

TOPIC: Group Identity

Participants will answer the following questions by the end of the session:

- What is group identity?
- What are some reasons that group identity is important in Venturing?
- What are some ways that a group can express their shared identity?

Presentation Method

In planning the presentation, you should review the latest materials posted at <http://www.venturing.org/>. The most recent program updates are posted there are ready for your use.

Use the discussion outline below to help you prepare your remarks. PowerPoint presentation slides were not prepared for use during this session. If you wish to use one, the content below will be helpful in constructing your presentation.

Resources

- Boy Scouts of America (2014). *Handbook for Venturers*. Irving, TX: Boy Scouts of America (BSA No. 619088)
- Boy Scouts of America (2014). *Venturing Advisor Guidebook*. Irving, TX: Boy Scouts of America (BSA No. 618768)
- Boy Scouts of America (2014). *Venturing Awards and Requirements*. Irving, TX: Boy Scouts of America (BSA No. 618767)

OVERVIEW The Venturing program is structured around four areas of program emphasis: Adventure, Leadership, Personal Growth, and Service – ALPS. This session explores the use of leadership and mentoring as an area of program emphasis.

INTRODUCTION The ALPS model was developed during the 2012-2014 program review process by the National Venturing Task Force.

	ADVENTURE	LEADERSHIP	PERSONAL GROWTH	SERVICE
SUMMIT 	<i>Mentoring and participation</i>	<i>Ongoing leadership development</i>	<i>Goal-setting and personal growth</i>	<i>Leading others in service</i>
PATHFINDER 	<i>Leading and participation</i>	<i>Leading others</i>	<i>Goal-setting and personal growth</i>	<i>Participating in service</i>
DISCOVERY 	<i>Participation</i>	<i>Preparing to lead</i>	<i>Goal-setting and personal growth</i>	<i>Participating in service</i>
VENTURER 	<i>Initial participation, orientation to the crew, Personal Safety Awareness training, induction into the crew</i>			

WHAT IS GROUP Peer groups are essential for the growth and development of young adults. **Group**

IDENTITY?

identity is the shared sense of belonging to a group with common values and serves as a means to build positive group interactions and self-confidence.

Venturing is most effective when young adults gain a positive sense of belonging in their crew. This sense of belonging and group identify might occur by chance, but most often it requires conscious effort on the part of the crew's membership and Advisors.

Successful crews purposefully form a group identity that provides a sense of purpose and belonging. Our social identity is our sense of who we are based upon our group memberships. The groups we belong to can give us a sense of self-esteem and confidence. Venturing crews should be social groups that share a core set of values based upon serving others, seeking honest adventure, and improving oneself.

Social identity is a mixture of intrapersonal behaviors (within ourselves) and interpersonal behaviors (how we act with others). Crew Advisors should help Venturers to understand that while a crew identity will form naturally over time (and it will probably change and grow), members of the crew are not going to identify themselves 100 percent with the crew and its image.

Crews should be able to cultivate a sense of belonging and identity without needing to also support views of elitism, arrogance, or mockery of others. The crew's identity will appeal to both novices and experts because they can each find a sense of belonging around a shared hobby while still being able to individually achieve and push themselves.

**CHARACTERISTICS
OF GROUP
IDENTITY**

People choose to belong to groups that fit their image of who they are.

- In this manner, the group identity is aspirational – the group represents something that the participant would like to achieve.
- The activities that the crew delivers help also to connect Venturers with the ideals of Scouting. But youth don't join Venturing just to be associated with the values; they join because of the appeal of the local crew's adventures. Successful crews purposefully. That connection and identification with the Scout Oath and Law come with time, especially with participants who are new to the movement.
- Group identity is an outcome of social interactions. It is noted by researchers that individuals in an uncertain environment (such as being challenged during an adventure) are particularly guided by the learning that takes place while interacting with others. This emphasizes the power of challenging adventures, but also the important role of the advisor in ensuring that the relationships and outcomes are universally positive
- Peer group membership is likewise an important developmental phase during adolescence. Researchers note that “who perceive peer group membership as very important to them and had a positive sense of peer group belonging had significantly fewer behavior problems than those who viewed peer group membership as very important but did not have a positive sense of peer group

belonging.”¹

**A CREW
UNIFORM?**

Advisors are often more comfortable with the use of the official Venturing uniform than Venturers themselves.

As an advisor, you are in a position to encourage and suggest, but not to insist that a crew adopt the official Venturing uniform.

An outward sign of group identity can be similar clothing. Venturers who grew up in Boy Scouting or Girl Scouting are probably used to wearing a uniform. This method of group identity provides a group identity with a national organization. The National Council of the Boy Scouts of America does produce a green shirt and gray pants or shorts that can serve as a Venturing uniform, but it is important to realize that young adults ages 14 to 21 are not the same as elementary and middle-school youth in the Scouting program. It works better if Venturers see the value in the use of the uniform and adopt it as a tool for constructive group identity rather than to be forced to wear something because an adult insists on it.

There are other ways to express identity in addition to wearing the official Venturing field uniform. Some examples include:

- Patch on a ski jacket or parka for search and rescue crews
- Fishing hat for a crew that focuses on fishing adventures
- T-shirt emphasizing a crew’s rock climbing adventures
- Embroidered polo shirt identifying a crew’s connection to its youth ministry group
- Jacket with screen-printed logo on back displaying a crew’s shooting sports specialty
- T-shirt showing the fun side of Venturing STEM activities

See the *Venturing Advisor Guidebook* for further comments on this sort of expression of group identity.

**DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS**

Use the discussion questions to provide advisors an opportunity to process and analyze the information presented during this session. As a general suggestion, keep the discussion positive and constructive, in keeping with the values of Scouting and of Venturing as a youth development program.

A helpful comment to use to keep the discussion moving in a positive direction might be, “how does [comment] promote a youth-designed and youth-led program?”

- How is a shared article of clothing useful for developing a shared/group identity among adolescents?
- What are some things an advisor can do to ensure that a positive group identity emerges from the activities of a crew?

¹ Newman, B.M., Lohman, B.J., & Newman, P.R. (2007). Peer group membership and a sense of belonging: their relationship to adolescent behavior problems. *Adolescence*. 42(166), 241-263.

- Consider a new advisor, who recently served as a Boy Scout leader. This new leader insists that crew members adopt the green Venturing uniform for wear during crew meetings. How would you counsel this new advisor?

CLOSURE Wrap up conversation. Close by asking participants how they will use what they learned during this evening's roundtable to support their crew's program.

ASSESSMENT Look for participant answers to the following questions by the end of the session:

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