

# Four Qualitative Methods for Understanding Diverse Lives.

## Participant Pack Activity Sheet.

**Objective:** To reflect on the experiences, values, and beliefs that shape our identity through the creation of a participant pack.



### **Materials:**

- A plastic wallet in which to put the materials listed below
- A blank notebook or journal
- A dictaphone for recording your experiences
- Photographs, letters, mementos, and personal items that represent our identity
- Art supplies, such as markers, pens and paints (whether or not you include art supplies will be shared by the aims of your research. If you are asking the participant to create a collage, then it might be a good idea to include scissors, glue, and paper, for instance.)

### **Instructions:**

**Step One:** Start by reflecting on your identity, thinking about the experiences, values, and beliefs that shape who you are. To help you do this, you could reflect on your life from the past through to the present, thinking about the events and people that have shaped your sense of self.

**Remember:** Rather than viewing the pack as a task to be 'completed', it might make more sense to engage with this method over time. Iteratively engaging with the pack might allow you (or the participant who is engaging with this method) to collect more materials and add richer accounts to the pack.

**Step Two:** Choose items that represent these experiences and place them in the wallet. You (or the participant) could write about these experiences in the notebook or journal or record them using the dictaphone.

**Step Three:** When you're finished, if you completed the Participant Pack on your own, take a moment to reflect on the participant pack. What does it tell you about your identity? What themes or patterns emerge? Did anything unexpected come up whilst engaging with the method?

Equally, if you set the Participant Pack as an activity for participants to engage with, take the time to reflect on the items collected and the stories shared. The pack could then be used as a prompt to shape the types of questions asked in an interview. You could ask the participant to talk through the contents of the pack.



**Remember:** The Participant Pack method can work well as an online method whereby a pack, containing the materials listed above, could be sent to a participant in the post and then posted back to you once completed. If you do this, be sure to reimburse any costs incurred to the participant. This makes the Participant Pack method inclusive and accessible as it can be used to engage with those who are difficult to reach, or who would perhaps prefer to not talk or meet in person.

**Step Four (Optional):** If several participants completed the Participant Pack, you could arrange a group meeting whereby participants share their packs with each other, listening to each other's experiences and reflections on their own identities. Whether or not you choose to do this will be shaped by the specific aims of your research project.

**Note:** This activity can be completed individually or in a group setting, and can be modified or adapted as needed to meet the needs of the participants.

National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM)  
Social Sciences  
Murray Building (Bldg 58)  
University of Southampton  
Southampton SO17 1BJ  
United Kingdom

**Web**                [www.ncrm.ac.uk](http://www.ncrm.ac.uk)  
**Email**             [info@ncrm.ac.uk](mailto:info@ncrm.ac.uk)  
**Tel**                 +44 23 8059 4539  
**Twitter**           @NCRMUK