



Identity, Why and for What Good

**Workshop by Dhillon Marty Foundation
on August 9th, 2017
at the World Humanities Conference, Liège, Belgium**

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the workshop was to facilitate dialogue on the topic of identity, while helping participants gain a deeper understanding on how we define identity, why we need it and what good does it do, at both individual and group levels.

Through this initiative, Dhillon Marty Foundation's goal was to contribute to raising awareness and investigating the different ways of development of humanity in the society, hence building dialogue in the society against radical and extremist manifestations.

AUDIENCE

The workshop participants consisted of educators, parents, high school students and professionals, aged 13 to 70, from North and South America, Africa, Europe and Asia. The demographic was very diverse, participants coming from different backgrounds, having different countries of origin, different countries of residence and different nationalities.



FORMAT

We invited participants to join us in the workshop to conduct research through role plays and deliberation on why and for what good do we need Identity. Our workshop consisted of three slots of creative exercises, performed both individually and through group interaction, exploring the rationales which lay at the foundation of forming the individual vs. group identities.

The workshop consisted in three sessions:

1. In the first session, participants filled out one questionnaire for their official identity and one questionnaire for their personal identity. They then took a passport photo to accompany their information on their “official” identity card.
 - **Focus: group identity** - looking at the identity labels that the society places on people in general, which are usually found in the formal 'group-belonging identity cards" which accompany us throughout our life, which define our assignation as members to a specific group / nationality / segment of population. These labels are usually formulated to the benefit of the group, rather than the benefit of the individual.
 - **Focus: individual identity** - what matters for the human being? Essentially, revolving around questions that will determine how one defines his/her self: a date, a place or other coordinates that are meaningful for each participant. The "individual identity card" resulted showcased the elements that are truly important for one's self to live a fulfilling life.
2. In the second part, without talking to their neighbor, they filled in a short questionnaire about their neighbor's identity, including questions related to both their official and personal identities. Then discussed with their neighbor to check their answers and talked about the reasoning behind the assumptions made about the neighbors' identity.
 - **Focus: judgement of the other** - looking at how we perceive others and the judgements of value that we make about others, by making precipitated assumptions based on solely limited amount of information available at hand.
3. A two-hour group discussion regarding the above questionnaires and people's personal beliefs and feelings on how identity is constructed and its role for the personal fulfillment and for the societies was held.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE DISCUSSION

- The effects of colonialism and imperialism on the connection between nationality, ethnicity and racial identities were raised by participants over 40s (older group).



- The older group was more emotionally charged regarding the connection between race, ethnicity and nationality, than the younger group in their 30s or below (millennials).
- The younger group who has come to age in the era of social media, saw the world as one and was more focused on where we go next.
- When discussing stereotypical identities, the older group was more focused on the past.
- The younger group viewed nationality as a means of belonging, while the older group connected it to nationalism and its detriment to society.
- Due to the demographic of the most interactive participants, the discussion centered around racism and colonialism overshadowed younger group's discussion of multiculturalism.
- If two people are multicultural but have different cultural identities, the identity of being multicultural itself can bond people due to their shared experiences.
- Modern day active mobility of citizens poses a challenge on identity's role in securing the sense of belonging: the emigrant is treated as an outsider by the country he left and as a foreigner in the country he immigrated to.
- With technology, the contributors to a child's identity and education are no longer limited to be necessarily located in the near proximity of the child or within the same physical environment, namely it is no longer solely the responsibility of parents, school teachers and the Ministry of Education to shape the education of children nowadays.
- Identities are used to allocate resources, which makes identities so important to us and causes tension and conflict. For example, within the Caribbean, there are identity divisions based on countries and natural resources we need to accept and understand diverse identities and ensure that we do not create a hierarchy of them, because that is where the tension lies.

CONCLUSION

Identity serves two purposes:

1. Allocation of resources
2. Sense of belonging



CONTINUITY

The findings of the workshop have been used as a leading material for the Identity session during the “State of the Community 2017: Every Decision Counts” Conference, held on September 12-13, 2017, at UNESCO, in Paris. Visit the webpage dedicated to the panel related to the topic: <http://www.dhillonmarty.org/identity-why-and-for-what-good/>

The next step is to continue this workshop online to engage people into a global social movement that can answer personal needs of each individual, while building common civic values that will oppose extreme group ideologies and build a culture of peace for our interconnected world. [CALL-TO-ACTION LINK](#).

MULTI-MEDIA RESOURCES

- VIDEO: [Short-video with workshop highlights](#)
- Photo Gallery Below or visit [High-resolution Online Gallery](#)

