Self and Identity

Youth Development

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Who am I?

- Try to answer three times to this simple (?) question.

Self, selfsystem

- „It is much easier **feel** the self than **define** what is the self" (Allport, 1961).

Two Sides of Self: Me & I

- self as an acting and experiencing subject
- knower
- I, Ich
- awareness of psychological presence
- connected with memory
- agency, continuity, distinctness

- self as a known object
- content of self-reflection
- „object of realizing"
- known
- Me, Self, Selbst
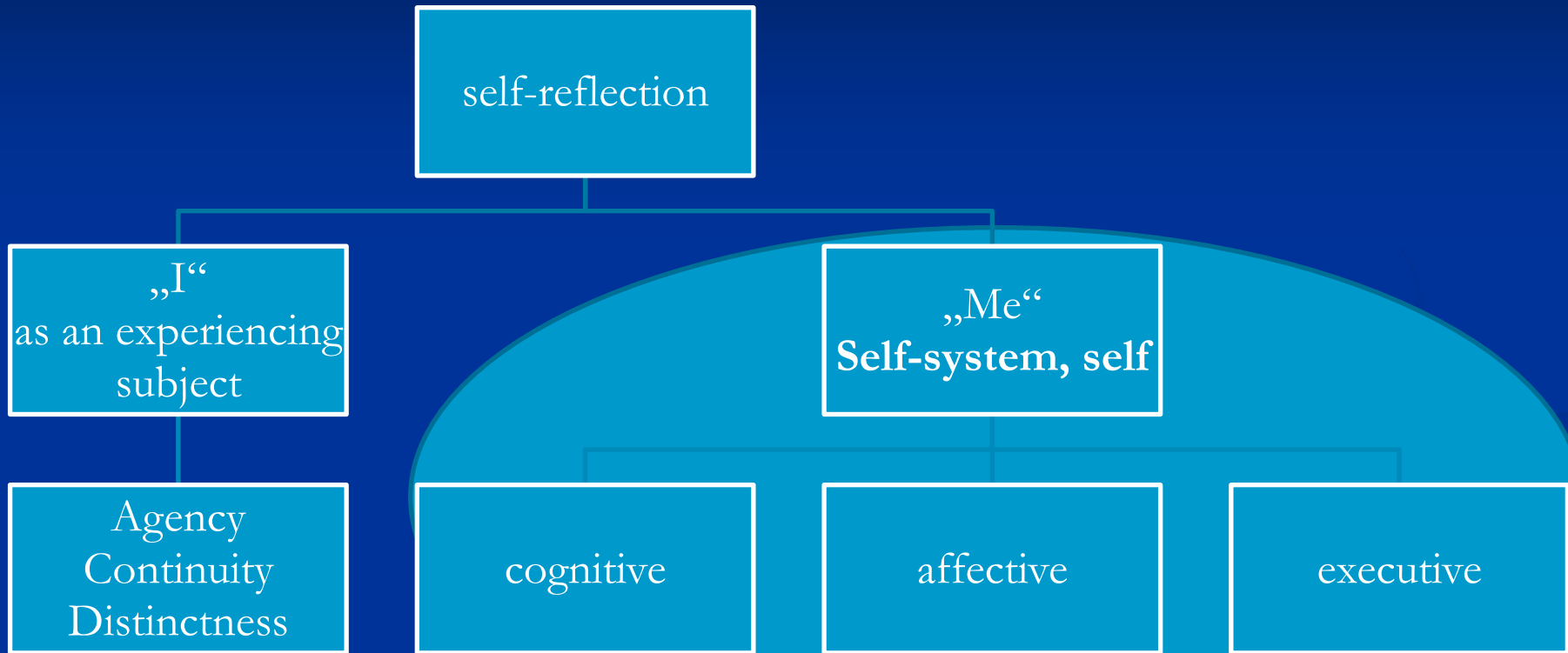
Self-system

- The cognitive aspect - *self-concept*
  - includes all self-relevant cognitions, i.e., knowledge and imaginations of the self
  - self-cognitions are organized into a particular whole (structure) and this is so at various levels of generality
- The executive aspect
  - connected with behavior, self-presentation strategies

Affective aspect

- every piece of knowledge related to the self is alwaysin connected with some feelings

- in adolescence it is predominantly a result of interpersonal comparison with peers, parents, other adult authorities, or group and social standards (Higgins, 1987)

- self-concept comprises various self-representations including also some self-assessment and self-evaluation

Self-esteem

- individuals' more general self-evaluation, empirically distinguishable from self-concept

- overall feeling from oneself or as global self-evaluation

- adolescent's self-esteem cannot be always simply derived from his/her partial self-evaluation; it implies being aware of one's value and overall self-satisfaction. It is related to individual's general feelings of worth and competence.

Self-esteem during adolescence

- self-esteem **declines** in early adolescence **and again increases** in the period of late adolescence and during the period of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2010)

- self-esteem **remains nearly constant** during adolescence (Baldwin & Hoffman, 2002).

- self-esteem **increases** moderately during adolescence and continues to increase more slowly during young adulthood (Erol & Orth, 2011).

Two approaches

- self-esteem as a static construct

- self-esteem as a dynamic construct
  - in cross-sectional research, sufficient attention cannot be paid to intra-individual changes
  - results are usually based on comparing the mean scores for a particular age cohort
  - If self-esteem increases in some adolescents and declines in others, then the differences cancel out due to the approach focused on mean scores and hence self-esteem makes an impression of being static (Hirsch & DuBois, 1991).

Cluster analysis approach
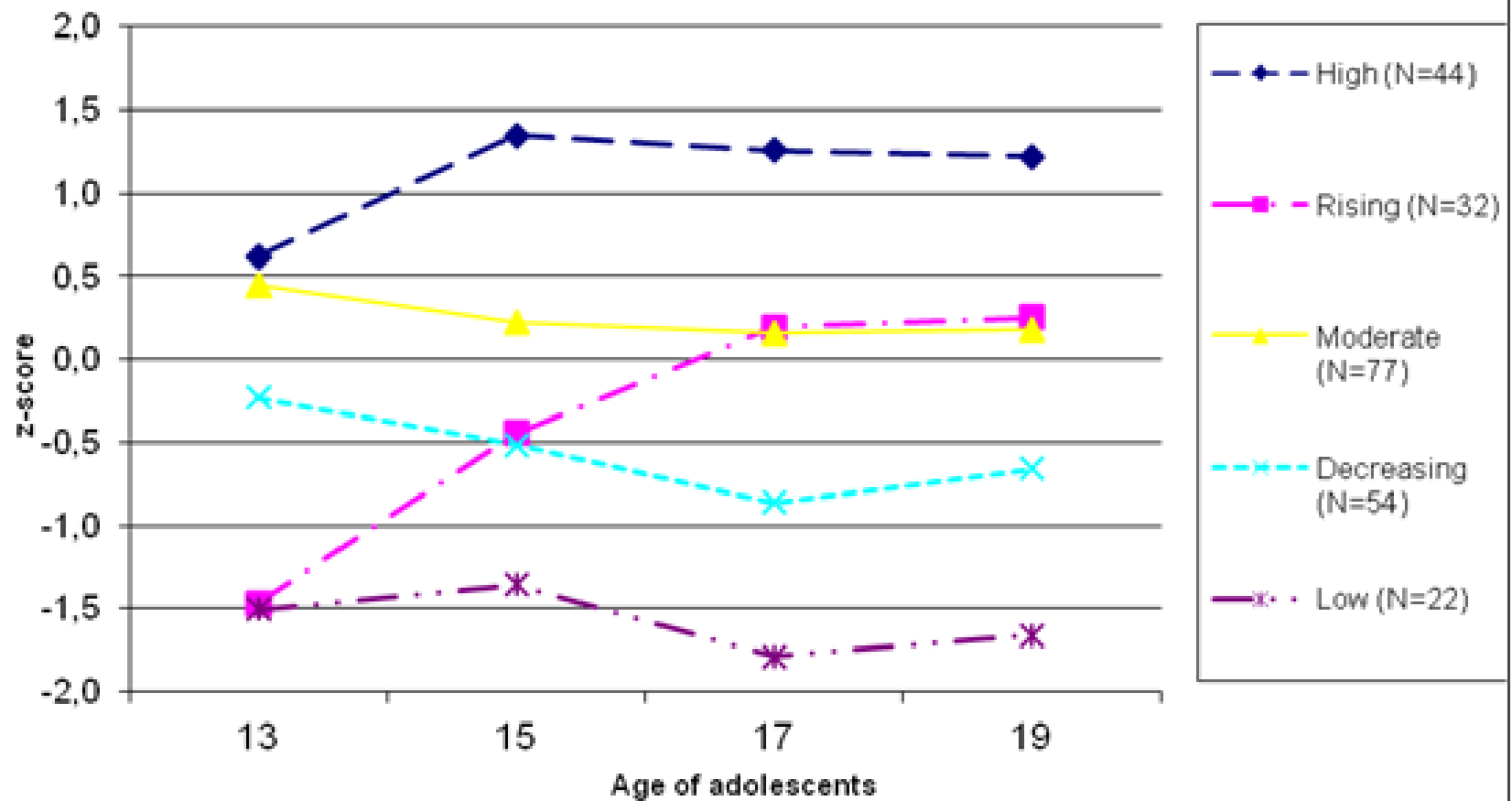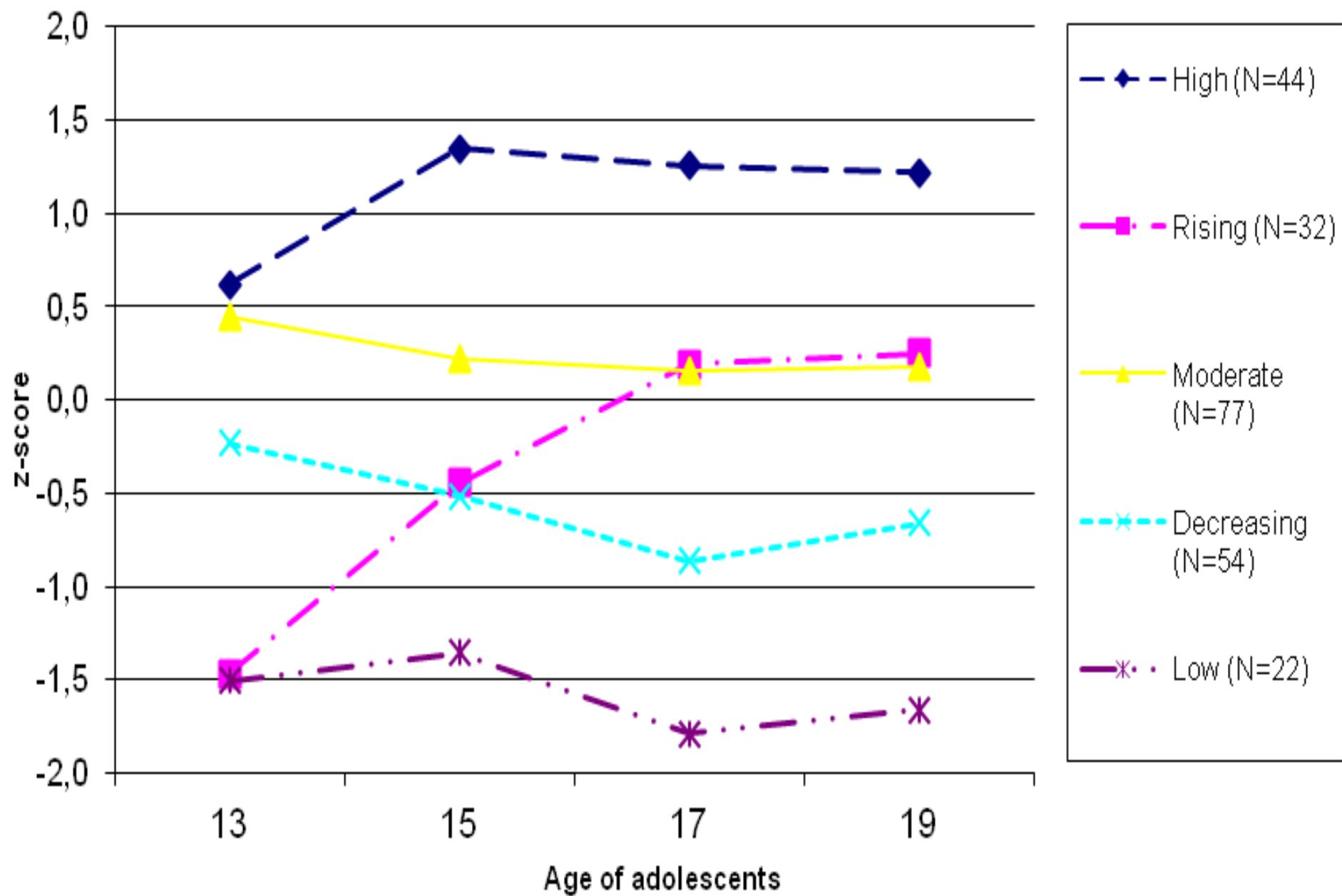
Trajectory A: Permanently high self-esteem

- a low degree of neuroticism and higher emotional stability.
- in comparison with other respondents, they have stable and positive relationships with parents — they do not have many problems with them and they trust each other.
- less dependent on the evaluation and opinions of their peers.
- little self-doubt and are more oriented on their future perspective than a majority of others (they exhibit a higher degree of commitments).

Trajectory B: Growing self-esteem

- a higher degree of neuroticism, self-blame and alienation at 15 years of age

- lower degree of commitments in relation to their parents at 17 years of age.

- at 17 years of age, they also showed an overall higher degree of general commitment (which can be also interpreted as a clear vision of their own future).

- In peer relationships, this subgroup does not significantly differ from other respondents.

Trajectory C: Stable moderate self-esteem

- the most numerous subgroup
- Stability of self-esteem over time can be expected to be based especially on relevant personality traits — in particular on a higher degree of extraversion and lower degree of neuroticism.
- Otherwise, these respondents are in many ways similar with the profile of their psychosocial characteristics to the subgroup with permanently high self-esteem (trajectory A).
- What makes them different are more problems and a lower degree of trust in relationships with parents.

Trajectory D: Decreasing self-esteem

- Lower trust and higher alienation in relationships with parents, a higher frequency of problems with parents and self-blame for an interparental conflict.

- More complicated relationship also with peers: firstly, they often give evidence of problems in relationships; secondly, they show higher dependence on peer opinion and emotional response.

- U-shape trajectory?

Trajectory E: Permanently low self-esteem

- The permanently low level of self-esteem is related to the constellation of personality traits: these respondents have a higher neuroticism score and a lower extraversion score. Strong impact of emotional stability/instability (i.e. neuroticism) and extraversion/introversion on the level of the self-esteem trajectory highlighted by Erol & Orth (2011).

- They report a higher degree of problems in relationships with parents and their peer relationships are problematical as well.

Self and/or Identity?

- Self and identity are often used interchangeably.

- Some clarity can be attained by considering them as a series of nested constructs, with self as the most encompassing term, self-concepts being embedded within the self, and identities being embedded within self-concepts (Leary & Tangney, 2012).

- Identity refers to the traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is (Leary & Tangney, 2012).

Identity Conceptualization

- The process of identity formation involves the exploration and testing of alternative ideas, beliefs, and behaviours, marking this period as one of both dramatic change and uncertainty for adolescent development.

- Identity refers to the identification with roles, values, beliefs, and life styles that mark a person's individuality.

- Social identity refers to a person's self-definition in terms of group belongingness and embedding in social and cultural systems

Identity Conceptualization

- Identity can be defined as the concept of self that continues throughout the lifecycle and correlates strongly with the perception of what others have of them.

- Identity is thus the **continued perception of self that is made up of the following components: physical, sexual, social, occupational, moral, ideology.**

Example of different work with identity (adolescents)

Coat-of-arms

(pictures intentionally removed)

- Coat-of-arms no. 1
  - Johnny 007 – an example of personal identity

- Coat-of-arms no. 2
  - Vlasta (aka Emo) – an example of social identity

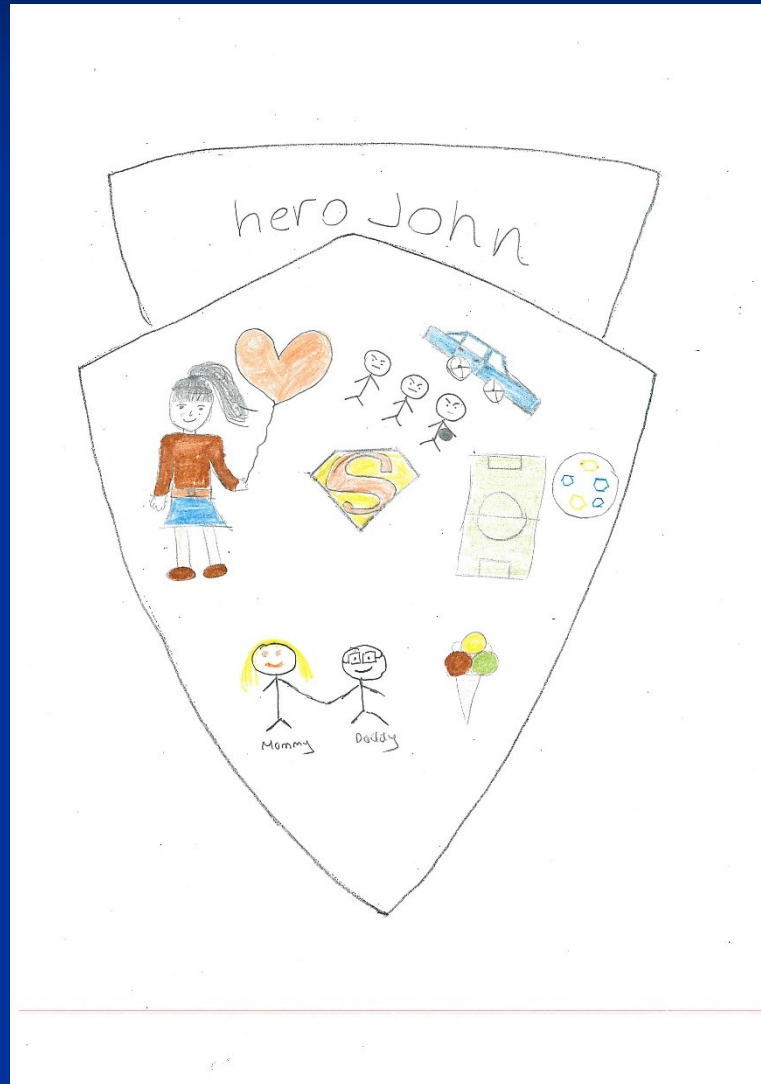# What is different?

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- ■ T-shirt picture – an example of work on identity in the field of substitute family care
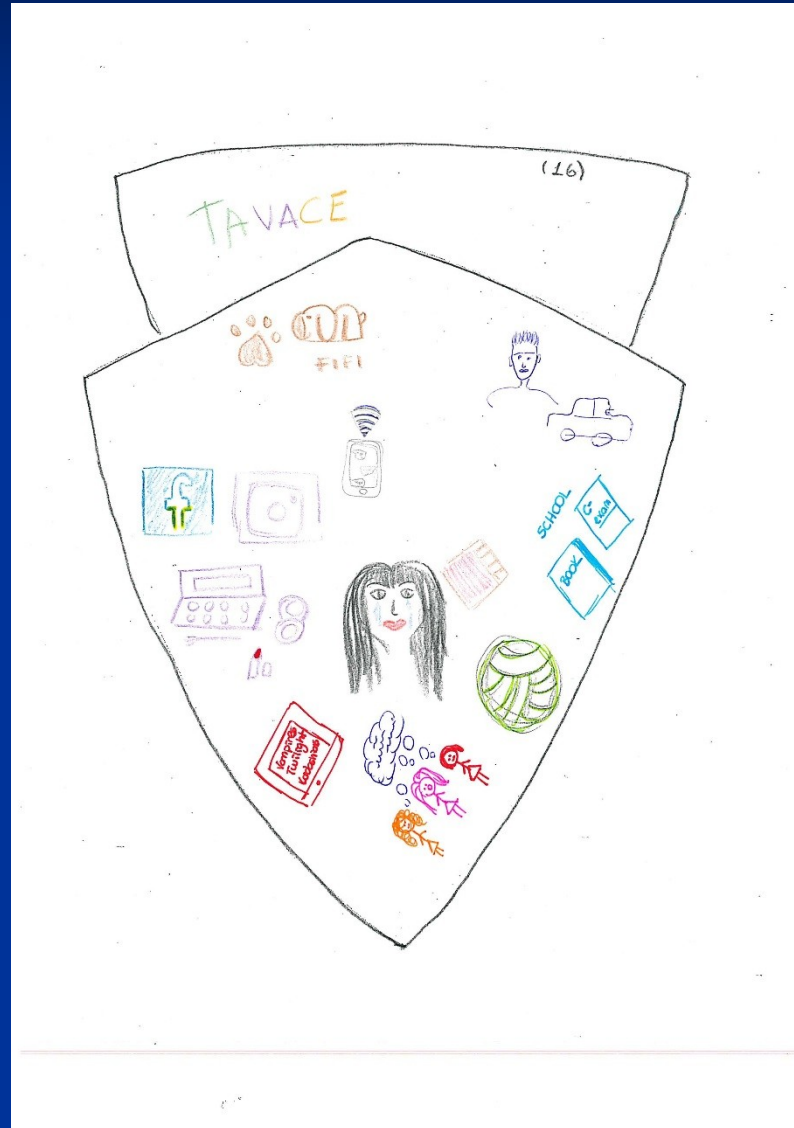
Identity within Youth development

- Examples of your own work ☺

Hero John (school age)

Tavace (adolescence)

Lawewnce (emerging adulthood)