

Personal Identity: Group Game	
Theme: Identity	Source: http://home.snu.edu/~jsmith/library/body/v18.pdf

Goals

- To enable participants to “try on” new identities.
- To explore the influence of a different identity on the behavior of others.
- To explore the relationship between honesty and trust

Group Size

Eight to twenty-four participants in two to four subgroups of four to six persons each. (Most members should not know one another.)

Time Required

Approximately one hour.

Materials

- A copy each of version A of the Personal Identity Instruction Sheet for half the participants.
- A copy each of version B of the Personal Identity Instruction Sheet for the other half of the participants.

Physical Setting

A room large enough for the subgroups to meet without interfering with or being overheard by one another. If more than one room is used, it should be possible for the facilitator to visit each subgroup during the time the participants are getting to know one another.

Process

1. The facilitator tells the group members that an important part of the time they spend together will be getting to know one another personally and that to facilitate this they will be divided into smaller subgroups. The participants should avoid being in a subgroup in which there are other persons they already know. If this is unavoidable, they are to behave as though they do not know anyone in the subgroup.
2. Subgroups are formed, and the facilitator distributes a copy of the Personal Identity Instruction Sheet to each member. The number of persons receiving form A in the subgroup should approximately equal the number of persons receiving form B in the subgroup.

3. Participants are directed to read the Personal Identity Instruction Sheet. They are told that they have approximately twenty minutes to get to know one another, that they may begin by having each person in succession take two minutes to tell about himself or herself, and that they may comment on any presentation after all are completed.

4. The facilitator calls time and announces a fifteen-minute break during which participants are free to leave the room if they wish. They are encouraged to continue the process of getting to know other members of their subgroup. This step is important in order to give them an opportunity to interact on the basis of their presented identities, whether genuine or false.

5. The entire group is reassembled, and the facilitator asks the members to identify any other members whom they believe to have presented false identities. When all the “nominations” have been made, those members who have assumed different identities identify themselves.

Awareness of Process Questions

- What are the feelings of those who presented themselves honestly about those whom they suspected of presenting a made up identity? Were they tempted to embellish their own presentations?
- Did those with “false” instructions assume that others also were lying?
- Did this influence their behavior?
- Did any members find that people related to their new identity differently from the way people usually relate to them?
- Will it be hard for those who were told false stories to get to know or to trust the “false” persons in the future?
- Did members find it easy or difficult to “lie”?
- What did each member learn about himself or herself from this?
- Is it necessary or important that people be honest about themselves? Are there any virtues in not being honest about oneself

Variations

- The information that some members are presenting different identities can be withheld until step 5.
- Every member can be instructed to assume a new identity.
- Students could be given identities of historical figures from the time period we are studying and have to assume their roles.

PERSONAL IDENTITY INSTRUCTION SHEET A

In order for subgroup members to get acquainted with one another, each member is first to talk briefly about himself or herself to the subgroup for approximately two minutes. After each person has done this, other members are free to comment on whatever anyone spoke about. For example, you might want to question someone about an experience he or she has had or relate it to your own experience.

Remember, the Goals are to obtain information about the other persons in the subgroup and to supply information about yourself. What you initially tell the subgroup about yourself can be basic information such as birthplace, occupation, interests, etc., or it can be more idiosyncratic, such as astrological sign, favorite color, shoe size, favorite fantasy, etc. In short, you can tell the subgroup members anything that you think will help them to get to know you.

You will have fifteen minutes to get to know one another. Then you may take a break, during which time you will continue to interact informally with members of your subgroup. Some members of the subgroup will be presenting false pictures of themselves. You may wish to see if you can identify whether a member's story is true or false, but do not "cross-examine" another member solely for this purpose. The atmosphere in the subgroup is to remain one of getting acquainted. If you know that another member is presenting a false picture of himself or herself, do not reveal this to anyone. Do not share these instructions with anyone.

PERSONAL IDENTITY INSTRUCTION SHEET B

In order for subgroup members to get acquainted with one another, each member is first to talk briefly about himself or herself to the subgroup for approximately two minutes. After each person has done this, you may attempt to find out more about the people in the subgroup and they about you.

Your task, however, is to not tell the truth about yourself. Keep your real name, but make up a new identity for yourself that is entirely or largely false. Thus, you can talk about such things as birthplace, occupation, interests, etc., or about more idiosyncratic things such as astrological sign, favorite color, shoe size, favorite fantasy, etc., but what you say should be false or highly misleading.

Try to make your story or your "facts" believable and consistent. (After this activity, the subgroup will take a short break. Continue to maintain your "new" identity during this period as you interact informally with the members of your subgroup.) Not all people will be receiving these instructions. It is crucial that you do not indicate in any fashion that you are not telling the truth or that you have received these instructions. See how well you can act. If you find yourself in a subgroup with someone who also is presenting a different identity, do not reveal this to anyone. Do not share these instructions with anyone.