

# Portraits

*We are all equal, but some are more equal than others. We are all different, but some are more different than others. Why?*

## Issues addressed

- The identification of social success with economic success.
- How social and economic factors diminish or raise the possibilities of social success.

## Aims of the activity

- To identify and analyse the basis of discrimination.

**Time:** Approx. 2 hours

## Group size

A minimum of 10 people, a maximum of 24.

## Preparation

- Large sheets of paper and coloured markers
- Pens and sheets of paper (DIN A4) for making notes
- Tape to fix the pictures on the wall.

## Instructions

1. Divide the participants into working groups of a maximum of 6 per group. If possible there should be an even number of groups and not more than four.
2. Tell half the groups that they are to produce an “identikit picture” of someone who they consider to be a “social winner” in their society. Tell the other groups to produce an “identikit picture” of someone who they would consider a “social loser”.
3. Tell everyone to start by listing the characteristics of their person, for example, social-economical level, education, profession or occupation, sex, ethnic group, habits, leisure time activities and hobbies, ways of dressing, opinions, ideas and values, family background, life style, type of housing, spending habits, themes or areas of interest, etc.
4. Now tell the groups to draw an identikit picture of their person on a large sheet of paper. This drawing should depict all the characteristics that they listed. It is very important that the pictures are graphic representations and no use is made of words. Allow 40 minutes for this.
5. Then get the groups to exchange their pictures, so that the groups who had to draw a “winner” swap with those who drew a ‘looser’, and to interpret them. Allow 15 minutes for this.
6. Now display all the pictures on the wall where everyone can see them.
7. In plenary, ask each group in turn to present their interpretation of the drawing they received. The group who made the original drawing may not make comments at this stage.



8. Once all the groups have presented their interpretations, you may ask the groups who made the drawings to give their comments if they wish to add something. Allow 30 minutes for this.

### **Debriefing and evaluation**

Allow approximately 30 minutes for the discussion. Ask the groups to identify and discuss the criteria by which society attributes social success and failure. The following questions may make the reflection and discussion easier:

- What are the main features of social success? And those of failure?
- What are the causes, the “roots” of success and failure? What factors determine the difference?
- Are the people represented in the ‘identikit’ picture’ found more often in some social groups, strata or classes than in others?
- Do people in all groups and social sectors of society have the same equality of opportunity to be successful?
- Who are in a more favoured, and who are in a less favoured position?

### **Tips for the facilitator**

Some participants may express difficulties in drawing the “identikit-picture” because they say they are “not good at drawing”. You may encourage them and stress that nobody is searching for a masterpiece but rather to use a form of communication other than speech. You should also be prepared to help by giving hints on how the characteristics on the list may be represented graphically or visually.

In the discussion draw out the point that if we identify social success with economic success we should be sure to realise that the person who is successful is not necessarily the one who achieves the greatest personal development or experience, but only the one who manages to accumulate or earn the most riches. There is a saying in English: ‘money isn't everything’.

You could also consider what society could do about the social and economic factors which diminish the possibilities of “social success”, such as educational shortcomings or marginalisation due to factors such as the colour of the skin or belonging to a minority.

To follow on you could identify and analyse the basis for discrimination and exclusion of people or groups who are “different” due to their culture, origin, sexual orientation, language etc. which mean that from the start some social groups are at a disadvantage compared to others.

### **Suggestions for follow up**

Social winners may be successful in some terms but do we think of them as heroes, people we really look up to and admire? Who are your heroes and what qualities do you admire in them? You might like to look at ‘Personal heroes’ (page 147).

Alternatively, if you enjoyed interpreting the ‘identikit picture’ you could try interpreting other pictures in ‘What do you see?’ (page 176).