



## “Flatmates”

“I moved to Barcelona three years ago to study with a scholarship. When I arrived it was difficult to find a flat to share. After six months searching for a flat to move into, a friend of mine recommended that I contact a friend of hers who was renting out one of her rooms. I called the girl to meet up and see the flat. She was a very sweet and sensitive girl, and from the very beginning we hit it off. She was responsible for managing the flat and seemed like the ideal person to share a flat with. I got to know that one other guy also lived there, but the day we met, I was not able to meet him. The girl described him as a 30-something year-old Italian who had a well-paid job, and who had lived there with her for over a year and a half. I liked the flat and had a very good vibration with the girl, so I did everything I could to stay in that flat and was able to finally move in. When I met my other flatmate I was surprised because he had a very strong personality, he occupied a lot of space in conversations and required a lot of attention. The big shock came when one day, shortly after I had moved in I arrived to the flat and found all of my things had been moved out of my room. My flatmate – the guy – had taken everything out of the room to paint it, because he wanted me to feel welcome and comfortable in my newly painted room. I was in shock and didn’t know how to react. I asked my other flat manager/flatmate girl, why she had allowed him to do such a thing. She just replied that there were certain things regarding his behavior that were out of her control. ”

*In the narrator’s flat, 2018*



## IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON(S) TRIGGERING THE SHOCK

### THE NARRATOR

A 28 years old Peruvian woman. She has a scholarship and she volunteers with local organisations at Barcelona.

### THE OTHER PERSON(S)

A 30 years old Italian man. We don't know his job but apparently this is well paid.

### SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES

What connects the two of them is their age. What separates them are their genders, their social status and their nationalities.

## CONTEXT

### PHYSICAL CONTEXT

Shared flat, where there are common spaces and private rooms.

### OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT

The flat manager was present. She is a 25 years old woman, who despite being the flat manager, feels she doesn't have control over the behavior of her male flatmate. She is not happy with certain things he does but doesn't seem to be bothered enough to ask him to leave the flat or change his behavior.

### LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT

Amongst migrants living in Barcelona South Americans and Peruvians are well represented, but there may still encounter manifestations of racism and xenophobia.

### PREVIOUS RELATIONSHIP, ANTECEDENTS

The narrator is new in this flat, she only met the male flatmate a couple of times.

## FRAMES OF REFERENCES OF THE NARRATOR

IMPOTENCE

DISARMED

RAGE

VIOLATED IN HER PRIVACY

UNDervalUED

When she arrives to the flat she finds all of her belongings have been moved out of her room and a flatmate is painting the walls.

**Need for autonomy, and safety of being able to have control over personal space:** especially for people who are in situations of vulnerability – such as people living in a foreign city where they suffer racism – even the smallest spaces where they do have control become very important to provide a feeling of safety.

**Patriarchy, male dominance:** the narrator has a representation of her male flatmate as him feeling superior to her. The fact that he thinks he has a higher rank than she does because of her gender and her origin makes him feel entitled to do things for her, without respecting her wishes, personal space or autonomy.

**Respect for personal space and objects:** personal space and objects should not be dealt with by others without consent.

**Balance of favors and gifts:** When offering a gift or a favor (whether or not I asked for it) I have a debt, and in the logic of gift and counter-gifts I have to make a gift / favor in return. Such an unsolicited gift / favor may be perceived as a way to force the other into making favors in return without her wish

# FRAMES OF REFERENCES OF THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT “OUMAR”

Displacing the belongings of the new flatmate out of her room to paint the walls.

**Balance of favors and gifts:** When offering a gift or a favor (whether or not one asked for it) one has a debt, and in the logic of gift and counter-gifts one has to make a gift / favor in return. Such an unsolicited gift maybe a way how to have this balance on his side in case there is a conflict in the flat.

**Being a good host:** it is important for him to make her feel welcome and to be a good host, by showing he cares that her room is neat and clean, and that he has put time and effort to paint it. He identified himself by the role of the host based upon the fact that he already lived in the flat when the narrator arrived. Also connected to the fact of being a host towards people arriving to Europe from other continents.

**Respect/politeness versus autonomy:** sometimes the ways to be polite and respectful is to go against what a person manifests following the rules of politeness. The flatmate was trying to be welcoming and polite by painting the narrator's room, but he did so without consulting her that would go against the rules of politeness, where he thinks the narrator could not express clearly her desires because of this rules (Never mind, there is no need, etc...)

**Being polite:** as a man, the flatmate is trying to be polite and courteous, by painting her room. He thinks of painting as a manly activity so something she would not be able to do.

*This document has been created as an Intellectual Output of an Erasmus+ project IRIS, Intimacy, Relationships and Interculturality in Youth Work in 2018.*

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*IRIS project benefited from the support of the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Commission. The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein*

Co-funded by the  
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