hegemonic social structures that cause social inequities and to provide them with the skills and resilience to uphold their own desired identities rather than accept society's attempts to enforce debilitating ones.

Differences between these three logics of identity education have important curricular and pedagogical implications. This is quite clear for subjects such as literature, history, and art. But even disciplines that supposedly deal exclusively with "hard facts" and "rules" can show the effects of different goal orientations on how educators engage aspects of identity (Skerrett & Sevian, 2009). Take, for example, mathematics instruction. Teaching mathematics with a *socialization* orientation might entail teaching the student to accept the idea that mathematics provides knowledge that is correct, useful, and socially sanctioned. Identity becomes relevant when, for example, students learn and accept that one's potential for upward social mobility is linked to being recognized as one who's "good at math" or when they are taught to accept that society uses mathematics to define people and their social status. Within the *enculturative* orientation, mathematics instruction could be geared toward teaching a deep understanding of the logic of mathematical rules so that students will adopt the perspective that one who masters mathematics and appreciates its aesthetic becomes a member of a cultural elite of thinkers. Learning mathematics is then fostered by stimulating the students' identity-based desire to become members of the community of mathematical scholars (see, e.g., Putnam & Borko, 2000; Richmond & Kurth, 1999). Last, IdEd *individuation* teachers present the curriculum in ways that foster students' exploration of themselves and their environment to develop their unique talents and potential. Mathematics teachers, according to this logic, present their subject in whatever fashion is deemed pedagogically sound while scaffolding the value of

learning mathematics in the hope that students might find it personally interesting, useful, or aesthetically pleasing (see Brophy, 2008). Teachers devote class time to assist students in acquiring tools for exploration and reflection on personal meanings of learning experiences. Or critically minded math teachers might help students appreciate how math can be used to disenfranchise them and that therefore mathematical literacy can empower them (Gutstein, 2007). So different educational goal orientations bring to the fore different models of preferred identity that in turn affect how teachers translate the curriculum for class use (see Gudmundsdottir, 1990).

Level of Identity Targeted: Social, Personal, or Ego Identity

Erikson (1968) distinguished between three levels of identity: *social identity*, *personal identity*, and *ego identity* (see Côté, 1996; Côté & Levine, 2002; Schwartz, 2001). Each of these levels of identity is educationally significant, yet for different reasons. Next we explain why and demonstrate how each might become a deliberate focus of educational practice.

Social identity refers to a person's sense of membership(s) in and identification(s) with meaningful, usually large, social groups. Whereas the term has sometimes been used in the literature as a factual marker, referring to a person's "objective" place in a social structure or to that person's actual membership in specific, meaningful social groups, many have noted that this "objective" membership is not a natural and irrevocable state of affairs. Rather, this identity has actually been conferred or negotiated. This conceptual approach serves to heighten awareness to the often unequal power relations involved in creating and maintaining social identities (Bingham, 2001; Gee, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Taylor, 1992). The term *social identity* is also frequently used to denote a person's subjective sense of belonging, that is, the extent of solidarity with a person's social position or group and to the extent to which an individual adopts this identity as central, important, or relevant to his or her own self-definition (Hogg, 2003). This usage has been captured by Tajfel's (1981) definition of social identity as "that part of individuals' self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (p. 225).

Personal identity refers to those unique goals, values, sentiments, and preferences that are claimed as one's own in everyday social interaction and that serve to distinguish people from each other and provide a sense of uniqueness. Sometimes personal identity is used to refer to those identifiers that other people recognize as distinctive; more often the concept is used to refer to an individual's self-defining personal attributes used to differentiate oneself from others in daily interaction (Vignoles, Chrysochoou, & Breakwell, 2000). So, for example, whereas Dora's *social identities* might include being Hispanic and middle-class, her *personal identity* might include markers she chooses to make herself known to

others in social interaction and to feel unique, such as *guitarist*, *George's mom*, *joyful*, and so on. A person's personal identities can provide a valued sense of singularity, and if these identities are recognized by others, they invite others to recognize them as unique and valued individuals.

Ego identity, as discussed by Erikson (1968) and his followers, refers to a person's sense of invigorating sameness and continuity. This is the subjective feeling that one is the same individual leading a life that is coherent, imbued with purpose, moving from a reasonably understood past to a manageable future despite the diverse and often unpredictable social situations, circumstances, and life events one meets. Erikson claimed that ego identity is a result of a complex interplay between individual and social action and is accompanied by the confidence that one's subjective personal and social identities are recognized and affirmed by significant others and by social institutions. Ego identity has been conceptualized as the underlying basis for the individual's ability to positively adopt, flexibly manage, and freely commit toward personal and social identities (Kroger, 2007; Schwartz, 2001).

Educators viewing any of these three levels of identity as affecting social and psychological outcomes of value to students or to broader society might consider directing their growth through educational intervention. One can conceive of educators targeting any of these three levels or combinations of them in the interest of fostering educational goals. Efforts to strengthen students' social identity can be done with the purpose of serving the interests of both individuals and groups. The individual with a strong *social identity* may gain a sense of belonging, communion, meaningfulness, and purpose (Newman & Newman, 2001). Society or social groups may also benefit from individuals' commitment to the group's welfare, thereby bolstering group cohesion, solidarity, adherence to social norms, and group continuity. In contrast, strengthening social identity has been portrayed as having negative consequences when it is achieved through exclusion of others, or when individuals repudiate parts of self, or when they are overly conformist (i.e., Erikson's *pseudospeciation*; see Friedman, 2001). Strong *personal identities* may enable individuals to maintain a sense of uniqueness while allowing society to benefit from their talents and abilities. Negative aspects have to do with the weakening of social cohesion and commitment, or the intensification of pseudo-personal identities, excessive individualism, and a culture of narcissism (Lasch, 1979). Strengthening *ego identity* can stimulate agentic, autonomous action that might produce increased commitment among members of social groups, or conversely produce critical uncompromising members. Strong ego identity could be valued in certain societies and cultures but less so in others where flexibility is admired or where there is a collectivistic ethos that frowns on highly individualistic persons. Of course, these are but a few examples. We now briefly illustrate how these concerns about identity might manifest themselves in educational ethos and practice, in aspects of

the school's structure of time and space, and in curricular decisions.

Some educators strongly committed to a specific social identity might try to reproduce this commitment among their students. This may be done, for example, through celebrating national or religious holidays or conducting field trips to sites with historic meaning with the intent of inspiring positive sentiments and collective loyalties. Students at a Jewish school, for example, might be encouraged to actively participate in Holocaust Day memorials where Holocaust survivors are invited to interact with the children so that their struggles and suffering will be meaningful to the youngsters. These and other informal activities might be implemented so that children experience personal connections with Jewish history and stimulate a sense of kinship with the Jewish people. Studying ethnic, national, or religious history or local geography has been documented worldwide in other schools and contexts as fostering specific social identities (Korostelina, 2008). This may lead to controversy when the curriculum is seen by some as favoring certain groups over others. In a Jewish school debate may arise regarding whether non-Jewish victims should be highlighted when studying the Holocaust, and what that might mean for the construction of students' social identity. Teachers in other schools might debate whether to emphasize the study of local over world history because of their deliberations about the meaning of that choice for students' social identity (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Korostelina, 2008). Individual students might have their own particular understanding of their social identity that differs from those that the school promotes, thereby raising challenging issues for educators.

Educators, however, might be concerned with social identity in other contexts besides attempting to foster commitment toward a specific favored identity. For example, educators holding to the logic of *socialization* might try to cultivate students' commitment to social identities in order to bolster dispositions toward communal responsibility (Arthur, 1998; Etzioni, 1993), solidarity, or normative behavior. Teachers might encourage students to participate in the athletics program and to identify with the "athletes group" at school because they believe that athletics does an exceptional job of teaching kids the benefits of discipline, hard work, cooperation, teamwork, and following rules, lessons that these teachers believe will enable the adolescents to fulfill their potentialities in a relatively uncaring world. *Enculturation* educators might also be concerned with social identity. They may try to foster identification with cultural heroes, inspiring texts or noble ideals with the intent of strengthening students' dispositions to engage with desirable ideas and models and to strive to realize the underlying ideals. Thus, enculturation teachers might devote a study unit to Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech not only to learn about the American civil rights movement but also to appreciate the lofty ideals Dr. King championed and his extraordinary oratory. Teachers holding to the logic of *individuation* might collaboratively

explore with students how their social identities enhance or constrain the development of their individual potentialities so that they might be able to resist society's attempts to mold them in ways they deem debilitating or impose certain social identities while stripping them of others (Gutstein, 2007). School counselors at inner-city schools know that for many early adolescents it is very important to belong to local gangs, but they also know that many of them strive to gain a sense of personal autonomy and to make decisions for themselves rather than to follow the dictates of gang leaders. Counselors invest effort to deal with this dilemma by equipping students with social skills and tools to cope with the difficult situations they encounter so they can blend their desired social identities with their personal hopes and ambitions (see Rollins, 2002).

An educational focus on *personal identity* is different. Here educators are concerned with issues such as how students form understandings of their own personal attributes and how these are influenced by educational practices or settings (Lannegrand-Willems & Bosma, 2006). For example, *socialization*-oriented educators focused on personal identity might be interested in helping students fit their personal characteristics to existing social role demands in order to promote appropriate and rewarding social functioning. *Enculturative* educators might try to assist students to recognize their personal attributes that can be shaped into culturally treasured virtues, such as humility, courage, or generosity, and to excel in them. *Individuation*-geared educators might assist students acquire reflective skills, allowing them deeper self-understanding and enhanced ability for self-expression (Flum & Kaplan, 2006; Fredrick, 2009).

Educational focus on the *ego identity* level is also different. Here an educator would be concerned with issues related to identity structure and the executive and interpersonal processes involved in forming and maintaining it. Because we deal with these issues in some detail in the next section, we note here only that educators might, intuitively or by design, through instructional methods or curricular contents, get involved in structuring students' abilities and preferred ways of structuring their own identity, for example, by scaffolding or intentionally modeling processes of exploration, commitment, self-awareness, and the like. The ego identity level, as the social and personal identity levels, can be engaged daily in classroom interaction and might be seen by teachers as part of their educational task.

We end this section reiterating that these levels influence each other in complex ways (Côté & Levine, 2002). In real-life settings, educators might employ certain practices at one level of identity in order to ensure success on another. For example, educators at charter schools oriented toward specific cultural groups such as Muslim or Hmong youth (Bailey & Cooper, 2009) might debate whether their goal of fostering a strong ethnic social identity might require a guarded structure of ego identity and whether this is a viable and desired option. Educators in a school with a multiethnic student body might

debate whether promoting multicultural education with the purpose of strengthening personal identities might cause a breakdown of social solidarity in the school or, conversely, enhance social relationships between students from different ethnic groups. These deliberations are not always explicit, nor do they necessarily use identity terminology. Nevertheless, they are common occurrences and they play a role in many educational discussions.

Facets of Identity Targeted: Identity Content, Structure, or Processes

A second major distinction regarding the “what” of identity is between *contents* of identity, *structural* aspects of identity, and *processes* that constitute identity. Each of these bears on the attainment of educational goals and may draw interventions from educators. Identity *content* refers to the specific ideation that is the object of a person’s identifications or commitments. These can be ideals, knowledge, institutions, people, and so on. For example, the specific content of Alan’s personal identity includes his job as an architect, his love of jazz, his Italian ethnic history, and his affirmation of Roman Catholic religious dogma. Identity *structure* refers to the various ways identity elements are embedded, organized, and related to one another; to identity’s degree of complexity; and to its stability and flexibility. One may speak of self-consistent identities versus fragmentary identities or flexible identities versus rigid identities (Bamberg, 2011; Schachter, 2005b). Thus, the same identity contents could manifest differently in individuals with varied identity structures. For example, Alan might experience his Catholic identity as structurally consonant with his other identity elements, as irrelevant, or as dissonant. If it is dissonant, one may ask about the extent to which this identity element is insulated from other identity elements and how, and at what expense, it is kept separate. Such structural issues may influence the way Alan’s Catholicism is understood by him and expressed to the outside world. These issues have been studied extensively in relation to immigration and bicultural identities, also in relation to schooling (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005; Greenfield & Suzuki, 1998). Last, identity *processes* refer to those processes that are involved in the acquisition, maintenance, and transformation of identity contents or structures. For example, we may ask how one comes to identify with certain ideals and to see them as self-defining, or how identity structures become more coherent or complex.

Applying these distinctions to IdEd can help us understand the diverse approaches educators could take regarding school practice. Clearly, many are attracted to focus on the *contents* of identity—on how the specific curricular contents that students are exposed to affect their emerging identities, whether in classroom or in other educational settings. An educator or researcher might be interested, for instance, in the values and ideologies supported by the curriculum contents, or in the affiliations that the contents promote toward particular social

groups, or in the ways learning is conducted, which may or may not be congruent with preferred ways of constructing meaning for individuals from different identity groups (e.g., Berry et al., 2006). Educators and other interested parties frequently debate what specific identity contents are appropriate for inclusion in the curriculum. For example, a few years ago Israeli education experienced vociferous debate over the inclusion of conflicting Jewish and Arab national narratives in history textbooks recommended to teachers by the Ministry of Education (Al-Haj, 2005; Gordon, 2005; Podeh, 2002), and acrimonious debate has appeared in the United States regarding “evolution,” “creationism,” and “intelligent design” in the school curriculum (Humes, 2007; Hunter, 1991). These debates encompass more than determining the truth value of the curriculum; rather, the passion of the arguments also stems from the symbolic high-stakes value of the specific contents perceived as having a meaningful role in shaping students’ identities. Concern about identity content has been especially salient in the literature on multicultural and minority education, where scholars have debated the academic value of curricular contents alongside the importance of these contents for shaping the identity of students (Banks, 1995, 2008; Taylor, 1992). Of course, as mentioned earlier, merely knowing certain bodies of knowledge does not affect one’s identity unless this knowledge is processed in ways meaningful for self-definition. Thus, IdEd educators teaching content should also be concerned about the processes of meaning-making based on the potential identity features of the contents (Faircloth, 2009). This has important implications for teachers’ pedagogy as has been demonstrated in numerous settings (Rich, 1993; Rothenberg, McDermott, & Martin, 1998; Schachter & Galili-Schachter, in press).

Issues related to identity *structure* can be important to educators as structures form, organize, and maintain identity contents. For example, a school counselor may encourage graduating seniors to carefully explore their abilities, interests, and aspirations and to consider their vocational options before choosing a college major and then to “stick with it despite difficulties” because she desires to promote the attitude that a good identity is based on integrity, commitment, and self-consistency. In contrast, a teacher may insist on hard questioning of students’ assumptions in the classroom due to her conviction that they live in a complex pluralistic world and it is thus desirable to foster identities that are comfortable with complexity and ambiguity and are capable of resisting premature closure.

Issues regarding identity structure might also influence decisions regarding curricular content. Research indicates that many children in particular ethnic or racial groups learn to experience and express meanings in unique ways that are not typical of other groups and this uniqueness may be a meaningful component in their identity development (Greenfield & Suzuki, 1998). Thus, particular ideational contents may give rise to differential self-definitional meanings among youngsters from different ethnic or racial groups (see

Fordham, 1999; O'Connor, Lewis, & Mueller, 2007) and be easier or more difficult to integrate in their existing identity structures. This raises thorny issues, such as teaching academic content in culturally heterogeneous classes that has varied identity implications for different groups of students. For example, what identity-shaping messages does a science teacher impart when teaching a high school class in which some students come from a modern Western background and others are endowed with an indigenous cultural heritage that views the relationship between humans and nature differently than in classic Western scientific thought (Kirmayer, 2007)? Thus we see how the sense of identity that students bring to the class can affect their approach to new curricular material. As a result, identity concerns regarding structure can play an important role in educators' decisions as to the wisdom of exposing students to certain academic contents. Other structural elements of identity might also be of educational concern, including, among others, identity's complexity, differentiation, comprehensiveness, and degree of reflexivity.

Processes of Identity Targeted

Self-regulatory or *executive* identity processes (Baumeister & Vohs, 2003; Oyserman, 2007; Roeser et al., 2006) can also become the target of educational intervention. This is where educators, holding to certain identity-related beliefs in an intuitive manner, might be doing their most influential yet least overtly articulated identity work. Theory and research relating to identity processes are based in two psychological traditions: the Eriksonian developmental tradition and the symbolic-interactionist tradition (SI). The developmental tradition focuses on how a core identity develops across the life span through psychosocial processes of *identification*, *exploration*, and *commitment*. SI focuses on how identities are dynamically and locally formed through social interaction processes such as *positioning*, *negotiation*, *resistance*, and the like. These identity-forming processes, from both traditions, might be considered important by educators. Educating students how to benefit from them may become the target of educational intervention.

The developmental perspective views identity as a long-term developmental task, where processes build on each other and on earlier accomplishments across the life course. In this tradition, identity is embodied and cross-situational and the essence of ego identity is precisely one's ability to maintain a relatively stable sense of purpose and unity despite traversing multiple contexts that vary significantly. Psychological processes of *identification*, *exploration*, and *commitment* direct the individual to create a core, integrative and invigorating sense of self. By *identifying* oneself with external elements (people, ideas, symbols, etc.), by *exploring* different possibilities of self, and by *committing* to those that fit one's significant identifications, identity is consolidated.

Educators guided by a developmental perspective would presumably want to strengthen all three of these processes,

translating them to differential practices according to age-specific groups (i.e., children, early adolescents, adolescents, etc.) and with reference to students' unique circumstances and particular developmental stages, so as to advance each individual's position on the developmental pathway. *Identification* refers to the process whereby one perceives certain traits, characteristics, or attitudes as attractive and wishes to adopt them as one's own and as self-defining. Significant identifications become the building blocks of a mature identity. Schools can foster this process by designing opportunities for students to encounter and engage with objects of identification (people, symbols, and ideas) that are deemed attractive, meaningful, inspiring, and worthy (Dreyer, 1994; Rich & Schachter, in press).

Erikson's (1968) classic developmental perspective claims however, that "identity formation, finally, begins where the usefulness of identification ends" (p. 161). He claimed that identifications are sometimes rigid, archaic, and perhaps not fully one's own and may not be appropriate in changing developmental settings. Therefore, mature identity requires that earlier identifications be analyzed, refined, and sometimes rejected and their relevance to the individual examined in light of other identifications and current societal conditions. Erikson called this process *exploration* and described it as being partially unconscious, not exclusively rational, and often involving tentative commitments and extreme changes. In the neo-Eriksonian tradition, exploration has been referred to as "problem-solving behavior aimed at eliciting information about oneself or one's environment in order to make a decision about an important life choice" (Grotevant, 1987, p. 204). Others (Waterman, 2004) emphasized the more emotional aspects of self exploration. Flum and Kaplan (2006) recently called upon educators of adolescents to promote their *exploratory orientation*, helping them to examine earlier identifications by confronting them with their underexamined beliefs, by creating awareness to alternatives, and by introducing them to new fields of knowledge that have identity implications.

Last, *commitment* refers to choosing specific social and personal identities and developing faithfulness toward them as a result of ego identity consolidation. Toward late adolescence some educators, often guidance counselors, work on student development of commitment through activities aimed at helping students understand the meaning and implications of commitment regarding their future planning of career, family, and other social roles (Gali-Cinamon & Rich, 2005; Seginer, 2009). Other educators may develop commitment among their students by emphasizing decision-making skills and stressing the value of perseverance and fidelity in the face of negative circumstances, or holding students accountable for previous decisions. In the present era of economic uncertainty and powerful changes in many central social institutions, researchers have found that adolescents and young adults often feel very ambivalent about making long-term commitments regarding their social and personal

identities and their career and family aspirations (see Côté & Bynner, 2008).

Examples of educators intervening with students on an individual level with regards to their identity processes are easy to formulate. A school counselor might recognize a student in a state of identity diffusion and attempt to engage his basic motivation to create meaningful identifications. Or a literature teacher in a parochial school, upon identifying a student with a tendency to commit prematurely and foreclose her religious identity, may encourage her to get involved in an academic project that is likely to foster a more exploratory orientation. Or, recognizing a student caught up in a difficult moratorium quandary, a homeroom teacher may attempt to assist with confidence-building or decision-making skills.

Conversely, the SI perspective focuses on the individual's context and conceives of identity formation as the result of local, situation-specific interactions. Individuals performing roles in an interaction *position* themselves vis-à-vis other persons in ways that confer specific identities upon them. One's identity at any moment is the result of the success of one participant in an interaction to claim an identity and either to confer complementary identities on the others or to *negotiate* tentative agreements with them regarding the meaning of the situation and every individual's identity within this situation. From the individual's perspective, identity must be continuously and flexibly negotiated locally. Individuals must also learn to recognize when others impose identities on them that do not serve their best interests and to know how to *resist* such attempts. Although identities may become crystallized over time, this perspective sees identity as open to negotiation and resistance. It also recognizes that the broader context heavily influences the actors' ability to manage and express their identities in a given situation. Power relations enable dominant social actors or institutions to determine meanings and to constrain individuals' identities.

The SI perspective has been used extensively in discussing emerging identities in classroom interaction (Paris & Paris, 2001; Wortham, 2004) and to demonstrate the harmful effects of teachers' and peers' conferring hurtful identities. However, educators who are sensitive to the linkage between students' success and their ability to understand and navigate power relations in society might have positive intentions and adopt a perspective based on SI. These teachers may be aware that students will probably need to confront the tension between asserting agency and accepting social constraints. Educators may deliberately engage issues in the classroom in ways that express their beliefs and preferences regarding how to deal with this tension. For example, a homeroom teacher might prefer that her students serve as their own advocates in dealing with other teachers in order to promote their skills regarding negotiating with authority and effecting change. Or a math teacher might require students to solve problems using a particular method, discouraging originality, wishing to convey a moral message that there are "right" and "wrong" ways to do certain things and that not everything is dependent on

individual discretion. Literature teachers may assign personal writing exercises intended to help students find a unique personal voice (Faircloth, 2009), whereas other teachers promote student collaboration and foster shared understandings with the intention of promoting identity processes and structures that support interdependence (Markus & Kitayama, 1994).

To summarize, many processes of identity formation may become the target of educators' interventions in routine school interactions and practices. Therefore, any explicit discussion of IdEd practices intended to foster students' development would need to begin by clarifying what processes are being targeted and to what purpose.

Contexts That Affect IdEd: Macro, Intermediate, and Microcontextual Considerations

The last level that we address is the context in which IdEd takes place. On several occasions in this article we have used examples from schools from different cultural or sociological contexts demonstrating that identity concerns are relevant and differ in varied educational contexts. As has been demonstrated in earlier research, identity needs and goals are framed differently in different contexts (e.g., Côté, 1996; Schachter, 2005a). Educators are in a strategic place to serve as mediators of society to students. As mediators, their reflections on educational practices regarding identity content, structure, and process or social, personal, and ego identity are dependent on their perceptions of students' school, home, and community contexts and their expectations regarding future broad sociocultural contexts. Educators' perceptions of these contexts will influence their choice of what and how they mediate to students. A teacher in this spot could ask, "Given that my students are each endowed with certain personal and sociocultural identity elements and will grow up to live in a particular society with certain presumed characteristics, how will their identities develop and what are the options open to the school and to me to participate constructively in their formation?" Next are examples of specific contextual issues that might be relevant on different levels.

On the macrosystem level we could ask, Is the social environment within which education is being conducted traditional, modern, postmodern, or a mixture of these (Schachter, 2005a), and what are the global cultural, economic, and religious forces affecting adolescence? These contexts likely influence, among others, whether youngsters grow up in a relatively dynamic or stable environment; whether they are exposed to multiple incongruent contexts or to relatively consistent harmonious contexts; and whether they develop in a cultural milieu that is community oriented or individualistic, emancipatory or controlling, and globally or locally oriented. Contextual influences may affect educators' decisions regarding IdEd treatment objectives for different situations, such as the desirability of a consistent self-image, the degree of agency students should be encouraged to adopt, how individualistic an identity is desirable, and whether different

levels or kinds of exploration should be sanctioned or encouraged (Assor, Cohen-Malayev, Kaplan, & Friedman, 2005).

On an intermediate level of context, we might, for example, ask questions regarding the attributes of the community, family, and school in which identity formation is taking place. What are the identity issues that concern members of the specific communities to which the student belongs? Family economic circumstances, religious beliefs, cultural understandings, child-raising ideologies, and many other conditions can be considered. What local economic, cultural, and religious resources do children and their families have that can assist identification and identity exploration? Other relevant topics involve issues such as the IdEd setting—home, public, or private school, or an informal community setting. If at school, it is important to consider possible school effects such as whether the student body is culturally or economically homogenous or heterogeneous. We might ask what cultural, pedagogical, and legal leeway is afforded to teachers in discussing and acting upon identity issues and whether identity development is part of the school's charter or ethos.

Last, on the microcontextual level, we might raise issues regarding conditions enabling or hindering teachers who seek to assist students individually in identity building efforts, such as class size, variation in student background, special needs of students, and so on. Are the different groups that a child belongs to in school congruent with each other, and what skills are needed to manage the incongruence? What routine interactions does the student have with meaningful adults, and is school structured so that students interact with the same adults extensively or do they constantly see new faces? All these levels of context present important issues to educators and researchers studying education and identity development.

ETHICAL ISSUES

The concept of IdEd can raise ethical concerns. Choosing to get involved with students' identity, especially from an institutionalized base of power, may be viewed by some as an educational stance with sinister Orwellian connotations, as an abuse of power inviting indoctrination, minimally as an overstepping of the teacher's legitimate social role. Although a thorough discussion of this important issue is beyond the scope of this article, we wish to relate to a few points (see extended discussion in Waterman, 1994).

First, we reiterate that in calling for the study of IdEd and highlighting some of its potential benefits, we are not issuing an endorsement of any specific pedagogical practice to enhance identity or any specific content or overarching goal. Rather, we recognize that there are educators who are concerned about their students' developing identities in the context of furthering educational goals, and we call for scholars and researchers to recognize this phenomenon, to unpack it, and to study identity-related practices. Examination of

these issues should also involve delineating the relevant ethical issues and debating the legitimate boundaries of IdEd practice. Moreover, we believe that making the examination explicit will facilitate rather than obfuscate a serious analysis and debate of the ethical issues.

The most problematic general argument that might be raised against IdEd is the danger that some educators will abuse institutional power and impose their own particular versions of identity contents, structures, or processes on students, families, or communities that have different views of desirable identity rather than working with them collaboratively and dialogically. Alternatively, some educators may impose aspects of identity that suppress rather than advance student development. Granted, there are downsides to IdEd if abused, misunderstood, concealed, or applied without critical reflection—much as is the case with many educational interventions. However, the multiple examples throughout this article demonstrate that we do not view IdEd as the replication of specific identities while stifling student agency; rather, IdEd stems from recognition of the centrality of personal agency in determining identity. Indeed, we believe that the practice of IdEd can contribute to the strengthening of student agency. Because IdEd is a new dynamic concept, the scholarly and applied directions of which are not fully predictable at this stage, as discussion of the concept develops and as educational interventions are conceptualized in IdEd terms and implemented, it will be crucial for educators to carefully scrutinize the ethical implications of each intervention. They will also need to be transparent in their practices and sensitive to the degree of cultural, communal, parental, and institutional support for IdEd practices. Disagreements surrounding this issue among different stakeholders would require further ethical deliberation.

Finally we note that the diversity of goals, aspects, and levels of identity that were discussed in this article, and the diversity of contexts in which IdEd can take place, require a nuanced treatment of ethical issues. Whereas the ethical concerns confronting different educators interested in IdEd may perhaps have certain commonalities that extend across particular local contexts or preferred educational goals, it is nevertheless imperative to take into account the particular local considerations and goals that largely define the perceived meanings of educational practices.

SUGGESTED RESEARCH

By presenting the IdEd concept this article has also called for greater research efforts to investigate the purposeful involvement of educators with students' identity formation. As noted earlier, much of the research that has been conducted concerning identity and education examined particular student populations or particular aspects of identity. Some of this research has focused on educational effects on identity formation, and some has been concerned with the effects

of concern about identity on educational practice. Because there has been no field of study relating education to identity, the knowledge gained from the individual studies has not generated large steps toward a comprehensive understanding of these phenomena. We are still largely at the stage of manipulating individual pieces of the puzzle. The conceptual framework offered in this article is intended to contribute to a more systematic, programmatic, theory-based approach to the study of the intersection between identity and education.

We believe that the IdEd model can offer a fertile research perspective. For example, one might investigate how schools and educators affirming different educational purposes stimulate varying identity formation processes among students with diverse characteristics and how the processes relate to desirable student attainments. In this vein we used the IdEd model to examine the relationship between the existence in secondary schools of different degrees of identity formation processes, what we called the school “identity climate,” and variables associated with high school students’ identity development, such as confidence about successful future role behavior and engagement in exploration (Rich & Schachter, in press). One important result in this study was that students who perceived that their academic studies were personally meaningful experienced enhanced engagement in exploration and greater confidence in successfully filling future roles.

In particular, we think it will be valuable to investigate how identity concerns might be guiding educators’ thinking and practice. One study using the IdEd model explored high school counselors’ overt and covert assumptions and understandings regarding identity development and the strategies they used to shape student identity (Idan & Rich, 2011). This study found that the counselors’ assumptions about the purposes of education, whether held consciously or unconsciously, served as master switches having a cascading effect on their attitudes and professional behaviors toward student identity development. An ongoing study is exploring how the instructional practices of teachers at a professional school for film derive from their perspectives regarding student professional and artistic identity development. These are but a few examples of the research possibilities afforded by the IdEd perspective.

Certainly different researchers will continue to focus on particular aspects of the identity–education relationship. As noted earlier, some researchers have studied motivational aspects of the interface from the students’ perspective (Kaplan & Flum, 2009); others have looked at language, personal and cultural identity, and school attainment (e.g., Gee, 2001; Lee & Anderson, 2009); and still others are carving out other worthy areas of study. We do not think that it is appropriate now to prioritize specific topics of research. What is especially important at this stage of developing this field of study is that researchers document carefully the characteristics of the phenomena studied, among other descriptive information on the research context including schools, teachers, students,

and community, as well as educational goals and ideologies, and that they delineate meticulously the aspects, levels, contents, structures, and processes of identity that are being investigated. This careful documentation should facilitate the integration of findings from a variety of studies and lead to solid knowledge growth.

CONCLUSION

The purposes of this article were to explain why identity might be particularly important to the educational endeavor, to create a conceptual framework for discussing educating toward identity as a distinctive domain of inquiry, and to present how this framework might benefit both researchers studying education and educators who wish to reflect on their goals and practices.

To summarize briefly, we suggested an inclusive characterization of IdEd as the deliberate active involvement of an educator in the development of aspects of students’ identity. We focused on the distinctive elements of identity that explain why such involvement might be an appealing goal for many educators, whether or not they explicitly frame their purposes in identity terminology, and cited research that supports this way of thinking. By presenting IdEd, we suggested making the implicit explicit and offered a conceptual tool to educational researchers interested in understanding why educators practice as they do. Many commonplace aspects of educational practice might be conceptualized, debated, and practiced differently when subjected to analysis sharpened by a perspective that views them as implicitly guided toward identity formation.

This article also presented parameters for discussing different perspectives that might help practitioners tailor an IdEd perspective that fits their goals, values, and the contexts in which they work. Educators could benefit from thoughtful reflection on these and other questions: What are my educational goals and what aspects of identity contribute to them? What are the personal and educational implications for my students of the contexts in which I educate and in which my students will be growing into, and what is my job in this regard? What level of student identity should I concentrate on—social, personal, or ego identities—and in what way? What do I want to accomplish regarding identity contents, processes, and structure? What psychological and social processes are especially prominent and should be addressed through education? In what ways are these processes involved in the future regulation and growth of student identity, and how should this affect the pedagogical practices I employ? Using these and other locally significant questions as guidelines can lead to deeper understanding of teachers’ thinking and action as well as facilitate coherent communication among educators. These questions highlight the especially complex nature of IdEd which suggests that educators’ ongoing deep reflectivity is a necessary component

of practicing IdEd effectively. Certainly IdEd also challenges teacher educators to consider whether and how this conceptual framework should be presented to enrich the pedagogical thinking of students of education and to reflect on the curricular changes that may be necessary if implemented. This is an important topic that demands extensive attention.

The framework presented here is an initial suggestion intended to stimulate discussion. Certainly there still remain many important issues and concerns that have not been adequately addressed. Yet we think that this attempt to delineate a distinct domain of study and to provide some major parameters with which to understand the scope and diversity of this domain is important. Efforts to integrate other theoretical perspectives and empirical work into this conceptual framework should generate new perspectives and research directions that will deepen our understanding of the identity–education interface.

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