

Chapter 6

Research perspectives on the nature and development of identity

To thine own self be true; then it follows as surely as the day follows the night that thou shalt not be false to any man.

Polonius' advice to Laertes in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

Young people make their lives by using various resources, especially those drawn from trusted relationships, to create storylines about who they are and where their lives are leading. The results of their narratives, or 'storying' are visible over time: different understandings shape the way individuals engage in the world, the way they engage shapes experience, and experience, in turn, shapes understandings.

Richard Eckersley et al., 2006¹

This chapter considers insights into identity from research and theory, mainly in psychology and sociology. The analysis will be more concerned with interpretations that could be the starting points for further research on identity development in young people than a comprehensive review of existing research. The chapter concludes with an interpretation of identity and identity health that will be useful for educators and professionals engaged in the care of youth.

The analysis of research related to identity is organised under the following headings:

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6.1 Developmental theories: contributions to self-understanding

Psychological theories of identity propose that this construct is a fundamental one for the human person, one that has a strong influence on behaviour. Not all of the theories

of human development focus specifically on identity, but a number of them contribute helpful ideas.

Structural-developmental theories have explored the drives and motivations that stem genetically from the human organism at different stages of biological and intellectual development. Coupled with perspective on the influence of the social environment, they are useful ‘windows’ on identity. The theories of Piaget, Kohlberg, Erikson, Fowler, Kegan, Loevinger and Oser have distinctive viewpoints on personal development that are pertinent to identity. It is beyond our scope to track these contributions in any detail.²

Identity formation is at the centre of Erikson’s theory of human development.³ He considered that there was a fundamental drive towards self-understanding as individuals negotiated a sequence of developmental identity tasks that predominated at particular stages of the life cycle; human development proceeded as they gradually resolved the conflicts characteristic of each stage. For the adolescent, Erikson proposed that the major task was the development of personal identity, and then in exploring relationships: seeking personal intimacy and moving away from a sense of isolation. Erikson stressed the genetic developmental tasks. His view needs to be complemented by understanding of the social contexts within which these tasks were being negotiated. Adolescents also faced identity questions related to appearance, gender, sexuality, family, school, career and social status. As considered in the next chapter, it will be important not to underestimate the energy (and money) invested in their quest to appear ‘cool’.

Piaget’s ideas on the emergence of intellectual capacity and moral reasoning in the child were taken up by Kohlberg, who proposed a sequential stage theory focusing on the gradual development of moral reasoning.⁴ But moral reasoning was only one of the elements that affected behaviour and the development of a moral identity. Genetic factors like personality type and cultural factors like social conditioning have a strong influence. The level of moral reasoning was not in itself an adequate measure of moral maturity.

Fowler’s theory of believing (or human faith development) focused on changing patterns in the believing process.⁵ It interpreted a stage-by-stage development in the ways the individual’s beliefs shaped personal meaning: from the more dependent, derivative meaning from family and social groups, through conformity to authority and dominant groups, towards a more personal and autonomous faith, with some people going further to transcend this through an ‘expansive’ faith. By contrast with Fowler, Oser looked at spiritual development in terms of the level of cognitive activity linked with different stages of belief across the life cycle.⁶

These psychological theories all implied that the universe of meanings, within which individuals understood their own needs and behaviour, changed during human development: from childish self-centredness and authority dependence in the earlier stages, through to a more autonomous and interpersonal mode of operation. In the later stages, individuals were better able to cope with conflicting views without collapsing the tensions between them. The universalist stage in the Fowler scheme suggested that a sense of personal identity had developed such intrinsic security that it no longer needed the sharp boundaries that separated them from the belief systems or religions of others – boundaries that seemed to serve a defensive function in the earlier stages.

Kegan's theory of personal development proposed a series of structural-developmental stages through which the sense of 'self' gradually progressed.⁷ It is similar to the other stage theories in that the transition to different stages depended on the emergence of new psychological competencies. The key to Kegan's theory is the notion that as long as individuals are 'embedded' in particular emotions, thinking and behaviour, they remain unable to distinguish how these elements affect both the way they operate psychologically and how they 'present' themselves to others. As they learn to take more perspective on themselves and their social situation, their reflection on self from some psychological distance enables them to be less controlled by their dominant feelings and drives, and more capable of choice about the sort of person they want to become.

According to Kegan, children progressed from the 'Incorporative self' when they realised that the world was bigger than they were and that others were not just extensions of themselves. However, because they were still very self-centred and driven by needs and feelings, he described the next stages as the 'Impulsive self' and the 'Imperial self'. In these stages, manipulation to get what one wants was still a powerful component of the self that had not yet acknowledged sufficiently the individuality of others and reciprocity in personal relationships. Kegan saw the development of a better appreciation of others as the point of transition to the 'Interpersonal self'. Then, the recognition of social systems (of principles, responsibilities and commitments, together with a greater capacity to separate the view of self from self-centred operations) signalled the development of the 'Institutional self'.

In the light of the changing personal competencies proposed by Piaget, Kohlberg and Fowler, one could predict a further stage of self-development within Kegan's theory where individuals became more mature by transcending the structures that previously sustained the sense of self. The individual, with growing internal spiritual resources, could become even more autonomous; but significantly, this new autonomy would not be a return to self-centredness, but a transition to a greater appreciation of relationships between a more independent individual and the world shared interdependently with others.

A valuable aspect of Kegan's theory as far as identity is concerned is his focus on 'self-understanding'. As with the other structural-developmental theories, it gives insight into the way people make sense of themselves and their relationships with others. Kegan's picture of identity maturity emphasised the ways in which they struggled out of successive forms of psychological embeddedness to achieve greater capacity to make meaning of their experience.⁸

All of the structural developmental theories have stages through which the individual progresses. The notion of 'progress' and 'development' has an implied value judgment about human improvement – a notion of human health and even of human perfection: you become better as you progress to 'higher' stages.

The metaphors 'growth' and 'development', as used in psychology, derive much of their meaning from Western economic thinking. Hence there is a tendency to interpret personal growth and development quantitatively as psychological 'increases', like growth in individual wealth or in the national economy; it must be 'bigger', 'better', 'higher' or 'deeper'. Also, the stage theories almost inevitably lend themselves to 'scores' for measuring personal or spiritual development; and this appeals, partly because it harmonises with the mentality of a consumer society. Even personal

development can be commodified and planned in linear lock-step stages (there is good evidence for this in the burgeoning personal development and self-help ‘industry’ and in ‘consumer spirituality’; see Chapter 8). Higher scores or stages are indications of success and achievement. So there is a danger that personal development may take on the note of increasing perfection and performance – in short, spiritual success according to an acceptable social scale, like improving IQ (also EQ [emotional intelligence] and SQ [spiritual intelligence]). This metaphor for personal development is too limited. As Moran suggested, a wider range of metaphors is needed to interpret personal development to account for its complexity and unpredictability⁹ (18.1).

We consider that wise use of the developmental theories can give useful insights into self-knowledge and personal growth. But we caution against use of psychology in the quest of ‘getting it all together’, especially when this becomes too self-centred. It depends too much on an unrealistic notion of human perfection. A more down-to-earth image is not ‘getting it all together’ but ‘getting most of the fragile pieces pointing in the same direction’.

6.2 Psychological theories of identity: From the perspective of ‘identity health’

This section reports on psychological theories of identity to show their extensive range and their points of focus. They were considered with the following questions in mind:

- What is their principal focus as regards identity content and competencies?
- How do they attend to the interaction between inner psychological factors and external cultural factors?
- What interpretations of ‘identity health’ do they seem to imply?

For any progression from psychological theory of identity to practical care of youth, the professional needs some notion of *identity health* (which includes a moral component) to guide the translation. Criteria are needed for deciding whether an identity was good for the individual (and for others), and respected people’s freedom, uniqueness, rights and responsibilities. The notion of identity health implies a view of the nature of the human person. This chapter works towards a definition of identity health, making use of the hints within the various psychological theories. While the theories usually do not address identity health specifically, they suggest directions that desirable personal development might take, and by implication the reverse directions that could lead to ‘identity sickness’.

The summary of theories in Table 6.1 shows whether or not they are referenced to *internal categories* such as a sense of continuity of personal identity over time, and to *external or cultural categories* concerned with social roles. The theories are grouped into major types. This analysis was drawn from a review paper on identity by the European psychologist Professor Bert Hermans, with some additions from other sources.¹⁰

Table 6.1 Theories of identity from the perspective of identity health¹¹

Types of theory of identity and self	Particular theories of identity and self	Any major focus on internal categories (psychological construction with	Any major focus on external or cultural categories (social roles, public features,	Preliminary ideas on the notion of ‘identity health’ implicit in, or related to, the
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		continuity over time)	cultural reference points)	theories
A. Public, social features	Identity as a public feature		Social roles	When the individual is comfortable with the social roles taken; the appropriateness of social roles needs evaluation within a framework of values.
	Multiple social identities (Rosenberg and Gara 1985)		Description of identity in terms of multiple social roles and cultural reference groups	Ability to take on an idiosyncratic combination of social roles which satisfy the needs of the individual.
B. Psychological constructs with continuity over time	Erikson's developmental tasks (1963)	Presumes a continuity of personal 'identity proprietorship'; finds evolving answers to the question 'Who am I?' in a sequence of developmental tasks that the individual has to negotiate across the life cycle.	Experimentation with social roles, together with an attempt to harmonise these internally.	Satisfactory completion of developmental tasks, e.g. achieving 'ego integrity', 'intimacy', 'interdependence', 'autonomy'. Building a meaningful self-understanding and worldview with successful resolution of psychological conflicts.
	William James (1890)	I and Me as components of self – as 'knower' and 'self-known'.	Involvement in roles becomes part of the self as 'known'.	Maintenance of sense of continuity over time. Satisfactory development of distinctness and volition, together with meaningful material, spiritual and social 'constituents'.
	Robert Kegan's stage theory of development of the self (1982)	The evolution of self through a series of structural-developmental stages where self-	Social interaction and finding roles within the community are part of the raw materials for	As the individual matures and develops personal competencies, he/she negotiates change progressively

		understanding operates in modes distinctive of each stage. Stages include 'incorporative' self, 'impulsive' self, 'imperial' self and 'interpersonal' self.	self-development.	from stage to stage. Satisfactory progression through stages of development towards a more interdependent self.
	Self-esteem theory (1970s, see Kohn, 1994)	An undifferentiated notion of self-regard which may be high or low. Self-concept (self-image) which is positive or negative.	Self-esteem is influenced by social interaction.	Achievement of high self-regard and self-assertiveness.
<p>C. Psychological constructs with a dynamic multiplicity of components and a focus on 'organisation of knowledge' as a key factor.</p> <p>These theories address the ways individuals process and organise information in the interpretation of self.</p>	Complexity of images (Rhodewalt & Morf 1995)	Self interpreted in terms of multiple images.		Collection of images which satisfy the individual.
	Mental representations (Kihlstrom & Cantor 1984)	Self interpreted in terms of mental representations.		A self-description which is found satisfying and which meets personal needs.
	Facets (Marsh 1986)	Self interpreted as a combination of different facets (aspects which embody qualities and action).		An individually satisfying combination of facets. Facets need to be comprehensive to cover all aspects of life.

	Goals (Brandstädter & Rothermund 1994)	Self interpreted in terms of life goals to be achieved. Self is motivated by aims for life.	Goals will include some social roles.	The achievement of particular life goals.
	Tasks (Sheldon & Emmons 1995)	Self interpreted in terms of multiple developmental tasks.		Satisfactory completion of particular developmental tasks.
	Possible selves (Markus & Nurius 1986)	Self interpreted in terms of interactions between different possible expressions of the self.		A satisfying sense of self achieved through combinations of attributes from different possible selves.
	Private, public and collective selves (Triandis 1989)	The self interpreted in terms of interaction between understandings of the individual, his/her public expression and the identities of the groups in which the individual participates.	The public and collective selves can be reference points for the individual's sense of identity.	A satisfying sense of self derived from internal and external representations.
	Actual, ought, and ideal selves (Higgins 1987)	Self interpreted in the light of perceived discrepancies between different expressions of the self. Difference between the ideal self and what appears in practice.		The satisfying resolution, to some extent, of discrepancies between perceptions of the actual self, the ideal self and the morally desirable self.
D. Psychological constructs with a dynamic multiplicity of components	Narrative theory of identity (Bruner 1986; Cohler 1982; Gergen & Gergen 1988;	The world and personal experience are given meaning as parts of a narrative or autobiographical	Cultural elements contribute to the experience of individuals and stimulate narrative	A sense of satisfying meaning is derived from narrative understanding of self and

<p>and a narrative perspective.</p>	<p>Hermans 1996a,b; McAdams 1993; Sarbin 1986; Thomae 1988; Tomkins 1987)</p>	<p>structure. A history of ‘episodic’ events influences self-understanding.</p>	<p>interpretation.</p>	<p>experience.</p>
	<p>Paul Ricoeur’s narrative perspective on identity</p>	<p>Identity development is an autobiographical process; it is derived psychologically from personal reflection – primarily a process of interpretation (hermeneutics).</p>	<p>The individual interprets identity through interaction with community narratives.</p>	<p>Achieving an ongoing, satisfying narrative which helps interpret the individual’s sense of self and experience.</p>
	<p>The narrative perspective of the polyphonic novel as proposed by Bakhtin (see Hermans & Kempen 1993). The dialogical self (Hermans, Kempen & Van Loon 1992)</p>	<p>Going beyond the I as ‘author’ and me as ‘actor’ to a plurality of relatively independent narrative perspectives.</p> <p>Self is understood and expressed through a dynamic multiplicity of relatively autonomous ‘I positions’ which interact through dialogue.</p>	<p>Dialogical relationships for identity can extend to others.</p>	<p>Allowing multiple ‘voices’ to have a say in understanding the narrative of the self.</p> <p>Through dialogical relationships (mainly internal) the individual’s identity achieves a ‘multivocal’ quality. A number of distinct and semi-autonomous voices are allowed to have a say in the self-expression of the individual. Success in dialogue between the different identity voices. This would also include conflict that is not always resolved.</p>

<p>E. Psychological constructs which emphasise the influence of culture or others on the development of identity</p>	<p>CH Cooley's idea of the '<i>looking glass self</i>' as developed in the symbolic interactionist school of sociology (Cooley 1998, from work written at the turn of the century; see also Blumer 1969)</p>	<p>The image of self is in part derived from reflections of the self that an individual encounters through interaction with others.</p>	<p>Social interaction has a major influence on self-understanding. How individuals are viewed and treated by others has a significant bearing on their acquisition of values, beliefs, and sense of self.</p>	<p>Achievement of a satisfying image of self that is in harmony with the culture.</p>
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A common initial reaction to a summary like the one in Table 6.1 is perplexity at seeing so many theories of identity – and this is not a complete list. As Hermans noted, the contemporary situation is characterised by 'increasing multivoicedness in self and society, a development unprecedented in the history of the human mind'.¹² People find themselves awash with a multiplicity of proposed ways of 'being yourself', all of which seem to have easily accessible resources for helping them achieve it.

Yet, in spite of this apparent cultural richness, there is evidence of alarmingly high levels of alienation and lack of meaning. The problem is not so much the multiple voices per se, but the way people respond to the contemporary situation. Hermans felt that *dialogue* was the crucial element for finding meaningful relationships between 'unity' and 'multiplicity'; he rightly pointed out that a retreat towards unity and 'fixed-ness' of identity, and away from multiplicity was not an appropriate solution for the times. We suggest that dialogue is important, but not enough; what is also needed is the *evaluation* of what is proposed for identity. But this cannot be done in a value-free way, hence the importance of establishing a baseline position on what constitutes identity health.

Within the limitations of this exercise, issues are raised by questions about what constitutes identity health within the different theoretical frameworks. Most of them appear to say little explicitly about identity health – we make this judgment tentatively because we have only a elementary knowledge of many of the theories. However, most of them seem inclined towards a notion of identity health that is more concerned with the successful engagement in psychological *processes* than with the acquisition of desirable identity *content*. By content is meant qualities of self that can be evaluated in ethical terms – that is, an evaluation of how identity meets individual needs and how it might impact on others. At first sight, most of the theories seem to presume a value-free position as regards the content dimension to identity health.

Even where social interaction was an influential factor in the theories, the focus was predominantly psychological and on the individual. Hence, when interpreting what each theory might imply for identity health, it was difficult to avoid using the phrase 'satisfying for the individual' as the ultimate criterion. In one sense this ultimacy is natural, because it is the province of the individual to make such judgments. However, this may lean towards narcissism if identity health were to be judged exclusively by

what pleases individuals or meets their personal needs. Other more objective, community-related values are also needed for the moral evaluation of identity.

6.3 Personal identity: Interaction between the individual and culture

Below are brief comments about theories of identity that focused on relationships between the individual and culture.

6.3.1 A social psychological view of identity (Symbolic interactionism)

The writings of the early sociologist CH Cooley (1864–1928) proposed the idea of the *Looking Glass Self*: the image of self is in part derived from reflections of the self received from others.¹³ This thinking was developed by sociologists in the symbolic interactionist school like Herbert Blumer; they considered that social interaction had a major influence on self-understanding and that external cultural reference points were important for identity.¹⁴ How individuals were perceived and treated by others had a significant bearing on their acquisition of values and self-image. This thinking was important in self-esteem theory (6.4) and was also consistent with theory about the social construction of reality, as evident in the work of Berger and Luckmann.¹⁵

6.3.2 A narrative structure to identity

As noted in the quotation from Eckersley at the beginning of the chapter, and in the research listed in Table 6.1, section D, a narrative structure for identity helps interpret the place of the individual in the world as part of an interactive personal journey. This approach is represented strongly in the Australia 21 Research Report (2006) *Flashpoints and Signposts: Pathways to success and wellbeing for Australia's young people*. It considered that:

A body of work has emerged around narrative, exploring the increased importance of story in the *multiple* and *changing* ways in which people make sense of their lives and identities in a now complex and changing world (E.g. see Bruner 1987, Gergen and Gergen 1988).

... the capacity to hold strong personal narratives also allow[s] young people to negotiate chaos, hardship and crisis.¹⁶

The category story or narrative is a central one for meaning (2.9.17) and spirituality. In addition, it is a key category for interpreting the spiritual and moral influence of film and television (Chapter 15).

Grimmitt's account of the role of education in personal identity formation regarded individuals as 'actors' in their own personal stories which unfold in the context of, and through interaction with, the larger cultural story or cultural history. The role of education is to help the young become more aware of the historical cultural origins of their identity, as well as opening up new identity horizons. In the light of new options, they can change the direction of their own identity stories or personal histories.¹⁷

6.3.3 A perspective on identity from critical theory

At the end of Chapter 2 (2.10.14), a brief summary of critical theory was given to show the perspectives from which critical theory addressed questions about personal and cultural meaning. At this point, it is pertinent to note that critical theory is also

helpful in the study of identity. In fact identity is one of its major interests. It is concerned with the ways in which personal and cultural identities develop, their interaction, and the degrees of congruence and conflict between them.

One description of critical theory claimed that it was specially interested in

ways that cultural institutions – ranging from media, to religion, to scientific and academic work – are used to shape identities, dictating what is accepted as true, normal, or acceptable within a culture, offering privilege to some, and marginalising or denying others. Critical theory looks at the mechanics of this process of privilege and marginalisation, and often thinks about the possibility of political action against this process.¹⁸

Our purpose here is to signal the importance of critical theory for the interpretation of identity dynamics. Some of the relationships between aspects of critical theory and identity will be referred to in the discussion below.

6.3.4 Relatively fixed psychic reference points for identity (Brennan)

The psychoanalytic theorist Brennan considered that personal identity depended on perceived relatively fixed points because it relied on its identifications with others to maintain a sense of individual distinctness.¹⁹ Identity developed out of images of the self received from others – images that remained fairly constant in relation to the movement of life. Individuals needed these psychic fixed points, but these same fixed points could hold the individual back from further change and development. Brennan argued that these identity reference points were reinforced by the construction of commodities in the social world. She claimed that while fixed points ‘blocked the mobility of psychic energy’, technological commodities, unless they were constructed with care, could block the regeneration of nature and natural energy.

When thinking about psychic reference points for young people’s self-definition, it should be understood that some of their relatively fixed points are actually rapidly moving! As discussed in the next chapter, ever changing fashions can function like a fixed identity reference point; this can have more influence than historical, religious or ethnic traditions. Continual change has become a near permanent feature of young people’s social world.

Different theories have emphasised a relatively fixed psychic basis to identity; others emphasised the capacity to change identity in response to new circumstances. A robust view of personal identity needs both properties – having permanence and flexibility is not contradictory. An enduring stability to personal identity is not incompatible with its functioning like a ‘working hypothesis of the self’, which is always being revised to some extent. This notion is important for education in identity, because if either aspect is emphasised at the expense of the other, an unbalanced view will result.

6.3.5 Exaggerated individualism (Lacan)

How individuals think about and relate to others is influenced by their own self-definition. This in turn is affected by inner developmental needs interacting with culture.

But at times the cultural forces can appear to have such a powerful influence that they distort identity development. People can be seduced into an identity that

endangers their humanness; it can be subtly constructed for them as a marketable package by power, economic, advertising and media groups in society.

Max Weber, in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930), suggested that the religious revolution of the Reformation and its influence on the rise of individualism set the stage for the development of capitalist societies in the West. He did not claim that this was the only factor that promoted capitalism.

The French psychoanalytic theorist Jacques Lacan proposed, in turn, that capitalist society accelerated the emphasis on individualism to the point where many people suffer from a social psychosis of individualism – trying to live out a massive ego fantasy. He considered that much of their anxiety came from the frustration of unrealistic personal desires; the drive for higher production rates and profits had an ever increasing negative effect on the psychic environment in which people live, and it distorted the social reference points they drew on for self-understanding and identity.²⁰

These identity reference points are reinforced by the production and marketing of commodities that strengthen the hold of such a psychosis. Then the reference points become entrenched, trapping people into an identity and a frustrating search for meaning in what are ultimately unrealistic and antisocial fantasies. The result is a psychotic idea of identity in the service of free enterprise. Brennan, an interpreter of Lacan, suggested further that this post-enlightenment psychosis of individualism blocked flexibility to human identity development that involved relationships with other people and nature, and that in turn this caused degradation of the social and physical environments.²¹

Lacan's theory suggested that individualism tended to

make the world over in its own image by reducing the lively heterogeneity of living nature and diverse cultural orders to a grey mirror of sameness. And it can only do this by consuming living nature in producing a proliferation of goods and services whose possession becomes the *sine qua non of the good life*. Of course, if nature is endlessly consumed in the pursuit of a totalising course, then that course is dangerous for living; it constitutes a danger to one's own survival, as well as that of others.²²

Brennan also considered that Western societies have a degree of social angst arising from ambivalence about its various descriptions as post-industrial, post-Christian, post-structural, postmodern, post cold-war (and now post 9/11), while anxious that there appears to be no compelling analysis that will readily give a hopeful sense of future direction.

In Western countries in particular, people seem to have become more preoccupied with personal identity and individuality than formerly. As far as their motivation is concerned, finding 'themselves' appears to be a more prominent and immediate concern than finding a secure career or working towards a more secure society. This signals a fundamental shift in their outlook on life. Glasser identified this trend many years back in his book *Identity society* (1972):

Previously people's lives were governed by achievable goals or ideals. Now people are raising questions about their own personal

development as a unique identity rather than as the means to some social end ... almost all Western people are first concerned with how to fulfil themselves as human beings, the quality of their life, recognition and pleasure rather than life itself. This has occurred because people who live in the West have gained basic economic security, or if they have not, they have gained the illusion of security which seems to serve the same effect – hammering home the message to fulfil and enjoy yourself in a world where this is possible ...

The struggle for a goal – a profession, a diploma, a home, a family – had been superseded by the struggle to find oneself as a human being, to become aware of and enjoy the pleasures implicit in our own humanity ... ‘identity’ is about the same for all people. Everyone aspires to have a happy, successful, pleasurable belief in self. Role or identity is now so important that it must be achieved before we set out to find a goal.

[Quoting Marshall McLuhan, 1969:] ‘youth mindlessly acts its identity quest in the theatre of the streets, searching not for goals but for roles, striving for an identity that eludes them.’²³

Glasser went on to argue that institutions like schools would not be effective if they ignored this ‘new priority in human motivation’. They needed to be responsive to identity needs as few students would be ‘willing to work towards school goals before gaining self recognition’.²⁴

6.3.6 Identity implied in life structure (Bourdieu)

The dual aspects of identity development noted above – permanence and flexibility – acknowledge that externals and social interaction are crucial reference points and raw material for identity. For some people, their identity problems arise through a lack of critical self-reflection that should be a part of identity development; they may give little or no thought to identity, but may live with the stereotypes and values they have absorbed unconsciously; they display an identity by default.

The idea of an implied identity embedded in behaviour can be linked with the thought of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu on what he called ‘life structure’.²⁵ He defined this as the beliefs and values implied in the way individuals spend their time and engage in activity. It is like an identity portrait of individuals painted by the way they act and invest energy. No matter what they might say about their identity, their life structure is the litmus test of authenticity. Considerations of identity cannot afford to overlook the significance of people’s ‘embeddedness’ in a concrete life structure.

From Bourdieu’s perspective, some individuals had identity conflict. This means a hiatus between their view of their own identity and the implied identity others perceived in their behaviour. Such a hiatus indicated unrealistic reflection on the self; their self-understanding was deluded.

This view of identity naturally points towards education as one process that might inform self-understanding. The goal here would be fostering an identity that is open to enhancement through education.

6.3.7 Spirituality and identity

Spirituality is a core expression of identity. Often a religious culture can strongly inform identity. However, the tendency towards secular spirituality in many youth goes hand in hand with their inclination not to see religion, including their own particular tradition, as making a strong contribution to identity. These issues are taken up in more detail in the next chapter on youth identity, and in later chapters on spirituality.

6.3.8 Generational identity

There is a growing literature, at both academic and popular levels, about generations as a scheme for interpreting group identity at a macro level.²⁶ This approach analyses significant changes in both cultural background and lifestyle that characterise the different generations in Western industrialised countries, and it seeks to interpret the causal factors. It is helpful in describing the different mentalities that are shaped over time by growing up in different cultural circumstances.

We chose not to give special attention to this approach because a number of the cultural influences will already be covered under other headings.

6.4 Relationships between identity and self-esteem

Self-esteem is a construct intimately related to ‘self’ and ‘identity’. In both clinical and educational practice, this construct has been useful for interpreting people’s behaviour (particularly for children and adolescents) and for promoting personal development. Practitioners regard it as a fundamental and influential aspect of people’s psychological makeup. Many personal problems flow from low self-esteem. Negative behaviour, particularly attention-getting, often indicates poor regard for the self – people who feel unloved and unlovable. This may also reflect the poor way in which they were treated by significant others, but this is not always the case. In some instances, where young people have realised that they were affected by a syndrome of poor self-esteem, and where they began to imagine themselves more positively, there was a dramatic turnaround in their behaviour. Acknowledging that low self-esteem had triggered negative behaviour was a psychological watershed. It enabled them to start their lives anew with more self-confidence, and with a sense of being freed from destructive behaviour patterns into which they had been locked.

While the construct self-esteem has been valuable psychologically, there are some problems with the way it has been conceptualised in research, and in the way it has been used in education. In these two areas, use of the construct can give the impression that self-esteem is like some undifferentiated, ‘quantitative’ component of personality – you have ‘lots’, or ‘some’ or ‘none’ – and this has consequences for wellbeing and behaviour; some negative behaviour is attributed to low levels of self-esteem. Therefore, the idea that increasing self-esteem must be good for individuals is widely accepted and not contested.

But the interpretation of self-esteem as an undifferentiated, quantitative element of identity does not readily accommodate the situation where self-esteem is not unconditionally positive. For example, some individuals have a sense of self that is arrogant, intolerant and aggressive – and they are comfortable with this self-image; technically, they have high self-esteem! Self-esteem needs to be understood as more than the level of good feelings about the self. Self-esteem has a ‘content’, and this

content – the self-image – has a moral value and should be open to moral evaluation. The construct self-esteem needs to include something about the ‘quality’ of self-image and identity. While the general principle of being respectful of all identities is an important one, this democratic ideal has limits protected by law – we should not be equally tolerant of identities that clearly compromise the rights and freedoms of other people. This principle is also important when examining relationships between identity and violence.

Hence we propose a need for greater differentiation within the construct self-esteem to make it less ambiguous. It needs to include scope for evaluation of the self. A step in this direction would be to identify two dimensions to self-esteem, *content* and *affect*. In this way, self-esteem can be interpreted as the dynamic link between what individuals *think* about their personal identity and how they *feel* about it. This interpretation has both *descriptive content* (the image of the individual’s qualities as a person) and an *affective dimension* (how comfortable or satisfied they feel with that image). For example, people may feel more or less comfortable with their self-understanding, and about how they are perceived by others; or they may have a lingering, vague feeling of doubt about their value – they may feel that if others only knew what they were really like, they would find them unattractive and undesirable.

While it may be transparent to a perceptive adult that a particular young person feels he or she is unloved, this may be something that the young person is not able to comprehend or admit. Adults, teachers and counsellors periodically make diagnoses of this condition in young people; but it is not an easy one to change. It is not just a matter of telling the young person that he or she has a problem. Neither is it readily resolved by a dose of what has been called ‘unconditional affirmation’ – or by telling them they are ‘special’. It can be a psychological difficulty that individuals carry throughout their lives, often a cause of distress to themselves and to those close to them.

Therefore it remains an issue for the community to work out how best to address the problem of low self-esteem in youth. A first valuable step is to understand the problem. What is usually described as low self-esteem has two aspects:

- 1 The image of self that individuals with low self-esteem have is often harsh and unfavourable; it is usually not an accurate picture, but for them it represents reality.
- 2 Despite any outward show of self-confidence, they feel unhappy with their self-image.

Therapeutic efforts to redress the problem, as well as any generally informative educational process, need to focus on both these aspects. This means looking at the *degree of satisfaction* individuals have with their perceived self-image or identity, as well as proposing a *self-evaluation* of its humanness. Highlighting this evaluative dimension can help address limitations in the self-esteem movement in education; it has operated out of an oversimplified understanding of self-esteem, and also out of questionable empirical measures.

The empirical research on self-esteem needs critical interpretation. There seems to be a disjunction between the way counsellors and educators make good use of the construct as a psychological theme for interpreting behaviour and the way it has been conceptualised and operationalised in empirical research. In turn, there are ambiguities in self-esteem education that draws on this research. Few would oppose

the idea that education should help improve students' perceptions of their own worth, but what this means in practice needs to be more carefully articulated.²⁷

Coopersmith, one of the earliest self-esteem researchers in the United States, understood self-esteem with an evaluative emphasis: 'a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes the individual holds toward himself.'²⁸ However, when it came to the development of self-report questionnaires for 'measuring' self-esteem, the evaluation of personal characteristics (a complex and sensitive process) was understandably not prominent. As a result, many instruments for measuring self-esteem were concerned mainly with subjects' responses to questions about how favourably they felt about themselves. What was being measured was not necessarily the same construct that educators and clinical psychologists were using – the research seemed to be measuring 'self-assertiveness' and not 'self-esteem'. It was the latter more complex construct that had such an important influence on behaviour. Some people are very self-assertive, but this may indicate a low self-esteem that is unacknowledged or kept well concealed. Also, there was a problem in that the research findings might say more about how individuals *wished* to appear than about what they really felt about their 'true' self – presuming that this could be accurately known anyway. The self-esteem research reported on confidence and self-satisfaction, but not about what sort of a person the individual was. Hitler would probably have scored well on self-esteem scales!

Some researchers suggested that those who scored highly on self-esteem tended to be the ones who demonstrated 'a willingness to endorse favourable statements about the self as a result of an ambitious, aggressive, self-aggrandising style of presenting themselves'.²⁹ With conceptual difficulties like this, it is not surprising that research studies linking educational programs with gains in self-esteem (or research linking behavioural problems with low self-esteem) have, in the main, shown no significant correlation – and therefore questionable evidence of causation.³⁰

The ambivalence and inconclusiveness of this psychological research does not seem to have inhibited the educational interest in fostering self-esteem, as informed by these studies. The main focus of curriculum materials concerned with self-esteem that appeared since the 1970s has been on unconditional student affirmation – telling students 'how special they are' and encouraging self-assertiveness. (See for example the titles *Self Esteem: A family affair*, and *Self Esteem, a classroom affair: 101 ways to help children like themselves*.)³¹ While no doubt such student materials may have been helpful to the limited role that classroom teaching might have in fostering self-esteem, they did not try to explore the complex personal processes through which self-understanding, self-image and self-valuing develop.

There are two potential dangers in the 'I am special' approach: First, it can trivialise the importance and complexity of the construct self-esteem as far as student personal growth is concerned. Second, its focus on the individual is yet another aspect of education and culture that could encourage self-centredness and self-preoccupation. An approach to self-esteem education that focuses too narrowly on psychological self-enhancement might end up being narcissistic; it might distract attention from social and community aspects; it could overlook the importance of analysing economic, political and social factors that have an influence on how people are valued and devalued. These 'structural' identity aspects might be having more influence on self-esteem than any educational self-analysis procedures.

The idea of linking education with the fostering of self-esteem is not in question; the point being made here is the need to acknowledge first that self-esteem is a complex but vital factor in identity and psychological health; second, that self-esteem education should not be thought of in clinical psychological terms, but rather as studies that can contribute to young people's understanding of self-esteem as a component of identity. It is likely that the quality of the personal relationships between teachers and pupils will be more important for student self-esteem than the formal curriculum.

6.5 Congenital identity deficiency?

The discussions here about identity development could incline one to the view that people have a congenital identity deficiency, and that this is a normal part of being human. Or at least it means that their identity will never be complete or perfect. Of particular importance is the way relationships with others enter into the complex process of self-understanding. Other animals do not have this problem. They are not so dependent as humans are on social interaction as a constitutive part of their development. As noted in Chapter 2, people are born human but they become persons through social interaction.

This has significant implications for a notion of identity health. Reflections of the self from others can become an important part of self-understanding and feelings of self-worth (6.3). But at the same time, this makes the individual vulnerable to the judgments others make of them – while positive judgments are always encouraging, negative judgments can be harmful – and it could also amount to a slavery to the views of others. This is the root cause of 'status anxiety' (5.1), where constant comparisons with others can be a continual source of dissatisfaction with one's lot. Hence, while acknowledging the identity-building potential of social interaction, a mature identity needs independence from outside threats to its integrity. While being aware of what others think of you is always healthy, this needs to be weighed up in the internal forum to judge whether or not one needs to change to accommodate new insights. To be able to do this requires fairly secure internal identity resources and a capacity to evaluate fresh identity inputs.

This thinking suggests that the mature, healthy identity has a consolidated bank of internal resources that forms the basic identity infrastructure. External identity resources, in culture and in social interaction, are also important for informing identity development, but they should not have an unquestioned dominance. Hence a generalisation about identity health should presume that it depends primarily on internal resources (values and beliefs) and not on externals (fashion, or the commendation of others), while there should be a balance between internal and external identity resources.

6.6 Research on relationships between identity and education

In Europe since the 1990s (and to a lesser extent in the United Kingdom), there has been a notable academic interest in links between identity and education. While much of the writing has not been in English, what has appeared in English language books and journals has shown that the development of personal identity has come to be regarded as an important goal for school education.³²

It may well be that one of the driving forces behind this has been the emergence of the European Economic Community and the European Union. As one European

educator noted: ‘Europe must decide now on the criteria for civil cohabitation and make new provisions concerning the conditions for education in *European citizenship*.’³³ These political and economic developments prompt questions about relationships between national identities and a new European identity.

Economic unity is evidently more easy to achieve than the notion of ‘European’ identity. Questions revolve around the extent to which a European identity is desired, and the extent to which it might draw on a common cultural and religious heritage – particularly when it is acknowledged that there is great cultural and religious diversity in Europe. There is also much secularisation that has little linkage with any religious traditions. The interest in admitting Turkey to the community is testing the thinking even further: it is a Muslim country and not European in its geography, history or culture.

The impression coming from these writings is that an education in identity is an important one for contemporary school education. Since little attention has been given to this in Australian educational thinking, the European literature warrants attention.

The European writings on identity education that we have examined fall roughly into two categories. Some have concentrated on developing a notion of identity that fits comfortably with modern Western education and culture;³⁴ others have said less about the nature of identity but more about how identity development might be promoted by different educational pedagogies.³⁵

An example of the former is evident in two articles by the Dutch academic Meijer published in 1991 and 1995.³⁶ She considered that the more traditional understandings of personal identity were too biological and inflexible; she felt that they defined personal identity as a relatively fixed entity that is influenced by particular group self-understandings into which individuals are socialised. She saw this emphasis as educationally problematic because in Western countries the cultural milieu is characterised by rapid social change and international, interethnic, intercultural and interreligious communication. She claimed that it was inappropriate to propose the development of this notion of identity as an educational aim because its narrowness was incompatible with democratic and pluralistic ideals.

Meijer looked at two views of identity at opposite ends of a spectrum. The first understood personal identity as a fixed inner core or kernel to the individual that remains constant throughout the life cycle. At the other extreme was the view typified by Nietzsche that personal identity is an illusion or an artificial construct; the individual is an aggregation of changing ideas, emotions and desires. Meijer considered that these interpretations were problematic; and in rejecting both the inherent identity and the option of no identity at all, she turned to the philosophy of Ricoeur, which understood identity as a process of *interpretation* of personal history. This regarded identity as the end product of reflection on personal experience, allowing for continual adjustment.

Meijer sidestepped the problems within a socialised personal identity, with its relatively permanent characteristics, by stressing personal interpretation as the primary identity-forging process.

This human potential for reflection is more fundamental than identity, for identity-as-interpretation is the outcome of reflection. Personal identity, therefore, is necessarily tentative, to be reflected upon, reconsidered and revised again and again. Education should

therefore not aim at identity-development or identity-formation, but at rational autonomy, independence and responsibility, the capacity to make informed choices or at personhood.³⁷

Meijer's approach is useful for identifying problems that result from defining identity as too fixed or as an illusion; she also showed how personal reflection and interpretation allow for continual change and development in self-understanding. However, this seems to overstate the importance of psychological reflection and to underrate the place for the less reflective, unconscious and socialised elements of identity. Her interpretation does not give an adequate account of the important role that the externals of culture and social interaction play in identity processes. Also, a legitimate concern to educate young people within a particular identity (for example, a religious, ethnic and/or cultural identity) is not necessarily opposed to promoting rational autonomy and informed decision-making; these latter 'critical' qualities are an appropriate part of a healthy, mature identity.

Meijer's ideas on education for identity development seem more relevant to mature adults, who are in a better position than children to choose components in their identity; young people are only taking initial steps in this direction. Intercultural, inter-ethnic and interfaith communication are desirable processes, but they are not a natural 'given' in pluralistic communities (an impression one gets from Meijer's writing). Such levels of dialogue are difficult goals to achieve, even with adults. School education should certainly aim at fostering first steps in such communication; but this is not incompatible with an education that is also attempting to communicate some basic sense of ethnic or religious identity. The crucial matter is how both cultural inheritance and developing individuals' autonomy are balanced. It need not imply the sort of indoctrination that Meijer is concerned about.

A school education in identity needs to account for the aim of handing on a particular cultural identity, while allowing for the critical skill development that would help young people gradually take a more responsible role in the negotiation of their identity.

The second group of (mainly European) writings about education in identity focuses more on pedagogy. Their objective is to help young people *'negotiate' their own personal identity development*. Some of the theorists considered that the individuals' construction of meaning and identity needs to take into account the pluralistic cultural environment, while giving special attention to their own particular religious and cultural heritage. For example, the development of young people's identity should involve learning

how to take on a personal and civil *identity* open to *otherness*, that is, being able to communicate with other identities, which are equal in dignity and legitimacy ... [It] should develop reciprocal tolerance and the capacity for intercultural dialogue between persons and ethnic groups; it should promote religious capabilities in terms of critical information, of capacity for judgement and personal decision; it should develop the possibility of confronting the historico-cultural heritage of Europe, and of [the individual's] own nation in particular.³⁸

Other writers said less about the communication of a particular religious, ethnic or cultural identity, as if this was not something that school education should be concerned with.³⁹ Their focus moved away from cultural identity traditions and

concentrated almost exclusively on developing the personal meaning and identity of pupils. Earlier on, the study of religious traditions had been central to cultural education in Europe; this new thinking tended to see such traditions as not important as content in their own right, but only instrumentally in terms of possible source material that might help young people in their own idiosyncratic personal quest for meaning and identity. Segments, or ‘contextual quanta’, from different religions were considered as raw material for exercising pupils’ capacities for interpreting meaning. The idea of learning to assimilate a particular cultural or religious identity receded to the background, and in some instances disappeared from educational thinking. This approach exhibited strong postmodern assumptions about a minimal role for historical traditions in education. According to this view, culture as educational content was subordinated in an instrumental fashion to young people’s quest for personal meaning and identity.

How far this thinking extends from theorists through to classroom teachers is difficult to estimate. There have been other writers who question this approach for being too strongly influenced by cultural postmodernity.⁴⁰ In brief, they consider that it suffers from excesses in subjectivism, individualism, constructivism, relativism and contextualism, while depending too much on an epistemology of uncertainty in human knowing. This is more than a ‘mouthful’ of critique, and there is no room for further explanation of it here. But at least it indicates that there is much lively debate in European and British circles about education in meaning and identity. Nevertheless, in relevant parts of our chapters on meaning, identity and spirituality we have tried to address issues arising from postmodern uncertainty about knowledge (for example 4.2.4).

6.7 A conceptualisation of identity and identity health for educational purposes

While more evaluative attention needs to be given to the various theories examined in this and the previous chapter, the summary of categories listed in Table 6.1 has at least identified a range of issues sufficiently to inform a definition of identity and identity health that will be useful in the education and care of youth.

We seek to develop a robust interpretation of personal identity, or working hypothesis of the self, that includes both a sense of subjective ‘identity permanence’ and the capacity to change and develop. For most, identity will remain fairly stable, with gradual modifications across the life cycle resulting from experience; this applies especially to those whose self-understanding is confirmed positively by others. For some, the self-hypothesis may at times be insecure. While some may try to change aspects of their identity in response to new circumstances, including education, others may resist change, consciously reinforcing their established self-image.

For educational purposes, *personal identity* can be conceptualised as *a process in which individuals draw on both internal and cultural resources for their self-understanding and self-expression*.

This conceptualisation sees identity as a dynamic interplay between internal/personal and external/cultural elements; the externals are relevant to identity when they serve as reference points and resources for self-understanding and self-expression – that is, as *cultural identity resources*. They can be appropriated and further developed for the *construction of meaning*. This view highlights people’s integration of ideas, beliefs, values and images as *internal identity resources* to make

sense of their lives – that is, making sense of both their inner experience and their interactions with the world and people. Cultural identity resources can be used in two ways: they can be assimilated (as noted above), resourcing self-understanding; and they can be utilised for purposes of distinctive self-expression, that is, helping individuals express themselves in ways they feel are consistent with their identity.

This notion of both *process* and *content* in identity suggests that it makes use of external elements of culture (family life, heroes and heroines, peers, religion, school, artefacts, work, lifestyle, leisure, television, consumer products), in relationship with internal elements (needs, beliefs, values, ideals, attitudes, emotions and moods), to fashion the ‘internal clothing’ of individuals through which they identify and understand their own characteristics as a person. It is meshed with their sense of individuality and uniqueness. When individuals think about their identity, these self-defining elements come to mind as reference points.

From this perspective, *identity health* can be regarded as a *harmonious balance between internal and external identity resources*. It is proposed as a value judgment that personal identity should be based primarily on internal resources like beliefs, values and commitments. These can be thought of as spiritual resources; they may or may not include religious elements. Too great an identification with externals weakens individuals’ autonomy and makes them slaves to expectations from outside, rather than being inner-directed. However, it would be unrealistic to expect people to be so spiritually strong and independent as to rely exclusively on their own internal resources for identity and meaning. It would be even more unrealistic to expect this of children and adolescents.

External reference points and links with culture (family, peers, cultural groups, film and television) are fundamentally important for personal identity. It is a basic part of the human condition to need the help of others, and access to cultural resources, for making sense of life, for achieving a worthwhile sense of self, and for the experience of happiness and fulfilment. Identity development and maintenance have an important interpersonal component. Some identity problems may be interpreted as too great a dependence on externals, or too much dependence on internals. Identity is displayed by what individuals think of themselves and what they do to express themselves.

A healthy identity is mainly self-validated. It does not need to be continually propped up somewhat artificially by externals, such as the approval of others or identity-related consumerism. Also, a healthy identity does not require too much energy for its maintenance, allowing for personal energies to be directed outwards and not tied up in self-analysis and self-assurance.

This view of identity and identity health is useful for education and the care of youth in a number of ways:

- It readily allows for an educational role in helping give young people access to cultural resources to assist with their development of self-understanding and self-expression.
- It is a useful construct for the interpretation of behaviour in the light of identity motivations.
- It has a strong psychological focus and is related to self-knowledge and self-esteem, and to purpose and meaning in life.
- Yet it retains significant links with social interactions and cultural identity resources.

- It allows for the identification of ‘identity content’ that is open to moral evaluation.

This interpretation of identity is like ‘meaning’ viewed from the perspective of self-expression and self-understanding. It regards identity as the consistent moral picture of people that emerges from their behaviour; it is an expression of what sort of a person they are, of what they think of themselves and what sense they make of life. Identity has a momentum about it; it is relatively fixed, but it can change. It can be influenced by new experience coupled with personal reflection and interpretation. It can be affected by perceptions of what others think of the individual; also, it can change in the light of perceptions of the identity of others, especially if they are favoured role models. Personal identity can be influenced and sustained by social interaction, including relationships with groups and institutions.

This view includes the Ricoeur-inspired notion of identity as personal interpretation arising from reflection. But it suggests that identity is not just a process of reflection that articulates the current working hypothesis of self; it acknowledges that externals and social interaction are crucial reference points and raw material for identity. For some, the problem with identity is precisely a lack of the sort of reflection that Ricoeur saw as constituting identity. They may give little or no thought to identity but may live with the stereotypes and values they have absorbed unconsciously. They are less consciously involved in their identity construction – it could be said that they display an identity by default.

Personal identity development needs some basic socialisation into the beliefs, values and culture of the individual’s family and immediate community, and into some sense of the identities of the groups in which they will participate – hopefully positive and non-exclusive. These components should not be fixed and unchangeable, but open to confirmation, evaluation and modification.

This view of identity and identity health can be expanded within a values framework. A strong sense of personal identity can be the driving force behind idealistic and humane action; it can reinforce links with others from various groups; and it can serve as a source of courage in adversity. But at times, for various reasons, individuals can feel fragile and uncertain about their identity. A diffuse identity can be related to erratic and immoral behaviour.

A natural interest in maintaining and enhancing identity is healthy, though a concern to project a particular identity may be a facade protecting inner uncertainty. Individuals may appeal to a particular identity to justify their actions – both moral and immoral ones. Anxiety about identity can be caused by various things ranging from, for example, the poor form of one’s favourite sporting team to fear that immigrants may threaten one’s jobs and lifestyle.

How individuals and groups define themselves, and what cultural elements they draw on to do this, will reveal something about their values and their understanding of what it means to be human.

This view of identity health stresses the importance of inner identity resources. It shows identity intimately linked with meaning and spirituality. The advice that Polonius gave to Laertes is pertinent here: ‘To thine own self be true; then it follows as surely as the day follows the night that thou shalt not be false to any man.’ Inner truth is achieved first by knowing what one’s moral identity and values are; then there is *fidelity* to those commitments.

Notes

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- 1 R Eckersley et al. 2006, *Flashpoints and signposts: Pathways to success and wellbeing for Australia's young people*, p. 8.
 - 2 A useful discussion of personal development as portrayed by the developmental theories is provided in BV Hill 2004, *Exploring religion in school: A national priority*, pp. 117–24.
 - 3 See the following titles by EH Erikson: 1963, *Childhood and society*; 1965, *The challenge of youth*; 1968, *Identity: Youth and crisis*; 1974, *Dimensions of a new identity*; 1980, *Identity and the life cycle*.
 - 4 L Kohlberg 1984, *Essays on moral development: The psychology of moral development*.
 - 5 JW Fowler 1981, *Stages of faith: The psychology of human development and the quest for meaning*; 1986, *Becoming adult, becoming Christian*. 1987, *Faith development and pastoral care*.
 - 6 FK Oser 1993, Toward a logic of religious development: A reply to my critics. In Fowler et al., *Stages of faith and religious development: Implications for church education and society*.
 - 7 R Kegan 1982, *The evolving self: Problems and processes in human development*, p. 87. See also AL Strauss 1977, *Mirrors and masks: The search for identity*; C Taylor 1989, *Sources of the self: The making of the modern identity*.
 - 8 C Leavey et al. 1992, *Sponsoring faith in adolescence: Perspectives on young Catholic women*, pp. 89–95.
 - 9 G Moran: 1990, *No ladder to the sky*; G Moran 1980, *Religious education development*.
 - 10 HJM Hermans 2001, Conceptions of self and identity: Towards a dialogical view.
 - 11 See the Bibliography under Identity: Writings on psychological and sociological theories of identity related to Table 6.1.
 - 12 HJM Hermans 2001, Conceptions of self and identity, pp. 59–60.
 - 13 CH Cooley 1998, *On self and social organisation: Charles Horton Cooley*.
 - 14 H Blumer 1969, *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and method*.
 - 15 P Berger 1963, *Invitation to sociology: A humanistic perspective*; P Berger 1980, *The heretical imperative: Contemporary possibilities of religious affiliation*; PL Berger & T Luckmann 1967, *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*; PL Berger & T Luckmann 1969, *The sacred canopy: The sociology of religion*.
 - 16 R Eckersley et al. 2006, pp. 26–7. See J Bruner 1987, *Life as narrative*; KJ & MM Gergen 1988, *Narrative and the self as relationship*.

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- 17 MH Grimmitt 1987, *Religious education and human development: The relationship between studying religions and personal social and moral education*, pp. 71–81, 196.
- 18 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Critical_theory Accessed 19/04/05.
- 19 T Brennan 1993, *History after Lacan*, p. xii.
- 20 JA Miller 1977, *Index, J. Lacan, Ecrits: A selection*, p. 137.
- 21 Brennan 1993, pp. 1–25.
- 22 *ibid.*, p. 4.
- 23 W Glasser 1972, *The identity society*, pp. ix, 8.
- 24 *ibid.*, p. 8.
- 25 P Bourdieu 1977, *Outline of a theory of practice*. Bourdieu's ideas relevant to identity are explained in M Warren 1994, *Life Structure and the material conditions of living*.
- 26 For example, G Barna 1994, *Baby busters: The disillusioned generation*; G Barna 1995, *Generation next: What you need to know about today's youth*; T Beaudoin 1998, *Virtual faith*; M Butcher & M Thomas 2003, *Ingenious: Emerging youth cultures in urban Australia*; M Cohen 1993, *The twenty something American dream*; D Coupland 1991, *Generation X: Tales for an accelerated culture*; W Dunn 1993, *The baby bust: A generation comes of age*; R Eckersley 2004, *Well and good: How we feel and why it matters*; R & K Hicks 1999, *Boomers, Xers and other strangers: Understanding the generational differences that divide us*; C Hamilton 2003, *Growth fetish*; N Howe & B Strauss 1991, *Generations: the history of America's future 1584–2069*; N Howe & B Strauss 1993, *13th generation*; N Howe & B Strauss 2000, *Millennials rising: The next great generation*; R Huntley 2006, *The world according to Y*; D Lipsky & A Abrams 1994, *Late bloomers: Coming of age in America*; P Loeb 1994, *Generation at the crossroads*; C Lumby 1997, *Bad girls: The media, sex and feminism in the 90s*; H Mackay 1997, *Generations: Baby boomers, their parents and their children*; M McCrindle 2003, *Understanding generation Y*; W Mahedy & J Bernardi 1994, *A generation alone: Xers making a place in the world*; S Pitman et al. 2003, *Profile of young Australians: Facts, figures and issues*; W Roof 1993, *A generation of seekers*; E Watters 2003, *Urban tribes: A generation redefines friendship, family and commitment*.
- 27 The review of A Kohn is a useful starting point: 1994, *The truth about self-esteem*.
- 28 S Coopersmith 1967, *The antecedents of self-esteem*, p. 5.
- 29 Kohn 1994, p. 273.
- 30 *ibid.*, p. 273.
- 31 For example, C & M Borba 1978, *Self esteem, a classroom affair: 101 ways to help children like themselves*; J Clark 1978, *Self esteem: A family affair*.
- 32 See Bibliography under Identity and Education – a selection of European and British writings that show a special interest in identity development as an aim

for education. Their main focus is religious education in public schools; we have not had an opportunity to determine whether this interest in identity is also evident in more general writings about European education. Links between identity and education are also taken up in pertinent sections of Chapters 16, 21 and 22.

- 33 F Pajer 2003, *School-based education and religious culture: A European approach to the problem of teaching religion in school*, p. 4.
- 34 Examples from the list of European and British writings referred to in note 32 that focus on the nature of identity from an educational perspective are: Alma & Zock, Altena et al., Carr, C. Hermans, Meijer, Pajer.
- 35 Examples from the list of European and British writings referred to in note 32 that look at strategies and pedagogies intended to develop pupils personal identity are Erricker, Heimbrock, C Hermans, Jackson, Pajer, Ploeger, Schmalzle. Some critiques of the approaches that emphasise personal identity formation are given in writings by Cooling, Watson and Wright.
- 36 W Meijer 1991, *Religious education and personal identity: A problem for the humanities*; W Meijer 1995, *The plural self: the hermeneutical view on identity and plurality*.
- 37 Meijer 1995, p. 95.
- 38 Pajer 2003, p. 8.
- 39 For example, Erricker, Heimbrock, as listed in the Bibliography (note 32).
- 40 See the writings listed for Cooling, Watson and Wright in the Bibliography (note 32).