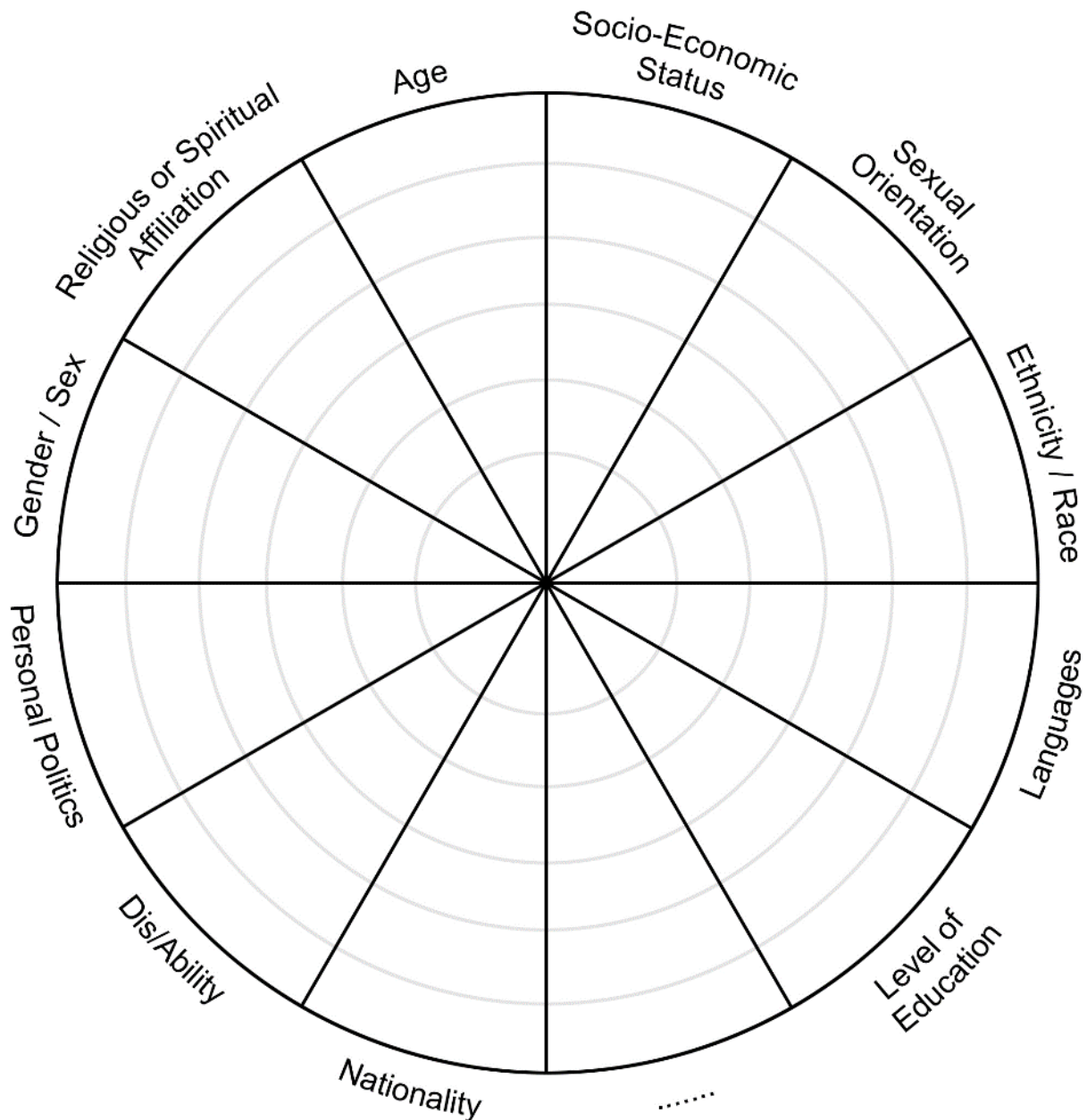


Exercise 2: Research identity wheel (60-120 min.)

Every form of social scientific research entails interaction among researchers and research-participants, yet in anthropological research this is especially so and explicitly part of the research methods. This wheel is meant to think about the different and overlapping social identities of researchers and participants in research locations and to think about these in relation to the process of data-collection (interviews, focus groups, participant observation etc.) and knowledge production. This exercise is particularly suitable as a preparation to fieldwork.



2a) Individual exercise (20-30 min.)

Think of a specific (future or imaginary) research location and fill out the wheel individually. Reflect upon how much every identity aspect you consider to be relevant to your research location; how much impact does it have on the process of gathering data and knowledge about the research (setting)? NB: impact can both mean advantage or dis-advantage. The more impact, the more you colour in the corresponding identity box starting from the centre. Think of the following questions when filling out the wheel:

- With what particular population do you expect to work for your research? And in what kind of situations?
- Which social identities do you consider most relevant in the encounters with research participants? How do these play a role?
- How do you think research participants perceive you and your social identities? Can this lead to advantages or disadvantages in relation to discussing certain themes, or in getting access to certain locations.
- Does this count for all research participants? What differences could there be between different research participants?
- Is there information that you might not or difficulty gain access to because of certain aspects of your identity? How can you deal with this (in an ethical way)?

This part can also be filled out by students in preparation of the seminar.

2b) Group discussion (20-45 min.)

Form groups of 2 to 3 persons and discuss your wheels with each other. First explain each other what research location you had in mind and use the questions formulated in part a) to comment on your filled-out wheel.

Additional questions for discussion:

- What differences and similarities are there between your wheels? How can you understand these? (also interesting when students have the same or similar research location, such as duo's in the bachelor-project).
- Which aspects are connected? Are there aspects that are not or of little importance to the research setting?
- What did you encounter when filling out the wheel? What did you learn?
- (How) can this wheel help you prepare for fieldwork?
- What power relations are there between you and your research participants and how are these of importance in your research? How can you deal with them (in an ethical way)?
- (How) are your social identities of influence on your interpretation of the collected empirical material/ in your analysis?
- In what ways do your social identities and power relations influence what you can know/what knowledge you can generate in and about your research location?

2c: Plenary discussion/recap (20-30 min.)

Some of the groups can share what they have discussed. The point of the plenary recap is to become aware of and reflect upon the process of knowledge production and the power relations that these entail. It is often not possible to undo these power relations, yet it is important to be aware of and sensitive to them during the research and to realize that you are always generating partial and never 'complete' knowledge. See "Read more" for concrete guidelines for ethical-methodological issues and discuss these plenary or in groups.

Important points of attention:

- It is explicitly not the case that the researcher is always per definition situated in the most privileged position. Think, for example, of researchers that form part of minority groups carrying out research among majority groups, or fieldwork amongst people in powerful positions, for example, in a company.
- There can be a difference in how we identify ourselves, and how others (in the research setting or outside of it) perceive us. For example, as a student without governmental financial support, you might consider yourself as not necessarily enjoying a privileged socio-economic position in the Netherlands, yet in a research setting where people do not have access to higher education, they might see you that way. How can this influence your research and how do you deal with it?
- There are very many different forms of self-identification and social identities. An exercise such as this one can never be 'exhaustive.' What other relevant identities and positionalities can you think of? Exercise 3 offers a continuation to think about different forms and categories of identification.

2d) Reflection after research (+- 15 min.)

This part can be done together or individually, after the research has been conducted.

Prior to your fieldwork you filled out the "social identity wheel" and the "research identity wheel" based on your experiences and expectations at that moment. Now fill out (one of) the two wheels and bring in your fieldwork experiences. In wheel 2 you can indicate how different social identities actually have been of influence in your specific research-setting and -encounters. Subsequently compare the wheels from before and after your fieldwork:

- What differences and similarities do you see?
- What expectations about the research setting have come true and which have not? What aspects of social identity were of importance, whereas you did not expect that in advance? (research identity wheel).
- Did you come to look differently at you own social identities? (social identity wheel)
- How did you deal with social identities and power relations and how did you experience this? What would you do different next time?