



Researching youth moralities

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Luxolo's story

Starting Questions

1. Why research youth moralities?
2. How do we research youth moralities?
3. Two tools towards a sociology of morality
 - a. Moral ecology
 - b. Moral capital
4. Going further in developing a sociology of moral education

Research question

How do youth in a South African township understand the concept of morality, and how does this construction facilitate an understanding of their processes of moral formation?

The study

- An ethnographic study
- Two years
- With 37 'Black' youth – 18 men, 19 women
- Aged between 15 and 19 years old
- Most in Grade 9
- Cape Town townships

Data Collection

- Three individual interviews
- Field notes from participant observation fieldnotes
- Digital Documentaries photovoice
- Right and wrong questionnaire
- Decision making mind maps
- Free lists of right and wrong
- Rank ordering of moral influences

Sociology, morality and education

Sociology is concerned with the study of

- society, human social interaction
- the rules and processes
- bind and separate people as individuals, groups and institutions.
- Interested in the way political and social institutions and economic and social context affect human social functioning
(Bourdieu et al., 1991; Giddens & Birdsall, 2001).

The sociology of education is concerned with how:

- public institutions affect education and its outcome
- including how schooling reproduces social class, inequalities and injustices

(Bourdieu, 1997; Lauder, 2006).

Sociological theorising on morality

Nineteenth century	Twentieth century
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Durkheim• Simmel• Weber• Marx	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bauman• Levinas• Habermas• Luckmann• Foucault

discordant-processes

moral

multiple-positionings

interconnecting-systems

competing-influences

over-time

ecology

complex-antinomies

on-multiple-levels

diverse-codes

Poverty and morality

1. Alcohol and drugs sabotage – no help available
2. Cognitive impairment – reflection skills
3. Lack of supervision – too much freedom
4. Stress hormones and fatigue – too tired to act (on beliefs)

Why we need a sociology of morality?

1. Moral growth is neither linear, ordered nor directly related to physical maturation
2. What about power, marginalisation and social advantage?
3. Can morality be viewed as a form of capital, that provides economic advantage?

Capital

Intellectual

Moral

Cultural

Spiritual

Economic

Emotional

Social

Human

Conceptualising moral capital

‘Moral capital’ refers to those qualities, capacities, intelligences, strategies and dispositions that young people acquire, possess and can ‘grow’ in the pursuit of moral maturity, and where moral maturity (with its goal of ‘being a good person’) is related to educational, career and financial success.

Reputation Capacities

Career-opportunities

Financial-success

How-being-good-is-a-form-of-capital

Strategies

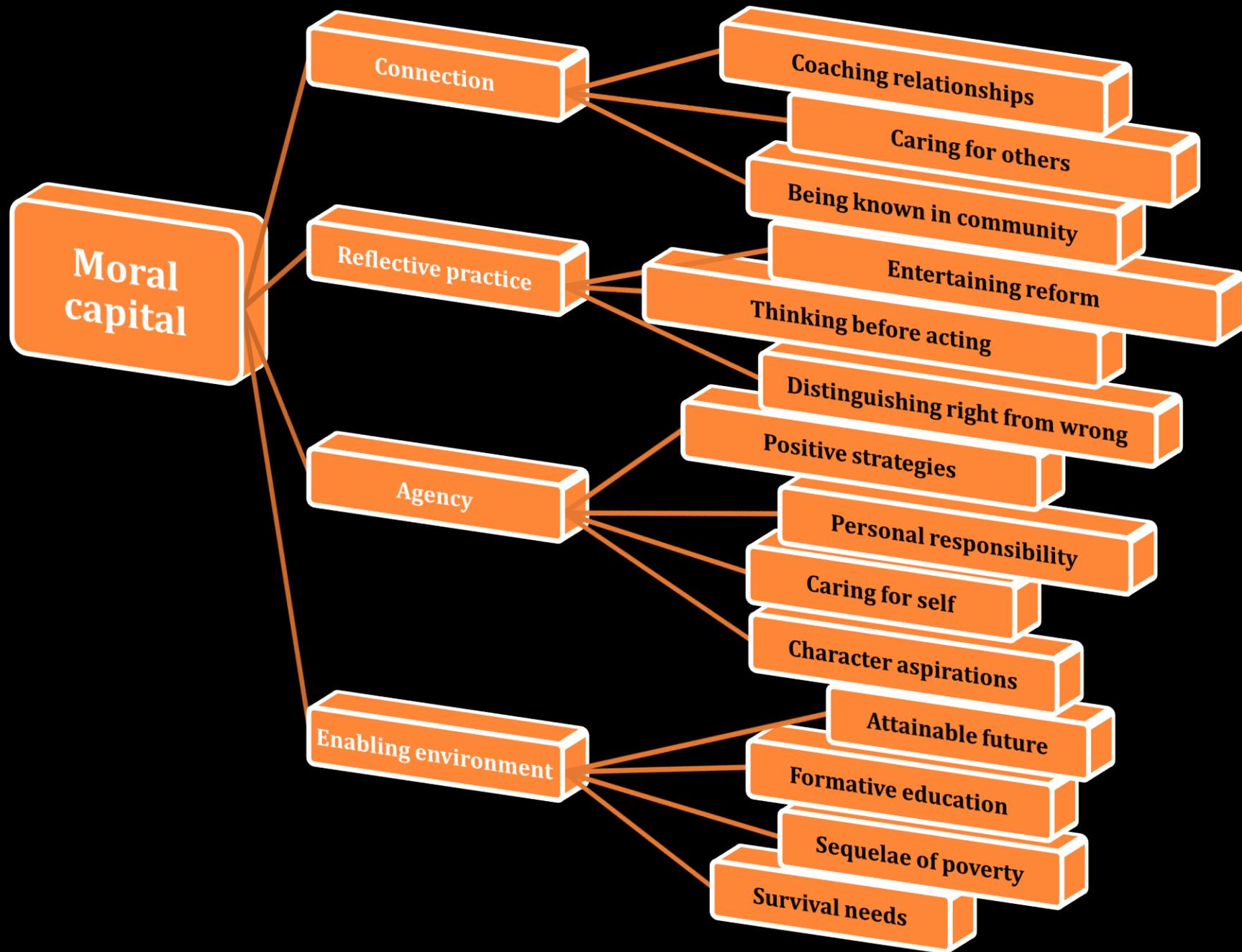
Intelligences

The-capital-you-need-to-be-good

Educational-achievement

Good-person Qualities

Dispositions



Implications of moral capital

1. Shifts focus from absence to presence
2. Nuance re: blame the victim v. blame the system
3. Addresses issues of power and social exclusion
4. Changes the aim of moral education - nurturing moral capital
5. Analysis – urges us to unravel personal, social, institutional and environmental factors
6. Provides a conceptual framework for empirical research

Further Questions

1. What are the problems associated with investigating youth moralities?
2. Are poor youth more or less moral than their middle and upper class counterparts?
3. Is moral conformity the new resistance in contexts of poverty?
4. What might a sociology of morality look like?
5. What else does a sociology of moral education need to include?