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What Makes You, You?

Exploring Instruments that Contextualize Identity
in ISL

VSA Conference 2024

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Project Context

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Background/Context

- Museum field has done tremendous work in accessibility but with a focus on physical and sensory aspects (e.g., Access Smithsonian, 2019)
- Little is known about the ISL experiences of the largest group of people with disabilities in the United States: visitors identified as having learning disabilities (LD)
 - Individuals with learning disabilities comprise up to 20% of the U.S. population
- Best practices for students with LD in science classes (e.g., Therrien et al., 2011) may not translate well to ISL
- Informal science learning experiences can be particularly powerful for young people with LD, who often thrive in active science learning opportunities (Abrams, Southerland, & Silva, 2007; Nadelson et al., 2013)

Project Design



Pilot testing: Testing survey, getting initial idea of experiences of youth with LD; using virtual exhibits



Phase 1: **Descriptive study** with 30 participants (15 at each of two museums) to understand visitors' experiences of autonomy, competence, and choice in ISL settings



Phase 2: **Mixed methods Experimental studies** with 51 participants across the two museums to test prototypes of design strategies, informed by Phase 1



Phase 3: **Co-design charrette** with youth with LD and ISL practitioners to jointly interpret previous findings and generate guidance for field

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A large circle with a gradient from dark blue at the top to orange at the bottom. In the top left corner of the circle, there is a small orange plus sign and a small orange circle. In the bottom right corner of the circle, there is a small orange circle. The text "Experimental Study: Phase 2" is centered in white.

Experimental Study: Phase 2

- Research question:
 - **How can exhibits be designed to support intrinsic motivation and engagement among visitors with LD?**
- Specific aspects of exhibit designs were tested in each of five different exhibits across two science museums
- ~ 50 Participants (ages 10-17) tested prototypes of design strategies, informed by Phase 1
 - Some participants (n=12) also completed an activity that supported them in sharing quantitative data about aspects of their identity and how it relates to preferences around exhibit design

Phase 2: Data Collection

- Collected data via **card sort activity, survey, interview, and observation (n=51)** as well as **Identity Map (n=12)** as youth interacted with a variety of exhibits.

Card Sort



Interviews



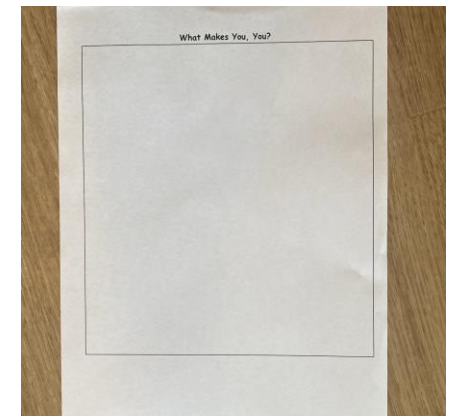
Observations



Survey responses



Identity Map data



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Card Sort



Interviews



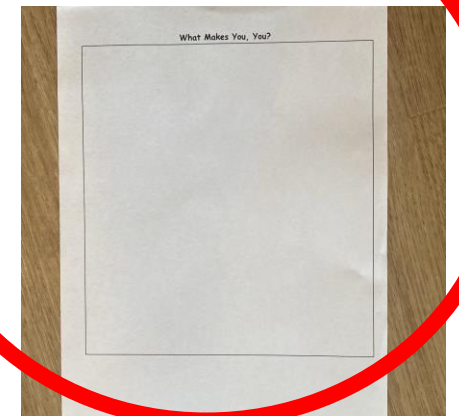
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Identity Map data



What Makes You,
You?

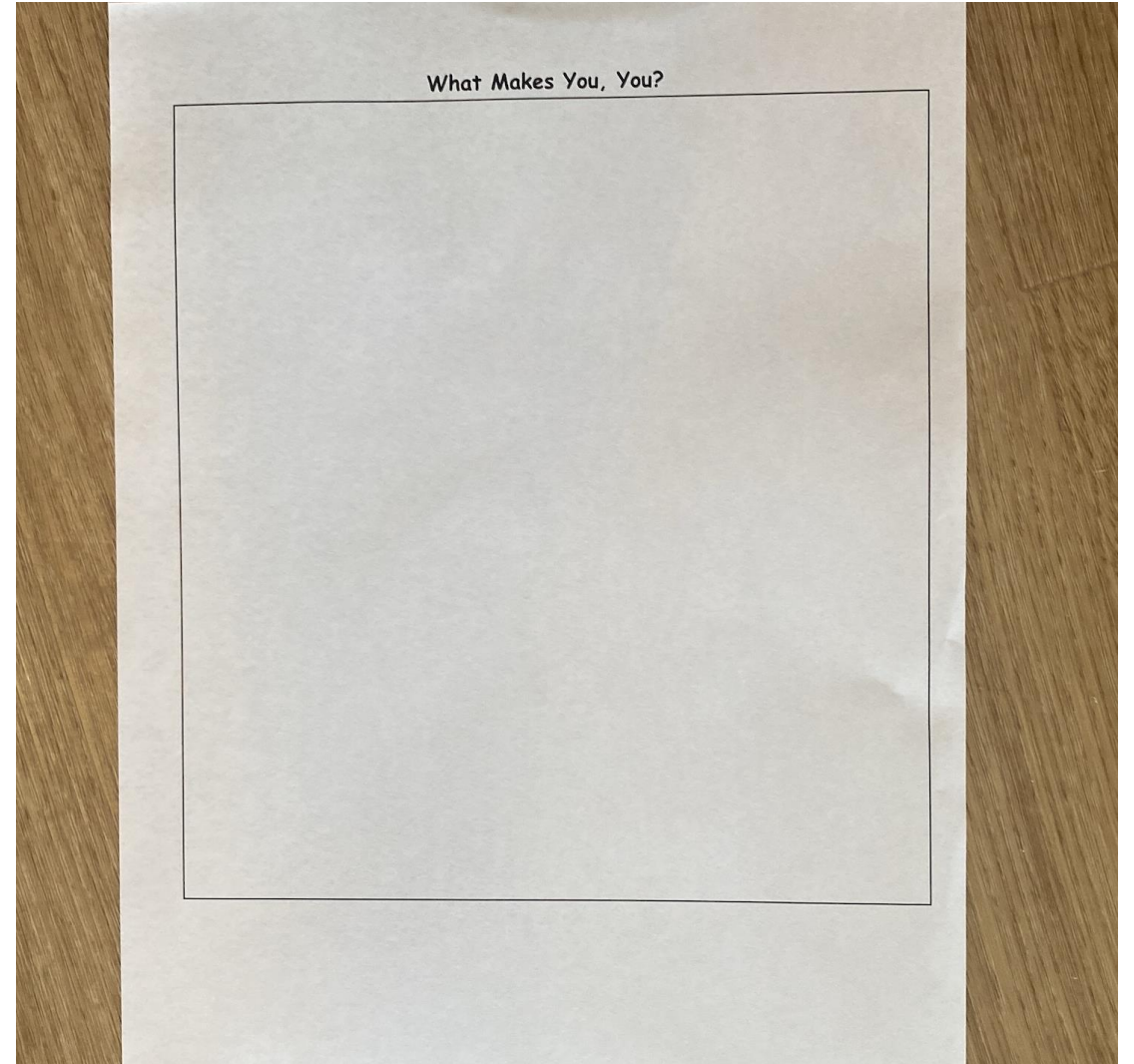
Try the activity!

Draw, color, write, however you may,
answering the prompt:

What Makes
You, You?

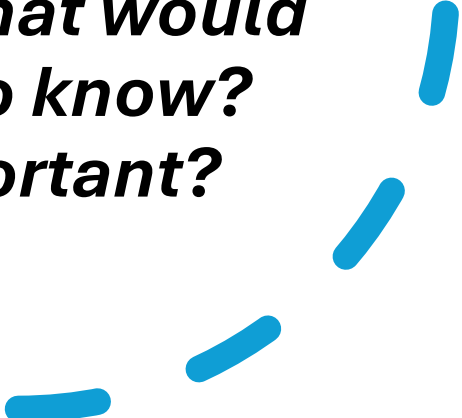
Use any art supplies and/or stickers
provided

There's no right/wrong way to do this
10 minutes





Try the
activity!

- After completing the identity map, turn to your neighbor and ask them to walk you through their identity map.
 - Here are some guiding questions:
 - ***If we were going to share this identity map with an exhibit designer to make sure they were making exhibits that worked for you - both as a person, and based on your preferences - what would be most important for them to know? And why is that the most important?***
- 



Identity Map Activity Discussion

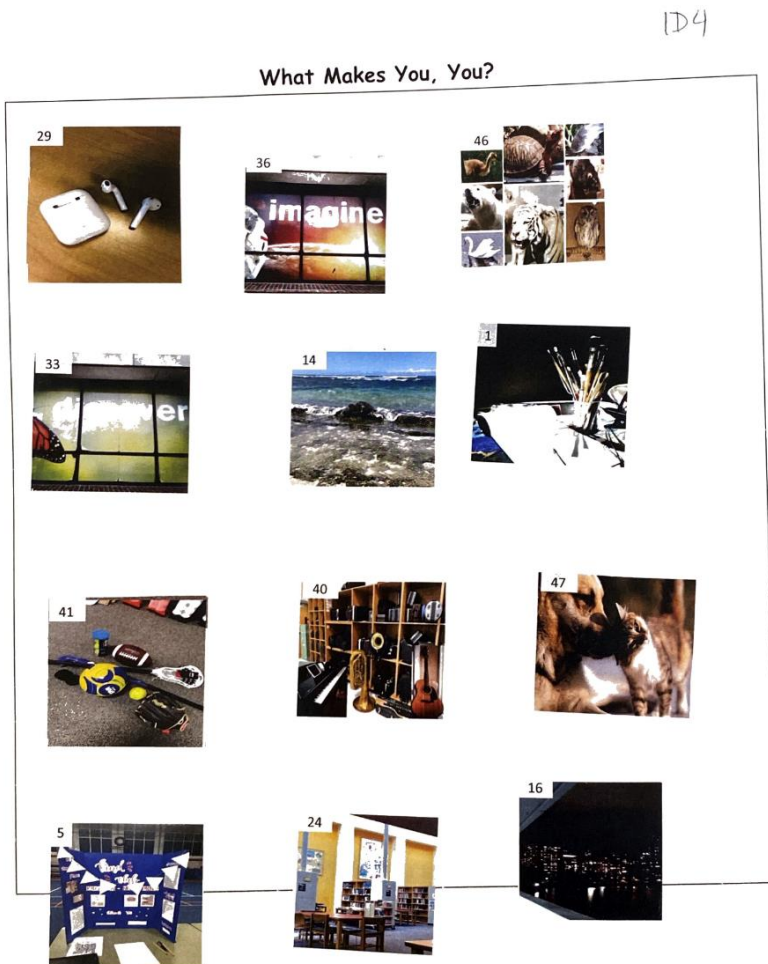
How did it feel
doing that activity?
Was it hard, easy,
comfortable, etc.?

Any other initial
thoughts about the
identity map
activity?

example pictures from participants

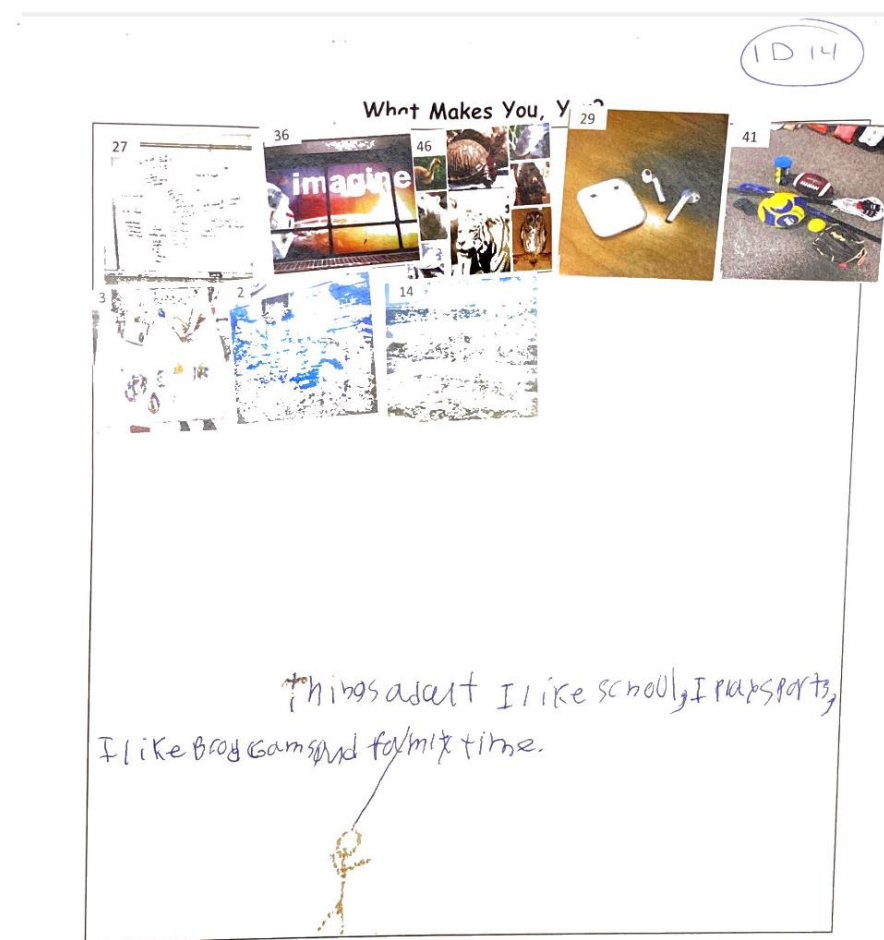
1D4

What Makes You, You?




1D14

What Makes You, You?




Things that I like school, I like sports,
I like programs and family time.



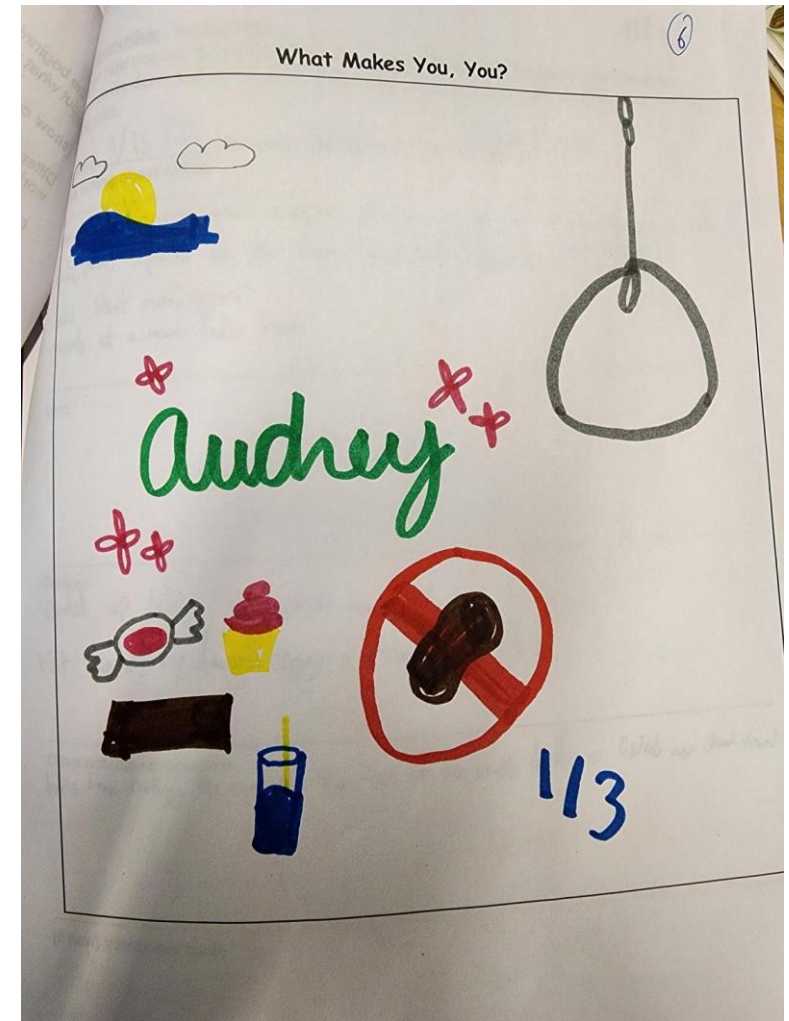
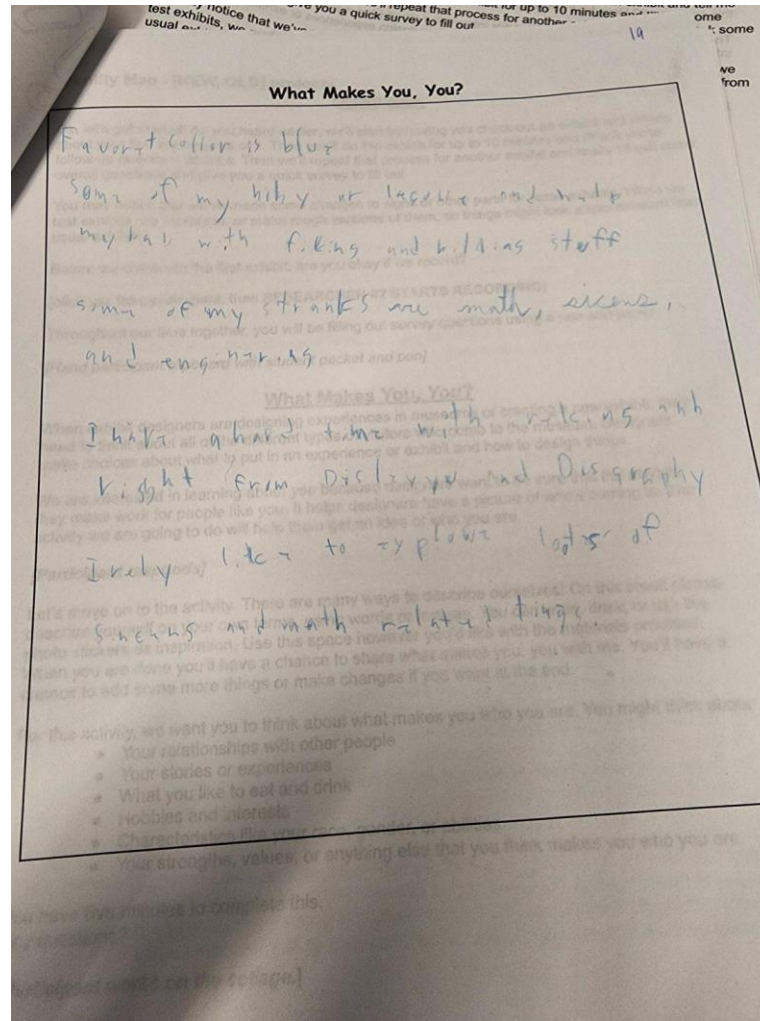
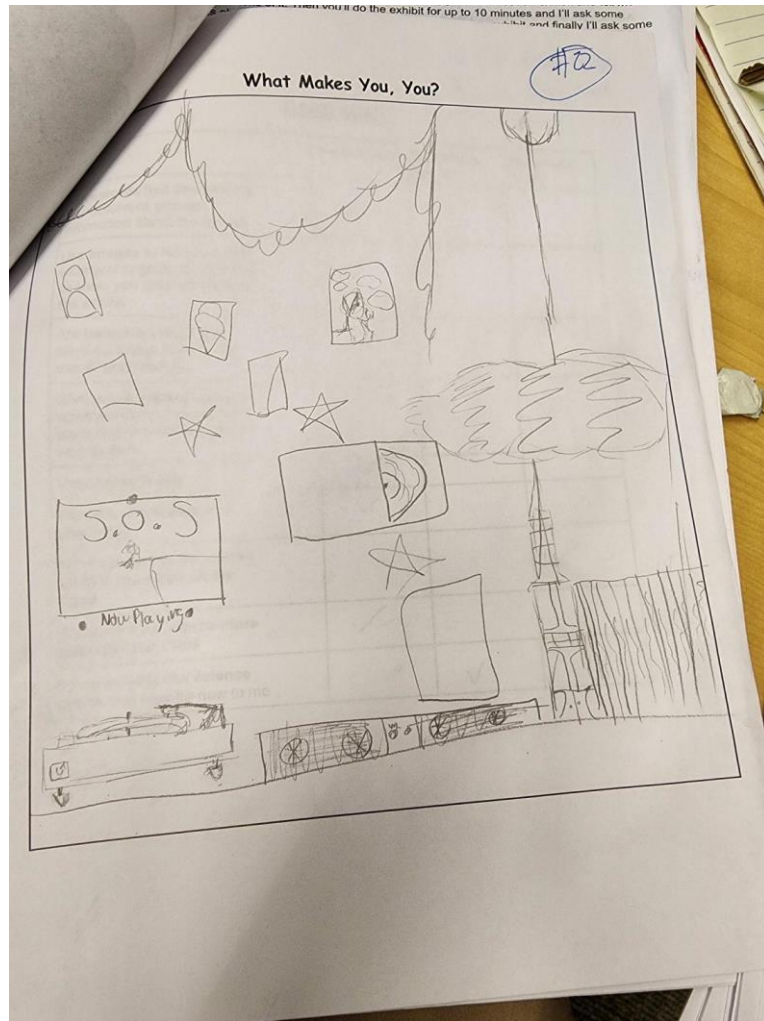
1D6

What Makes You, You?



I Like to Play
Football

example pictures from participants (cont.)



Connecting the Activity

Handshake activity

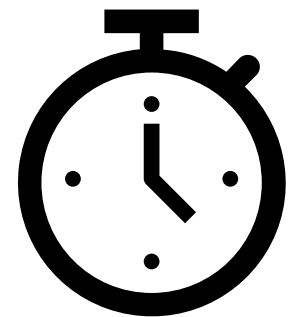
Pair up with someone to make a secret handshake

- Make it as simple or as complex as you would like
- Again there's no right or wrong way to do this

*If you finish early, feel free to use the remaining time to reflect on and discuss about creation process of the handshake



5 minutes
to scheme



Handshake activity - reflection

- *When thinking about how you described yourself before, what sorts of things factored into how you made your handshake?*
- *Did you see or feel elements of your identity map come up during this creation process?*



Handshake activity - reflection

- *When thinking about how you described yourself before, what exhibits tend to work best for you and why?*



Discussion

Identity Map

We allow participants to center themselves

- Youth express salient and relevant aspects of themselves in open-ended ways, and describe what they did
- These aspects can play a role in their experience at exhibits



What do we mean by a “map of identities”?

- This perspective describes how one’s relationship to the world cannot be summarized by a single demographic factor (race, gender, ability, etc.), but is a culmination of these and other interacting factors within ourselves and our environment that make us who we are and influence the ways we interact with the world.



Discussion Questions

How are you connecting youth identities in your evaluation?

What assumptions do you have about how identity relates to exhibit engagement (or engagement in general)?

Share out

How are you connecting youth identities in your evaluation?

What assumptions do you have about how identity relates to exhibit engagement (or engagement in general)?

Discussion Questions

How are you supporting youth with learning disabilities in your evaluation? What kinds of other approaches have you seen?

How has your own lived experiences shaped your identity?

Share out

How are you supporting youth with learning disabilities in your evaluation? What kinds of other approaches have you seen?

How has your own lived experiences shaped your identity?

Team Reflections

Team Reflection – Analysis Considerations

- The role of ability: Did participants mention their learning disability? Is it a salient part of their identity?
- Find and include connection between what was mentioned in their identity map and how they engaged with the exhibit.



Q&A

