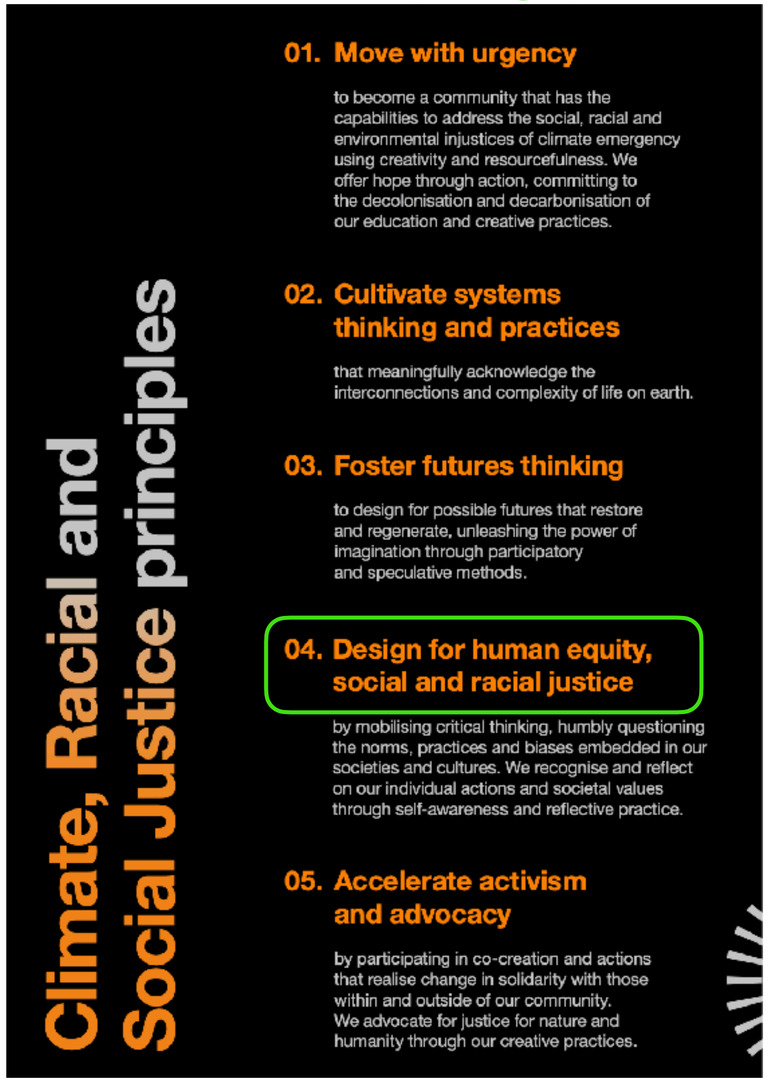
Object Based Learning on Identity and Belonging

ARP_PgCert

Monika Gravagno, Educational Developer, CSM

Identifying problem

Step 1: Identifying problem/research question



- In January 2025 JTM Programme meeting, staff reflected on how the UAL Climate, Social, and Racial Justice Principles were being embedded into courses.
- Principle 4 – Design for human equity, social and racial justice – was identified as the least embedded in the curriculum.

Case study: Design for human equity, social, racial justice in JTM

Step 2: Gather data

P4: *Design for human equity, social, and racial justice* in JTM - Case Study

Written by Hannah Ogahara – Climate Advocate, Jewellery Textiles & Materials (JTM) programme, Central Saint Martins

Co-edited by Monika Gravagno – Climate Justice Curriculum Developer, CSM

Background

1. Setting the Stage: Place, People & Purpose

Central Saint Martins's Jewellery, Textiles & Materials (JTM) community, is an eclectic mix of BA and MA students working, investigating materials in the broadest sense ranging from open-ended design speculation to hands-on craftmanship.

Courses: BA (Hons) Jewellery Design, BA (Hons) Textile Design, MA Material Futures, MA Biodesign, and MA Regenerative Design (online).

On the JTM website, it states that, "Alongside our ethos of radical materiality and intricate making, we are committed to decolonising our curriculum, diversifying our shared learning resources, prioritising representation and developing planet-positive design strategies. We evoke curiosity and provoke change. We actively empower our students and staff to share our strong sense of accountability for climate and biodiversity emergency, economy and social justice."

I joined this setting in two capacities: first as an MA Regenerative Design graduate with a background in education and now as Climate Advocate for the JTM programme. The Climate Advocate scheme – an initiative of UAL's Academic Discourse & Action Learning (ADAL) Working Group – places recent alumni inside courses to audit handbooks, co-design curriculum and act as "critical friends" on climate, racial and social-justice questions.

2. Institutional Drivers: From Guiding Principles to Practice

Since 2023 the ADAL Working Group has been steering Central Saint Martins toward its 2026 Education for Sustainable Development goals. Concrete outputs already in circulation include:

- Five Guiding Principles for Climate, Racial & Social Justice (Fig. 1)

- **Research question:** How students experienced teaching related to human equity, social and racial justice
- **Who:** 10 class reps from Jewellery, Materials and Textile Programme at CSM.
- **With:** Hannah Ogahara *(Climate Advocate)* and Rose Thompson *(Evidence and Evaluation Manager)*
- **Method:** Peer-to-peer semi-structured interviews.
- **Analysis:** The data were thematically analysed and presented as a case study

Findings

Step 3: Interpret Data

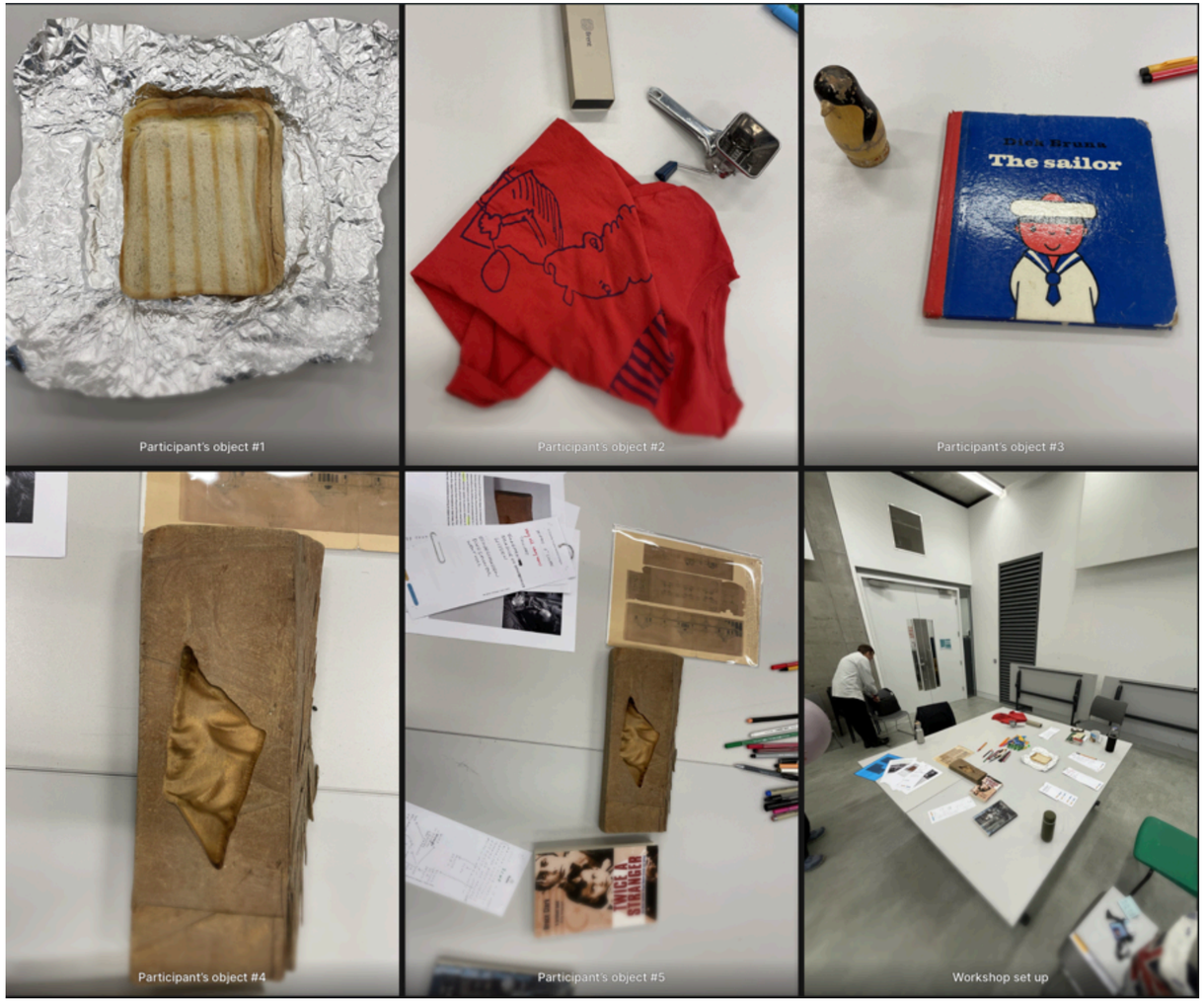
- Social and racial justice themes are only marginally present in curriculum.
- Strong desire for opportunities to explore those themes in authentic, participatory and discursive way.
- Students felt staff didn’t feel confident to have conversation about equity, racial and social justice with students.

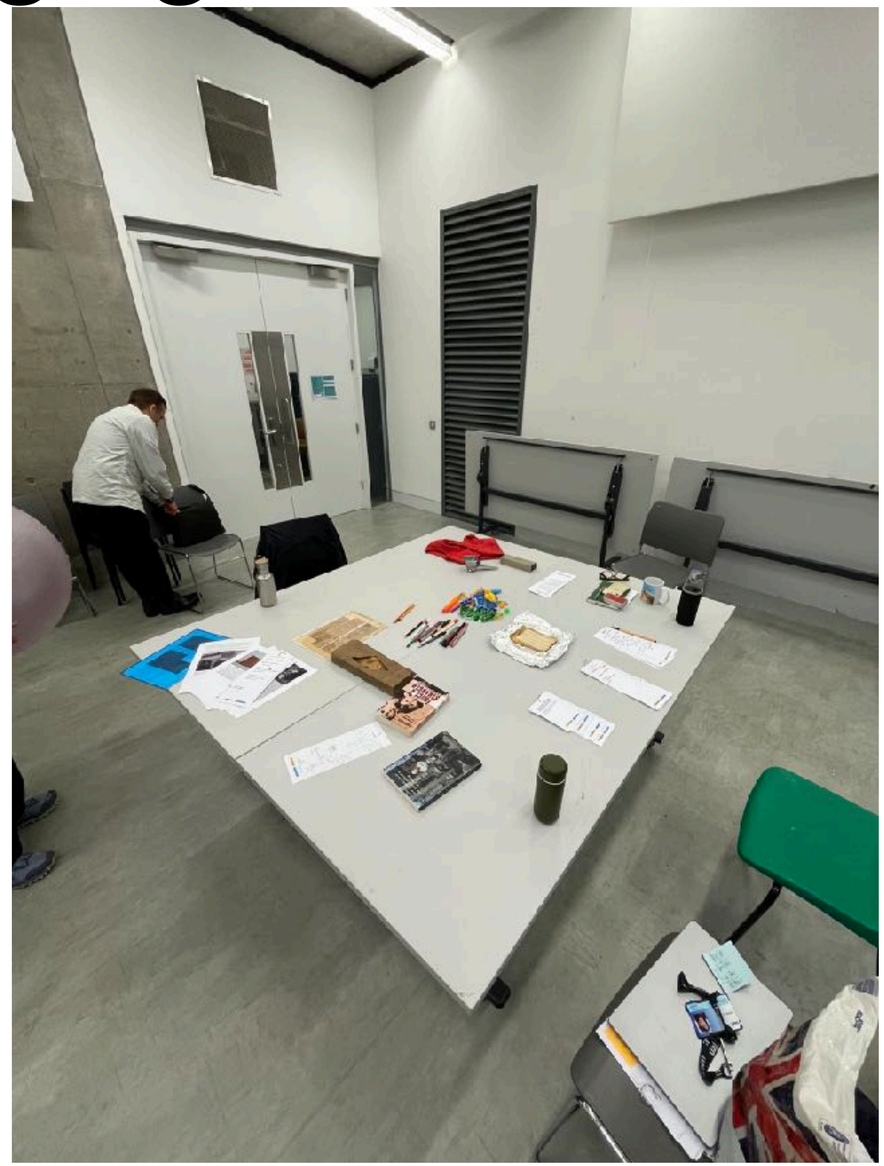
ARP focus

Step 4: Implement changes

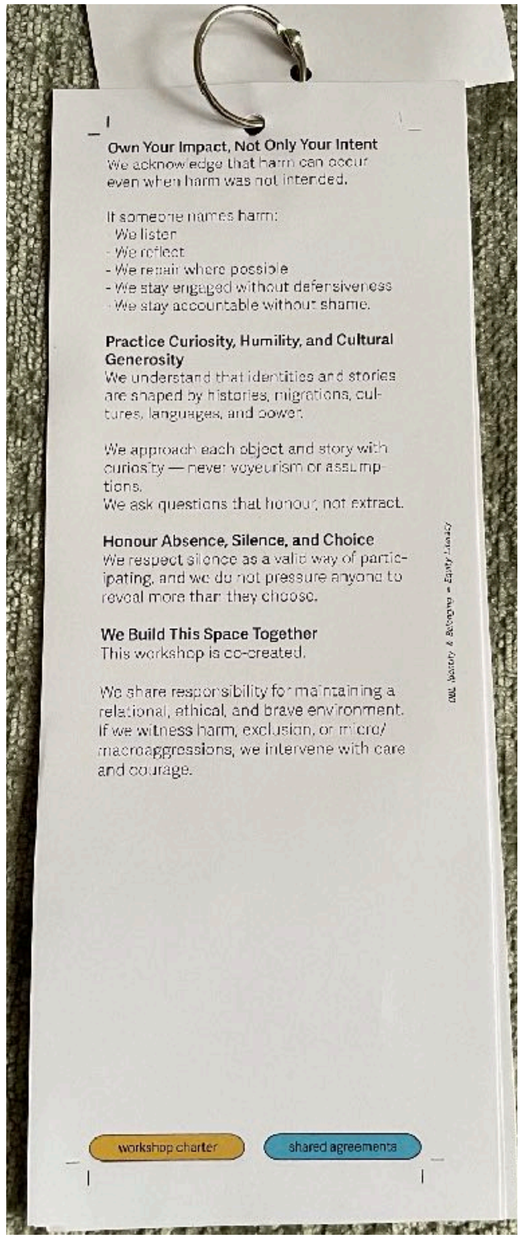
- Develop a staff training workshop designed to build **equity literacy.**
- Through **object-based learning** activities.
- Centred on belonging and identity.
- Providing a reflective, participatory space to explore how educators can foster more authentic and meaningful engagement with students around equity and justice.
- Introduce the object-based learning framework and pedagogy and how to apply to their own teaching

OBL on identity and belonging





Speak Your Truth, Not the Truth
We share from our own lived experiences — not on behalf of groups or identities we do not belong to.
We aim to:
- Use "I" statements
- Avoid generalisations or assumptions
- Honour that multiple truths and ways of knowing coexist
Listen to Understand, Not to Reply
We practice deep, generous, relational listening, especially when what we hear challenges us.
This includes:
- Allowing people to finish without interruption
- Resisting the urge to correct someone's experience
- Staying curious rather than judgmental
Challenge Ideas, Not People
We commit to naming harmful assumptions or inequitable patterns while still respecting the humanity of the person speaking.
We do not: shame, dismiss, or attack.
We do: question narratives, unpack biases, and reflect critically.
Expect and Accept Non-Closure
Equity work is ongoing.
We won't solve everything today — and that's okay.
We value reflection over resolution, and learning over certainty.
Foster Confidentiality, Not Secrecy
Stories shared in this space stay in this space, unless you have explicit permission to share them elsewhere.
We may take away lessons, not people's personal details.
This protects vulnerability without creating secrecy or silence.
workshop charter
shared agreements
OBL Identity & Belonging = Equity Literacy


Own Your Impact, Not Only Your Intent
We acknowledge that harm can occur even when harm was not intended.
If someone names harm:
- We listen
- We reflect
- We repair where possible
- We stay engaged without defensiveness
- We stay accountable without shame.
Practice Curiosity, Humility, and Cultural Generosity
We understand that identities and stories are shaped by histories, migrations, cultures, languages, and power.
We approach each object and story with curiosity — never voyeurism or assumptions.
We ask questions that honour, not extract.
Honour Absence, Silence, and Choice
We respect silence as a valid way of participating, and we do not pressure anyone to reveal more than they choose.
We Build This Space Together
This workshop is co-created.
We share responsibility for maintaining a relational, ethical, and brave environment.
If we witness harm, exclusion, or micro/macroaggressions, we intervene with care and courage.
workshop charter
shared agreements
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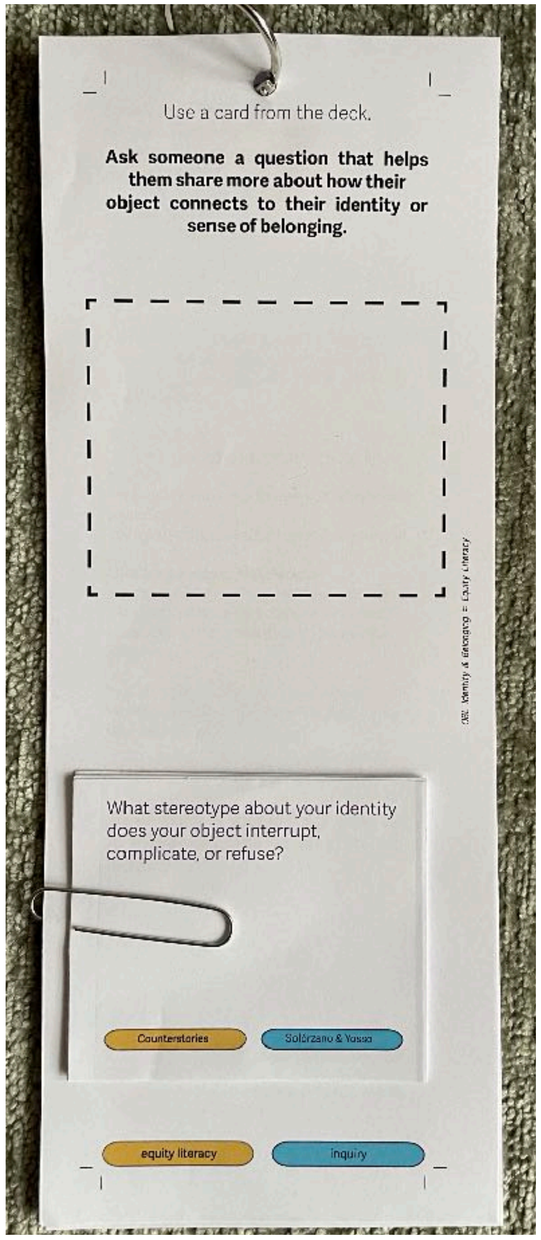
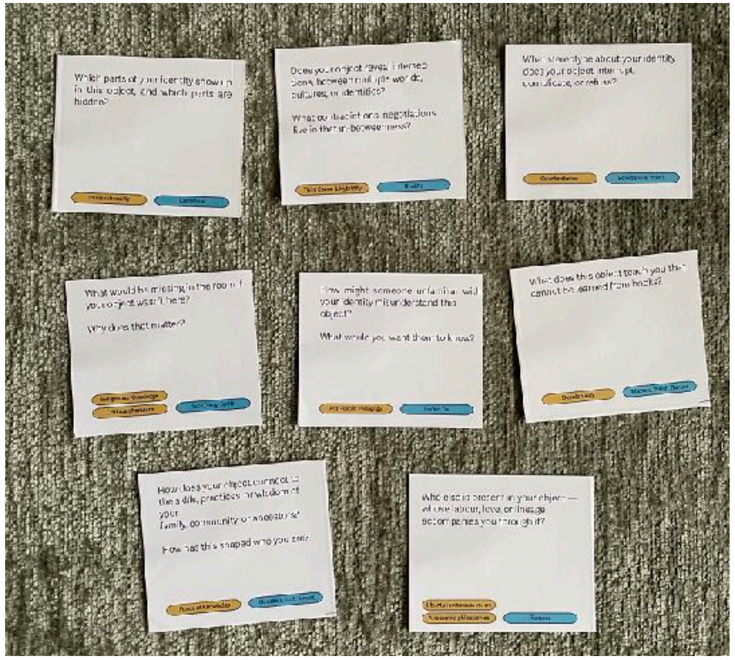
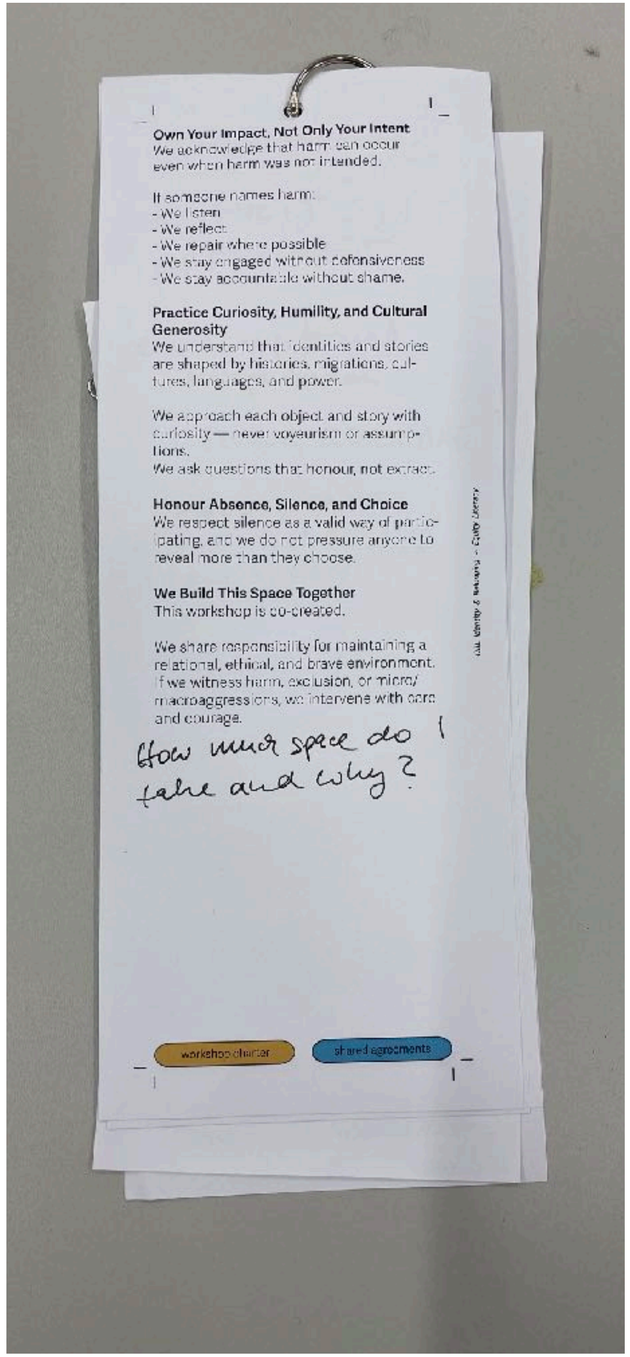

Use a card from the deck.
Ask someone a question that helps them share more about how their object connects to their identity or sense of belonging.
What stereotype about your identity does your object interrupt, complicate, or refuse?
Counterstories
Solórzano & Yosso
equity literacy
inquiry
OBL Identity & Belonging = Equity Literacy


What would be missing in the room if your object wasn't there?
Why does that matter?
How might someone unfamiliar with your identity misunderstand this object?
What would you want them to know?
What does this object teach you that cannot be learned from books?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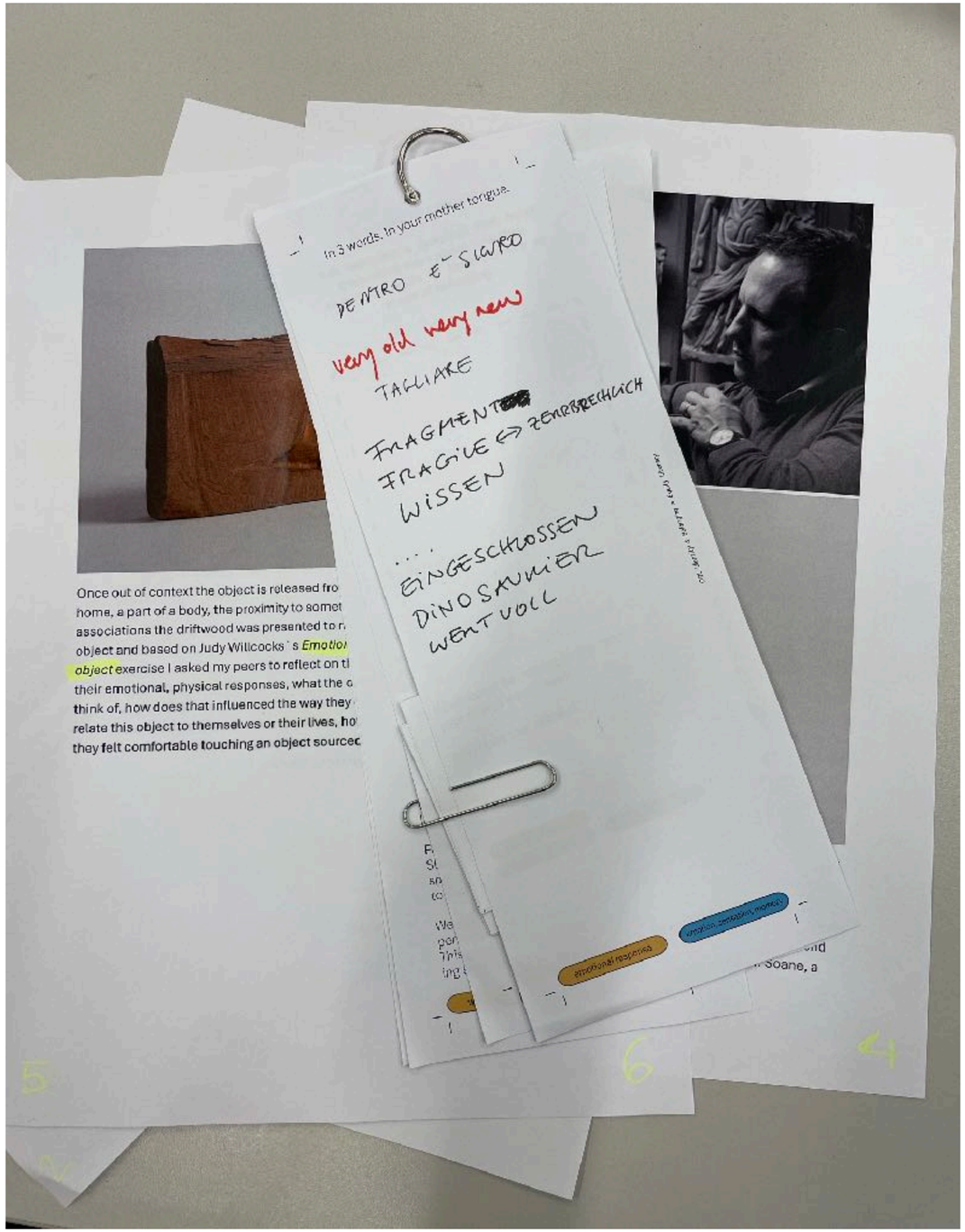
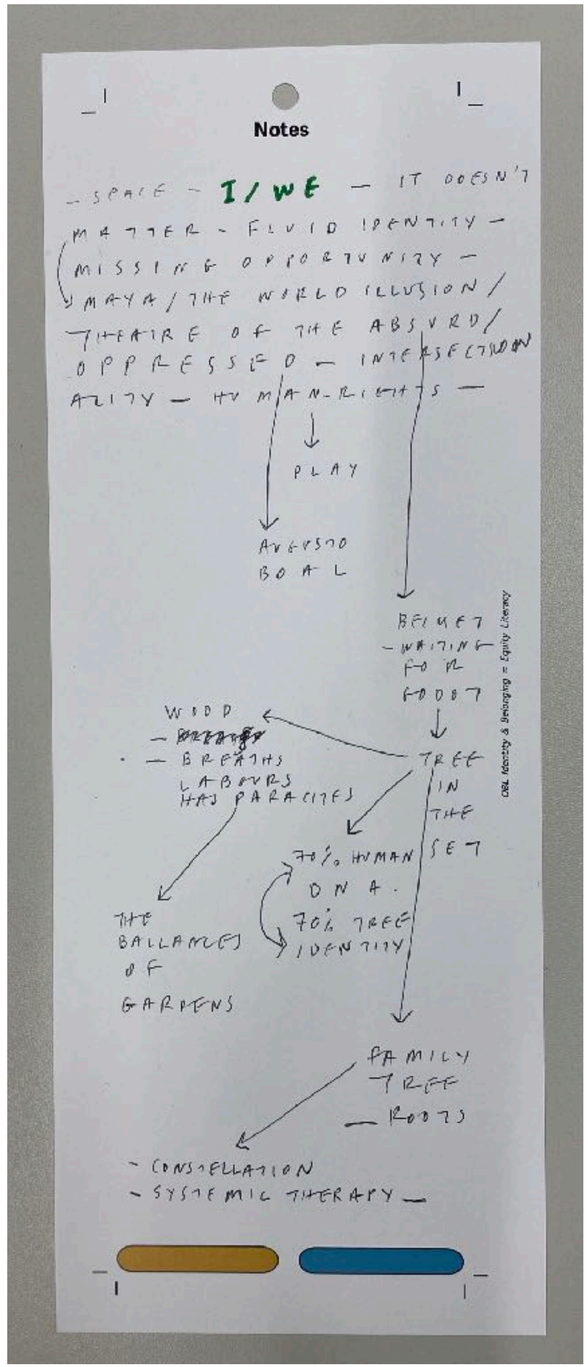
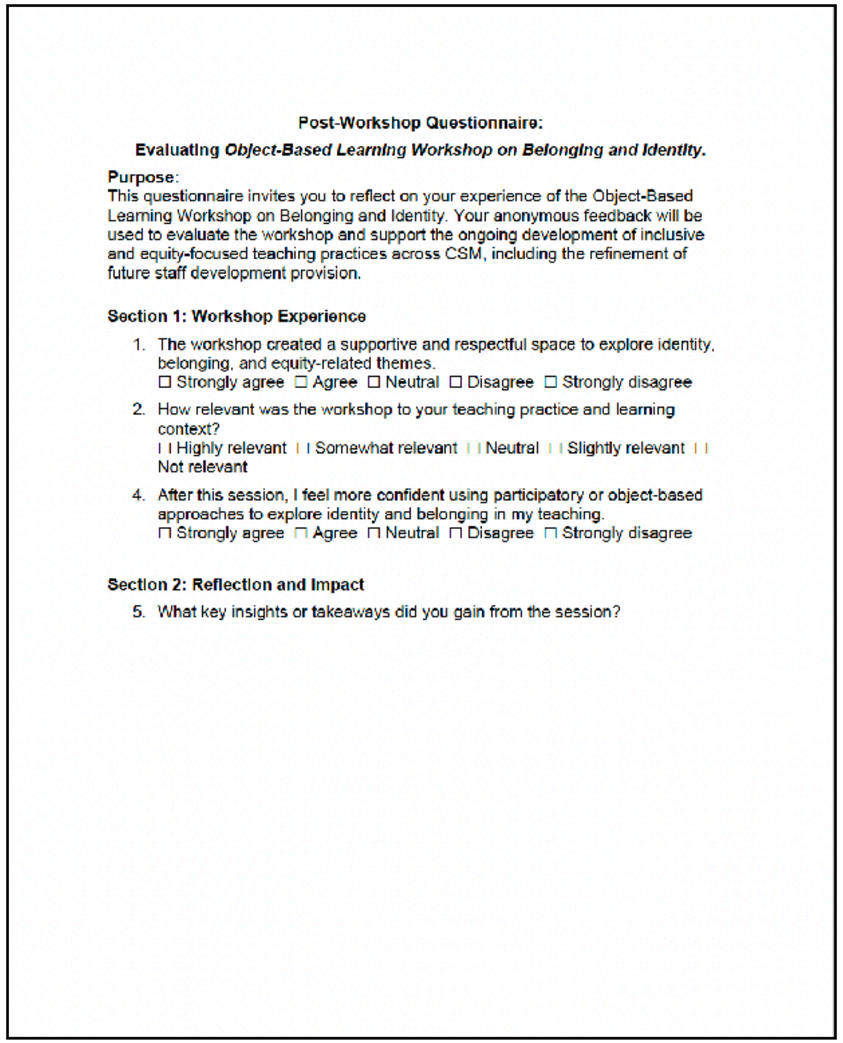
We Build This Space Together
This workshop is co-created.
We share responsibility for maintaining a relational, ethical, and brave environment. If we witness harm, exclusion, or micro/macroaggressions, we intervene with care and courage.
How much space do I take and why?
workshop charter
shared agreements


In 3 words. In your mother tongue.
DENTRO E' SICURO
very old very new
TAGLIARE
FRAGMENT
FRAGILE ⟷ ZERBRECHLICH
WISSEN
....
EINGESCHLOSSEN
DINOSAURIER
WERTVOLL
Once out of context the object is released fro
home, a part of a body, the proximity to somet
associations the driftwood was presented to r
object and based on Judy Willcocks's Emotio
object exercise I asked my peers to reflect on t
their emotional, physical responses, what the o
think of, how does that influenced the way they
relate this object to themselves or their lives, ho
they felt comfortable touching an object sourced
emotional responses
emotion, sensation, memory
Soane, a
5
6
4


Notes
- SPACE - I/WE - IT DOESN'T MATTER - FLUID IDENTITY - MISSING OPPORTUNITY - MAYA / THE WORLD ILLUSION / THEATRE OF THE ABSURD / OPPRESSED - INTERSECTION ALITY - HUMAN-RIGHTS -
PLAY
AUGUSTO BOAL
BECKET - WAITING FOR GODOT
TREE IN THE SET
WOOD
- BREATHS LABOURS HAS PARACITES
70% HUMAN DNA. 70% TREE IDENTITY
THE BALLANCES OF GARDENS
FAMILY TREE - ROOTS
- CONSTELLATION
- SYSTEMIC THERAPY -
DBL Identity & Belonging = Equity Literacy

Evaluation method: Questionnaire

Step 5: Evaluate changes



Post-Workshop Questionnaire:

Evaluating *Object-Based Learning Workshop on Belonging and Identity.*

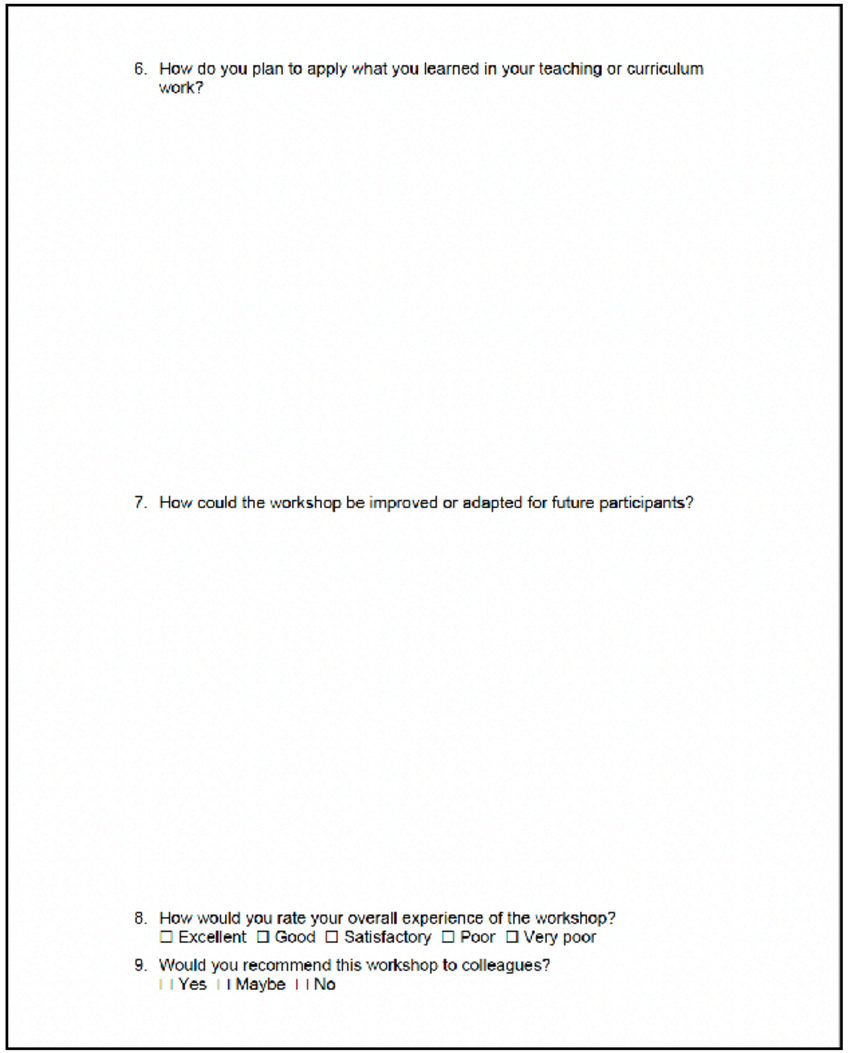
Purpose:
This questionnaire invites you to reflect on your experience of the Object-Based Learning Workshop on Belonging and Identity. Your anonymous feedback will be used to evaluate the workshop and support the ongoing development of inclusive and equity-focused teaching practices across CSM, including the refinement of future staff development provision.

Section 1: Workshop Experience

1. The workshop created a supportive and respectful space to explore identity, belonging, and equity-related themes.
   ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree
2. How relevant was the workshop to your teaching practice and learning context?
   ☐ Highly relevant ☐ Somewhat relevant ☐ Neutral ☐ Slightly relevant ☐ Not relevant
4. After this session, I feel more confident using participatory or object-based approaches to explore identity and belonging in my teaching.
   ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

Section 2: Reflection and Impact

5. What key insights or takeaways did you gain from the session?



6. How do you plan to apply what you learned in your teaching or curriculum work?

7. How could the workshop be improved or adapted for future participants?

8. How would you rate your overall experience of the workshop?
   ☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Satisfactory ☐ Poor ☐ Very poor
9. Would you recommend this workshop to colleagues?
   ☐ Yes ☐ Maybe ☐ No

Section 1: Workshop Experience

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2. How relevant was the workshop to your teaching practice and learning context?
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   ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

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References on methods

- Gibbs, G. and Coffey, M. (2004) ‘The impact of training of university teachers on their teaching skills, their approach to teaching and the approach to learning of their students’, *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 5(1), pp. 87–100.
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- University of the Arts London (n.d.) Evaluating staff development: Teaching, Learning and Employability Exchange guidance. London: UAL.

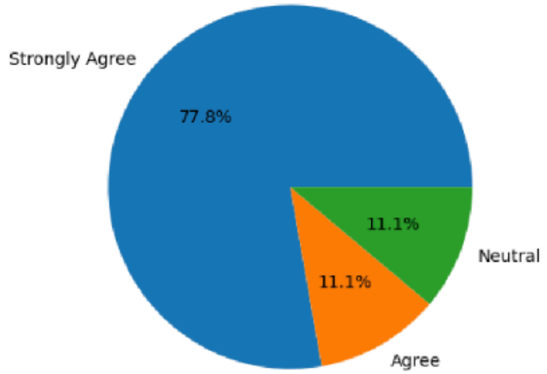
Thematic analysis

Step 6: Reflect on evaluation/changes

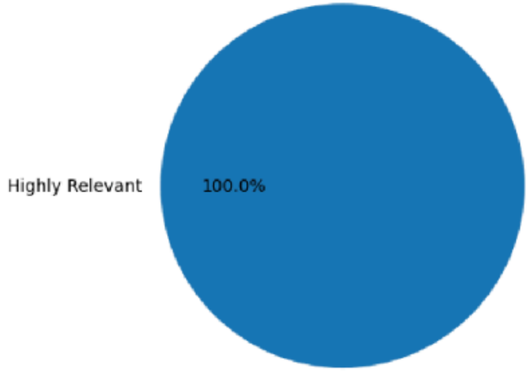
- 9 participants responded
- Conducted a thematic analysis

Quantitative data analysis

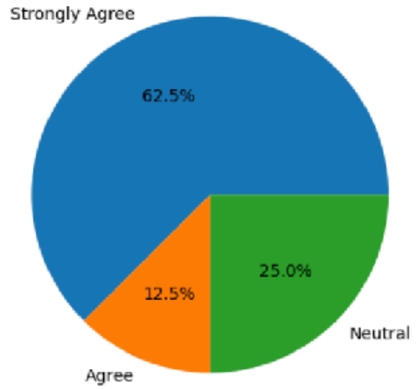
The workshop created a supportive and respectful space to explore identity, belonging, and equity-related themes



How relevant was the workshop to your teaching practice and learning context?



After this session, I feel more confident using participatory or object-based approaches to explore identity and belonging in my teaching

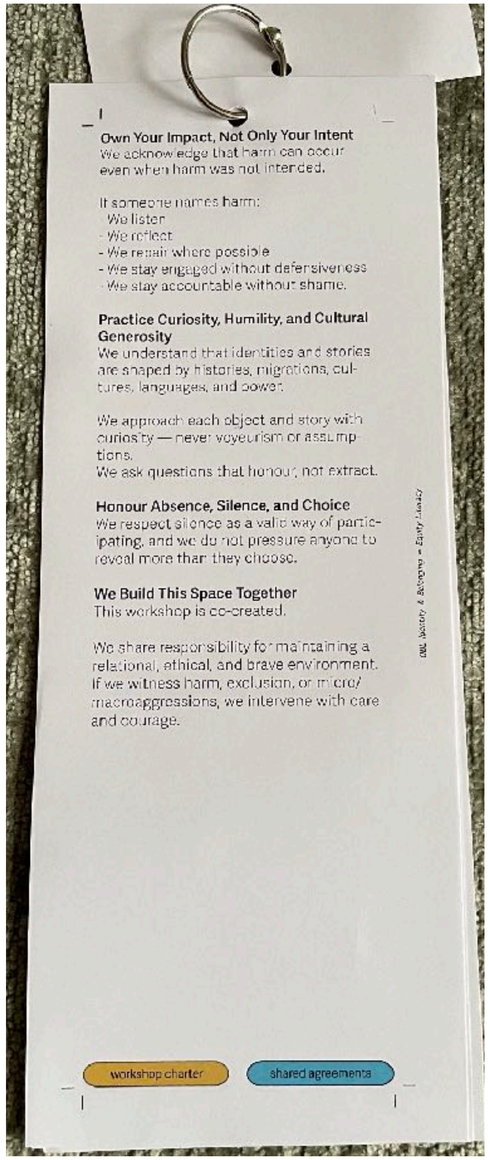


Overall

- “…nice framework to investigate our own assumptions and prejudice,”
- “Facilitating safe space to reflect ‘On Belonging’ from a deeply personal point of view/lived experience offered authentic, impactful insight.”
- “It encouraged thinking through learning about personal standpoint.”
- “A safe space for collaboration and collective learning”.

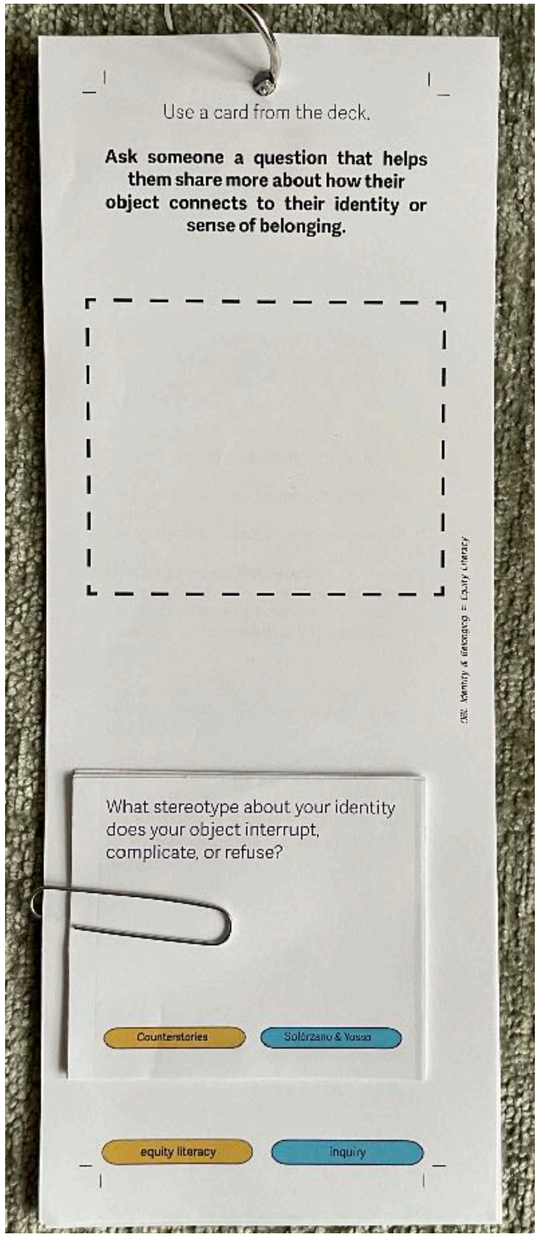
**Quotes from participants’ response questionnaire*

The structure, and pedagogical framework

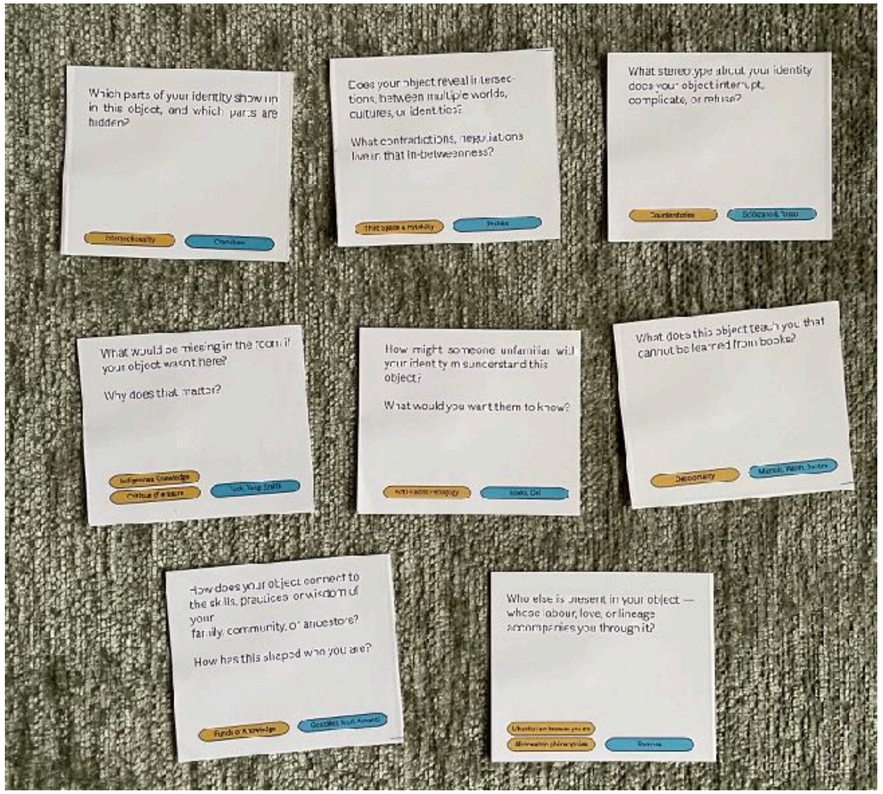


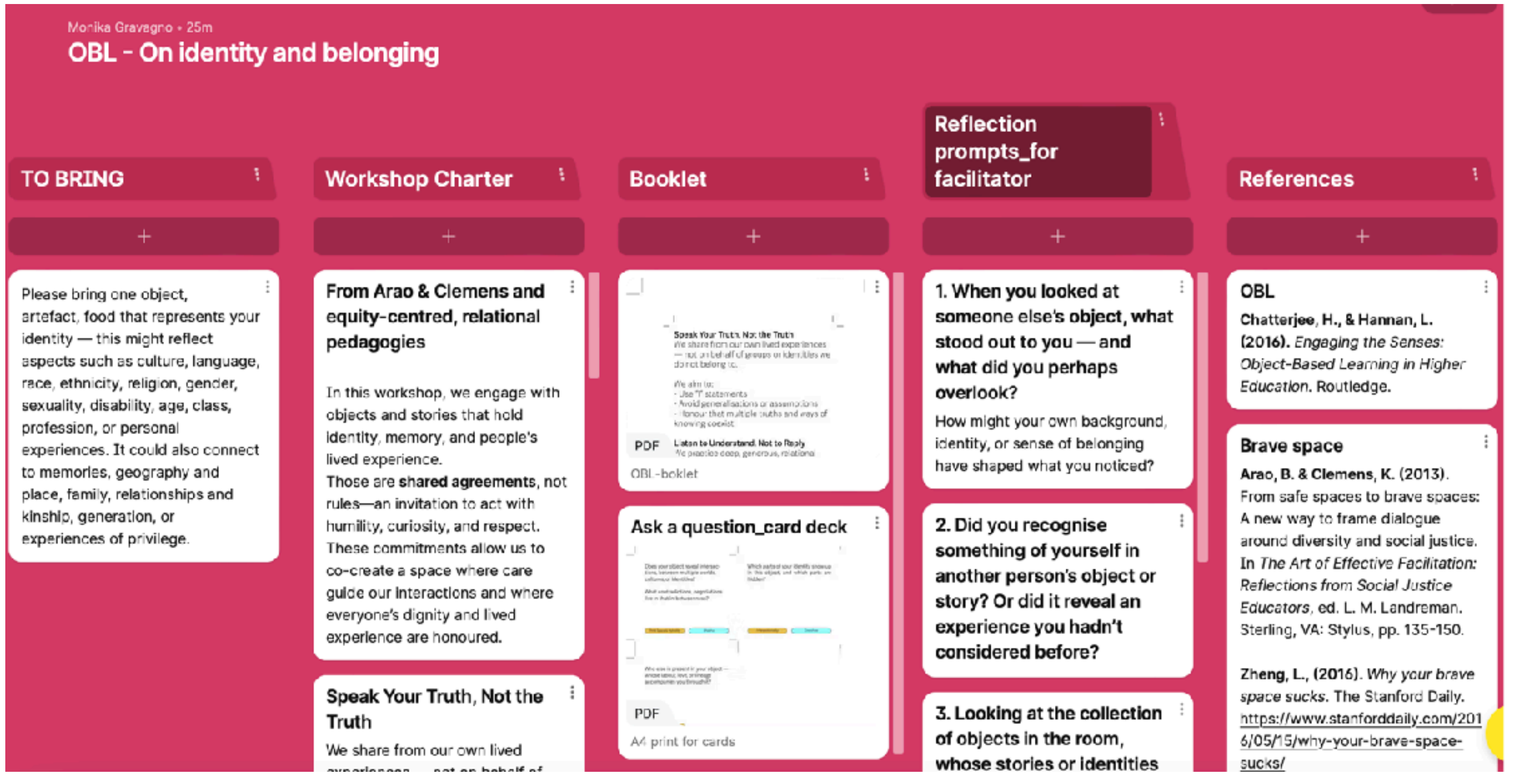
- Shared agreements, collective reading, and multilingual identity markers (e.g., three keywords in one's mother tongue) **"helped situate participants before engaging in complex conversations."**

**Quotes from participants' response questionnaire*



- “The questions provided really a nice framework to unsurfaced our assumptions and prejudice,” and
- “The postcard were helpful to think about personal endeavours/critical theory. How do I apply these theories to myself? (Decentering the self, hybridity, etc.).”





- "The padlet with the reading lists and related categories were helpful."

*Quotes from participants' response questionnaire

Complexity and Listening

- “The idea of multiple truths, as well as the notion of impact and intent,” and “It was very insightful how many different aspects of identit(ies) emerged!”
- “The facilitator successfully encouraged deep, generous, relational listening… without the expectation to be verbally responsive; this was key to contemplate the physicality of the objects.”

**Quotes from participants’ response questionnaire*

Application to teaching practice

- “Designing an “object CV” or portfolio documenting an object’s biography and cultural background as part of professional practices to bring it to life and render it employable”
- Applying methods within Knowledge Exchange work with communities.
- Incorporating active listening as a research and facilitation methodology.
- Reusing the **questioning framework** developed in the workshop: “I will try to use this way of questioning objects in my future projects.”

**Quotes from participants’ response questionnaire*

Improvements

- Clear time limits for object sharing activity.
- More time dedicated to discussing how to navigate difficult or triggering topics.
- Language in the card deck perceived as overly academic. Suggested clearer explanations or prompts on the reverse of cards.
- Reducing overlap between similar questions (e.g. Questions 3 and 4).
- Clearer communication in advance about the workshop format and expectations.
- Participants highlighted the complexities of facilitating identity-based discussions, including facilitator emotional labour. One noted that “some responses can be challenging for the facilitator (trauma triggering or feeling judged for a certain family background/ privilege), and more time to discuss navigating difficult topics would be valuable.”

Next steps

Step 7: redesign/repeat the cycle

- Implement all changes.
- Scale the workshop into a CSM-wide staff development offer to build equity literacy.
- Data collection and thematic evaluation.

Literature Review

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