

# **Module 1**

## **Gender & Identity**

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Contributors (i.e.):

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### **Foreword and annotated table of contents**

People are who they are! - Whether they are adults or teenagers, they all have an idea of how and who they are: they have an identity.

As is shown in this module, people develop this identity throughout the course of their lives, and language is a great help, because people like to talk about themselves ...

In literature a distinction is made between psychological and social identity: Identity as a psychological construct suggests that when a person "identifies" himself with something that he takes on an (outer) characteristic of a certain group identity as its own essential characteristic. Identity as a social construct is attributed to a person by society, it also is always associated with the acquisition of certain roles. - Both approaches are discussed in this module through a gender-specific approach.

In the first section - "On the Social Construction of Gender" - Bernd Drägestein (DE) provides the theoretical foundations for the social construction of gender and explains the terminology "biological sex" (sex) and "social sex" (gender). Furthermore, using the three agents of socialization "family", "school" and "peer group", the complex development in the acquisition of sexual behaviour is discussed, as well as the numerous factors, interactions and social processes that are involved.

In a further contribution for this section, Drägestein shows through an interview that the issue of "social gender" also represents fundamental learning material for classroom activities. In the "hidden curriculum" at schools, this subject is already at the top of the list.

In the second section Renate Seebauer (AT) presents the results of an empirical study "On The Body Concepts of Young People in six European Countries - With Special Regard to Self-Perception".

The empirical research study investigates the body concepts of young people in their in-dividual-personal and collective dimensions - in this case in six countries. The sample of 444 young people (average age 13;9) reveals significant gender-specific differences in the

varying dimensions of the research (e.g. self-perception, ideal-perception, fear of transition to adult-hood, orientation according to current beauty trends). National characteristics are particularly noticeable with respect to Norway. Numerous studies that have already shown that female attractiveness and - as a result female self-perception (physically, socially, attainment-specific) - in contrast to male attractiveness is strongly influenced by an "ideal of slenderness" have been confirmed through this present study as far as young people are concerned.

More results from this study, which were not included here for reasons of space, are available in a publication of the Masaryk University in Brno..

In a collaborative effort from five European countries, Herbert Zoglowek (NO), Małgorzata Żyluk (PL), Nesrin Oruç (TR) and Fiona Shelton (UK) treat the "visualisation of men and women/girls and boys in European textbooks used for teaching foreign languages." The results of the random textbook analysis are summarized by Renate Seebauer (AT). The analysis shows a commitment to a relative balance of pictorial representations of women/girls and men/boys described in these textbooks. At first glance however, this could obscure the fact that male and female persons are almost "replaceable", and are almost "gender shapeless" - as expressed in the Norwegian contribution. Overall, the lack of suggestions on identifying opportunities for girls and boys with regard to an altered role image has been observed.

In the fourth section "Teenage Language Communication and Identity", in her contribution on "communication, identity and gender" Fiona Shelton (UK) refers to some educational and psychological research and explores the use of ICT by young people in reference to various recent studies. Erika Grossmann (HU) focuses on the use of Facebook by Hungarian youngsters and the impact of information communication technology on language. To what extent Face book profile pictures serve as a communication tool and a means of self-expression, is described in reference to a study.