

# Activity 5.5 Identifying Knowledge in the Community

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## Description

This activity explores where we locate knowledge in our community. Participants examine the different kinds of knowledge they have gained. This activity disrupts traditional notions of how we think about knowledge and where it is located.

## Learning Goals

- Participants will have a deeper appreciation for the multiplicity of knowledge in a community.
- Participants will question how knowledge is valued in society and who or what is served by this ranking.

## Instructions (60 minutes)

<p><b>Set Up</b></p>	<p><b>Prepare for the Activity</b></p> <p>Provide participants with crafting supplies, like different colored paper, tape, and markers for participants to construct their knowledge trees.</p> <p>Organize participants into small groups (4-6 ppl).</p> <p>Begin by introducing the learning goals of this activity.</p>	
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<sup>1</sup> **Citation for this activity:** Janice McMillan (2023). Identifying Knowledge in the Community. In Hartman and Byrd (Eds), The Interactivity Foundation Collaborative Discussion Toolkit. Retrieved from <https://www.collaborativediscussionproject.com/activities/module-5>

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<b>Step One</b>	<p><b>Discuss Different Aspects of Knowledge</b></p> <p>As a full group, invite participants to quietly reflect on some of the prompts below. After everyone has had a chance to reflect or write down their thoughts, open up the discussion to the full group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does the word “knowledge” mean to you? How is it different from intelligence, wisdom, experience? How might this word be expressed in other languages or contexts?</li> <li>• Where does knowledge come from? Can one be born with knowledge? How does one cultivate knowledge? Can knowledge be bought? Traded? Owned?</li> <li>• Who has knowledge? Who lacks it? Who is the most knowledgeable person you know?</li> </ul>	<b>20 min</b>
<b>Step Two</b>	<p><b>Reflect on Sources of Knowledge</b></p> <p>In small groups, invite participants to work together to create different colored shapes to represent various sources of knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orange/brown strips of paper = roots (what you learned from your family/socialization)</li> <li>• Pink strips of paper = stems (what you learned at school/formal knowledge)</li> <li>• Blue strips of paper = branches (what you learned from experience)</li> <li>• Green “leaf shaped”/oval paper = leaves (what you learned from nature)</li> <li>• Yellow circles = buds (what you hope to learn from this workshop/class/gathering)</li> </ul> <p>Ask participants to reflect on what they have learned from these different sources of knowledge and have them record this on the corresponding shapes/colors.</p>	<b>10 min</b>
<b>Step Three</b>	<p><b>Create Collective Knowledge Trees</b></p> <p>Next, invite them to imagine all the knowledge they have acquired in their lives as a tree. In their small groups, invite them to start building a shared knowledge tree together.</p> <p>They can start to piece together different parts of the tree while discussing where various types of knowledge belong on the tree. Ask them to consider: Which sources of knowledge or specific things they know form the roots of their collective tree? The trunk? The branches? The leaves? The buds?</p> <p>Discussants may answer this question differently. Some may consider the age of knowledge. For them, the first things they learned might constitute the roots of the tree. Others might determine that the most important or foundational knowledge should constitute the roots. Participants will discuss and navigate this together as they construct a single, collective knowledge tree.</p>	<b>15 min</b>

	<p>If required, share these Sample Knowledge Trees for inspiration: <a href="#">Sample Knowledge Trees</a> (craft) and <a href="#">Sample Knowledge Tree</a> (digital).</p> <p>Once each group is finished, invite them to place or hang their trees for other groups to see.</p>	
<p><b>Step Four</b></p>	<p><b>Debrief as a Full Group</b></p> <p>When all trees are held or placed on the wall, have participants walk around the room to look at the different trees. Invite each group to briefly describe their tree.</p> <p>Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was common between the trees? Different? Surprising?</li> <li>• How did your group decide where to place different sources or pieces of knowledge on the tree?</li> <li>• How do the knowledge trees compare to how society values different types of knowledge?</li> </ul> <p><b>Facilitator Tip:</b> The key point here is for participants to understand that formal school/university knowledge, while important, is only one form of knowledge. Very often participants also say that what they learned through other modalities are in many ways more important to how they are in the world. It also helps participants understand that communities with whom they engage have a lot of very important knowledge even if not the traditional formal kind associated with university.</p>	<p><b>15 min</b></p>

## Reflection Journal

- What surprised you the most about your group knowledge tree?
- How might your tree look different if you completed it alone? What did you learn from others? What did you learn about knowledge?
- What were the most rewarding or memorable learning moments?

## Practice Journal

This week, keep a journal of new things that you learn. Maybe it is a recipe, song, exercise, fact, story, etc. When you realize that you are learning something new, take a moment to write it down and how you learned it (you may need to do this at the end of the day). At the end of the week, create another knowledge tree that reflects how you learn or gather information. What does this say about you? About this moment in your life? How does it compare to other moments or eras of learning?

## Dive Deeper: Additional Resources

- Forthcoming

## Activity Cluster

5.5 Identifying Knowledge  
in the Community

[5.4 Seeing Communities as  
Partners](#)