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Solidarity and Individualism as Traits of the 20th Century Child Huckleberry Fin, Holden Caulfield and Jean Louise Finch

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Abstract- This article will focus on the importance of educational values instilled in youth characters of the Ninetieth and Twentieth century American Literature. This article pays close attention to the way in which children react in an environment with limited resources and most importantly, how substantial the role of education is, when faced with a severe lack of any other aids. By the end of this article, with the use of contrasting images, we shall see how young characters such as Lee Harper's Scout, Mark Twain's Huck and Tom, and Salinger's Holden, find themselves in rather difficult situations and how they operate in getting out of the presumably rather inconvenient condition. Questions such as: Does education play a valuable role assuming that one finds themselves in a situation with no material, emotional, or any other type of resources?; How the environment could affect the children and what is the peculiar nature of all these things?; will be of importance in trying to analyse how solidarity may be one important factor in overcoming the limited resources situations and how individualism may be a limiting factor under these circumstances.

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I. Introduction

A century where "to be nobody but yourself in a world which is doing its best day and night to make you like everybody else means to fight the hardest battle which any human being can fight and never stop fighting" (A Poet`s Advice to Students; E.E. Cummings, A Miscellany).

The term solidarity has been used in social, political, and religious discourses for over 200 years. However, very little attention has been given to defining and theorising exactly what is meant by it (Scholtz: 2012). The idea of solidarity has had concrete influences in two arenas in contemporary social life—politics and religion. The concept of fraternité, or brotherhood, is a precursor to solidarity and shares some of its meaning (Wilde 2013:17).

The political idea of fraternity, or brotherhood, was built upon the foundation of the family and the social bonds that united its members. Some of the earliest converts to Christianity were Greco-Roman households that were built on filial and familial ties (Wilde 2013: 18).

The use of the idea of brotherhood within Christianity was theological as well as social. In his teachings, Jesus radically redefined family by claiming, "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother" (Mark 3:35). That the language of brotherhood was definitional for understanding the relationships between early members of the Christian community is evidenced by the frequency with which Paul addresses the recipients of his letters as "brothers." This language is theologically consistent with the emphasis on God as "Father" that develops within the early Christian community.

In a very pragmatic way one may try to understand the meaning of the words "solidarity" and "individualism" by looking at the way in which these terms have been defined by dictionaries and how they are used in today's world. When looking at the American- English (Merriam Webster) or British- English (Oxford dictionaries) linguistic approach to the words "solidarity" and "individualism" one will come to notice a very strong resemblance in the way in which both dialects understand it. The consensus is that "solidarity" and "individualism" represent:

> *Solidarity:* "unity (as of a group or class) that produces or is based on community of interests, objectives, and standards, Unity or agreement of feeling or action, especially among individuals with a common interest; mutual support within a group".
>
> *Individualism:* "the habit or principle of being independent and self-reliant, a theory maintaining the political and economic independence of the individual and stressing individual initiative, action, and interests; also: conduct or practice guided by such a theory"

In post industrial societies, functions previously taken over by the family, are taken over by the state i.e. health, housing, job, economic stability and social protection. This is an example of nation-wide solidarity: the state offers safety provided before family, clan, and tribe, however in exchange it requires tax, law enforcement, and social participation in the event of a crisis (mobilisation in case of war). Rich post-industrial societies generate individualism. Nations facing resource crisis generate a strong solidarity in society, in contrast to the individualism of rich societies.

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As Yuval Noah Harari explains in his book *Sapiens: A brief History of Humankind*, the industrial revolution brought about dozens of major changes in human society and adapting to this new industrial time is one of them (2011:398). Other important examples include urbanisation, the disappearance of the peasantry, the rise of the industrial proletariat, the empowerment of the common person, democratisation, youth culture and the disintegration of patriarchy. (2011:398) Furthermore, he explains that all of these major changes are dominated by the crucial social revolution that ever befell humankind: the destruction of the family and the local community and their replacement by the state and the market. (Harari, 2011:398)

> "As best we can tell, from the earliest times, more than a million years ago, humans lived in small, intimate communities, most of whose members were kin. The Cognitive Revolution and the Agricultural Revolution did not change that. They glued together families and communities to create tribes, cities, kingdoms and empires, but families and communities remained the basic building blocks of all human societies. The Industrial revolution on the other hand, managed within little more than two centuries to break these building blocks into atoms. Most of the traditional functions of families and communities were handed over to states and markets." (Harari, 2011:398)

In addition, Yuval Noah Harari explains the collapse of the family and the community. Before the Industrial Revolution most people worked in the family business or they worked in their neighbours` family businesses. There wasn`t the welfare system, the health system, the education system, the construction industry, the trade union, the pension fund, the insurance company, the radio, the television, the newspapers, the bank and even the police, however the family provided all of the above mentioned. (Harari, 2011:399) When a member fell sick or grew old it was the family who took care of her and the children were her pension fund. From aspects concerning the family there was nothing that the family couldn`t deal, resolve, take ownership of. When a person died the household took care of the orphans, if a member of the family wanted to build a house, or open a business it was again the family that intervened, if a person wanted to get married, the family had the right to choose with whom to marry and last but not least, in all conflicting matters, it was the household members that intervened. (Harari, 2011:339)

If we continue understanding the paradigm of solidarity as being eponymous with the word unity one would be unable to find a more powerful feeling of unity and belonging than in people who are devotedly religious. While we may find this unity in all religious denominations, for the sake of the argument portrayed in this chapter, we will only take into consideration the Christian aspect of religion and its trait of unity. Moving on, this chapter will also look at a more niche aspect of Christian unity, namely the unity of Christian Afro-Americans.

Christianity has been for a very long time the biggest religion, in what the number of followers is concerned, and due to the very high number of such followers it was enabled to pursue a large plethora of activities (some more orthodox than others <sic>). One would have to simply look at the Crusades, or the various wars that had plagued the old continent in the name of the Lord to simply understand just how united Christians were- and, to some extent, still are today.

We may argue that with the sense of unity comes the sense of belonging, of identity. Identity is, in this researcher's opinion, beyond any shadow of a doubt, one of the most important aspects of social life. An individual must feel comfortable in their identity, in their label, so much so that they are accepted by a community, and thusly would have a sense of belonging to said community. Without "belonging" the individual would be nothing more than simply that, an individual. Or then, how can such a person function in a society if they do not belong to any class, any system, or any other type of mass community? It is here where the importance of religious allegiance can be seen. One acquires identity through religious allegiance, and through that, one may come to understand and apply the above mentioned notion of religious solidarity. You do whatever it takes to help your brother/sister (if and only if they belong to the same religion as you do).

This attitude of helping "thine brethren" can be seen and analysed thoroughly in today's society; namely in the protestant, and neo-protestant denominations of Christianity.

Identity has always been a matter of the Self versus the Other binary system, this is to say that, whenever a certain individual would identify as *something they* will automatically become part of a community that does not accept, appreciate, value, or understand the individual identifying as *something else*. Even if self-identification occurs, most of the times it is either imposed on the individual, (this would be the case of individuals wanting acceptance from an important/ powerful group) or it is transformed into a matter of sentient misidentification (this is to say they underwent strategic self-imposed misidentification in order to escape ostracism or punishment). This binary can be looked at from various points of view - from Christian to political approaches - and all with perfectly valid arguments and points. However, a society fuelled by normative binaries is nothing but a utopian/dystopian society (Kumar, 1991). In a hyper simplification of this matter one could say that, basically, *the Self* is the embodiment of good and *the Other* represents the bad. The above mentioned traits of religious solidarity can be observed in the three works of literary fiction that this chapter aims to dissect. The traditional, conservative attitudes towards society and way of life that appear in

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both *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Fin* and can easily be attributed to the influence religion had in the development of the new found land (The US, a country established by protestants who were fleeing the ruling of the old continent).

Racial solidarity is frequently the byproduct of a combination of several contextual factors: racial consciousness, racial pride, racial identity, loyalty, awareness of racial discrimination, and a willingness to engage in social action on behalf of the racial group. (Ross, 2007:7) Furthermore, As Elizabeth A. Ferguson explains in her study *The Journal of Negro Education*, the consciousness can be explained as being a collective sentiment in which race becomes the object of loyalty and idealisation. (1938:32). She explains further on:

> "Through race consciousness the members of a race become a historic group, acquiring a past, aware of a present, and aspiring to a future. Race consciousness is essentially a characteristic of minority groups, more specifically, of oppressed minority groups and takes the form of a feeling of solidarity among group members. "

The problem with social constructivism is that society is not the only one to construct categories, but the categories construct societies (Cottone: 2011). We need societies to construct linguistic realities that encompass all variations of this spectrum, societies that function on liberties and tolerance (Marcuse: 1965), and not on normativity and imposing ideas.

Lastly and more importantly there is a need for undoing "restrictively normative conceptions of life" (Butler: 2004), as races, and in extension of that logic, identities, are performed subconsciously. The degree of humanity of the Self, thus, must not be in any way different than the one of the Other as both can coexist, but as long as societies create realities where the Other is less-than-human, it will then have to sentiently misidentify in order not to live an unliveable life (Butler:2004).

Substantially, according to Paula Thomson Ross, racial solidarity has been conceptualised as an ability to be recognised as a member of a group, to willingly sacrifice personal interests in the name of the society arising from a union of interests, responsibilities, or intentions that are reflective of one's group loyalty (2007:7). Socialisation is a very important aspect when talking about racial solidarity and it is safe to assume that the transmission of values, moral and religious upbringing, education across generations are the foundation of a community's solidarity. Racial solidarity has also been closely linked to racial consciousness because of strong similarities in conceptual definitions. (Ross, 2007:7)

As far as the Afro-American community is concerned, and how united said community is, one may simply look at the past 50 years worth of history and notice that very few ethnical minorities stood as united as the Afro-Americans did when faced with matters of rights and attaining equality with the WASP (white Anglo-Saxon Protestant, an ethno-religious identity) oppressor.

The Afro-American strength had been apparent in the *Brown v. Board of Education,* Rosa Parks, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the Sit-ins, the March on Washington, et.al. This is to say that the Afro-American solidarity has had a tremendous impact on the 20th and 21st century Unites States, an effect that ensured such attitudes being talked about at large in works of fiction and anthropological studies alike.

America is one of the most advanced countries in the word and it is indeed amazing for such a young country with only two hundred years of history to get such unbelievable accomplishments. (Yuxian, 2013, 36) The fact that individualism stays at the foundation of the American culture is because it has influenced all the fields of politics, economics, society, literature and even the characters of the nation (Yuxian, 2013, 36).

> "It has endowed the past, the present and the future with the perspective of unity and progress. It has explained the peculiar social and political organization of the nation—unity, an ideal social organization, so individualism has been expressed as the most common characteristic of the national consciousness." (Yuxian, 2013, 36).

A good example where individualism is portrayed might be in our beloved character, Twain's Huckleberry Finn, which according to him is an illustration of individualism as far as education, both intellectual and moral is concerned. He believes that he is an outcast, doesn't agree what so ever with the moral and rules of the society that labels himself as a vagabond and ultimately fails to protect him from abuse from a worthless father who forbids him to learn how to read and most importantly to abandon school:

> "Well, I'll learn her how to meddle. And looky here—you drop that school, you hear? I'll learn people to bring up a boy to put on airs over his own father and let on to be better'n what HE is. You lemme catch you fooling around that school again, you hear? Your mother couldn't read, and she couldn't write, nuther, before she died. None of the family couldn't before they died. I can't; and here you'rea-swelling yourself up like this. I ain't the man to stand it—you hear? Say, lemme hear you read. […] and if I catch you about that school I'll tan you good. First you know you'll get religion, too. I never see such a son." (Twain, 1884:21)

This understanding about society's values and his rather wonderful friendship with Jim, made Huck question many of the teachings and guidance he has received from his family or society regarding race. The reader might notice that the boy chooses to "go to hell" with some beliefs or with what he has been taught and rather does what he feels is right to do following his own instinct, logic and conscience. Listening to his inner voice, he chooses to run away from his father and by the

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novel's end Huck has already learned to read and scan the world, to distinguish good or bad, right and wrong.

While all the above mentioned types of solidarity are important in the life of any character when said characters find themselves no longer able to rely on religious ethnical or family solidarity they will see themselves forced into making use if the resources they have at hand. This doesn't necessarily mean that all characters may have unhindered access to a plethora of resources in some circumstances, as the ones this study will address in what follows, the pool or resources may be highly limited. Limited resources mean not only material resources but as well emotional resources.

From a social science perspective resources can be classified into Human and Natural resources (Perham, 1997). For the scope of this paper we will not be addressing the matter of natural resources as they do not make the object of interest. However, when looking at the Human subgenus of resources we may identify two branches. One that deals with the quality/quantity of Human resources (not to be misunderstood as HR) and the second that deals with structures and institutions that influence humans. In what follows we will be looking into how such resources (be they material- quantity, or emotional – structures) have influenced the main characters in all three aforementioned books and how such influences have shaped the narrative in such a way that it makes it current even by today's standards.

Coming from a Deep South family, it is safe to assume that, Huckleberry Finn was born and raised into a heavily conservative, white supremacists, confederate-esque type of family. This is to say that from very early on Huckleberry Fin was taught to see the afro-American minority as objects that should be possessed by the Caucasian people. As with all Deep South white families the expectation would have been for Huckleberry Fin to buy into the already established norm and in doing so show solidarity with his family, religion, community. All of that, however, could not stop Huck from disregarding the norm and following his own ideals. It might be said that Huck's disregard and inability of accepting the white supremacist norm stems from the fact that he had had a very abusive upbringing. His model of a functioning adult was his father:

> "He was most fifty, and he looked it. His hair was long and tangled and greasy, and hung down, and you could see his eyes shining through like he was behind vines. It was all black, no gray; so was his long, mixed-up whiskers. There warn't no color in his face, where his face showed; it was white; not like another man's white, but a white to make a body sick, a white to make a body's flesh crawl—a treetoad white, a fish-belly white. As for his clothes—just rags, that was all. He had one ankle resting on t'other knee; the boot on that foot was busted, and two of his toes stuck through, and he worked them now and then. His hat was laying on the floor—an old black slouch with the top caved in, like a lid." (Twain, 1884:18)

A model of a father who more often than not sequestered Huck, limited his ability of exploring and knowing his surroundings (a curiosity that all young kinds have at that age) at this point is easy to understand why Huckleberry Fin decided against the norms of the majority, since the majority never did anything good for him, faked his death and ran away from home in hopes of finding his own normality and thus, his own type of solidarity.

Quite immediately after having run away, having run from one type of normality, Huck is put face to face with what up until then he was taught to believe is something undesirable. Huck meats Jim; Jim, is part of the afro-American minority and is, because of the times a runaway slave. Even though Huck was influenced by the white majority and the Caucasian normativity of that time to assume and believe that all African- American individuals should be the property of the white men, he accepts the companionship of Jim and sees how they are both running from a normality that they do not desire, normality that they do not identify with and are looking for a normality where the idea of solidarity and understanding does not stop at the color of your skin. Throughout their adventures Huck and Jim find themselves quite often faced with a lack of material resources, they are stranded on a raft traveling the Mississippi stopping only in places where they won't be found by other whites who will most certainly capture Jim and hold Huckleberry Fin accountable.

It is this lack of material resources that droves both Huck and Jim towards conceiving ludicrous or otherwise very ambitious surviving plans. When they are about to be caught by a group of people searching runaway slaves, Huck is faced with a question of morality: should he give Jim up and accept that his normality is with the slave owning whites or should he do his very best to keep Jim hidden and be the creator of his own normality. Huck chooses the latter and in doing so, not only does he gets more time for his adventures with Jim, a decent amount of money that will keep them afloat (sic), but also he gets to actively choose to rebel against the white supremacist normativity and start building his own culture (and while doing so he builds his own community and thus solidarity).

In the case of Holden Caulfield, for him the meaning of limited resources does not have a material meaning what so ever. Even though he is alone in an unknown city, maybe for the very first time, no one forced him to escape the boarding school and start a so called journey; he manages to survive and to easily get out from problematic situations. The reader would have noticed that in this book the character doesn't deal with a material crisis where one finds himself in an environment with limited resources, yet Holden goes through an emotional crisis; he cannot bare the idea of loneliness which is why he decides to come back home

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to gain back his affective emotional support. This fact is easily seen at the very end of the book when he reunites with his sister Phoebe:

> "Did you mean it what you said? You really aren't going away anywhere? Are you really going home afterwards?"She asked me.
>
> "Yeah, I said." I meant it, too. I wasn't lying to her. I really did go home afterwards.
>
> […] I felt so damn happy all of a sudden, the way old Phoebe kept going around and around. I was damn near bawling, I felt so happy, if you want to know the truth. I don`t know why. It was just that she looked so damn nice, the way she kept going around and around, in her blue coat and all. God, I wish you could've been there." (Salinger, 1945: 233)

Coming form an upper class background, Caulfield often finds himself torn between doing what society and family expects of him to do or following his dreams and desires. From the very beginning Holden does not take lightly to anything that starts with "you must", "you have to", he identifies himself as being a free soul, one that must pursue the beating of his own drum, however he always finds that society has something else in store for him which is why he decides that his only escape is found by completely running away from all problems. Due to his well-off family Holden does not have any material obstacles which is why on a whim he may go to New York and spend gregarious amounts of money on lavish and unorthodox things. While in New York, Holden experiences what may be identified as a coming- of- age scenario but unlike different cases from literature Holden's coming of age will not grant him any life changing lessons for he will find himself at the end just as lost as he was at the beginning. In a desperate attempt of escaping his mundane school life, in New York, Holden indulges in hard liquors, cigarettes and prostitutes. While he may succeed in the former, the latter poses difficulties since Holden is but a phoney virgin (sic). One can understand why while in the case of Huckleberry Fin we discussed about a lack of material resources, in the case of Holden Caulfield the lack is simply emotional. He has run from everything in life and in doing so he managed to avoid building proper interpersonal relationships which understandably transformed him in not only a sexual virgin but also an emotional virgin. Holden is incapable of finding emotional connections, in finding well grounded connections since his way of solving problems is either running away from them or throwing money at them.

Holden Caulfield was not only running from problems and responsibilities due to the fact that he was a loner par excellence Caulfield never really took to the idea of solidarity be it domestic, religious or otherwise. This however shows a slight chance of changing right at the end of the book where we see Holden wanting to be the erroneous catcher in the rye.

> "I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in this big field of rye and all […] And I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff- I mean if they're running and they don't look where they're going I have to come out from somewhere and catch them. […] I know it's crazy but that's the only thing I'd really like to be." (Salinger, 1945:191)

It may be said that Holden is the modern reinterpretation of the biblical prodigal son the only difference being that while in the bible the prodigal son is welcomed back home by a family that is ready to forgive and forget and thereby offering the son a new chance at redemption, in The Catcher in the Rye Holden is greeted by Phoebe who, although very young tells him in a very cerebral way that his aspirations in life are not feasible or sustainable. It is here where Holden finds himself returning home with no new lesson learned and failing at yet another school, but this time the school of life. This is reinforced by the fact that Holden is committed by his family to an institution from where he presumably, laments his life choices while writing the Catcher in the Rye that he never could be.

> "That's all I'm going to tell about. I could probably tell you what I did after I went home, and how I got sick and all, and what school I'm supposed to go next fall, after I get out of here, but I don't feel like it. I really don't. That stuff doesn't interest me too much right now. A lot of people, especially this one psychoanalyst guy they have here, keeps asking me if I'm going to apply myself when I go back in September. It's such a stupid question, in my opinion. I mean how do you know what you're going to do till you do it?" (Salinger, 1945:234)

Jean Louise Finch, best known by her nickname Scout tells the story of a widowed lawyer and his children Jem and Scout, from a fictional small Alabama county set of Maycomb. It is safe to assume that the story teller is an adult Jean Louise Finch who narrates en episode of her childhood (during the summer of 1932 and ending on the Halloween night in 1935) when she was six years old and some of her adventures with her brother Jem and their best friend Dill.

Reading her story, one might "return to one to optimism about possibilities in human nature and in societal concern that many of us no longer share."(2010:7). An important episode in this novel is the trial of Tom Robinson, a black farm worker falsely accused of rape by the daughter of a white "good-for-nothing", however despite having witnessed Ewell's behaviour and the conviction of poor Tom Robinson who is indeed a victim of Maycomb County racism and prejudice, "Scout retains not only her own idealism but her faith in the virtues of the people of her county" (Bloom, 2010:7).

One might compare Jean Louise Finch (Scout) from *To Kill a Mockingbird* with other important youth characters from literature however she is neither Huck

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Finn nor Holden Caulfield both fighting for inner freedom while fearing solitude. Even though she was raised without a mother, she had an excellent father figure at her side who tried in his very best way to shape and construct a child who is and will remain the most charming characters in the American literature (Miller, 2018).

It is interesting to see the difference between Huck Finn, Holden Caulfield and Jean Louise Finch especially when talking about how children react in an environment with limited resources. When raising the question of how education is portrayed (both intellectual and moral education), it is worth looking – through a comparative lens, at both solidarity and individualism.

How does Scout become Jean Louise Finch? As mentioned earlier she is a motherless child, born and raised in an upper-class family. In spite of this, Scout had had two mother figures male father (and maybe the most important) figure, Atticus Finch. Having both types of role models, her Aunt Alexandra who tries to teach her how to become the "flower of southern belledom" (Bloom, 2019:78) or how to behave like a lady, and the other role model, who is the most influential in her development and education, who acts as a moral compass for southern children with a philosophy of calm courage and rational strength (Bloom, 2010:74).

> "You just hold your head high and keep those fists down. No matter what anybody says to you, don't you let 'em get your goat. Try fighting with your head for a change."(Harper, 1960)

Her father teaches her the meaning of understanding, accepting of all realities, minorities, accepting of all people thus Scout understands what solidarity means and is able to show this every time when facing injustices. In this case, the racial injustice and the unfair treatment toward people of color. Fact that is very well portrayed in Atticus' words: : "Why reasonable people go stark raving mad when anything involving a Negro comes up, is something I don't pretend to understand"(Harper, 1960), he further on continues "I just hope that Jem and Scout come to me for their answers instead of listening to the town." (Harper, 1960).

II. Conclusion

Throughout the entirety of this paper we have seen how societal solidarity have influenced characters into believing certain racist falsities. Scout has been profoundly affected and marked by a segregated and racist society she had come to know in spite of her father's education. Holden, with a plentitude of material resources still ended up being a misfit, someone who yearned for companionship yet had never managed to attain it, and Fin, due to a heavily conservative (to be read as racist) upbringing still conquered all misconceptions and created a reality of his and Jim's own.

We have seen how education shaped our characters, and how, said education determined if they are more or less creative in tense situations. What is interesting to notice is that with or without education (Scout v. Finn) one may still be able to make the right choice- or better yet, the human, decent choice, while on the other hand feeling from education, but having a plentitude of material resources may still get one stuck in an Inferno-esque spiral of self pity and intense feeling of disassociation (Holden).

Lastly, we may now unequivocally say that while the environment may be important (but only to the plot and not to character development), we have seen how irregardless of said environment, Fin, Scout, or Holden, have always done the very best they were able to in order to succeed. Does the environment promote a spike in creativity as far as youths are concerned? Most probably not *just* the environment, but a very well knit combination of environment, resources, and the sense of identity- belonging will determine the creativity of a young individual.

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