

The construction of our identity

Key message

The identification of the way the sense of belonging can also lead us to built a rigid and comparative image of our identity is crucial to strengthen social cohesion and prevent polarisation between groups.

Key words: Individual, social identity

Summary

One's identity can be defined as all the roles we play in society in the course of our lives. Identity shows the relationships between the people at the social and cultural level; establishes frameworks, as limits within which we cannot move or change (and also the expectations regarding our and other's behaviour) as possible and expectable fluctuations within those limits.

Module	Group size	Group age	Duration
• Prevention	• individual • small • medium	• 12 - 15 • 16 - 19	• 1 hour

Purpose

- Determine the development process of individual and social identity.
- Identify how the feeling of belonging to a group leads us to maintain a rigid image of our identity.
- Be aware of how we overstate differences and similarities intra and inter groups and how we tend to emphasize our group's strengths and other's people defects.

Description

Step 1: Introduce the concept of identity and how do we consolidate it by conducting a brainstorming. Expand and explain the construction of our identity.

"One's identity is changing over the years: due to the contact with people from other groups, the influence of media, stays in other places, etc. Our identity is much more complex, multiple and dynamic then we think. We should be able to develop contexts that will help us to be more open-minded to external influences, to get all the positive aspects from any place and experience. We are susceptible to pressures (both within and without our own group) that make us enclosing in this shell supposed to identify us. These pressures make more difficult our adaptation to other contexts and our processes of personal growth and development. One thing is clear anyway: change over time should not being perceived as a negative aspect."

Step 2: Ask the participants to answer to the questions on an individual basis:

- *Who are you, how do you define yourself? which groups do you identify most closely with (music*

groups, friends, people from your country, activist groups, etc.)? Choose several words or sentences. Now try to do the same with a person you know superficially or with some group's member you don't know personally (e.g. people from other countries or other youngs you don't know in deep). Compare both descriptions. What do you notice? Present the answers in the whole group.

Step 3: Reflect on the following questions as a group: *Why do you believe that we imagine others in such a simple way? And how this way of viewing others can be related with racism?*

Step 4: Answer individually and then finish with a sharing with the whole group. *In what do we look alike and differ from other groups (choose your favourite group)?*

Materials needed

paper, pen, blackboard or flipchart

Methodology

discussion board

Source / Literature

(Ponterotto y Pedersen, 1993).



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