

## Who Am I? (My identity)

On his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday, a man asked himself: "Who am I? Can I still study and learn, or go hiking, or am I too old to do those things?" The same day his son-in-law of almost 50 years was asking the same question, "Who am I? Am I a small business person, a computer nerd or an inventor?"

Is it useful to ask the question, "Who am I?"

Is it useful to ask the question, "Who are we?"

Why or why not? In your native culture, do people ask these questions? If yes, do they ask them privately (only in their own mind) or talk about them with others? Explain.

Do you think 50 years or 75 years old is too old to be asking the question: "Who am I?" Don't people ask and answer that question in their teens or their twenties? What do you think?

What kinds of questions does your culture teach you to ask about yourself or about life?

Activity:

Write down a list of 10 things that define your identity (this is me!). Then group them by "very important" "important" or "less important".

Talk with one or two other people about your lists. Make sure everyone has a chance to talk.

Examples: "I am a singer." "I make jewelry." "I play basketball." "I have red hair." "I speak 3 languages."

Do you see yourself differently than other people see you? Explain.

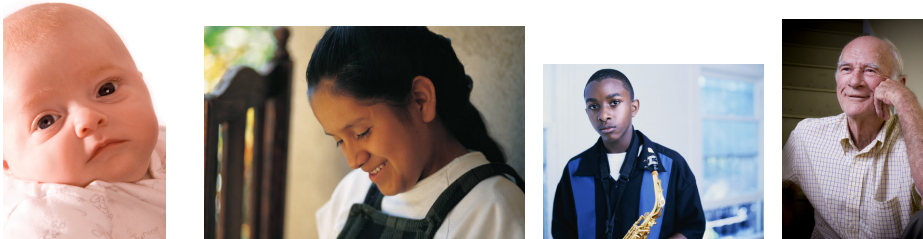
Sometimes people label each other. For example,  
"You're a woman, so I know that you are this and this and this."  
"You are poor, so I know that you are this and this and this."  
"You are an engineer, so I know that you are this and this and this."

What do you think about labels? When are they useful; when are they not? Explain.

How is identity established in your native culture? Rank the following items by importance. Does identity come from:

- .... your ethnic background?
- ..... your place of birth?
- ..... your education?
- ..... your accent?
- ..... your job?
- ..... your family?
- ..... your physical characteristics?
- ..... your skills and abilities?

Do people define *themselves* and have control over who they are, or are they defined by things outside of their personal control?



Describe changes you've made as you've grown older.

How well do you know yourself? How well do you know your family members?

Key words: identity, define, labels, establish