

Área 3 - EPCDA

**Ensino-Aprendizagem, Pesquisa e Formação Didático-Pedagógica de
Professores em Administração**

**IDENTITY WORK IN BUSINESS EDUCATION: HOW ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF
TEACHING AND LEARNING ALLOWS FOR IDENTITY CRYSTALLIZATION**

Abstract

The goal of this research was to understand how alternative ways of teaching and learning in business education allows for identity crystallization. To achieve the objective, we collected data through semi-structured interviews with all 19 students enrolled in an alternative educational program in the first semester of 2021. The program aims to develop, through practical activities, skills and competencies related to leadership, communication, team work, listening, and autonomy. The data analysis revealed occurrences mapped in an isolated way in the previous literature, such as disidentification as a way of dissociating oneself from attributes perceived as negative; the expression of resistance as a form of identity work; the search for preferred identities; and crystallization: the coexistence of different facets of identity. We highlight the potential of educational experiences as facilitators of IW, especially non-traditional ones which are more likely to contain elements for that. The original contribution of this study was to organize the occurrences of identity work in a process: starting with a dynamic of disidentification and resistance to the prevalent discourses; passing through alternative routes, to build a preferred identity; and culminating in the emergence of a crystalized identity.

Key words: identity work; resistance; disidentification; crystallization; business education

Resumo

O objetivo desta pesquisa foi compreender como formas alternativas de ensinar e aprender em cursos de administração permitem a cristalização da identidade. Para atingir o objetivo, coletamos dados por meio de entrevistas semiestruturadas com todos os 19 alunos matriculados em um programa de ensino alternativo no primeiro semestre de 2021. O programa visa desenvolver, por meio de atividades práticas, habilidades e competências relacionadas à liderança, comunicação, trabalho em equipe, escuta e autonomia. A análise dos dados revelou ocorrências mapeadas de forma isolada na literatura prévia, como a desidentificação como uma forma de se dissociar de atributos percebidos como negativos; a expressão de resistência como forma de trabalho identitário; a busca por identidades preferidas; e a cristalização: a coexistência de diferentes facetadas da identidade. Destacamos o potencial das experiências educativas como facilitadoras de trabalho identitário, principalmente as não tradicionais, que apresentam maior probabilidade de conter elementos para tal. A contribuição original deste estudo foi organizar as ocorrências do trabalho identitário em um processo: partindo de uma dinâmica de desidentificação e resistência aos discursos predominantes; passando por rotas alternativas, para construir uma identidade preferida; e culminando na emergência de uma identidade cristalizada.

Palavras-chave: trabalho identitário; resistência; desidentificação; cristalização; educação empresarial.

Introduction

Identities can be defined as the subjective interpretations that individuals have about who they are, “based on their socio-demographic characteristics, roles, personal attributes, and group memberships” (CAZA; VOUGH; PURANIK, 2018, p. 889). Given this definition, it appears that identity related issues can be linked to numerous situations relative to organizations, making the organizational field prolific for the development of studies on identity and identity work (IW) (BROWN, 2022; CAZA; VOUGH; PURANIK, 2018). In the last five years, topics such as managers behavior (BARDON; BROWN; PUYOU, 2021), work spaces (CORLETT; RUANE; MAVIN, 2021) and professional identities (BARROS, 2018) have been explored in research in the business field. Educational organizations – and among them business schools – are also field for research in IW.

Brown, Lewis and Oliver (2019), for instance, have studied IW in deans of business schools. They identified a pattern of losses in which those professionals built their identities, reinforcing the sacrifices that are required for the exercise of their function. Additionally, they demonstrated that the deans had preferred identities in which they were seen as credible researchers, morally incorruptible and dedicated workers.

Approaching the students' point of view, Danielsson and collaborators (2019), investigated the identity trajectories of engineering students, demonstrating the importance of students identifying themselves with elements of the program's culture and a process of resistance when it didn't occur. Siivonen et al (2020) studied the construction of a collective identity among the participants of student entities related to entrepreneurship and found that the group built a cohesive identity and a shared narrative based on positive energy and thinking, but with difficulties in identifying critical aspects and counterpoints. Still on entrepreneurial education, Frederiksen and Berglund (2020, p.1) listed three practices that facilitated the entrepreneurial identity construction of students: “setting new rules to activate the entrepreneurial self”; “playing by the rules by figuring the script”; and “bending the rules protecting the self”, a practice in which resistance proved to be a significant concept.

Some researches has investigated the IW process in underrepresented groups, such as students from minority groups (FERNANDO; KENNY, 2021), students who are mothers from low-status schools (SMITH, 2017) and academic women (BARNARD, 2019). The results show that underrepresented groups face additional challenges and engage into a complex IW in order to negotiate a sense of fit, in this process they have to disidentify themselves from the stigmas that certain identities conferred on them and reframe their experiences in a more positive way.

Petriglieri and Petriglieri (2010, p. 44) introduced the concept of identity workspaces, defined as “institutions that provide a holding environment for individuals' identity work” and positioned educational institutions – especially business schools – as identity workspaces. In accordance with that definition, this research seeks to understand how alternative ways of teaching and learning in business education allow for student identity crystallization.

Business schools were chosen as a research locus because they are fertile ground for the study of IW, since the educational institutions themselves and the course are often linked to an identity crisis, related to low legitimacy and respectability of business education (AKRIVOU; BRADBURY-HUANG, 2015; BENNIS; O'TOOLE,

2005; MINTZBERG, 2004; NICOLINI, 2003; THOMAS; LORANGE; SHETH, 2013). Business students, according to prior research, appear to cheat significantly more than other college students; are more likely to behave in a self-interested way in social dilemmas (PARKS-LEDUC; MULLIGAN; RUTHERFORD, 2021); and have narcissistic tendencies such as materialistic values (BERGMAN; WESTERMAN; DALY, 2010). Therefore, it is academically relevant to investigate how the IW occurs in this particular setting, to which so many negative attributes are related.

We intend to show that not all the IW carried out by the administration students goes in the direction of an adaptation to the values of managerialism and entrepreneurialism (TRACY; TRETHERWEY, 2005), leading the students to seek alternative experiences that support their IW. The main original contribution is to show how occurrences of IW mapped separately by the literature – such as disidentification, resistance and crystallization – were articulated in the IW undertaken by the students investigated at this research.

Theoretical overview

Identity Work

Identity work is a process in which individuals reflexively attach subjective meanings to their self (BROWN, 2019; BROWN; LEWIS; OLIVER, 2021). Such process can happen for a lifetime but is more likely in transition phases, such as when students are transiting to higher education and need to learn how to fit in such environment (IBARRA, 1999). As highlighted by Fernando and Kenny, (2021) IW encompasses personal attributes, roles, and group memberships (BROWN; LEWIS; OLIVER, 2021) and is construed through discourse enacted in the present moment (BROWN, 2015), contingent to the relation with the significant others (BEECH, 2008; IBARRA; BARBULESCU, 2010).

IW, as a process, is not hermetic or unidirectional, but includes creating, presenting, sustaining, forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening, or revising identities (ALVESSON; WILLMOTT, 2002; SNOW; ANDERSON, 1987; SVENINGSSON; ALVESSON, 2003). During the identity work process, some occurrences relevant to the present research were mapped by prior research, such as disidentification (BARROS, 2018; SMITH, 2017), resistance (DANIELSSON et al., 2019; FERNANDO; KENNY, 2021; FREDERIKSEN; BERGLUND, 2020; TRACY; TRETHERWEY, 2005) and crystallization (TRACY; TRETHERWEY, 2005).

In the IW process, disidentification occurs when an individual wants to separate his/her identity from certain characteristics, generally prevalent in the environment in which he/she is inserted, or, in the words de Elsbach and Bhattacharya (2001, p. 393), “defining who you are by what you’re not”. Barros (2018), for example, explored how the lack of identification with attributes related to journalism in Brazil led some journalists to reshape their identities with new attributes and Smith (2017) emphasizes how people seek to disidentify themselves from characteristics that can give them a stigma.

According to Barros (2018, p. 2) the process of disidentification can be an opportunity to express resistance against “dominant subjectification”, through a series of strategies such as “irony, parody, cynicism”, etc. To Frederiksen and Berglund (2020) resistance is a complex form of IW that takes different forms and functions as

a way of protecting the self. One example can be seen in the work of Smith (2017), in which a student expressed his resistance to the engineering student culture by seeking social relationships with people outside his course. In the work of Fernando and Kenny (2021), resistance has similar contours, being expressed as a form of questioning and rejecting organizational practices. Students from programs that aimed widening participation of underrepresented groups refused to participate in cultural leveling activities promoted by the educational institution, as a way of asserting that these cultural elements were, in fact, not relevant.

Tracy and Trethewey (2005, p. 171) said that “resistance lies in rebelling against the ways in which we have already been defined as individuals by discourse”. The IW that occurs in the movement between resistance and dominance allows the emergence of identity. Since identity is neither fixed nor stable, individuals can engage in IW related to disidentification, resistance and creation of new, different and preferred identities that coexist, but that should not be understood as the ‘real self’ in constant battle with the ‘fake self’. Indeed, they suggest that this dichotomy should be abandoned since identities are not even real or fake, but crystallized, constituted by discourse and its effects (TRACY; TRETHERWEY, 2005).

Certainly crystals may feel solid, stable, and fixed, but just as crystals have differing forms depending upon whether they grow rapidly or slowly, under constant or fluctuating conditions, or from highly variable or remarkably uniform fluids or gasses, crystallized selves have different shapes depending on the various discourses through which they are constructed and constrained (TRACY; TRETHERWEY, 2005, p. 186).

Referring to the self as crystallized would be a way to attach a positive valence to multiple coexisting identities, since a crystal is made up of multiple facets that combine complexity and beauty.

Identity work and education

IW is also an ongoing and critical phenomenon within the educational context. The transition to higher education is alone a significant change in the young adult’s life where they get exposed to new demands, behavior, and patterns (FERNANDO; KENNY, 2021). In such context students are likely to refine who they are (IBARRA, 1999), however, following strict institutional patterns, business schools are unlikely to offer an approach that will fit all students during their journey. Scholars have suggested that in the experience of lack of fit people might be involved in intense IW (CAZA; VOUGH; PURANIK, 2018; FERNANDO; KENNY, 2021). In such a process, students are likely to forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening, or revising constructions of self to produce a sense of coherence and distinctiveness (SVENINGSSON; ALVESSON, 2003, p. 1165). In short, IW is more intense during transitions, from high school to college, as shown by Fernando and Kenny (2021) and from college to market job, as is our setting.

The literature in learning and education have explored IW from different perspectives and contexts. Scholars have shown themselves concerned with diversity and inequalities (FERNANDO; KENNY, 2021; REAY, 2018), inclusiveness (BARNARD, 2019; DANIELSSON et al., 2019), virtual learning (HEIKOOP, 2013) and

business school as identity workspaces (PETRIGLIERI; PETRIGLIERI, 2010). However, there still the need to investigate the influence of the educational process on IW.

Methodology

To understand how alternative ways of teaching and learning in business education allows for identity crystallization we investigated an alternative educational program called Integrated Education for Entrepreneurial Leadership (Intent) through semi-structured interviews conducted with all 19 students enrolled in the program in the first semester of 2021.

The Intent Program

Intent is a semestral, elective and integrated program in which approximately 20 students of business administration can participate from the 6th semester onwards, at a private non-profit college. Its goal is to develop, through practical activities, skills and competencies such as leadership, communication, team work, listening, and autonomy.

Classes take place from Monday to Thursday, from 9 am to 4 pm in a large room, equipped to accommodate different assemblies. The more common layouts tend to be circles and small groups. During the meetings, the teachers – designated as team leaders – are responsible for designing and sustaining a learning space from experience, and team members are encouraged to develop their individual or group projects autonomously. There are no lectures and students are free to interact with the bibliography, which is indicated in advance.

The evaluation of team members consists of three main components, each referring to one of the three cycles that make up the program. In Cycle 1, which contemplates the formation of the team, the assessment is given by the student reflection on their learning, which occurs through the weekly delivery of a reflective diary. In Cycle 2, which involves the realization of a personal project, peers and team leaders are the evaluators. In Cycle 3, which provides consulting services to a real client, the evaluation comes from a panel of external professionals, invited to evaluate the results and the consulting process.

Information about the Intent program was provided to us by its creators, teachers and participants and complemented by written records such as the Syllabus, the information folders, an executive summary, and content published on websites and social networks.

Data set

To research this object, we have collected data through interviews with all 19 students enrolled in the program in the first semester of 2021. The interviews took place at the end of Cycle 1 of the program, which was considered the most favorable moment to collect information about the object of study. The script was semi-structured and included questions about the reason why the students chose to enroll in the undergraduate business course, why they chose to make part of Intent, how they sought the evolution of themselves and the team during the course. During the interview, depending on the answers of the participants the authors asked that they

explore more of the themes they were saying and furthering the data collection. The participants expressed their agreement to participate in the research through a consent form and all information that could identify them was omitted.

Data analysis

With all data collected we begin the analysis by coding the text, inductively. We used the inductive approach in order to understand what our informants could have stated by themselves about the construction of their identity. This process resulted in significant theoretical constructs that we will explore further (CHARMAZ, 2000). Data was coded using ATLAS.ti software, whose tools help to encode large volumes of data. In the codification process we compared the narratives told by our informants, looking for relevant facts that contributed to achieve the research objective.

Results and Discussion

In order to understand how alternative ways of teaching and learning in business education allows for identity crystallization, the data analysis led us to the proposition of an IW process, as we found in our empirical data a thread of occurrences mapped separately by the previous literature.

The process starts with a dynamic of disidentification and resistance to the prevalent identity. Then it goes through escape routes, in which students have new educational experiences (e.g., self-knowledge and self-development) that enable them to crystallize an emergent identity. We found that the context of the Intent Program offered a group learning experience and a safe pedagogical space which were conducive to the IW process.

Disidentification and resistance

Students participating in Intent are in the final portion of their undergraduate courses. At that point they already had at least two and a half year working in their self-identity as students in a particular traditional educational institution. The empirical material showed that the search for an alternative program was motivated by both, the genuine interest for the features of the program, and also the possibility to find an escape route from unsatisfactory experiences in the regular course. We argue that this disidentification process was a trigger for the search for alternative routes.

Two types of unsatisfactory experiences were mapped in the empirical material: the lacks and the excesses. In one way, students reported several aspects their course were lacking of. For instance, they reported the lack freedom to choose, to speak and to present their ideas. Similarly, they spoke about low self-adequacy to traditional methods which generates negative feelings and learning delay. Finally, they don't feel safe to expose their vulnerabilities and feel uncomfortable to behave freely. In the excerpt from Student 1 some of those issues are evidenced:

when there was a sociology class, I wanted to say: "professor, stop! Let's talk about what you're saying because I don't think I agree with that". And I never did it, I think it was much more acceptable you raise your hand, ask a question, say a very punctual thing, but never exchange ideas freely (S1).

On the other way, the excess of competitiveness between the students encouraged by the institution and the excess of 'ego' from the professors had also contributed to disidentification of a parcel of the students. According to them, the competitiveness was encouraged by actions like an honorable mention awarded to the students with the highest grades. That meritocratic system based on grades provide or constrain students' access to academic opportunities, such as elective courses and exchange programs. Additionally, students reported that some professors were unwilling to share their protagonist role with them. Instead of nurturing a safe environment professors' behavior create an unhealth psychological environment. That is supported by the words of Student 12, who said that some the professors can show "pleasure to torture" and to demonstrate that they "are super powerful" (S12).

The prevailing characteristics in an organization contribute to the construction of the identity of the subjects present there (BROWN, 2022). In the case of the administration course, attributes such as competitiveness, entrepreneurship (BARDON; BROWN; PUYOU, 2021), pragmatism (NICOLINI, 2003) and materialism (BERGMAN; WESTERMAN; DALY, 2010), are a core part of the discourse and identity. Students who did not adjust to or identify with the prevalent identity, at first, engaged themselves in emotional reactions. For instance, they reported feelings like frustration, discouragement, disinterest, apathy, demotivation, anxiety, and guilt. Those emotions can result in damage to their mental health. We understood those emotional reactions as a way to express resistance.

Student 14 synthesized these negative feeling in the word 'dispassion'.

[...] you know when you just passed the admissions exam and your eyes are super bright? I feel that [name of institution] took a lot of it. I feel that I was erasing it over time. I did not find the classes interesting and sometimes I was much more interested in sitting down and studying alone than in the class [...] I always had the expectation of being able to find my personality, for example, in electives courses, but I never had enough grades to be able to take the elective course I wanted. So, this process of dispassion also happened because of that, you know? (S14).

She mentioned an expectation to find her personality during her academic years, reinforcing the role of the educational process to IW. Since she wasn't able to do it through the minimum curriculum, she tried through elective courses, strategy it was also frustrated because she didn't have the grades required to achieve the courses she wanted.

Because students did not identify themselves within the traditional courses they expressed resistance in performing like most part of the group. As result they experienced negative emotional reactions and they engaged in IW in order to improve their subjective condition. As in the work of Frederiksen and Berglund (2020) and Danielsson et al (2019), in the present study resistance was a relevant form of IW.

Alternative routes

As stated by Barros (2018, p. 758) there are "disidentification costs" in, for instance, "openly criticizing and opposing a powerful [...] identity without a backup identification source". In the present research we identify the weight of those costs in the students' attempts to deal with disidentification and resistance.

One alternative would be simply drop out the course. We only interview current students, so we didn't reach students that had actually dropped out. Nevertheless, the idea had occurred to some of the interviewees. Due to the investment already made in the course and the status related to being a university student, even more at a traditional institution, dropping out or engaging in a vocal opposition were probably the alternatives with higher cost, materially and subjectively speaking. Our interviewee's preferred less disruptive alternatives. Student 1 called it "escape routes", when affirmed "to be honest, my graduation was made by escape routes, you know?". To be more accurate, we can call that alternative routes.

The strategy consisted in performing as good as possible at the requested minimum curriculum and be involved in other alternative initiatives, subjectively more suitable, such as sports (been a team member, part of the athletic association or cheerleader); non-traditional elective disciplines, student entities of all scopes; or any other free activities (e.g., theater). Siivonen et al (2020) demonstrated that, in student-led initiatives, a cohesive group identity based on a shared narrative leads to engagement through a sense of commitment, as can be seen in the follow student's description of the Junior Economics Consultancy, a student-led entity that became his reason to stay in the course.

I found myself thinking that I wanted to stop studying at [institution's name], but what motivated me [to stay] was the entity I was part, the Junior Economics Consultancy. I loved what I did there. Besides my friends, it was really my reason for continue at [institution's name]. There I saw a purpose of what I was doing (S8).

Be part of the Intent Program also constituted an alternative route. Students describe their motivation to join the program like: "a semester with just what I wanted" (S1); "a change of air" (S6); "an opportunity to find something with meaning" (S8) "a way to have new learning experiences" (S12); "a breath" (S18); "a space to explore creativity" (S4).

Another factor found in the empirical material was the validation of friends, who had already been part of the program, which reinforce the social component of identity. During its years of existence, Intent participants have developed an identity for themselves and for the program. According to Student 5, "those who are in Intent have a different sensitivity to certain aspects, attitudes, topics, life issues and being itself". In a complementary way, the identity of Intent, according to the interviewees, is related to elements such as friendship, self-knowledge, safe space, creativity and autonomy, which signals it as an alternative route already validated. Siivonen and collaborators (2020) found similar effects in groups of students in entrepreneurship societies, in which the construction of a collective identity and a sense of commitment helped students to reduce the effects of pressures they were experiencing.

Re-identification

Being part of a program like Intent seems to be a way out of the disidentification-resistance dynamic, as the program offers students the opportunity to re-identify. Here we understand the re-identification process as a step that leads to crystallization. Based on the disidentification-resistance dynamic – and the costs associated with it – students chose to search deeply for opportunities more adherent to their expectations and desires in the business school environment. Since the opportunities they found

were experienced within the same context to which they resisted, it constituted an opportunity for re-identification. Although Intent is an alternative program, it is an official one within the undergraduate course. Thus, the institution's student identity also contains the Intent's student identity.

Our data showed the IW process being facilitated by two aspects of the program: one formal – in which we highlight the creation and maintenance of a safe pedagogical space and a group-oriented educational model – and one conceptual, in which educational experiences promoting student's self-knowledge and self-development stands out.

A safe pedagogical space provides the students an opportunity to explore and develop their identities without the need to mobilize defense mechanisms against perceived threats (PETRIGLIERI; PETRIGLIERI, 2010) in the traditional educational model, such as competitiveness. They reported that they felt free to expose personal traces and vulnerabilities, to express themselves and also to remain silent and reflective. Learning was also affected, since they reported to feel more confident and freer to participate actively in their own education, making choices about the curricular program, facilitating workshops and pursuing personal projects.

Student 2 emphasizes confidence and how it affects her performance: "I think if you're confident with something you can perform much better. If you're insecure, you're going to back off and I think maybe the traditional [educational] environment brings a certain insecurity" (S2). In the same sense, Student 14 emphasizes freedom:

I am motivated to wake up every day and I can express myself freely and more confidently when I say what I think to the other people. I feel that we created a bond that is even stronger than with my class before Intent. I have been in my class for three years and I don't have the same freedom to speak or to come and go as we have at Intent (S14).

The safe space was intentionally created and maintained by the team leader. However, it is built on the active participation of the group. That is possible because Intent follows a group-oriented educational model, in which the whole class, including the team leader, works as a team. This feature favors the feeling of belonging reported by the students, which, in turn, contributed for IW. The statement made by Student 19 reinforce this point.

I think that's one of the first things that change [when participating in Intent] is that you don't do things out of obligation. You do things because you feel part of it and that, for me at least, is something very important. To be part of something. To not feel inferior, but as part of the whole. My opinion will be valued. What I point out is important. It's not a question that I'm going to ask in a regular class. Sometimes it's just a feeling that I can share (S19).

Have an educational experience feeling part of a safe group seems conducive to IW. Fernando and Kenny (2021, p. 149) reached a similar conclusion by looking at a different scenario. Investigating the IW of students from underrepresented groups at elite universities, the authors highlighted how all institutional material on diversity produced by the universities was "useful discursive material for backgrounding the significance they placed on their WP [widening participation] status and mitigating the

lack of fit that they experienced". Envisioning official spaces in which they feel safe and represented – as in our case, the Intent program – provides resources for sense making and help "individuals find like-minded others whom they can report to and rely on for support and encouragement" (FERNANDO; KENNY, 2021, p. 149)

The formal aspects of the analyzed program were also able to provide this opportunity to our interviewees because the program seeks to develop student's interpersonal skills, among which them highlighted self-knowledge and self-development as the main ones.

Work in a process of knowing yourself is basically part of the definition of IW (BROWN, 2022) and it is one of the strongest achievements of the program reported by the interviewees. Through projects, dynamics and educational experiences, students reported having achieved reflection, self and professional improvement, giving and receiving feedback, besides having experienced themselves in different roles. These experiences, in addition to offering them the opportunity to get to know themselves more and identify likes, dislikes, strengths and weaknesses also triggered a process of deconstruction of an identity already established.

Student 5, for instance, talks about facing her weaknesses:

My way of being a student is disturbing me during the Intent. The pattern repeats itself, I'm late, I'm forgetful, so it's happened that I don't attend some Intent classes, and I feel really bad. However, that's where the difference lies. I feel bad for not participating, I charge myself for having forgotten, I am ashamed of what people might be thinking of me because we built a positive, close, and intense relationship (S5).

She points out how her previous experience was being dissonant of her own performance expectation as a member of the Intent, inviting her to rediscover herself in order to fulfill her own new expectations. Student 17 also try to experience something different. She said:

I thought that I didn't have the profile to be on Intent because I'm a very correct person and the Intent follows a freer style [than the one I am used to]. You have to be the protagonist, and I didn't know if it was going to work, but [...] I realized that by participating at the Intent it would be a way for me to grow as a person and break this barrier that I had in my head. That's exactly what happened! (S17).

Despite seeing herself as a very correct person she decided to put this concept to test by joining Intent and giving herself the opportunity to try out new roles and thereby gain personal growth.

In all cases the process of self-knowledge and self-development appears to be deep and even permeated by a high dose of discomfort. The follow excerpt highlights the importance of lay aside established defenses when one is immersed in a process of IW.

I arrived at Intent very organized, you know? I already had constructions such as: what I was going to do in the personal project, what were my strong characteristics, how I was going to explore my

leadership. It was all very settled. And then, when I arrived, when this process of the first cycle started to happen and the dynamics started to happen and we started having contact with these group formation contents, with the facilitation tools, we started having those conversations, telling stories, then everything I had organized started to get disorganized. Thus, I said, "I don't know what's going on anymore". And then I started to question myself a lot [...]. And then, after maturing this whole mess, I started to see it. Because there are things that sometimes are hidden, they are in a dark room, we have dark corners. And then from some meetings, from some things that we talk about, that we discover, we get to know these dark corners as they receive light (S4).

The statement of Student 4 seems to synthesize the process of IW occurred during the Intent program, leading her from a fixed identity to an intense process of IW, experimenting until find a preferred identity (BROWN; LEWIS; OLIVER, 2021; TRACY; TRETHERWEY, 2005). Tracy and Trethewey (2005, p. 188) "emphasize the importance of individuals constructing different angles of repose and inching closer to the edges in their lives" and "place themselves in various situations with myriad textures" for the construction of a richer self. This seems to be the intention and the effect of the educational proposals through which the investigated students went through.

Crystallization

At the end of this process crystallized identities (TRACY; TRETHERWEY, 2005) emerge. Student 19 said:

One thing I feel is that I have more courage to be me. [...] Intent showed me that I can be myself, I can be well received in the group, I can propose new ideas, I can do projects that I want to. I can't tell you what has changed in my habits, in my personality, in my way of being. But I feel that I have been, in general, more myself. I have been giving more authenticity to what I feel, think and do (S19).

Based on the concept of crystallization (TRACY; TRETHERWEY, 2005), we understood that when the student felt that he was being more "himself" he was adding a facet to his identity. Although he still carries with him other traces of identity, new facets could be added and postulated by the subject as a preferred identity (BROWN; LEWIS; OLIVER, 2021; TRACY; TRETHERWEY, 2005). Those new facets are added through the new educational experiences lived in an alternative program.

Concretely, the empirical material revealed that participation in the Intent contributed to the students developing new behaviors. For instance, Students 10 and 18 addressed their interpersonal relationships. While Student 10 became "a much more reflective person", open to put that reflection on actions; Student 18 reported having learned to "deal with others and in a lighter way" (S18). Students 12 and 17 expanded their communication skills, especially related to self-positioning. Student 12 highlights that she is positioning herself better and Student 17 said she is much more confident in her own ideas "[...] even if I'm not really sure about the ideas, because I think I'm also understanding that I can make mistakes, because I'm learning" (S17).

By participating in the program, students had the opportunity to add other faces to their identity crystal, or, in the words of Student 4, explore themselves in a space in

which it was possible to "take off all these adornments that I already brought and try other accessories, try other clothes, try other shoes, other combinations" (S4).

Conclusion

The goal of this research was to understand how alternative ways of teaching and learning in business education allows for identity crystallization. The data analysis revealed occurrences mapped in an isolated way in the previous literature, such as disidentification as a way of dissociating oneself from attributes perceived as negative, the expression of resistance as a form of IW, the search for preferred identities and crystallization, the coexistence of different facets of identity.

These occurrences were facilitated by educational experiences – lived in group and in a safe pedagogical space – which promote student's self-knowledge and self-development. We highlight the potential of educational experiences as facilitators of IW, especially non-traditional ones. In our case, the studied program contained numerous elements that were the trigger, trail and support for the IW carried out by the students.

The original contribution of this study was to organize the occurrences of IW in a process: starting with a dynamic of disidentification and resistance to the prevalent discourses; passing through some escape routes, to build a preferred identity; and culminating in the emergence of a crystalized identity.

Here we study the students' perspective of a single program, which limits the contributions of our findings. For future research, we recommend the expansion of data sources. Despite our modest contribution, we believe that there is ample room for further studies on the influence of the educational process on IW.

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