

The links between family economic and cultural capital and adolescent identity processing styles

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Identity processing styles represent socio-cognitive strategies used for approaching identity-relevant issues (Berzonsky, 1994, 2004, 2011). While a number of studies have addressed the outcomes of identity processing styles, much less is known about how adolescents come to rely more or less strongly on informational (effortful, critical), normative (authority reliant), and diffuse-avoidant ways to approach identity-relevant information. Original identity styles theory and research suggests that reliance on a certain identity style could be a rather stable individual property, nevertheless, some previous findings indicate that this may also vary in relation to contextual factors, for example, school context (Erentaitė et al., 2018). We extend the inquiry into the contextual factors of identity processing styles by looking into the family context, specifically, family economic and cultural capital (Tramonte & Willms, 2010), and its links to identity styles at the individual and at the aggregate class/ school level.

Two-level regression analysis was performed using the data from the “Goals Lab” study with a sample of 1273 Lithuanian adolescents (51.9% females, $M_{\text{age}} = 14.86$ $SD_{\text{age}} = 0.39$). The findings revealed statistically significant, but mostly weak direct links between family capital and identity styles at the individual and class/ school level. Relational aspects of family capital (such as discussions on art and politics) predicted adolescent identity processing styles better compared to economic family capital (such as family material assets). While class/ school level variance in identity styles was relatively small (10%, 2% and 5% for informational, normative, and diffuse-avoidant identity styles, respectively), it was explained to a large extent by the cumulative class/ school levels of family economic and cultural capital (73%, 73%, and 64%, respectively). Possible mechanisms underlying these effects are discussed in the presentation.

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