

## Session 3: Identity

During the process of socialization fundamental elements of culture as well as comprehensive cultural styles are imparted to the adolescent generation. Through the acquisition of values and standards and the adoption of roles the emergence and development of an individual identity is brought about.

Due to inter-cultural diversity and ethnic differentiation identities may be quite different. On the one hand sexual identity is conveyed through bio-physical indicators (sex) and on the other mainly through the social structures and cultural attributions (gender). In the European cultural space the general situation is still marked by gender inequality.

Children learn to adapt to what society expects them to be (boys, resp. girls). Growing older they become active creators of their identity (self concept). The processes of development and acquisition can be constructive, i.e. sufficient space to experiment is available (to find one's identity). In case the individual feels threatened by the gender-specific attributions of his/her society, and/or behavioural expectations restrict the individual design of one's role, this may lead to inappropriate pressures. On the other hand, norms, values and tasks – that are brought over by a society to women and men, girls and boys – a subject to change. Physical strain, for instance, is barely needed on the labour market, whereas social skills such as team skills, conflict skills, reflection skills and communication are increasingly in the foreground.

The following collection of materials targeting at "identity" offers five activities with boys (and girls):

### 1. Me and the group - Me in the group

The first activity, "Me and the group - Me *in* the group" deals with the reflection of one's ego and the interaction in the context of group experience. Recognizing possible limitations of roles, the formation of hierarchies in the group context and the analysis of these elements are the focus of the unit in hand. For boys, this is a realistic topic, as their relationships often have been structured under gender-homogenous conditions.

### 2. Throwing dice for nonsense phrases

The subsequent example, named "Throwing dice for nonsense phrases" deals with a playful reflection of gender roles in the context of media education. The effectiveness of advertisements will be analysed. Using images of men and stereotypes of masculinity, the unit tries to track down restrictive role patterns.

### 3. Why is Mona Lisa not smiling?

The practical unit, "Why is Mona Lisa not smiling?" takes a closer look at non-verbal messages and (hidden) gender-related behavioural signals. The goal is – amongst others – to recognize role diversity as a basis for the development of one's own identity.

### 4. Building up a healthy self-esteem in boys

The unit "Building up a healthy self-esteem in boys" puts its emphasis on self-awareness, in order to promote a realistic self-judgment.

The unit in hand is based on the finding that there are boys who sometimes model themselves on tight traditional attributions of masculinity and these – on the other hand – are not related to their own role conceptions. This creates insecurity. With the help of a learning environment designed to encourage the development of identity the self-esteem of boys is actively worked on.

## **5. Where to go on holiday – gender identity in interaction**

In the final contribution "Where to go on holiday – gender identity in interaction" the goal – learning how to shape negotiation processes on equal terms – is in the foreground. This approach related to the communication between boys and boys, girls and girls and girls and boys is aimed at identifying possible differences, but also at listening and responding to the opinions of others. Joint decision-making is the centre of this unit.