



WORKBOOK

My Story

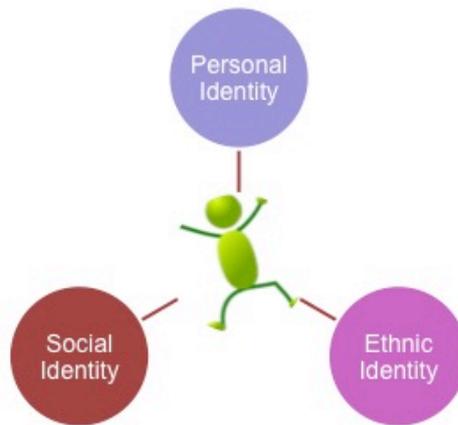


My Story



Migration can affect people in many ways but, in particular, it can challenge their personal and social identity leaving them feeling vulnerable or threatened. In this resource we look at what forms our identity and how the way in which we view ourselves in relation to others comprises many visible or invisible traits or roles, some chosen and some not. Sharing and listening to the stories that shape our lives can offer an opportunity to explore our belief systems, rethink our world view, find common ground with others and reshape our sense of identity.

What is Identity?



Personal identity is how we view ourselves in relation to those around us. We are born with some aspects of our identity; our nationality, sex and genetic history. We form other parts of our personal identity as we develop and mature, through our experiences and interactions with family, friends and community.

Social identity is how we relate to others and how we operate within many different social situations. Throughout our lives we interact with a range of social groups including family, friends, classmates, work colleagues, local communities, cultural and religious groups, different nationalities. We define our social identity by how we view ourselves in relation to these social groups.

Ethnic identity is the sharing of cultural practices, feelings, perceptions and behaviours with people of the same ethnicity.

Confused?



People, especially children, can become confused about their social, personal and ethnic identities if they have been separated from family, friends or their cultural and ethnic networks. It can be difficult for some people to adapt to new environments, customs and cultures.

Sharing our stories and exploring how identity affects or informs our perspective can help us understand the ways diversity impacts on human interactions and relations. Exploring the diversity and similarities within a group can lead to greater awareness, empathy and bonding.

What impacts on our Identity?



The stories we tell or hear from others shape our identity. Some of these stories are unchangeable like our age or where we were born for example. Other aspects of our identity are formed in relationship to others. With the choices we make every day we shape our identity. But, what are the factors that can influence our choices and contribute to the shaping of our identity?

Country



Our place of birth can contribute to shaping our identity; the history of our country, the political, social, economic and environmental situations that we were born into.



Family



Our family is the first social grouping that we are exposed to and therefore can have the most profound effect on shaping our identity. From birth we are exposed to multi generational influences between family members which cause us to adopt values, patterns of behaviour and belief systems that can stay with us through to adulthood and underpin our view of the world. It is only when we interact with others whose value systems differed from our own that we begin to explore and question those belief systems.

Culture



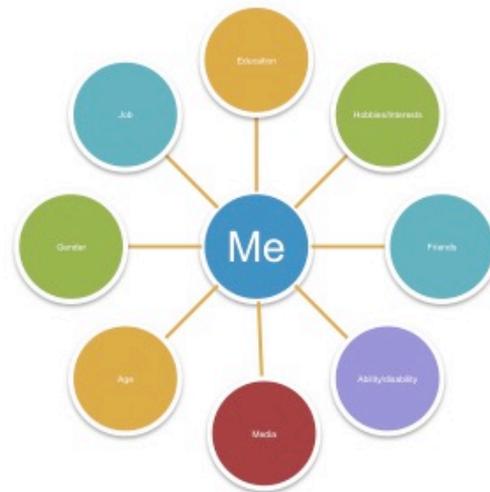
Our cultural identity relates to the human need to belong and develops from birth. It is shaped by the attitudes and values of the people around us, primarily our family and community. There is a comfort and security in sharing history, customs, music arts and other common interests. These elements can play a major role in shaping our identity yet it is wrong to assume that those sharing the same culture will have the same identities. Self-awareness, exposure to and openness to embrace new cultures can enrich the human experience and further develop our sense of identity.

Religion



A large majority of the world's inhabitants identify as religious. Most people reflect their religious identities through many of their social and cultural practices. In many cases, the moral choices made or actions taken by people, which in some cases includes risking death, are based on their faith. The formation of moral identity within the human personality is complicated as it is facilitated through family, culture and the wider society. This can often lead to an intensity and depth of conviction that can make it difficult to adapt to societies with opposing or different views.

Other aspects of Identity



There are many factors that affect how others perceive us and how we perceive ourselves. Age, race, sexual orientation for example are all characteristics of our identity but other aspects of our identity are less inflexible and can continue to be shaped through our interactions with others and through our own self-analysis and self-awareness.

Activity 1 – My Story



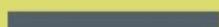
The aim of this exercise is to help identify personal and social identity, create awareness of the diversity and similarities within a group and to help participants to get to know each other. Use the blank template and write your name in the centre circle where indicated. In the small circles, write down five aspects that reflect your identity and are important to you. In pairs or in small groups, share your diagram and talk about your choices. When each member of the group has finished, look at the shared similarities and also the differences within the group.

Activity 2 – Life Stories



The aim of this exercise is to help identify personal and social identity, create awareness of the diversity and similarities within a group and to help participants to get to know each other. Use the blank template and write your name in the centre circle where indicated. In the small circles, write down five aspects that reflect your identity and are important to you. In pairs or in small groups, share your diagram and talk about your choices. When each member of the group has finished, look at the shared similarities and also the differences within the group.

Thanks!



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