This text is at the intersection of virtually all our other sensitive zone descriptions: it is connected to "Relationship to each other" because status and power differences have an impact on how we relate with one another. It is connected to the section on "Groups" because group membership is connected to power relations. It is connected to "Gender", because gender is one of the dimensions along which power seems to be distributed unequally. Finally, it is also connected to "Professional identity" through the power asymmetry that the professional role brings into the relationship with youngsters. These connections to other themes are not a surprise, as Bertrand Russel points out:

"the fundamental concept in social science is Power, in the same sense in which Energy is the fundamental concept in physics. Like energy, power has many forms, such as wealth, armaments, civil authority, influence on opinion. No one of these can be regarded as subordinate to any other, and there is no one form from which the others are derivative." (Russell, 1938)

If power is such a ubiquitous concept, let's start by defining it together with other notions connected to it such as hierarchy, authority, status. Please note: these are not the only possible definitions of these concepts, we are proposing these to have a common ground for the reading of this text.

HIERARCHY:	A system of organisation of people or groups where they are ranked according to importance, usually resulting in different rights and duties on the different levels. E.g. an intern joining the NGO will have a humbler salary and less responsibilities.
AUTHORITY:	In a hierarchical relationship the people "above" dispose of authority over those "below". The concept of "authority" is associated with that of "legitimacy", meaning that authority is not exerted by force, but by some recognized and accepted rule. Weber distinguishes three sources of deriving authority: tradition (for instance hereditary rule), charisma (personal features and competences) and legal bureaucratic setting (e.g. employees of the ministry of education issue accreditation of Youth Centres).
POWER	
Power over	Power is the ability to enforce one's will on others behaviour (Weber 1978/1919). It is the ability to make someone do something they would otherwise not have done. Powerful individuals can influence others despite resistance, if necessary, through the use of force or violence. The understanding of power has been labelled as "power over". This "power over" is often represented as a professional identity threat by youth workers: in their role they may be empowered / have the authority to take decisions for the youngsters they work with, but this contradicts with their values of self-determination, empowerment and horizontality[1]. Instead of turning our backs to the concept of power, opening it up and exploring its other forms of expression can be a way out[2].

---

[1] For an example see: https://sustainingcommunity.wordpress.com/2019/02/01/4-types-of-power/

[2] Summary follows https://www.powercube.net/other-forms-of-power/expressions-of-power/

SENSITIVE ZONE:
POWER, STATUS, HIERARCHY

INTIMACY,
RELATIONSHIPS &
IRIS INTERCULTURALITY
IN YOUTH WORK

Power with	If "power over" can become an action through force and coercion, power with yields change through shared interests, collaboration, relationship and collective action. For example, different youth groups engaging together to express solidarity.
Power within / Power to	If "power with" focuses on the potential of the group, these two expressions are centred on the individual. "Power within" invites one to tap into one's self-worth and self-knowledge, recognise her/his own abilities and capacities and draw power from this recognition. 'Power to' offers to translate this awareness and recognition of one's worth into a potential of action to "shape his or her life and world"[3]. The example here would be the youth worker who, instead of taking the decision for the youngster, assists her / him in becoming aware of her resources and taking the decision. This is a course of action which is typically associated with the concept of "empowerment". In this example, empowerment is an individual action, an enhancement for autonomy. Adding to it a "power with" perspective opens the floor for the collectivisation of experiences and prepares the way for a more systemic action and change.
STATUS	"Social status is a measurement of a social value. More specifically, it refers to the relative level of respect, honour, assumed competence, and deference accorded to people, groups, and organizations in a society."[4] Andresen and his colleagues (2015) point to the three separate components of "status": a) respect and admiration: individuals who afford high status are held in high regard and esteem by others b) voluntary deference: People afford higher status to another individual by voluntarily complying with that individual's wishes, desires, and suggestions—a compliance unaccompanied by threat or coercion c) perceived instrumental social value: people afford higher status to an individual when that individual appears to possess personal characteristics that will facilitate their own goal accomplishment It also seems that the desire for status is a fundamental human motive in line with the observation that status seems to predict subjective well-being, as well mental and physical health (Andersen 2015). What's more, people seem to be motivated to increase status in a competitive way, that is, they seek to have higher status than others, above and beyond simply having high status (Andresen et al 2016)

---

[3] https://www.powercube.net/other-forms-of-power/expressions-of-power/
 [4] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_status

INTIMACY,
RELATIONSHIPS &
INTERCULTURALITY
IN YOUTH WORK
IRIS

SENSITIVE ZONE:
POWER, STATUS, HIERARCHY

Some of these notions seem to go hand in hand, although they do not necessarily do so. Hierarchy and authority can both refer to power (in the sense of power over) or status. A person can be in a power position, disposing over resources, but without social prestige or recognition - i.e. status.

Let's consider the incident "Don't follow Ramadan" (FR). One of the youth workers in the incident can be considered as having "power over" a young Muslim man: he is the founder of the organisation; both his official status and his age confers him authority. Instead of forbidding Ramadan, the youth worker's action could be interpreted as an intent to "give" "power to" the young Muslim boy to reconsider the traditions and empower himself not to follow those if they don't fit his personal objectives. Does the young man perceive this interaction as empowering? We don't know that; he may as well perceive it as a threat to his freedom to follow a valued tradition. This is a recurrent problem with models developed in individualistic societies: it is difficult to appreciate precisely to what extent they will be meaningful in other cultural contexts.

In the following we will start by exploring intercultural dimensions of these concepts, then we will use the incidents to illustrate them.

Cross-cultural differences in perceiving status, power, hierarchy

The origin of status differences

Where is status derived from? Are there differences in the way cultures distribute status? A first differentiation is between ascribed and achieved status. Ascribed status is connected to group memberships, or features that automatically assign the person along the social hierarchy. A person could be associated with higher status because he's a man rather than a woman, because he's older and wealthier. Achieved status is acquired by the actor, it is earned, based on the achievements of the person. Think of an employee who is promoted because she made important contributions for her organisation.

It is a common (mis)perception that in modern, industrial societies achieved status is the dominant model to gain power, while traditional societies[5] go by ascribed status (Andresen 2015) Indeed it would be naïve to think that in the modern Western countries only achievement counts, and that through achievement all pre-existing differences get levelled out: a bulk of research on different forms of discrimination witnesses the opposite. Clearly, we'll find both models in all societies, while maintaining some bias towards one form or the other.

Generational differences could also be at play. It is possible that younger generations tend towards achieved status even in societies where ascribed status was the basis for differentiations: a domain worth investigating in future research!

---

[5] A very large category referring to very different types of communities that are not industrial, urbanized, capitalist 'modern' societies

INTIMACY,
RELATIONSHIPS &
IRIS INTERCULTURALITY
IN YOUTH WORK

SENSITIVE ZONE:
POWER, STATUS, HIERARCHY

a. The importance of status and power differences

Cultures also differ in terms of the importance attributed to power differences. Some societies will tend towards the minimization of such differences, while others towards their recognition. This is actually one of the main dimensions of cultural differences that Hofstede has identified. He calls it "Power distance[6]."

"This dimension expresses the degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. The fundamental issue here is how a society handles inequalities among people. People in societies exhibiting a large degree of Power Distance accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place and which needs no further justification. In societies with low Power Distance, people strive to equalise the distribution of power and demand justification for inequalities of power."

Hofstede's main focus was the comparison of national cultures. France and the Netherlands for instance have often been used to illustrate the two opposing orientations. The tendency towards horizontality of the Dutch can be seen for instance in the daily practice of the School headmaster to salute with a handshake every single student, and in the tendency of superiors and employees to have lunch together. The tendency towards more verticality in France can be seen for instance in patterns of asymmetric addressing: a university professor can treat the student in an informal way while the student has to treat the professor the formal way. Also, subordinates are not encouraged to disagree openly with their superiors. What works for national cultures can also be found in other types of cultures: professional domains, musical or other subcultures, generations etc. The NGO sector for instance tends towards more horizontality, the tendency is connected with the values which with the type of culture identifies with, for instance NGO identifies with equality and horizontality. However, different layers will add up to form individuals' own position on the power distance dimension. One of our incidents ("Don't follow the Ramadan" (FR)) highlights for instance how two people working for the same NGO have different approaches to hierarchy because of the differences in generations and political views.

Illustrations for status gaps and seeking status

Seven out of the eight incidents coded under the "status and hierarchy" theme seem to revolve around intents of the young participants to dispute the status of the youth worker or seek status for themselves.

Status gaps / Power with

The protagonists of "Sound system" (FR) are two young men who are roughly the same age, both migrants coming from a similar geographic zone, with one important difference: Ahmed is working for an association, Omar participates in some activities from time to time. Ahmed receives official recognition for his competences, conferring him a higher status. Omar's unwanted volunteering to help in the adjustment of the sound system may have been motivated by the desire for status, to close the status gap with respect to Ahmed. Although there is this tendency of horizontality in status differences in the Netherlands in the analysis of the Dutch incidents narrators reflect on their ascribed (higher) social status as opposed to their clients. ("The babysitter", "The handyman", "The boyfriend") They are older, wealthier, speak the local language, they have a paid job. They realize even if their best will as caregivers this status gap will have an impact on the relationship dynamics with their people. If this status gap remains unreflected that can cause extra vulnerability in the relationship on both sides. In the analysis of three incidents "The babysitter" (NL) and "The handyman" (NL) "The boyfriend" another aspect of status came up in overlaps with relationships and group belongings. It seems that in a minority / migrant position one ´strategy´ for integration is to choose (consciously or not) a person from the hosting society with higher status and develop a more intimate relationship (like daughter- or son- and

---

[6] See the exploration of differences between national cultures on https://hi.hofstede-insights.com/national-culture

INTIMACY,
RELATIONSHIPS &
INTERCULTURALITY
IN YOUTH WORK
IRIS

SENSITIVE ZONE:
POWER, STATUS, HIERARCHY

mother). But in the case of "The handyman" (NL) there is a hypothesis that the higher social/ economic status of the social worker might play a role in her sexual attractiveness for her client.

Authority vs Instrumental status

Two of the incidents "I got over it a long ago" (HU) and "These activities are shit" (HU) highlight a tension between the instrumental status and the authority of the youth worker. In both situations the youth workers propose activities that are very badly evaluated by some of the participants. At this point the youth workers lose their "instrumental social value" and lose their status and respectability, as reflected by the harsh verbal feedback they receive. This loss of status is connected to the belief system of participants regarding professional identity, they just need to recognize instrumental social value to a "good social worker" but not to a "bad one"

The gap between ascribed status and experienced status / gender dimension

There is a recurrent type of incident occurring with female youth workers and young men whose reference frame gives priority to ascribed status and also includes a hierarchy between genders favouring men over women. We see this in three of the incidents, where young male participants step up against the authority of female youth workers. In "You are the colonizer" (HU) a participant insists on contradicting the youth worker. In "Earswhisperer" (ES) a participant whispers sexual comments to the facilitator's ear, while in "Hand on thighs" (FR) a participant puts his hand on the thighs of the facilitator under the table. The two latter incidents illustrate how sexual harassment of the women in higher status can serve to contest the subordinate status of men (Rogers 2008).

The gap between explicit power and felt status

In these last three incidents, there is possibly another type of "status gap" playing out. This one is connected to a professional principle of youth work: horizontality. This would imply that youth workers don't have "power over" the youngsters, and indeed, youth workers often emphasise this, claiming that they are on equal footing. This expressed power parity however could be in contrast with the inequality of "power to" or status that the young people feel. Studies of status gaps in interracial contexts offer some interesting parallels: according to studies, egalitarian White people interested in developing relations with members of minorities are unable to understand them and engage in "patronizing self-presentation, to appear warmer, despite endorsing socially liberal ideologies" (cited in Fiske et al 2016). In a very subtle level, something similar could take place in interactions between youth workers and youngster that trigger the status-seeking behaviour. In this case bringing up the power relationship and process it , instead of denying it, would be a better strategie, but it is something to work on on further studies.

INTIMACY,
RELATIONSHIPS &
INTERCULTURALITY
IRIS IN YOUTH WORK

SENSITIVE ZONE:
POWER, STATUS, HIERARCHY

References

Anderson, C., Hildreth, J. A. D., & Howland, L. (2015, March 16). Is the Desire for Status a Fundamental Human Motive? A Review of the Empirical Literature. Psychological Bulletin. Advance online publication. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0038781

Cameron Anderson and John Angus D. Hildreth. (2016). "Striving for superiority: The human desire for status". IRLE Working Paper No. 115-16. http://irle.berkeley.edu/workingpapers/115-16.pdf

Susan T. Fiske, Cydney H. Dupree, Gandalf Nicolas, and Jillian K. Swencionis 2016 Status, Power, and Intergroup Relations: The Personal Is the Societal. Author manuscript accessed at https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4955850/, last accessed 12/12/2019 Published in final edited form as: Curr Opin Psychol. 2016 Oct; 11: 44–48.

Hofstede https://hi.hofstede-insights.com/national-culture

Rock, D. 2009 Status: A More Accurate Way of Understanding Self-Esteem accessed at: https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/your-brain-work/200910/status-more-accurate-way-understanding-self-esteem

Russell, Bertrand (1938). Power: A New Social Analysis. New York: Routledge. https://skepticva.org/Russell/power.htm

https://sustainingcommunity.wordpress.com/2019/02/01/4-types-of-power/

Max Weber in "Weber's Rationalism and Modern Society: New Translations for the 21st Century", translated and edited by Tony Waters and Dagmar Waters. pp. 137-138

List of incidents

Title	Country
Don't do Ramadan	FR
The earwhisperer	ES
Hand on thighs	FR
Sound system	FR
You are the colonizer	HU
I got over it a long ago	HU
These activities are shit	HU

SENSITIVE ZONE:
POWER, STATUS, HIERARCHY

INTIMACY,
RELATIONSHIPS &
INTERCULTURALITY
IN YOUTH WORK

IRIS

List of images

1. Photo by Polina Zimmerman from Pexels https://www.pexels.com/photo/notes-on-board-3782142/
2. Photo by Andrew McMurtrie from Pexels https://www.pexels.com/photo/grayscale-photo-of-people-holding-banner-3973905/
3. Photo by Dazzle Jam from Pexels https://www.pexels.com/photo/woman-in-white-and-black-floral-shirt-and-white-pants-4408055/
4. Photo by August de Richelieu from Pexels https://www.pexels.com/photo/businessman-man-people-desk-4427614/
5. Photo by Andrea Piacquadio from Pexels
6. https://www.pexels.com/photo/positive-multiethnic-colleagues-discussing-ideas-in-modern-workspace-3931417/
7. Photo by Andrea Piacquadio from Pexels
8. https://www.pexels.com/photo/happy-multiracial-colleagues-discussing-project-in-modern-office-against-window-3931554/
9. Photo by fauxels from Pexels
10. https://www.pexels.com/photo/multi-cultural-people-3184437/

INTIMACY, RELATIONSHIPS & INTERCULTURALITY IN YOUTH WORK

SENSITIVE ZONE:
POWER, STATUS, HIERARCHY

IRIS PROJECT PARTNERS:
Élan intercultural (Paris) In Touch (Amsterdam) La Xixa Teatre (Barcelona) KÉPES Foundation (Budapest)