

Identity - Introduction

Hello. My name is Dr. Lyndsey Bakewell, and I am Senior Lecturer and programme leader at De Montfort University. I've developed a workshop on identity as part of the creativity project. The purpose of this workshop is to explore our own personal identity and think about how we recognise our skills and abilities and how we might promote these externally to us whether that be to get into higher education, to secure a job, or just generally in the world interact with other people. In this workshop, there are three different activities, and they guide you through a process of understanding yourself and understanding others. For this workshop, you need three objects. Now, ideally, if you're working with a group of students, you don't want to let them know that they need these objects, they're gonna go find them in their bag. But if you feel that it would be helpful for them to bring three objects that are important to them to the workshop, then that's fine. Please let them know that beforehand. They also need to have a pair of shoes, generally everybody has on their feet, so that should be fine. They also need a video camera. This is going to allow them to record their own work, and to watch it and listen to it back. If they haven't got a video camera, then just an audio recorder will be absolutely fine. This workshop can be done anywhere. You can do it out in open spaces, at home, in a classroom, wherever, and it can be done as an individual or as a group. The important thing is that the students have a space where they feel safe and comfortable. Where they know that they're not going to be laughed at and where they can talk freely and explore themselves freely. As the facilitator, it's important that you know how to create this kind of space. This might be that you need to set some ground rules for your students if they are new to you or if you feel that maybe they know each other too well and that they might be tempted to make jokes at each other's expense. Or you might feel that actually, you've been working with this group for a really long time, and you've developed a really great level of trust. In which case, it's still good to note to the students that we are going to be exploring our own identity, and that everybody's exploration of their own identity and self is sacred and important, and that we mustn't interact or get in the way of that. What happens in that room stays in that room. This is an adage that I like to live by when running this workshop and I think it's an important one to build this area of safety and security for the students. You might want to take 5/10 minutes at the beginning of class to develop this safe space. The first activity in this workshop will also enable you to create that, but if you feel like you'd like to give them an introduction beforehand, then please do that before getting into activity one. Once you've created that you can find activity one in the next video. There are three key learning outcomes from this workshop. The first is that the students gain a better understanding of themselves and their identity and have skills in which they can express and explore that. The second is to develop skills that promote important aspects of yourself, your knowledge and your skill set. Encouraging students and enabling students to recognise what they're good at and promote it to others is a really key feature of this workshop. And finally, this workshop is designed to teach lifelong skills that enable students to continue a cycle of reflecting upon themselves and their abilities, and which gives them new skills in which to explore themselves and to continue to explore what they might like to do in the future.

Identity - Activity One

Activity one is very much an introductory activity to get the students centred and grounded and to create that safe space. I've called Activity one, 'who am I', and it's broken down into three sections. I tend to take around about 30 minutes to work through this. In the first section, I run a warm up with the group. You can ask them to stand in a circle or dotted around the space, however you would prefer to do it. This warm up can be open and free and you can guide this however you like but there are three key areas that you must focus on. The first of which is breathing. You want the students to recognise how they breathe naturally and how unusual it is to think about your breathing, and once you think about it, how difficult it is to breathe normally. Secondly, you want the students to explore their body. You want to know where tension is within their body, what they can do freely what is restrictive, if anything hurts. They're trying to get to know what their body does and how their body feels. Encourage students to work within their own limits, to know when to stop and when to pull back, to not compare themselves to anybody else. We're getting to know our body and that's the important thing. And the third area is their voice. You can run this as a vocal warmup if you like. I often encountered drama students who have never really explored the full range of their voice and so I get them to run scales from low to high but I also get them to try manipulating their voice. What happens if they squeeze their throat together or open it up wide? What happens if they articulate with all of their mouth or a little bit of their mouth? What happens when they talk loud or they talk quiet. All of these things allow them to understand the individual workings of their body.

Once they finish the warm up, which is taken about 10 to 15 minutes, ask them to grab a piece of paper and a pen. They're going to respond to five prompts, which you're going to present to them. Ask the students to write down the first things that come to mind. It doesn't matter what they are or if indeed they're the same kind of category as somebody else. It's the first thing that they think about when they are posed that question. The first question you're going to pose them is 'I am'. This can be anything. I am happy, I am sad. I am a mother, I am a teacher, I am a girl. The second prompt is 'my roles or jobs are'. Now this might take a little bit of explaining to your students. Our roles are the things that we embody within life. For me, for example, I am a mother, I am a lecturer, I am a daughter. I am also a wife, I am a friend, I am a sister, it can be a whole host of different things. We get the students to write down the first things that come to mind when thinking about their jobs and their roles. Thirdly, you're going to ask the students to write down 'I like my'. Now our natural inclination might be I like my face, or I like my voice or I like my hair or I like my shoes. Try and encourage the students to think beyond this if possible. So I like my ability to problem solve. I like my ability to be empathetic with people. It's fine to have those first things too but give the students here a little bit of time to push beyond those initial thoughts and to start to unpick and critically think about themselves a little bit more. The fourth prompt is 'I don't like my'. Now like the third question, we're going to encourage the students to think beyond those initial responses and think more critically. So one example might be I don't like the fact that I cannot be on time. I don't like my unwillingness to try new foods. Whatever they might be, get the students to push and dig deep into their understanding of themselves and start thinking about what it is

that they don't like. The fifth prompt is 'I worry about my'. Encourage your students to keep this centred on themselves. So not to deviate off into other people. It's quite natural for us to think I worry about my mum, or I worry about my friends, but encourage students to keep this about themselves. I worry about my ability to maintain a routine, I worry about my ability to go to bed at a reasonable hour. Whatever it might be, get them to think about themselves and what they might worry about within themselves. Once the students have answered all of their questions, they're going to start to create some performance work from their responses. If they've got multiple responses for each question, ask them to go through and just pick one. It doesn't really matter which one for now, they can always go back and rerun the activity if they want to. Once they've selected one response to each of the questions, they're going to create an action that represents that response. So, for example, if they said, I am strong, they might choose to do an action that represents strength. Then they create an action which represents the answer to my roles are and so on and so forth, until they have five actions that they can run one after each other. Once they have this, they have completed the first activity.

If you're working by yourself, you can do the warm up by yourself. Make sure that you're thinking about your breathing, your voice, and your body. Then answer those questions, respond to those prompts, and create those actions. You might want to record those actions so that you can watch them back. Once this is done, go down to video number three, and that's where you'll find activity number two.

Identity Activity Two

The second activity in this workshop runs differently if you're working as a group or if you're working as an individual. I'll explain the group's activity first, and then I'll give the instructions for if you're working as an individual. Activity two is called 'Becoming Another'. With your group of students set out a circle of chairs, this circle of chairs should all be facing out from the circle, so the students have their back to each other, and they're touching shoulder to shoulder. While you're setting up the chairs, ask the students to go and put their shoes on if they've taken them off and to find three belongings in their bag. Don't give them too much guidance on these belongings, just ask them to go and grab three things that they think says a little bit of something about them. They can be any objects at all. But when they come back to the circle, they should pick a chair and they should sit in it with their objects in their hand and their shoes on their feet. Once the whole group is seated, ask them to take three minutes to think about the objects that they have in their hands. Encourage them to feel these objects, to smell them, to think about what they feel like when they touch them. What do they mean to them? Where did they get them? where did they come from? Why are they important to them? It will be helpful for you to give a one minute marker for your students so that after one minute, they can move on to the second object so each object has equal time to be explored. Encourage the students to really think about what these objects mean and how they frame their identity. At the end of the three minutes, ask your students to slide their feet out of their shoes and place them upon the floor. Ask them to stand up and turn around and place the objects onto the chair one by one. As they put down each object we want them to think about how that object represents their identity. As the object is placed on the chair, get the students to think about how putting this object down is like leaving a part of their identity behind. They're losing that

part of themselves as they put the objects on the chair. Once all three objects are on the chair, the students should stand and wait for the rest of the group to finish. Once the group has finished putting their objects down, and all of their shoes are on the floor, ask the students to walk around the circle of chairs. They should go and find a chair that they want to sit in. They don't have to do it in order, they can dot around the space, they can overtake people, undertake people, they can pick the next chair that comes along or one that's all the way around the circle. They should go and find a different chair though and not sit in their own chair. Once all students have found a new chair, ask them to pick up the objects one by one. They can then sit on the chair and slide their feet into the shoes. You will likely find that there will be squeals, there will be protestations, there will be students complaining about the fact that they don't want to put their feet into somebody else's shoes. This is completely normal, and this is something that we should reflect upon as a group once we've completed this activity. There's something really important about us embodying somebody else or experiencing something from somebody else's perspective and so by sliding our feet into those shoes, we're almost kind of walking or experiencing life in their way too and that helps us to understand our own identity and how people experience our identity externally. So don't worry if that happens. Just let it happen. Let the moment pass and continue with the activity. Once everybody is seated, and quiet and comfortable, ask the students to look at these objects, to feel them. They're not necessarily thinking about what these objects might mean to somebody else but actually thinking, what would it mean if this object was important to me? For example, if I picked up a set of headphones that somebody else owned, I might start to think, 'if I owned these, music would be really important to me, this might be something that guides me and might be the way in which I understand my moods or my experiences'. And so I might think about how important music is to me currently. And whether or not that's something I need to reflect upon in my Identity. Let the students have three minutes again, to explore and think about each of these different objects. Again, a time marker after one minute would be really helpful to your students. After those three minutes, ask the students to slide their feet out of those shoes and put the objects gently back on the chair. They should then walk around, find their own chair and sit back down again. Once all students are sat down, give them a couple of minutes to come back to themselves to think about what just happened in that experience, and what it is that they've learned about themselves and their own identity. Once you've given the students a couple of minutes to do this, facilitate discussion. I would take around about 10 to 15 minutes to let the students really tell you what they thought of the activity. How did it feel to leave bits of you behind, to leave important objects behind, to have somebody else's feet in your shoes, to have your feet in somebody else's, to think about adopting other objects from other people into your own identity. Facilitating discussion in this way, enables students to understand what that process was that they've just been through, and to think about what parts of what they've just learned about themselves, they want to promote in the next activity.

If you're working by yourself, then you can absolutely do this activity too but you need to be a little bit prepared before you start. You need three objects of your own but you also need three objects and a pair of shoes from somebody else. If you're working at home feel free to go and grab a family members things. If you're working with some friends, ask them if you can borrow some objects and their shoes and then take yourself off and do it by yourself. Either way, make sure you have your own objects to explore, and somebody else's and set yourself timers on your phone so you know how long you've got to work with these things. Again, at the end, go through this process of reflection. What did you learn about yourself? What did you like about what you've learned and how might you think and use that in

the future? Once you've completed this process you've completed activity two. Activity three can be found in the fourth video

Identity - Activity Three

The third and final activity for this workshop pulls material from the other two activities and brings them together and presents them in a way that might be accessible to other people. So, the first thing to do is to encourage students to think about those three objects that they chose that were important to them and to think of a memory that connects to one or more of those objects. This can be a distant memory, it can be a more recent memory. It doesn't matter as long as it's something that has happened to them. If their objects are not meaningful in that way, then give students the freedom and the opportunity to pick any kind of memory. The purpose of using the objects in this way to elicit these memories is to narrow the field that they can choose from and therefore speed up the activity. But if that is proving problematic for the students, then they're very free and able to choose any memory that they would like. Once they have their memory selected, ask them to spend a few moments thinking through that memory. What happened? How might you tell that story to somebody else? Once you've given them that time, ask them to grab that piece of paper and pen again, and ask them to write down that memory. It's helpful to limit the time and the space for this activity. Giving the students around three to five minutes is ideal. This will mean they'll write around about 200 words and that's a good amount of words and a good amount of script to work with. Try and encourage the students not to worry too much about what they're writing. Just write the story from beginning to end. They can go back and edit it in a moment but for the moment, we're just getting it down on the page as they remember it. Once your students have their story, this is their script. Ask them to read it through two or three times to familiarise themselves with it. Once they feel comfortable with the script, ask them to try reading through it and doing the actions that they set in the first activity. So the five actions that responded to their five prompts should be performed, whilst reading their script. They might choose to do the actions just once through or they might choose to do them quicker and do them multiple times, it doesn't matter. The purpose of this is to get the students to think about how they thought about themselves previously, and the actions they applied to that might work alongside a memory of themselves. Give the students kind of five or six minutes to play with this and try it out. This is not what they're performing to the group. So get them to think kind of freely and creatively about this and not to worry too much about it.

The next section of this activity is to produce a recording of the script. So get them to grab their mobile phone or audio recording devices. If you have them. All they need to do is to record their voice into their phone. They can do it as a video if they would prefer. But this tends to be quite distracting. So where possible, encourage them just to record their voice. They just read the story from beginning to end. Don't worry too much about the way in which is presented and if you go wrong, keep those bits in there, they're going to be useful in a minute. Once you have that audio recording, get the students to listen back a couple of times, taking note of where they pause, where they stumble, how they say certain things. This is important for the third part of this activity.

The third part of this activity is lip syncing. This is a really interesting performance technique often seen within the cabaret scenes. It allows somebody to embody somebody else's voice without verbally speaking it. Now what's interesting here is the students are going to embody their own voices. So once they've listened to their audio a couple of times, ask them to try and mouth along to what they're saying. They are lip syncing to themselves. No sound should be coming from their own mouth, only from the recording. They should try and make their mouth match up with the recording on their phone. Once the students have had time to try this out and think they have got to grips with it, ask them to do that alongside their actions. So now they've got three things going on. They are embodying themselves without sound, they have the recording of their narrative, and they are physically performing actions that they think represent themselves. Give them 5/10 minutes to just play around with this. They might want to show each other but it doesn't have to be perfect. We're not after a finished product. We're just after them exploring themselves and their identity and seeing what comes out of it. Once the students have had chance to play around with their lip syncing, see if anybody wants to perform to the rest of the group, they may or they may not. Either way, it's good to get the students to reflect upon their process. What happened when the action they were performing didn't fit with what they were saying? what happened when their lip syncing went out of time with their recording? what happened when their lip syncing was stopping because their physical activity was taking over. You're encouraging students to think about themselves, about their body in that moment, and about how different parts of their identity and their experience of pulling against each other. This is a really good point, to get the students to think about how we construct ourselves on a day by day basis. How we are fully functioning people that are able to walk and talk and think all at the same time and how difficult that actually is. By facilitating this discussion, you can also facilitate a discussion with students about their particular skills. It might be that some students are really quick thinkers, and they're able to problem solve on the fly. This particular bit of learning about them is a really important skill that they might want to promote in the future. This is also a really great chance to get students to think about how they reflect upon and record their learning in their portfolio. There is a fifth video that reflects on this more fully. If you're doing this activity by yourself, then this works perfectly for you too. You can complete the activity exactly as described. The only difference I would suggest is that you record your final performance so you can watch it back. See what happens. What did you think about that performance? What did you learn about yourself and how might you use that in the future?

Identity Portfolio Evidence

Given the nature of this workshop, it seems to me that it would be a really great idea to encourage students to create something, which is visual or audio as their portfolio evidence. They could do a video recording of their performance. They could do an audio podcast. They could try getting a collage together of different aspects of their performance. Either way, the visual and the audio here really speaks to those skills that the students have developed. Their skills around critical thinking about understanding themselves have been really developed through this workshop. And so get them perhaps to run those five questions again when answering their portfolio. Now, who am I? Now what am I roles? Now, what do I like and what don't I like? And now what am I worrying about? Are they

different? If they are, this is something to absolutely reflect upon in the portfolio, because for the students, this demonstrates development, and it demonstrates a journey of change. These skills are so important to employers and to education institutions.