
This is the **accepted version** of the journal article:

Walker, Dana [et al.]. «Developing the imagination within funds of identity : insights from translocal youth radio». *Mind, culture, and activity*, Vol. 28, Num. 2 (2021), p. 180-194 DOI 10.1080/10749039.2020.1863428

This version is available at <https://ddd.uab.cat/record/325125>

under the terms of the  ^{IN}COPYRIGHT license.

Developing the imagination within funds of identity: insights from translocal youth radio

Dana Walker^a, José Luis LaLueza^b, Carolayn Marín, and Elisabeth VanBeek^a

^aUniversity of Northern Colorado; ^bAutonomous University of Barcelona

It is imagination which enables us to free ourselves from the reality of situations in which we are involved, apprehend that which is missing, and tend toward it, potentially even creating it. – Jean Paul Sartre

ABSTRACT

This paper argues for the development of the imagination experientially, pedagogically, and theoretically within the funds of identity approach. Our discussion is based on findings from a year-long ethnographic study of a Transnational Youth Radio project. The analysis centers on the case of 13-year old Muhammad in the context of his school-based Barcelona radio program. We present two examples from his case that illuminate the potential and challenges of using funds of identity in highly diverse learning contexts, how the imagination is implicated in these processes, and how educators can guide the imagination to support the expansion of the learning experience. The first example describes an event in which the use of an identity artifact involving religious affiliation gave rise to intercultural tension and the foreclosure of dialogue, due to lack of guidance of the imagination related to perspective-taking. The second example focuses on a group art project, in which the cultural experience guiding the collective imagination resulted in positive identity performances, perspective-taking, and interdependence. To conclude, we propose directions for future inquiry and the design of learning environments that can guide the development of the imagination within the funds of identity framework.

Introduction

Funds of knowledge is a theoretical and pedagogical approach to educating students from historically marginalized groups who face social exclusion within the larger society (González et al., 2005). Social exclusion, defined as the lack of social protection, lack of power, and social marginalization (Room & Britton, 2006), is closely linked to academic failure and early exit from school (Rumberger, 2011). Daily experiences of social nonrecognition, or negation of their basic humanity, create additional challenges for the development of identities as learners and participants in their school communities (Esteban-Guitart, 2016). Based on the funds of knowledge approach, funds of identity have been suggested as a way to connect formal and informal learning contexts in order to bridge the gap between school and home-community experiences. Educators and researchers deploy funds of identity pedagogies to reverse the harmful effects of nonrecognition by promoting positive affirmations of young people's identities through the use of identity artifacts that crystallize knowledge, emotion, and experiences from across multiple spheres of experience including home, community, and school. © 2020 Taylor & Francis Group,

The funds of identity approach draws on sociocultural theories of learning and identity, together as well as recent research on digitally connected learning and *mobile centric societies*¹ (González-Patiño & Esteban-Guitart, 2014) to propose a pedagogical model that can engage students in learning at school and promote lifelong and "lifewide" learning across multiple spheres of experience. The funds of identity approach has been applied in a range of schools and informal learning contexts. However, it seems that the pedagogical and theoretical power of funds of identity could be enhanced through closer attention to the role that imagination plays both in shaping the emotional and intersubjective dimensions of social contexts in which identity artifacts are introduced, and the new identities young people can experiment with and rehearse through the deployment of identity artifacts. We believe that by incorporating recent work on the imagination from sociocultural psychology (Gajdamaschko, 2005; Zittoun & Glăveanu, 2018), we can contribute to elucidating processes of imagination and strengthening the promise of funds of identity for improving educational systems and the learning experiences of students at risk of social exclusion.

This article provides a case study drawn from a year-long ethnography of Translocal Youth Radio, designed to connect immigrant and Roma youth in Catalonia, Spain with Mexican immigrant students in Colorado, USA through the virtual exchange of locally produced youth media products and computer-mediated encounters. The object of

the research project was to understand how producing identity artifacts such as radio stories for distance audiences, sharing stories with youth across continents, and enlarging the spaces for learning beyond the walls of school into the local community, could create openings for the imagination to expand learning experiences.

In this paper we present a case study of 13-year old Ibrahim in the context of Translocal Youth Radio, paying particular attention to the socially situated processes over time of his school-based program in Barcelona. The close examination of his case and the specific dynamics of his program was the springboard for our theorizing about the relationship between funds of identity and imagination. We present two examples from Ibrahim's case study that illuminate the potential and challenges of integrating a theoretical and pedagogical focus on imagination within the funds of identity approach. The first describes a event in which the use of an identity artifact involving religious affiliation gives rise to intercultural tension. We argue that the foreclosure of dialogue may be attributed to constraints on the imagination and lack of pedagogical guidance for imagining. The second example involves a group painting and narrative produced as part of a bicycle campaign, in which the cultural experience resulted in transformations of self and the group. This second example also highlights the importance of adopting a broader developmental perspective on the use of funds of identity in educational settings, through the analysis of the introduction, appropriation, and transformation of artifacts and identity performances in various contexts over time. To conclude, we propose directions for future inquiry and the design of learning environments that recruit identity artifacts, teachers, and researcher-mentors to guide the development of the imagination.

Funds of identity and the imagination

The Funds of identity framework is grounded in sociocultural theories of teaching and learning that are guided by the principle that learning has as much to do with identity processes as it does with cognition and experience (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Funds of identity are defined as “a set of resources or box of tools. These tools have been historically accumulated and culturally developed; they are socially distributed and transmitted; and they are essential for constructing one's identity and for defining and presenting oneself” (Esteban-Guitart, 2016, p. 48). This framework builds on the work of Luis Moll and colleagues on funds of knowledge, defined as bodies of knowledge and skills that are essential for the well-being of an entire household (González et al., 2005). Funds of knowledge and life experiences are transformed into funds of identity when people actively use them to define themselves: individuals accumulate not just household funds of knowledge, but also life experiences that help them to define themselves (Jovés et al., 2015). These funds of identity can be made explicit and mobilized through their materialization in artifacts such as self-portraits, neighborhood maps, objects brought from home, or digital bilingual texts on the history of migration by a person of foreign origin (Cummins et al., 2015).

Esteban-Guitart (2016) further develops the concept of *inscription* in conceptualizing identity artifacts. Inscription involves “transformations through which an entity becomes materialized into a sign, an archive, a document, a piece of paper, a trace” (Latour as cited in Esteban-Guitart, 2016, p. 44). In the case of funds of identity inscription involves the externalization of identities in artifacts. These externalizations enable educators to “recruit a particular students’ identity artifacts so that they can be used as vehicles that transport knowledge, experiences, situations, and practices” (p. 44) throughout the different sites of a person’s life trajectory. Identities and their externalizations change over time and are mobilized or adapted according to the context.

The primary interest of the funds of identity approach, building on Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) notion of the “mesosystem,” is to “optimize and coordinate the relationship – to establish continuities – between learners and the contexts of their lives: the school, the family, and social environment” (Esteban-Guitart, 2016, p. 5). This is also one of the primary areas in which a sociocultural theory and pedagogy of imagination can contribute to extending and deepening the funds of identity approach.

Imagination in sociocultural psychology

The Meriam-Webster Dictionary (Merriam-Webster, 2020) defines imagination as, 1) “the act or power of forming a mental image of something not present to the senses or never before wholly perceived in reality; 2) creative ability, and, 3) a creation of the mind.” Within sociocultural theory, imagination is considered central to learning and human development, and key to innovation and creativity in science, technology, and the arts (Glăveanu et al., 2018). Imagination was a foundational element of Vygotsky’s theory of a higher psychological functioning and creativity, Jovchelovitch et al. (2018) define imagination in the following terms:

Imagination is the human capacity to go beyond the immediate situation and play with possible realities . . . Liberating oneself from the immediacy of the perceptual field and being able to creatively recombine elements of context and previous experience is enabled by the interdependence between self and other. Imagination is social, adaptive, and intrinsic to rational thinking. (p. 114)

It is important to emphasize that imagination is not just “out there” unattached to the real, but that it has concrete effects on thinking and action in the day-to-day (Zittoun & Cerchia, 2013). Grounded in social, material, and cultural situations and enabled by material and semiotic mediations, imagination allows us to explore the past, the future, and alternative realities, and to produce new or alternative representations, which then might pave the way to concrete actions or to personal or collective creations, from a new type of music to a new political movement (Valsiner, 2018; Zittoun & Glăveanu, 2018). Imagination offers the material and the operations needed to create something that is not yet there; to re-interpret the past or to open possible futures. In this understanding, following Vygotsky (1994),

imagination is a form of enrichment, or expansion, of one's experience and understanding of the world.

[A]ccording to the valid observation of Pushkin, imagination is as necessary in geometry as it is in poetry. Everything that requires artistic transformation of reality, everything that is connected with interpretation and construction of something new, requires the indispensable participation of fantasy [imagination]. (pp. 269- 270)

As an expansion of human experience, Vygotsky sees imagination as part of the generation of one's own zone of proximal development, and a key process in human development. The goal is to expand people's capacities to know and experiment with their being in the world, not to master it (Zittoun & Cerchia, 2013).

Self-other relations are foundational to this understanding of imagination as the expansion of experience. In early life, imagination – often connected to play – allows children to appropriate culture by imagining, initially using signs and objects to deal with absence and unmet needs (Winnicott, 1960). This interplay between presence and absence, a defining feature of the imagination according to Vygotsky, is grounded in the sociocultural dynamic of self-other relations. Liberating oneself from the immediacy of the perceptual field and being able to creatively recombine elements of context and previous experience is enabled by the interdependence between self and other (Jovchelovitch et al., 2018). The paradox of the imagination, as Jovchelovitch and coauthors point out, is that the imagination's "as if" logic is able to free the mind from others, situations, and the world; yet, this logic can only be achieved through reliance and interaction with others, situations, and the world" (p. 112).

As children grow, they not only expand their temporal horizon but also access new spaces and, thus, new spheres of experience. The imagination plays an important role in the expansion of adolescents' social and semiotic horizons, as they travel within and between institutional spaces and create meanings and experiences that cross boundaries (Akkerman, 2018). For youth to integrate experiences with school, they must carry into their here and now something from elsewhere, turning "absence" into "presence." Individuals (and collectives) externalize their imagination in language, in the making of objects, and in ongoing action, thus producing new mediational tools, such as identity artifacts, that can transform self and others, and create continuities between learners and their multiple contexts of their lives.

Research context

The Translocal Youth Radio Project was launched in fall 2017 in an international collaboration among researchers from the University of Northern Colorado (UNC), the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB/DEHISI),² and educators in K-8 schools in Colorado and Catalonia. The purpose was to connect immigrant and minoritized youth in the two youth radio sites as they investigated issues of concern to them locally, and came together virtually to share their work and perspectives across

international borders. The Barcelona youth radio project, based in the El Riu K-8 school,³ used a blog page and the school's Instagram account to broadcast student productions. In Colorado the youth radio program used a project website to broadcast student radio stories. Student products were shared in the respective classrooms by linking to Instagram, the blog page, or website, projecting the media onto a large screen, and allowing students to engage in synchronous, often animated dialogue that included singing, dancing, and the sharing of music. In several instances, the viewing of the radio production from the other site instigated a new production by the other group in response. This happened, for example, when students in Colorado viewed radio announcements from the Barcelona group about their *campanya de bicis*/Bicycle Campaign. The students in Colorado responded by creating a radio announcement in Spanish in support of the students and the bicycle campaign, which was shared with the Barcelona group and posted on the El Riu school Instagram account. These translocal processes shaped the context in which Ibrahim's case unfolded.

Setting and participants

The K-8 El Riu school in Barcelona, from which this single case study is drawn, is located in a working class neighborhood of the city. It serves a low-income student population with a high proportion of immigrant and Roma students: 27% Roma, 20% Latin Americans, 9% Pakistani, 6% Moroccan, and 31% Spanish citizens from provinces outside of Catalonia. Twenty 7th grade (1st ESO) students participated in the Barcelona program.

The mentor-researcher team consisted of the first author, a researcher from Colorado; the UAB project coordinator for El Riu school who is a masters student in applied psychology; and a doctoral student from Chile. In addition to the mentor-researcher team, there were practicum undergraduate students in a service learning program under the supervision of coauthor José Luis Lalueza, and two practicum master's students from the university communications department who served as mentors for the youth radio student groups. The 7th grade teacher collaborated on the project throughout the school year and provided his own analyses of student interactions and activities, as well as reflections on our interpretations of the data.

The funds of identity framework (Esteban-Guitart, 2016; Esteban-Guitart et al., 2019; Subero et al., 2017) was adopted to help the teacher and support staff develop skills in project-based learning, to practice intercultural dialogue with students, and to develop activities based on the interests of their students. Since the research team did not have previous experience implementing the funds of identity approach, this was an exploratory learning opportunity for the researchers, the practicum students, and the teachers.

Research design and procedures

The larger study from which this single-case study was drawn, adopted a multi-site and multimodal ethnographic approach (Marcus, 1995). This approach enabled us to

describe the characteristics of the local and translocal projects, and to analyze how new meanings and practices were constructed within and across contexts through the use of media products. For the purposes of this analysis, a single-case study was used, as it allowed us to represent the subjective, qualitative aspect of lived experience in social contexts (Yin, 2013). The following question guided the analyses for this paper: 1) How does imagination come into play in educational contexts where funds of identity are used? 2) How can the imagination be guided to enhance the use of funds of identity among students at risk of social exclusion?

Data collection and initial analyses for the multi-site ethnography were conducted from August 2017 (beginning at the Colorado research site) through June 2018. Data sources for this study included observational field notes, video recordings and photos taken during project activities, social media (Instagram, radio project blog), semi-structured interviews, reflections by university student mentors, student media productions, and recordings of Zoom meetings between students in the radio projects in Colorado and in Barcelona. We conducted content analyses of identity artifacts and student media productions, narrative analyses of student narratives, discourse analyses of selected group interactions, and cartographic analyses of the movement of bodies through, and activities in physical spaces. We constructed a year-long timeline showing the realized curriculum; where, when, with whom, and for what purposes activities were undertaken, including links to the digital or non-digital individual and collective youth media and research products.

For the analysis presented here we began by selecting an interactional event involving an identity artifact that was used to form student groups of four around a shared interest. We selected the event surrounding Ibrahim's introduction of his name as an identity artifact, as it seemed particularly generative in terms of issues related to interculturality and perspective-taking. Following the analysis of this event that revealed seemingly negative outcomes in the use of funds of identity, we returned to our corpus of data to examine Ibrahim's participation over the course of the academic year, in order to identify interactional events or media products that could be submitted to a contrastive analysis (Spradley, 1979). This second phase of our analysis is presented in a brief overview of Ibrahim's evolving participation in the program, followed by a description of an illustrative event that shows a more productive use of identity artifacts involving explicit guidance of the imagination.

Funds of identity and imagination in the case of Ibrahim

The El Riu radio project used identity artifacts at the beginning of the year with the objective of eliciting individual student interests, identifying key topics of inquiry, and organizing student groups around themes of shared interest that would guide their collective investigations and radio productions. For the funds of identity work, we used the following identity artifacts (Peña-Cuando & Esteban-Guitart, 2013): (1) a cultural artifact from home with an oral narrative about why it was important to them ; (2) a geomap, in which students mapped their leisure activities in their neighborhoods; (3) a "significant circle" drawing, in which participants drew a large

circle and then smaller circles inside with symbols representing the people and institutions that were most important in their lives; and (4) a “mapa mundi,” which showed students’ countries of origin.

In addition to using identity artifacts to elicit student interests for the purposes of forming inquiry groups, the identity artifacts were used to create a sense of community among student and adult participants, and to get to know one another in order to reverse the tendency of “nonrecognition” of students from minoritized groups within Spanish society. As Taylor (as cited in Esteban- Guitart, 2016) writes, “Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being” (p. 45). In other words, the elicitation of identity artifacts in this setting constituted what Esteban-Guitart has called “acts of recognition,” which are “engines of identity” (p. 45). These acts of recognition – what we will call social recognition – were most visible and felt experientially when the introduction of the identity artifact was embedded in dialogue among participants. This dialogue occurred only in the interactional event involving the cultural object brought from home, which we analyze in the following section.

Event one: Ibrahim’s name as identity artifact

Ibrahim was a young man with a big smile from Morocco, who seemed hungry to learn and to participate in group activities. *Los Guais* – The Cool Guys – was a group formed around the interest of the music of emotions/*música sentimental*. The group consisted of Gema from Columbia; Selena and Tamara Roma from Barcelona, and Ibrahim. For the discussion about the cultural object brought from home, the group chose to sit outside under the old linden trees in the school yard. As described in her field notes, Faviola, the doctoral student from Chile, opened the activity by modeling a narrative of an object of importance to her, a poster of Violeta Parra (1917–1967), making connections across geographical space and time to this Chilean singer songwriter of the Nueva Canción movement of Latin America (see Figure 1).

Following Faviola’s presentation, Ibrahim offered his name – the name of a prophet of Islam – as the cultural object. His selection revealed the importance of the Muslim religion for his family and himself, thus connecting the pedagogical activity with a set of cultural meanings with significance in his family and home community. After Ibrahim had finished his presentation, tensions erupted when Faviola tried to explain the importance of the name of the prophet for the benefit of the non-Muslim students, by likening the prophet Ibrahim to Jesus. Ibrahim responded emphatically that Jesus did not matter to him. The other members of his group, two of whom were the Roma and Evangelical Christians, responded angrily: “Here you have to show respect! Do not say that! You are not in your country!” The mentors tried to make the most of this culture clash by pointing to the multiplicity of religions in Spain and the sociohistorical origins of religious belief. Though the mentor-researcher team was successful in enabling Ibrahim to introduce his religious identity into the school-based activity through his identity artifact, it was complicated. Ibrahim’s past experiences

and identification with his name were interwoven with historical, political, and religious narratives about the prophet heard throughout Ibrahim's childhood. This was all brought into the present interactional space through processes of imagination. The identity artifact triggered the imagination which evoked cultural memory and emotion, and brought the world of Ibrahim's Muslim community into the educational setting.

The name Ibrahim is an identity artifact that is built in the family and community context, where it acquires its cultural meaning. It contributes to the construction of subjectivity, and therefore individual identity, but its social and cultural origin must not be forgotten. Its potential (and difficulty) when incorporated into the classroom activity, is that this is a different context from the one in which it was given meaning, where the same consensus and constitutive presuppositions do not exist, and where an articulated set of meanings is not shared. On the contrary, different agents with different community

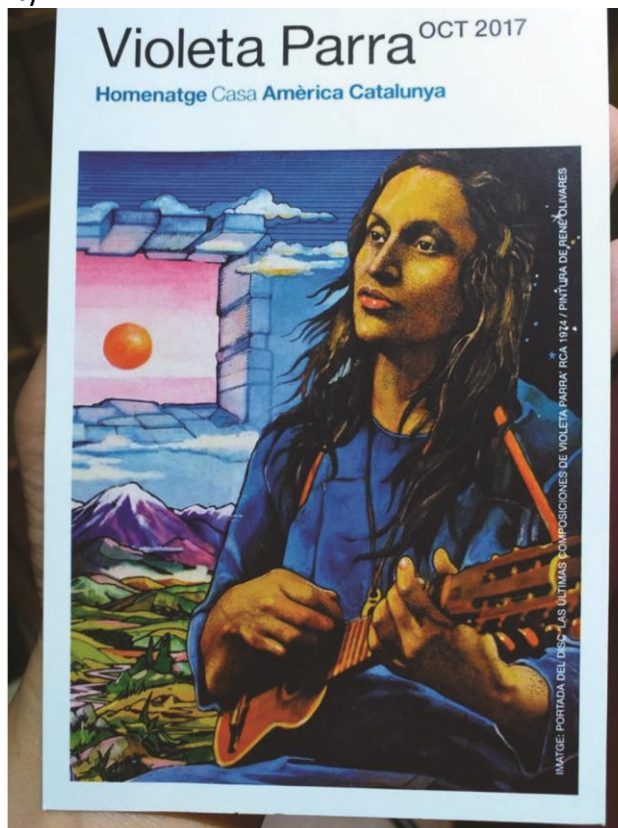


Figure 1. Painting of Violeta Parra by René Olivares.

references and different cultural meanings participate in the classroom. Although the aim of the funds of identity approach is to legitimize the identity references of the participants, establishing continuities between the community world and the world of school, we cannot assume that there will not be discontinuity and conflict, since

different cultural references are different sources of legitimation and can give rise to contradiction.

Part of the difficulty in using Ibrahim's name as an identity artifact was that this episode forced the group to address a previously unspoken topic – the religious identity of the participants, and more generally religious diversity in Spanish society. Faviola wrote, "We must introduce activities that bring to light these cultural differences. Religion seems to be invisible, but with the smallest amount of encouragement it comes to light." The identity artifact in this case elicited animated discussion in which students' passions and belief systems were engaged. It allowed religious identities and religious differences to enter the institutional discourse, whereas they were typically silenced and marginalized in the school.

Yet in spite of certain openings that were created through the funds of identity activity, the adults present did not succeed in creating a dialogic space for exploiting this rich moment of culture clash when worldviews and religious ideologies were thrown into relief. Struggling with another's discourse is crucial for the development of individual consciousness and intersubjectivity (Matusov, 2001). Given the proper preparation, strategies, and theoretical focus, the mentor-researchers could have utilized this rich moment to guide the imagination in ways that would have allowed the youth to explore the lived reality of *an other*, such that the experiences, stories and voices of others came to inhabit the life and experience of the self through the imagination. Due to the absence of guidance in imagining, the negotiation of meanings of the identity artifact reached an impasse that resulted in the breakdown of communication and the rise of intercultural tension, which may have left both the Muslim and the Christian participants feeling unheard, unrecognized, and perhaps disinclined to invest themselves in identity artifacts or to participate in group activities going forward. Following this event Ibrahim was consistently silent or holding himself apart from group activities, with a grim and unhappy countenance during the first half of the year.

How imagination comes into play with an identity artifact

The educational philosopher, Maxine Greene (1995) wrote, "to imagine is what, above all, makes empathy possible" (p. 3). The imagination is a tool for reaching greater understanding of self and other; it is essential for perspective taking and grasping how the experience of others informs the experience of self. Zittoun and Gillespie (2016) write,

[I]t might be our capacity to imagine the perspective of others that is central to our understanding of ourselves, our independence from others, and also our ethical being . . . To objectify the Other, to treat the other as an "It" invariably results in an impoverished realization of oneself . . . In such a dialogical stance, self cannot be thought of, or conceived of, except in a relation with an Other . . . Imagination allows us to see the other and adopt the perspective of that other, with us or in us . . . (p. 68)

Hermans and Salgado (2010) have examined the role of imagination in the self, concentrating on the imagination of others-in-self, or what appears as imagined others. Similarly, Glăveanu and Zittoun (2018) suggest that constructing a new perspective within a situation, the perspective of *an other*, is an imaginative act because one can never fully approximate how reality looks from any other position than that of the self. These experiences feed into what we imagine might be the case for other people or, more generally, how it would be to experience a new situation.

The fact that our minds are dialogical in nature enables acts of imagination and, in turn, is enabled by them. Imagination is at the roots of our possibility to decenter our perspective of the world, to understand the perspectives of others, and to reposition ourselves in relation to a shared reality . . . in this sense, a dialogical mind is always a mind that imagines. (p. 349)

The interactional event involving Ibrahim's name revealed a limited or constrained modality of imagining, or the inability to imagine the perspective of *an other*, whether Muslim or Christian. Research in sociocultural psychology has identified specific factors that can contribute to limiting the imagination. In the case of Ibrahim's name these factors could include: (1) negative social representations of Muslims; (2) lack of social recognition; (3) lack of emotional security and protection of the self; and (4) highly charged, negative emotional responses to statements that can lead to the rejection of the other and foreclosure of dialogue.

First, sociocultural research has shown that social representations with strong negative undertones can prevent people from imagining their futures (Bornat & Jones, as cited in Zittoun & Sato, 2018). Social representation is defined by Serge Moscovici as an organized corpus of knowledge as well as "one of the psychic activities that enables people to make the social and physical reality intelligible, they can be integrated within a group or in an everyday exchange relation, and which liberate the power of their imagination," (Moscovici, translated and cited in Zittoun & Gillespie, 2016, p. 61). The extremely negative social representations of Muslims in Spain, particularly following the terrorist attack just prior to the onset of this study, may have had this limiting effect on the imagination among the non-Muslim student participants.

Second, if imagination, like other dialogical processes, requires that it be socially shared and recognized, the lack of social recognition of Ibrahim in sharing his religious identity might have reduced the space for his imagining, just as the lack of social recognition of the Roma girls' Christian beliefs and identities on Ibrahim's part would have constrained the girls' ability to imagine the significance of the Prophet Ibrahim for Muslims. A change in the dialogical situation for imagining could have transformed the situation, first through social recognition (in this case by the youth and mentor-researchers present) and second by allowing people to recover the cultural elements that would become resources for imagining (Zittoun & Sato, 2018). Semiotic guidance by the mentor-research team with resources for imagination could have helped students decouple from the interactional impasse to imagine another's experience and "personal culture," (Valsiner, 2001).

Third, the constraints on imagination in this event may also be explained by the adults' lack of experience with creating "an imagined potential space," where the experiences, stories and voices of others come to inhabit the life and experience of the self; a potential space that "expands horizons, self-esteem and positive attachment to others and community" (Jovchelovitch, 2015, p. 78). To create this space would have required that the mentor-researchers provide emotional security and protection of the self to individuals in the group. In this kind of space, the imagination opens-up thinking by linking the "emotional and the experiential life of the self to wider emotions and experiences coming from the world of others. Its basic combinatorial mechanism connects all these through meaning and sense-making, simultaneously regarding and disregarding the immediacy and concreteness of situations" (p. 81).

Guiding the imagination in the production of identity artifacts

As Gajdamaschko (2005) has pointed out, educators must provide guidance for the imagination to develop. Sociocultural psychology research into literary, visual, and performing arts has provided some clues as to directions we might take in this regard. Vygotsky (2004), for example, asserts that people become maximally involved in an activity if they are emotionally and psychologically engaged in a distal experience of art engaging the imagination. Zittoun and Rosenstein (2018) argue that the entire sequence of actions in theater – such as taking a seat, watching the lights go down and the curtains rise – along with the aesthetic, physical structure of the theater itself, scaffold the imagination leading to the moment when the audience members "leave" their seats and enter the fictional world of the play.

Zittoun (2006) provides a compelling argument for developing cultural experiences that can trigger the imagination and set individual and collective change in motion:

The cultural experience enables imagining new images, bodily experiences, emotions, perspectives, and categories, general and abstract ideas; through the semiotic guidance, the person can experience herself as- if in another sphere of experience, or as-if in another position. The processes of relocating through the complex mediating enabled by the experience can be called empathy—if empathy is understood as the very movement through various positions within the architecture of the self. In some cases, during the imaginary experience, a person can enter a state of aesthetic absorption, a state of nondeployment of the self—or, more exactly, an absence of the self-consciousness that usually accompanies such internal movements. (p. 62)

Teachers can provide semiotic guidance to the imagination in ways that allow students to reimagine themselves in relation to others and other belief systems, and thereby develop a broader understanding of the diversity of funds of knowledge and identity. Daiute (2018) does this in a project with youth from the former Yugoslavia who were guided toward "relational imagining" to heal the wounds of war through the juxtaposition of fictional genres and personal narratives. In looking at the corpus of the data in relation to Ibrahim's case, we do in fact find examples of this kind of

semiotic guidance of the imagination through a cultural experience using an identity artifact, which we describe in the next section.

Event two: Ibrahim and the group painting of the super-powered bicycle

Further analyses of the corpus of data from Ibrahim's case revealed a clear example of semiotic guidance of the imagination through a cultural experience involving an identity artifact that resulted in the successful implementation of the funds of identity approach. This was an art project that was part of a bicycle campaign. The object of the *campanya de bicis* was to have students obtain donations of bicycles so that they could ride down the Rio Besos to the Mediterranean Sea and other sites of interest. We describe this event in detail below, subsequent to a sketch of the broader learning context that provides a more holistic view of Ibrahim's development within Translocal Youth Radio over time.

Following the initial use of an object brought from home as the basis for group formation, the group *Los Guais* (the Cool Guys), was reconfigured such that it did not include the Roma girls with whom Ibrahim had the relational, but did include boys of diverse national origin. *Los Guais* went on to successfully produce radio stories on people's interests in romantic music (*música de los sentimientos*) and people's addiction to social media. They conducted Vox Pop (*vox populis* or the voices of the people) interviews about these topics in the streets of the neighborhood, and produced a choreographed and scripted video in which they preview their radio stories for their multiple audiences – parents, the school community, and the virtual public in social media sphere. In this video, Ibrahim performed enthusiastically, jumping out of a hiding place with his arms raised smiling broadly making a statement about their production, alongside his groupmates in coordinated activity and shared excitement. In this and subsequent videos we see Ibrahim progressing from an awkward novice interviewer to a confident looking "youth radio journalist" who used the microphone expertly and conducted his interviews with strangers without using notes. Ibrahim expressed keen interest in the youth radio group in Colorado and was often the first to speak and stand in front of the video recording device or the screen projecting the zoom meeting with the Colorado youth. Overall, in this later period he looks engaged, happy (with a sparkle in his eye, or smiling), and participating in coordinated action with his group members.

Examining Ibrahim's development over the course of the year, we can see evidence of identity processes involving imagination that lent themselves to an evolving sense of interdependence with others in the production of group products, social recognition for his skills in interviewing, and general sense of integration in the group and excitement about the projects he was engaged in with others. This was particularly true in the *campanya de bicis* art project.

Campanya de bicis/the bicycle campaign

For the period in between the university semesters when practicum students were not present in the school, the classroom teacher designed a project that was explicitly informed by considerations of the imagination and student interests. The goal of the *campanya de bicis*/bicycle campaign was for students to obtain donations of bicycles in order to ride from their neighborhood at the northeastern margins of Barcelona – which some students did not realize was even part of the city – down the Rio Besos to the sea. To obtain bicycle donations students used media communication skills, graphic design, and visual arts for marketing and advertising. They developed scripts and performances in which they gave voice to the embodied imagining of riding on a bicycle to the sea. They also visually represented their embodied imaginings in multimodal products that culminated in a group visual arts project.

For the collective art project about the *campanya de bicis*, Ibrahim participated in a group composed of boys only: Amir and Sajid from Pakistan, Jorge from Colombia, and Paco from Barcelona (Roma). The teacher noted that Ibrahim seemed much more comfortable, perhaps safer, in this group than with the girls who expressed anger at his dismissive statement about Jesus. In his reflection on the group multimedia painting, which included real sand, transparent plastic colored paper, an image of the sea, and a bicycle that was created with wax and water color paint, Ibrahim and the other boys explained the significance of the painting to the art teacher in the following exchange.

Jorge This is a bicycle. Well. When
 we ride our bike we can
 feel the speed and the
 wind blowing in our face.

Ibrahim [*Moves closer to the
 recording device; looks at
 the videographer, adjusts
 his collar like a reporter
 preparing for the camera
 to roll, then at the art
 teacher*]. Well, it is like the
 attitude of an artist, like
 that of Picasso . . .

Ibrahim We created it in a very
 special way . . . that
 expresses that the bicycle
 is going at high speed, an
 internal high speed that
 you can't see, but it is
 moving fast.

Jorge	It has special tricks that are not like a normal bike, but not just any one can see these.
Art Teacher	Yes, I can see that it [the painting] has many layers.
Ibrahim	We have many colors so that it looks more original.
Art Teacher	I like this.
Ibrahim	<i>[Smiles, nods his head decidedly]</i> . What Paco said is true, it is a work of art!

In their painting (see [Figure 2](#) above) the boys attempt to capture the feeling of flying at high speed on a bicycle at, or to, the beach: the real sand symbolizing the beach is placed the foreground, splatters of color like drops of sea water reflecting sunlight surround the bike which has taken flight and is slightly elevated above the pavement, pointed slightly toward the sky. There is nobody riding the bike. The students' imaginations were guided and developed in the art project by the art teacher through the cultural resources related to Picasso and other painters, and the study of multimedia painting: some students used clay on paper, others cut out paper, used water colors, sand, stones, and so on. The classroom teacher noted in a diary entry,

Ibrahim insists that they used many colors to express speed and that makes it original and elevates it to a work of art. He compares it with Picasso, whose art I imagine he does not understand well, but he does know that Picasso is a genius for painting in that non-figurative style, and that he and his companions have been able to use a non- figurative style to successfully convey a powerful message. That success or recognition is something that Ibrahim needed in those days.

The art activity and the group's recounting of what is expressed in the painting is an example of what can be achieved through engaging the imagination in a cultural experience. It is also an example of the ways that imagination is enabled by the interdependence between self and others (Jovchelovitch et al., [2018](#)). To produce a group painting the boys expressed their individual imaginings and represent the individual imaginings in a collective art piece. They then articulate their shared vision in a verbal narrative about their painting. The teacher noted the interdependence of the collective imagining in the group painting:

Ibrahim for the first time takes the lead (*se siente protagonista*) and is proud that his participation in a group activity is successful and that together they achieve a good result. Ibrahim stood out in sports because he was a great sprinter. He wanted to reflect this speed in the artwork and for the first time what he feels, and how he feels, is taken into account by the rest of the group and they capture it. Even Paco, who is a Roma boy who rarely comes to class, this afternoon enjoyed this pleasant activity. I see them happy and proud of what they have done and they say so: “This is art and we have expressed it as the great artists do, like Picasso.”



Figure 2. The bicycle.

The group in this instance takes the perspective of the individual, Ibrahim, and transforms it into their collective perspective with shared emotion; the excitement over the speed and invisible powers of the bicycle they imagined together, and the artistic achievement of their group painting.

The bicycle campaign is an example of an educator providing strong guidance for the imagination. The underlying goal was to develop geographical imagination: for students to see their neighborhood as embedded within a larger geography, and for them to imagine themselves covering new territory on a bicycle, riding down the river to the sea where some of them had never been. Sharing their group products from the bicycle campaign with the Colorado students, and having the Colorado students post Instagram videos of support for the Barcelona students' project, broadened the contours of imagined spaces for communication and action, and perhaps enhanced their sense of importance of their work that was viewed through social media by

international and local audiences (families, the school community, the general public).

The fact that Ibrahim was able to connect his sense joy and mastery in sports to the school-based art activity in the bicycle campaign is an example of how the imagination, guided through a cultural experience, can support efforts to optimize and coordinate relationships between learners and the contexts of their lives (Esteban-Guitart, 2016), in this case, the social environment, sports, social media, and school. The fact that Ibrahim's group constructed a common perspective and shared emotions of excitement, pleasure, and freedom through the art activity, could be viewed as an expansive form of funds of identity, that goes beyond individual funds of identity to the collective. This may be a direction for future research related to intercultural learning and educational designs for students at risk of social exclusion.

Discussion and conclusions

This article explores the theoretical and applied implications of sociocultural theories of the imagination for the funds of identity approach in the context of Translocal Youth Radio. The first example from Ibrahim's case demonstrates how inattention to imaginative processes in highly diverse settings can lead to the interruption of learning and identity work through the funds of identity. Students from groups at risk of social exclusion are particularly susceptible to constraints on the imagination produced by negative social representations, the lack of social recognition, and lack of safe environments for the elaborating identities. Limiting the imagination can inhibit perspective-taking, empathy, and the ability of the mind to figure alternatives to given social realities.

The second example from Ibrahim's case demonstrates the transformative power of funds of identity when the imagination is guided and fully engaged through a cultural experience. The cultural experience enables the imagining of new emotions, bodily experiences, and perspectives; through such semiotic guidance, the person can experience themselves as-if in another position, which can be called empathy. The collective processes of imagining in the collaborative art project warrant further exploration, with possible implications for designing collective identity artifacts within the funds of identity model.

Finally, perspective-taking, social recognition and interdependence may be more likely to take hold if we pay attention to the quality of human relations extant in the setting, and modify our design if necessary to create an "imagined potential space" in which young selves are protected, which "expands horizons, self-esteem and

positive attachment to others and community” (Jovchelovitch, 2015, p. 78), as we saw in Ibrahim’s development over time in Translocal Youth Radio. Funds of identity has the potential to create these generative spaces when educators understand the processes of imagination that are triggered in the use of identity artifacts, and how to guide the imagination for expansive experiences across the contexts and phases of students’ lives.

Notes

1. Esteban-Guitart (2016) defines *mobile-centric societies* as, “The globalized and networked practices that have arisen from the massive penetration of digital media in our everyday lives, routines and activities. In other words, our work, business, learning and relationships have incorporated and are mediated by digital devices” (p. 15).
2. DEHISI is a research lab at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) directed by coauthor José Luis LaLueza. DEHISI stands for Grup de Recerca en Desenvolupament Humà, Intervenció Social i Interculturalitat/ Research Group on Human Development, Social and Intercultural Intervention.
3. Pseudonyms are used for the school and all participants in the research project.

Funding

I+D+i EDU2014-55354-R: University education: Analysis of the learning process and identity change through service- learning in communities of practices in contexts of exclusion, funded by the Secretary of State of Catalonia for Research, Development and Innovation, during the years 2015-2018. University of Northern Colorado, Dissemination and Faculty Development Grant, Provost’s Office [72012].

References

- Akkerman, S. (2018). Imagination in and beyond education. In T. Zittoun & V. P. Glăveanu (Eds.), *Handbook of imagination and culture* (pp. 211–221). Oxford University Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.
- Cummins, J., Hu, S., Markus, P., & Montero, M. K. (2015). Identity texts and academic achievement: Connecting the dots in multilingual school contexts. *TESOL Quarterly*, 49(9), 555–581. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.241>
- Esteban-Guitart, M. (2012). Towards a multimethodological approach to identification of funds of identity, small stories and master narratives. *Narrative Inquiry*, 22(1), 173-179. doi:10.1075/ni.22.1.12est.

- Esteban-Guitart, M. (2016). *Funds of identity: Connecting meaningful learning experiences in and out of school*. Cambridge University Press.
- Esteban-Guitart, M. (2016). *Funds of Identity: Connecting Meaningful Learning Experiences in and out of School*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press
- Esteban-Guitart, M., LaLueza, J. L., Zhang-Yu, C., & Llopart, M. (2019). Sustaining students' cultures and identities: A qualitative study based on the funds of knowledge and identity approaches. *Sustainability*, 11(3400), 1–12. <https://doi.org/doi:10.3390/su11123400>
- Gajdamaschko, N. (2005). Vygotsky on imagination: Why an understanding of imagination is an important issue for school teachers. *Teaching Education Journal*, 16(1), 13–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1047621052000341581>
- Glăveanu, V. P., Karwowski, M., Jankowska, D. M., & Saint-Laurant, C. (2018). Creative imagination. In T. Zittoun & V. P. Glăveanu (Eds.), *Handbook of imagination and culture* (pp. 61-86). Oxford University Press.
- Glăveanu, V. P., & Zittoun, T. (2018). The future of imagination in sociocultural research. In T. Zittoun & V. P. Glăveanu (Eds.), *Handbook of imagination and culture* (pp. 347–367). Oxford University Press.
- González, N., Moll, L. C., & Amanti, C. (Eds.). (2005). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms*. Lawrence Erlbaum.
- González-Patiño, J., & Esteban-Guitart, M. (2014). Algunos retos y experiencias de la educación formal en la Sociedad Móvil-Céntrica (SMC). *Digital Education Review*, 25, 64–86. <http://greav.ub.edu/der/> .
- Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination essays on education, the arts, and social change*. Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Hermans, H. J. M., & Salgado, J. (2010). The dialogical self as mini-society. In S. R. Kirschner & J. Martin (Eds.), *The sociocultural turn in psychology: The contextual emergence of mind and self* (pp. 183–204). Colombia University Press.
- Jovchelovitch, S., Priego-Hernández, J., & Glăveanu, V. P. (2018). Imagination in children entering culture. In T. Zittoun & V. P. Glăveanu (Eds.), *Handbook of imagination and culture* (pp. 111-136). Oxford University Press.
- Jovés, P., Siqués, C., & Esteban-Guitart, M. (2015). The incorporation of funds of knowledge and funds of identity of students and their families into educational practice. A case study from Catalonia, Spain. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 49(3), 68–77. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2015.03.001>
- Jovchelovitch, S. (2015). The creativity of the social Imagination, development and social change in Rio de Janeiro's favelas. In V. P. Glăveanu, A. Gillespie, & J. Valsiner (Eds.), *Rethinking creativity: Contributions from cultural psychology* (pp. 76–92). New York: Routledge.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press.
- Marcus, G. E. (1995). Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24(1), 95–117. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.24.100195.000523>

- Matusov, E. (2001). Intersubjectivity as a way of informing teaching design for a community of learners classroom. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17(4), 383–402. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X\(01\)00002-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(01)00002-6)
- Merriam-Webster. (2020). *imagination*. Merriam-Webster, Incorporated. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/imagination>
- Peña-Cuando, M., & Esteban-Guitart, M. (2013). El estudio de las identidades desde un enfoque cualitativo: La multi- metodología autobiográfica extendida y los talleres lúdico-reflexivos. *Revista de Metodología de Ciencias Sociales*, 26, 175–200. <https://doi.org/10.5944/empiria.26.2013.7157>
- Room, G., & Britton, N. (2006). The dynamics of social exclusion. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 15(4), 280– 289
- Rumberger, R. W. (2011). *Dropping out: Why students drop out of high school and what can be done about it*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
- Spradley, J. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers.
- Subero, D., Vujasinovic, E., & Esteban-Guitart, M. (2017). Mobilising funds of identity in and out of school. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 47(2), 247–263. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2016.1148116>
- Valsiner, J. (2001). *Culture and human development: An introduction*. Sage Publications.
- Valsiner, J. (2018). *Cultural psychologies and new general psychology: What has been learned in the past five years? Paper presented at the the sixth Niels Bohr lectures on cultural psychology, Aalborg University, Aalborg, DK*. https://www.en.aau.dk/digitalAssets/361/361109_valsiner-lecture-one-feb-26-2018.pdf
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1994). Imagination and creativity in the adolescent. In R. Van der Veer & J. Valsiner (Eds.), *The Vygotsky reader* (pp. 266–288). Blackwell.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (2004). Imagination and creativity in childhood. *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology*, 42(1), 7–97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10610405.2004.11059210>
- Winnicott, D. W. (1960). The theory of the parent-infant relationship. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 41, 585–595. <https://icpla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Winnicott-D>
- Yin, R. (2013). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications
- Zittoun, T. (2006). *Transitions: Development through symbolic resources*. Information Age Publishing.
- Zittoun, T., & Sato, T. (2018). Imagination in adults and the aging person: Possible futures and actual past. In T. Zittoun & V. P. Glăveanu (Eds.), *Handbook of imagination and culture* (pp. 187–208). Oxford University Press.
- Zittoun, T., & Rosenstein, A. (2018). Theater and imagination to (re)discover reality. In T. Zittoun & V. P. Glăveanu (Eds.), *Handbook of imagination and culture* (pp. 223–242). Oxford University Press.

- Zittoun, T., & Cerchia, F. (2013). Imagination as expansion of experience. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 47(3), 305–324.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-013-9234-2>
- Zittoun, T., & Gillespie, A. (2016). Imagination in human and cultural development (p. 61). New York: Routledge
- Zittoun, T., & Gillespie, A. (2016). *Imagination in human and cultural development*. Routledge.
- Zittoun, T., & Glăveanu, V. P. (Eds.). (2018). *Handbook of imagination and culture*. Oxford University Press.