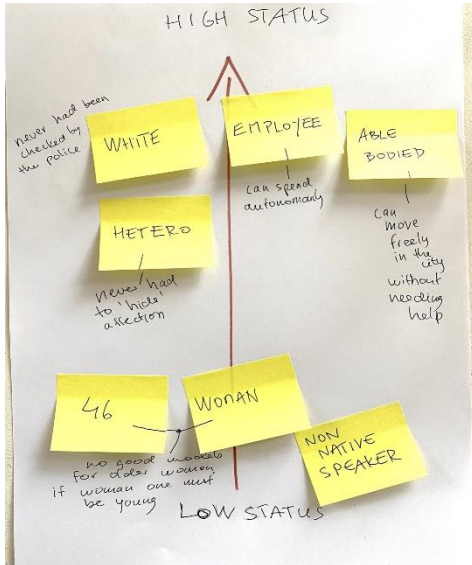


« status thermometer »



PREPARED BY: élan interculturel

TAGS (3 categorizations)

Is this activity focusing on one of the 3 steps of the method or tackling a sensitive zone that facilitators may face?	Step of the method	YES	Decentering	Discovery of the frames of references of the other	Negotiation
	Sensitive zone	YES	Status		

Small Description

Please explain in a short paragraph (using grammatically correct full sentences) what your activity is about, why did you create it?

This activity invites us to give up our illusion of neutrality and equality and shows that some identities are more valorised than others, some have more status and prestige than others while some may be sources of discrimination. You may want to do this activity after having introduced the concept of identity, before starting to work on specific critical incidents.

Specific learning objectives:

- To understand that we are not only unique individuals but also members of different social groups
- To identify the particular social groups that we are members of
- To raise awareness of differences of status associated to different social groups have within a specific society
- To become aware of visible signs of status differences

Quick info

 TIME FRAME 30-60min	 GROUP SIZE 2-10	 FACILITATION LVL Beginner	 COMFORT ZONE Safe	 MATERIALS Pen and paper or a computer/mobile device.
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About 45 min	6-12	Intermediate	Mildly challenging	Paper with categories of identities printed on them A list of questions to read
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Preparations needed

Identify the categories of social identity that are relevant in your context. You can choose from this selection: age, gender, nationality, mother tongue, ethnicity, race, physical abilities, religion or spiritual affiliation or world view, social class, sexual orientation, family status, level of education, professional identity, mother tongue, etc). We mean “relevance” in terms of vocabulary, more than content. In fact most of the elements cited above would be relevant in most European societies, but in different languages some categories are accepted and known and some others are not. For instance in English the category of “race” is widely used, while in Hungarian or French it is confusing, as we learn that there is only “one human race”.

We recommend using 8 categories in total. Print out the chosen categories, one word on an A4 sheet. For each, make sure you have a definition in case participants don’t understand what the concept refers to.

Instructions Step By Step

Please give step by step instructions of your activity, including debriefing. Be direct, address the reader as a facilitator directly: eg. ask your participants to stand in a circle...

Step 1.

Present the identity categories one by one. First check whether participants understand the category, then ask them to identify and write on a small piece of paper their own identity. For instance, if the category is “nationality” each participant can write down their respective nationalities. They don’t need to read out or present what they wrote down.

Step 2.

In the second step create together the status thermometer. Give a paper to each participant, ask them to draw a line across them. On one extremity they can write “very high status”, while on the other “very low status”. Invite participants to place their specific identities on the line, somewhere between “very high” and “very low” status. As before, participants don’t need to share what they did.

Step 3.

Ask participants how they decided where to place specific identities on the status thermometer. Invite them to share any indicator that they have used to assess the level of status. Collect these indicators on a flipchart paper and discuss them with participants. Examples: average monthly income per category (see gender pay gap, or statistics per ethnic groups if there are such), average life expectancy, stereotypes about the specific social group, frequency of experiences of discrimination etc.

Step 4.

In the last round ask participants to respond some of the questions below. These highlight what identities give us a subjective sense of value. Discuss with participants to what extent they tended to answer with identities that were on top of their “status thermometer”. Interestingly, identities that offer us pride and a positive self-worth are sometimes considered “low status” identities. Discuss this apparent contradiction with participants. What conclusions can we draw?

Questions you can use:

1. What part of your identity is the most important to you?
2. What are your own identities you would like to learn more about?
3. What identities that have the strongest effect on how you see yourself as a person?
4. What part of your identity are you most proud of?



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Hints for the facilitator

Depending on the constitution of the group, it is possible that the activity brings awareness of important differences between participants. Some may be more privileged in different aspects of their identities, and some may be disadvantaged in some aspects of their identities.

It is important to give importance to these inequalities. At the same time, we should also stress that each person has a variety of identities, and no one is reduced to one single identity. What's more, who we are, what we can do is never entirely prescribed by the social identities we have, each identity can be experienced, enacted in many ways. The unique combination of identities that have, combined with our life experiences and our personality create unique always diverse constellations.

Some participants may find the activity unpleasant, and may even resist, with the argument that they don't like the idea that people are "categorised" and that the categories are "not equal". When this happens try to make them understand that it is not the activity, or the fact of talking about status differences that creates the status differences. All European societies have group-based hierarchies. If we choose not to talk about them, this will not reduce the inequalities, merely hide them. Becoming aware of them may be a necessary first step to step up against them and be more vigilant about their consequences.

Ressources (Who invented this activity or who inspired it)

If you invented it, please write the name of your colleague and institution as you'd like it to be referenced

If you used ideas /activities of others please put full reference as concretely as you can

This activity was developed by élan interculturel, based on inspiration from the "identity wheel" activity created by the Program on Intergroup Relations and the Spectrum Center, University of Michigan.

Resource hosted by LSA Inclusive Teaching Initiative, University of Michigan (<http://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching/>).