



2 HOURS

# Funds of Identity: Artists' Books

Authored by Leah Peña Teeters, Moises Esteban-Guitart,  
Adriana Alvarez, & Bill Penuel

\*Adapted from Esteban-Guitart et al. (2019), Zhang Yu et al. (2021).

## Activity Rationale and Aims

### Aims

01. To identify the lived experiences, identities, and meaningful activities of collaborators, especially those for whom the designed product is intended
02. To incorporate collaborators' funds of identity—the social and cultural resources central to one's self-definition—meaningfully into the design of the process and the product

### Rationale

This activity aims to support the development of culturally sustaining research and design approaches via the incorporation of collaborators' funds of identities (Esteban-Guitart et al., 2019). Funds of identity are “historically accumulated, culturally developed, and socially distributed resources that are essential for a person's self-definition, self-expression, and self-understanding” (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014, p. 31). The concept of funds of identity expands upon funds of knowledge to specifically focus on the elements with which a learner self-identifies. Identifying collaborators' funds of identities in participatory research is critical to ensuring that the design process and product reflect a diversity of cultures, lived experiences, and ways of knowing. To activity presents multiple activities under the category of funds of identity to provide a variety of ways to produce “identity artifacts,” which are cultural tools that can be leveraged in design (Subero et al., 2018).

### Activity Summary

This activity aims to generate “identity artifacts” that can be woven into the design process so as to ensure that collaborators' diverse backgrounds are represented and sustained.



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# In Person Steps

1. Present collaborators with a book template including a minimum of 6 pages.
2. Present collaborators with the following prompts: “who I am?”, “what defines me?” or “the most important things in my life are....”
3. Encourage collaborators to respond to the prompts via collage, drawing, comics, painting and/or writing to tell a story of themselves, adding pages to their books as needed.
4. When all collaborators have completed their book, ask them to reflect on the funds of identity represented, using the following suggested categories (from Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014):
  - a. *Geographical Funds of Identity*: an area such as a country, a village or feature such as a mountain, or river
  - b. *Practical Funds of Identity*: activities such as work, sports, music or disciplines such as medicine or education
  - c. *Cultural Funds of Identity*: artifacts such as religious symbols, national flags, national anthems or any social category such as age, ethnic group or gender
  - d. *Social Funds of Identity*: significant relationships such as relatives, friends or colleagues
  - e. *Institutional Funds of Identity*: institutional affiliations, such as church or school
5. After individual reflection, display all collaborators’ books and engage in a collective gallery walk, asking collaborators to notice what funds of identity they notice amongst their peers’ books.
  - a. Provide collaborators with post-it notes to write down questions, compliments, comments, and reflections. These can be left by the books for authors to read and reflect upon.
6. After engaging in a gallery walk, ask collaborators to jot down some of the funds of identity that they saw represented amongst the collective.
7. Engage in a discussion about (1) the collective funds of knowledge, and (2) how these can be invited into the design process as resources.



## Facilitator Preparation

### IN PERSON MATERIALS

- Paper
- Artistic materials such as crayons, paints, colored pencils, magazines, scissors, glue, etc.
- Post-it notes

## Modifications and Virtual Adaptations

- In lieu of having collaborators visually depict their funds of identities, they could be asked to gather artifacts in a small box over the course of multiple days and bring their boxes into a design meeting to share (see Kanagala & Rendón, 2013).
- If conducting this activity in a virtual environment, create a Jamboard page for each collaborator with multiple sections (minimum 6) instead of creating a physical book (can draw lines on the Jamboard to create sections), and then follow the rest of the activity steps, with a virtual gallery walk instead of an in-person one.

## Facilitation Tips

- If the group is large, you may want to share the books in small groups as opposed to engaging in a gallery walk.

## Example from the field

In a collaboration among university researchers and elementary teachers and students, collaborators designed a book making project at the start of the school year. Students wrote and illustrated short stories about themselves, their cultures, and their families. Their books responded to key questions about their identities. The teachers organized a public reading of the

students' stories, allowing their fellow students and their communities to learn about them. After sharing their stories, students discussed how elements of their stories represented different parts of their identities and teachers then incorporated elements of students' identities into the design of pedagogical materials.



## Commitments to Equity and Wellness

This activity has evolved in response to the need for activities that combat deficit thinking about diverse communities (Esteban-Guitart et al., 2019, p. 9). Identifying collaborators' funds of identity can support designs that sustain cultural and linguistic diversity (Esteban-Guitart et al., 2019). Funds of identity draws on funds of knowledge, but importantly, focuses on those specific cultural resources that are of consequence to the individual. Foregrounding approaches to define one's own self and one's own community is critical in developing equitable approaches to fostering pluralistic designs for learning and development (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003).

This activity promotes individual and collective wellness as it invites collaborators' full humanity into design. When collaborators' identities are affirmed, valued, and sustained, the conditions are made more available for their individual and collective wellness.



# Additional Reading

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