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Contextual Intersectionality: A Conversation

Suryia Nayak, Marisela Montenegro, and Joan Pujol

This conversation on contextual intersectionality, between Suryia Nayak, Marisela Montenegro, and Joan Pujol, is a fitting conclusion to this edited collection of international perspectives on the activism of intersectionality. The conversation took place whilst walking together through Chorlton Water Park, Manchester, UK on a Sunday afternoon in June 2017. In the same way as the conversation took place, the chapter is structured by a series of questions that could be used as a social work framework for critical intersectional reflexivity. As the conversation developed, it became apparent that applying a contextual intersectional lens to issues of social justice in the Spanish context, foregrounds issues that resonate with the challenges, tensions and opportunities highlighted throughout this book with relevance to an international audience of social work. It is apparent that, the challenge of contextual intersectionality is of attending to 'the micropolitics of context' (Mohanty, 2003: 223) within contemporary 'political shifts to the right, accompanied by global capitalist hegemony, privatization, and increased religious, ethnic, and racial hatreds' (Mohanty, 2003: 229).

Suryia: It is noteworthy that Crenshaw ends her seminal paper 'Mapping *the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color*' (1991) by addressing the fetishization of personal identity traits as the focus of intersectionality. In the penultimate sentence of the paper, Crenshaw states, '[r]ecognizing that identity politics takes place at the site where categories intersect thus seems more fruitful than challenging the possibility of

talking about categories at all' (1991:1299). In her concluding remarks, Crenshaw warns against a binary split between identity and context, stating:

If as this analysis asserts, history and context, determine the utility of identity politics [] Does this mean we cannot talk about identity? Or instead, that any discourse about identity has to acknowledge how our identities are constructed through the intersection of multiple identities?' (Crenshaw, 1991: 1299)

The emphasis on context in Crenshaw's 1991 paper, should be apparent by the fact that she is locating intersectionality in the context of 'violence against women of colour' and 'identity politics'. As a Black feminist activist, with over thirty years working to end violence against Black women, I appreciate the significance of the particularity of the critique of practices that fail Black women survivors of rape, however, to remain at the level of that particularity is to fall afoul of the critique Crenshaw is asserting. This seems to reflect the obsession with personal traits as the determination of discrimination and to ignore Crenshaw's admonition that 'intersectionality is not being offered here as some new, totalizing theory of identity' (Crenshaw, 1991: 1244). Crenshaw's choice of the word 'mapping' (1991) in the title of her paper on intersectionality is a word implicated in context. Mapping intersectionality brings to mind Huggan's 'cartographic connections' (1989:128), Boyce Davies' 'compasses of racialization' (2013: 173-201) and the numerous other uses of the metaphors of location/context used in Black feminist, decolonial scholarship that I refer to as 'location as method' (Nayak, 2017b: 203). The constitutive imperative of context in relation to axes of

differentiation is that, 'if you can't locate the other, how are you going to locate yourself?' (Minh-ha, 1991: 73). Here, context can be thought of as a method, a verb, and an event (Nayak, 2017b: 206); context is the agent of intersectionality. There is no intersectionality without context. Picking up on the Black feminist concepts developed by Hill-Collins (2000) of 'situated knowledge' (2000: 270; Haraway, 1988) 'situated knowers' (2000:19) and situated standpoints (2000:25), we could speak of a 'situated intersectionality'.

The lesson for social work is that intersectionality is not a theory 'in the abstract, an exhaustive list of intersectional social categories . . . to add them up to determine - once and for all - the different intersectional configurations those categories can form' (Carbado, 2013; 5). Discursive practices of social work epistemology and practices rest too easy at the foothills of intersectional configurations of axes of difference, rather than the excruciating mountainous terrain of context, situation and positionality; a convenient place of 'conviviality', 'connivance' and 'compromise' (Mbembe, 2001: 66). Perhaps, an international movement of 'social workers without borders' (www.socialworkerswithoutborders.org) would be '[n]ot so much intersectionality of identities, but intersectionality of struggles' (Davies, 2016 144).

The lesson, for Black feminist activists working socially, is not to fall into the 'shadow boxing' trap described by James. Black women's embracing of intersectional identity positions, or '[e]ver present, often ignored, but completely inescapable . . . plurality' (James, 2000: 255) often translates into:

black women paint[ing] varied portraits of the shadow boxer as radical; as lone warrior; successful corporate fund-raiser for, and beneficiary of, progressive issues; individual survivalist; and community worker, disciplined to the leadership of non-elites in opposing state corporate dominance [] this, after all, is the shadow boxer's dilemma: to fight the authoritative body casting one off, while simultaneously struggling with internal conflict and contradictions' (James, 2000: 255).

Suryia: Marisela and Joan, How does contextual intersectionality enable you to understand power and the production of subject positions in social work practice in the Spanish context?

Marisela and Joan: The Spanish State organizes social work through general and specific services. General services focus on economic and health needs, while specific services follow a categorical logic, such as services for women or for older people. The conceptualisation of specific services corresponds to a construction of public policing that categorizes and homogenizes social groups (Subirats, et. al., 2008). Specific services approaches place people in a series of discrimination axes such as, gender, race, class, age and sexuality that translates complex life processes into stable regulatory frameworks. This control device defines which forms of life are possible and desirable (Motta, 2016) associated with identity formations and personal rights and establish asymmetric trajectories of inclusion/exclusion. The social work device constitutes a 'one-dimensional' subject (McCall, 2005).

Job placement services for migrant women in Barcelona highlight intersectional issues for public social policies and the practice of social work. Job placements in domestic service and caregiving workplaces offered to migrant women are, socially and culturally understood as "dirty" jobs; economically devalued and attributed, within patriarchy, to women (Anthias, 2001; Bettio, et. al., 2006; Gil, 2011; Mohanty, 2003: 245-6) Sassen, 2003). Contextual intersectionality enables (a) critical examination of how gender and culture interact in the definition of "adequate" workplaces for migrant women and (b) complicities within the practice of social work:

“Consequently we argue that social services condense semiotic–material elements that help to shape subjects and dynamics in the host societies, generating processes of social stratification for some collectives of immigrant women, precisely intending to combat poverty and exclusion. Hence, social services and resources targeted at immigrant women thus become accomplices in reproducing the Spanish patriarchal system that has not yet been abolished, while also creating processes of hierarchization and social stratification” (Montenegro and Montenegro, 2013: 338).

Suryia: In the UK context, the configuration of social work into specialist children and family, mental health, disability and older people services performs the dividing practices (Foucault, 1965) that ‘system of differentiations’ (Foucault,1982 :792) require for the rationalization of

unequal power relations (Madigan, 1992). This imposed fragmentation fails the woman situated in the contextual intersectionality of disability, mental distress, caring for children and classified as older; she becomes divided between, upwards of four, different service configurations. The anti-intersectional stratifications of UK social work are not fit for twenty first century, rapidly changing, and fluid configurations of socio-economic living conditions. The imperative for intersectional social work practice is to attend 'to specificity of the experience of difference whilst attending to the indeterminacy of difference' (Nayak, 2017a: 1). The point is that difference is constituted in and through context. So, in the example of the woman living in the intersectionality of disability, mental distress, caring for children and classified as older, a contextual intersectional lens would focus on the contexts that (re)produce these identity categories, for example a capitalist patriarchy.

Suryia: Using examples from the specificity of your geo-political contexts how can the practitioner / user divide be understood through the lens of contextual intersectionality?

Marisela and Joan: In the Spanish context, intersectionality highlights how power relations configure subordinate positions in localized situations or chronotropes. Significant axes of differentiation depend on specific relational contexts (Agha, 2007; Yuval Davis, 2014; Zebracki & Milani, 2017). Thus:

“forms of social distinction and inequality are produced in complex combinatories of social location in its broadest sense, forged through multiple sites. Hierarchical relations

linked to social divisions are emergent and subject to historical contingencies, variable, irreducible and changeable” (Anthias, 2011: 214).

Social service interventions problematically construct an asymmetry, between the service provider and a legitimately needy service recipient. This binary is characterised as two internally homogeneous categories, in dichotomies of active/passive, rational/emotional, provider/needy (Montenegro, 2003). This division, functions as a social organizer, defining social work relationships and legitimates paternalistic or "good intentions" interventions (Hagelund, 2005). The professional-user divide stratifies both positions and locates one of them in a position of inferiority with respect to the other. A contextual intersectional perspective draws attention to how this axis of differentiation interacts with other social markers in particular intervention processes, and how subject positions are built through the entanglement of multiple categorization devices.

For migrant women in Barcelona, social categories such as gender, class, legal situation, ethnicity, and user status are intertwined in the practice of 'labour insertion'. The training and counselling of migrant women tend to suggest their labour insertion in the field of domestic work and personal care based on the following arguments. Firstly, because migrant women represented as a "difficult to insert" collective, their insertion must be urgently facilitated. Secondly, gendered and racialized representations of migrant women as "affectionate and family oriented", equates to suitability for domestic and caring activities. Finally, migrant

women are constructed as "women in high risk" and in need of urgent intervention. This argumentation legitimates 'insertion practices' that position migrant women in the vicissitudes and precarious conditions inherent to this labour market. In practice this argumentation reproduces oppressive hierarchical practitioner/client dichotomies.

Suryia: The contradiction you expose in the term 'insertion', which in a UK context might be translated as 'integration', is that the mechanisms of 'labour insertion' for migrant women actually functions as the opposite of insertion or integration. Insertion practices position and represent migrant women as an 'excess and lack' to be placed in supplementary jobs, for example as domestic auxiliaries. I am reminded of Derrida's logic of supplementarity, '[t]he supplement comes in place of a lapse, a nonsignified, a nonrepresented, a nonpresence" (Derrida, 1997: 303). This brings me to the relationship between Derrida's logic of supplementarity and the logic of intersectionality because both of these lines of logic deconstruct the logic of binaries.

The Black feminist concept of intersectionality and Derrida's concept of the supplement demonstrate that all experience/phenomenon is constituted of multiple interdependent contextual meanings. In the logic of intersectionality and the logic of supplementarity there is no distinction between inside and outside or absent and present. Positioning migrant women as the supplement, surplus, substitute, is to position migrant women as the 'dangerous' undecidable, as inside/outside/absent/present. It is no surprise, then, that the logic of binaries functions to regulate and control subject positions, for example in 'migrant as lacking' and

'practitioner as expert'. Social work based on contextual intersectionality would reconfigure referrals, caseloads and record files to replace service user names, diagnoses and offences, such as, 'patient Mrs A, service user Mr B, Offender juvenile C' with 'the names of the oppressive situations they inhabit such as racism, patriarchy, homophobia and capitalism' (Nayak, 2017b: 207).

Marisela and Joan: Service user, practitioner binaries represent the service users as subjects 'marked' by intersecting gender and cultural traits and professionals as 'neutral' liberated, secular and non-traditional subjects. The differentiation between the subject and object of intervention constitutes an axe of differentiation that interacts with other axes that becomes intelligible from a contextual conception of intersectionality.

Suryia: In your particular socio-geo-political context(s) which axes of differentiation emerge as tools of legitimization, such as processes concerning racial ethnic, gender identity categories in the form of legal papers?

Marisela and Joan: Specific social service provisions, in the Spanish state, are based on traditional axes of structural differentiation (age, gender and disability). To these structural axes, other axes of differentiation, with less governmental attention, have been added such as national origin and sexual orientation. The categories of gender and age are defined by the

national identity card. Levels of disability are defined by the Assessment and Guidance Teams (EVO) (that belongs to the General Direction of Social Protection of the Department of Labor), and assign certain levels of disability; levels that may vary depending on state regulations. In the case of sexual orientation or gender identity, services are offered based on self-definition, and the type of resources received are allocated as a group (such as 'information campaigns') rather than at a personal level: 'personalized economic resources'. In cases of individualized attention, as in the case of HIV, these resources are part of the general health provision instead of assignment to a particular axis of differentiation. A focus on the differentiation procedures illustrates an intersectional perspective that considers the connection between the social context and the relevant axes of differentiation.

Training processes for migrants highlight the implications of incorporating the concept of intersectionality in the analysis of public policies. For example, some of these services are offered to migrants who have a residence card that is mandatory to obtain the certificate of the course. However, people without a work permit can take these courses, but they will not have official certification. A contextual intersectional perspective allows us to appreciate how legal status emerges as an important axis of differentiation. The intersectional analysis must identify the contextual forms of differentiation (the legal status in this example) and understand how these differentiations intersect with other axes of differentiation (for example, gender, race, age, sexuality). In this case, physical records (such as certificates, titles or residence cards) are artefacts that condense axes of differentiation (sex, gender, age, filiation) and facilitate the exercise and reiteration of power relations.

Intersectional contextual analysis incorporates socio-historical elements that define the axes of differentiation activated in a given context. In Spain, the differentiation procedures in the access and type of health care received must be understood in the context of the legal transformations of the Spanish National Health System (NHS) from a universal health provision to a stratified one according to nationality and employment. The Spanish Law 16/2003 of May 28ⁱ, of cohesion and quality of the NHS, considered, in article 2, that the general principles that inform the law were: (a) the provision of services to users of the NHS in conditions of effective equality and quality; (b) the universal and public insurance by the state; and (c) public funding of the National Health System, according to the current financing system. The Individual Health Card (IHC) was given to anybody who registered in the city town. This situation changed with the Royal Decree-Law 16/2012, of April 20ⁱⁱ, on urgent measures to ensure the sustainability of the national health system and improve the quality and safety of its health provision, which argued that the health system was economically unsustainable and pernicious to the viability of the health business sector (p. 31278). Article 3, on the condition of insurance, stated that (a) public healthcare provision will be given to those holding the insured status, and (b) those who do not have insured status may obtain health care delivery by the payment of a special health agreement. The legal situation was further transformed by the Royal Decree 1192/2012, of August 3ⁱⁱⁱ, on the condition of the insured and the beneficiary for healthcare in Spain, with public funds, through the National Health System and the Royal Decree 576/2013 of 26 July^{iv}, establishing the basic requirements of the special agreement for health provision to people without the status of insurance or beneficiaries of the National Health System, amending the

Royal Decree-Law 16/2012. The legislation was encoded into the Individual Health Card, transforming the IHC into an intersectional differentiation device that encodes gender, age, disability, nationality and employment. It has to be noted that the additional provision to the state budget (BOE, 16th December 2013, section I, p. 104817) establishes that the beneficiaries of the public health system must have their residence in Spain, and the health benefits are lost after spending more than 90 days out of the country. This is an example of capillary intersectional differentiation justified with economic arguments that exclude certain intersectional subject positions from public health provision.

Suryia: In the UK context, Anzaldúa's warning that, '[r]igidity means death' (2007: 101) underscores the necropolitics of Section 15 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, which states 'that a person will have 'no recourse to public funds' if they are subject to immigration control; public funds include welfare benefits and public housing'. If rigidity equates to the borders that constitute 'migrant' bodies and territorial (geographic, legal and conceptual) boundaries of immigration, then the question is what is social work doing to refuse these as an agent of collective resistance for liberation?

Marisela and Joan: In the Spanish context, '[r]igidity means death' (Anzaldúa 2007: 101), in the situation where the law functions as a mechanism of exclusion for migrants without legal status and Spaniards that are out of the country for more than 90 days. This legal imperative is based on an anti-intersectional necropolitical justification where apparent lack of resources justifies

the exclusion of certain groups of people from health provision. Article 2 of the Royal Decree 1192/2012, of August 3, on the condition of the insured and the beneficiary for healthcare in Spain states that the following conditions need to be fulfilled to have the condition of insured:

1. To be an employee or self-employed worker, affiliated with the Social Security and in a situation of membership or similar to membership.
2. To hold the status of pensioner of the Social Security system.
3. Being a beneficiary of any other periodic Social Security benefit, such as unemployment benefit or other similar benefits.
4. To have exhausted the benefit or the subsidy for unemployment or other benefits of similar nature and to be unemployed, not proving the condition of insured by any other title.

After excluding many migrants and some Spaniards from the NHS, the Royal Decree 1192/2012 of 3rd of August, explicitly give Spanish nationals that reside in the territory the condition of insured:

1. To have Spanish nationality and reside in Spanish territory.
2. To be nationals of a Member State of the European Union, of the European Economic Area or of Switzerland and to be registered in the Central Registry of Foreigners.
3. To be nationals of a country other than those mentioned in the previous sections, or stateless persons, and holders of an authorization to reside in Spanish territory, as long as it remains in force under the terms established in its specific regulations.

The establishment of a typology of "insured citizens" allows the intersectional stratification of the population in different categories; stratification that is codified in the individual Health Card. The IHC is the document that identifies and authorizes access to public health system services, recognizes the status of an accredited person and informs on health coverage. Therefore, the contexts of legal changes transform the right to public health for all into a stratified privilege for some, where the people of each level can receive - or not - a specific health benefit.

In addition, the difficulty of the administrative procedure for obtaining the card depends on a personal intersectional layering. The front of the card shows the details of the accredited person: (a) personal identification code; (b) name and surnames of the owner; (c) level of health benefits. The card incorporates a magnetic stripe with encoded information of personal and administrative details in order to guarantee the confidentiality of the personal data stored. When receiving health care, the card functions as the axis of differentiation that allows or denies the possibility of receiving certain health provision. The health card constitutes a material condensation of intersectional codification of different personal categories that facilitate or deny the access to certain medical treatments; a codification that can be historically traced.

Suryia: How do different axes of differentiation articulate, and thereby give representation, voice and position, to particular vectors of identity?

Marisela and Joan: Intersectionality questions essentialist identity models in recognising the conflict inherent in the configuration of subject positions (Brah, 1996; Hall, 1996). We must attend to the ways in which categories are constructed through symbolic and material assemblages. As different forms of social organization mutually constitute in specific geopolitical spaces and sociohistorical moments (Anthias, 2002; Yuval Davis, 2014); differentiation is the result of positionality, and relational context. Contextual intersectionality understands that certain differences in particular contexts produce particular relationships of discrimination and subalternization.

In social work, practice is considered a matter of social welfare and public interest, defined through complex processes, within power relations, dominant discourses, laws, policies, theoretical and methodological approaches, in which certain constructions arise while others remain inactive or disappear. These frameworks function as organizational principles that assimilate pieces of information and turn them into problems and definitions in which the solutions are included implicitly or explicitly (Verloo, 2006). It is crucial to observe who is involved in the definition of a particular political policy, as well as why some issues become relevant and others not. In short, the very process of constructing a problematic field where social work must be carried out is the result of discourses and practices that constitute something like an object of thought (political, moral, scientific) as a possible object of knowledge and governmental action (Foucault, 1976).

An example of these dynamics, in the Spanish context, are recent processes of recognition of rights related to gender, sexuality, kinship and family; as well as the appearance of services and specific social programs for LGBT people (Cruells and Coll-Planas 2013). Sadurní and Pujol (2015) warn that these operations of inclusion of homonormative corporeality entail the exclusion of other bodies from recognition policies, and function, in the geopolitical arena, as yardsticks to distinguish between civilization and barbarism. In the legislative context, Platero (2011) analyses the controversies surrounding the law 3/2007^v that includes the right to change the legal name and the mention of sex in the documentation of adult Spanish citizens, under the requirement (in most of the cases) of a diagnosis of gender dysphoria and of having received medical treatment for two years. Legislation that had an unequal reception in the collective of trans people. The obligation of complying with the diagnosis of "gender dysphoria", as a prerequisite to exercising the right to change name and sex, places in biomedical expertise the authority of certification of the pathological character of the patient; this contributes to the differentiation and asymmetry of trans identity with respect to cisgender identity, its constitutive exterior. On the other hand, by explicitly excluding the application of the law based on the status of citizenship, the rule of exclusion of non-citizens is reiterated. The space of public policy as an object of analysis, from an intersectional perspective, allows us to understand how different organizational structures work in a specific context to create hierarchies of -medical / patient, trans / cisgender person, autochthonous / migrant, civilized nations / barbarians

In the Spanish state, intervention spaces are generally organized on an axis of "problematized" differentiation; the very existence of the service or project starts from the premise of a phenomenon understood as a social problem. Specialized services, for example, in gender violence assume the category "woman" as central and unquestioned. Hankivsky and Cormier provide the following critique:

“Policy interventions have sought to extend to all women without taking into account that violence does not have a single cause and that women who experience it are differently situated. Violence against women cannot be read through the lens of gender without accounting for the intersecting factors that shape the lived realities of affected women and determine their needs and help-seeking patterns” (2011: 218)

In the investigation "From victims to agents: imaginary and practices on gender violence in the couple against immigrant women in the Spanish State" (Cea, 2015), narrative productions were carried out with professionals working with gender violence. The analysis allowed axes of differentiation to be identified, exposing: on the one hand that the legal status of migrant women determines their access to types of care in cases of partner violence. Without legal status, which in the Spanish state means possession of a Foreigner Identification Number (NIE), women are not eligible for certain economic aid or protection measures, such as access to foster homes. Thus, the institutional framework emerges as a limitation to how social services can be accessed by the very people who need them (Cea and Montenegro, 2014). On the other

hand, the imaginaries about the places of origin of some immigrant women affect the ways in which they are served in the services. One of the service professionals says:

I have seen many times in the public administration - which is my scope of action - that a Moroccan woman is not treated the same as one from here. This is a very strong situation for me. These stereotypes and prejudices are everywhere. There are professionals who do not review themselves and this marks their intervention. They are acts of racism, which are invisible, but are acts of racism as such. Therefore, if your point of departure in attention to citizenship is from prejudice, distrust, or "to see what you want", the possibility of migrant women to get out of violence is small because they are faced with other barriers that hinder, for example, reporting, asking for guidance, etc. There is a continuous secondary victimization to women in these cases. (Cea, 2015: 124)

An intersectional perspective allows us to analyse culturalist discourses in terms of reiterative practices of differentiation and categorization. Suárez (2008) defines this type of practice as "discursive colonialism": a structural position of power where certain constructions of gender equity are established as valid against others.

The constitution of 'identity vectors' requires 'representation technologies' and procedures to, 'give voice' to such 'identities'. Taking an intersectional essentialist perspective leads to a reification of "intersectional identities" and assume that these positions have a representative character. The position of "gay migrant", for example, constitutes a "legal" position (in

Foucault's perspective) that could have meaning within the practice of social service that assumes a "voice" and a "position of the subject" that sustains this voice. Contextual intersectionality blurs this position of the subject and exposes the contextual elements, including those within the social services, involved in the production of that position.

Suryia: Drawing on examples from your own contexts, activism and experience, how does intersectionality problematize knowledge production?

Marisela and Joan: Contextual intersectionality problematizes knowledge/power relations that constitute social work practitioner/service provider relationships. Contextual intersectional perspectives expose the mechanisms of disavowal that normalize and naturalize hegemonic power relations in the context of social work in particular and in governmental contexts in general.

Contextual intersectionality questions the effects that emerge from the dynamics of subalternization. These dynamics are based on socio-historical power / knowledge mechanisms through which information is produced, categorized and interpreted. The concept of intersectionality is linked to a broad tradition of feminist works that question the scientific rationale that hegemonizes production of knowledge (Harding, 1986, Haraway, 1988). Public policies and social work practices are nourished by the truths constructed by scientific production devices; devices that defines certain social situations and subject positions as problematic. These operations delimit the contours of the categories constituted as an object of

intervention and homogenize the people who are part of the same axis of discrimination. In the Spanish context, this process can be exemplified in the interventions that define its object of intervention as "immigrant women and their problems" (Agrela, 2004).

The definition of "social problems" through the production of knowledge and forms of social intervention is a political issue Cubillos (2017). Firstly, it occurs in a controversial field of theories, perspectives, methodologies and relationships where certain meanings are set against others. Secondly, it is framed in power matrices that contribute to defining what is "good" / "bad", what is "normal" / "abnormal", what is "correct" / "incorrect": what is susceptible to change and what should be kept as is. Thirdly, it has consequences that reinforce certain dynamics of subordination. Finally:

many of the cherished categories of the intersectional mantra—originally starting with race, class, gender, now including sexuality, nation, religion, age, and disability—are the products of modernist colonial agendas and regimes of epistemic violence, operative through a Western/Euro-American epistemological formation through which the notion of discrete identity has emerged. (Puar, 2012: 54)

The epistemic violence of social service provision is in the claim to objective detachment through an invisible, omniscient observer (Haraway, 1997); academic and professional "expertise" functions as an axis of differentiation and asymmetry. The lack of intersectional analysis of the position of the practitioner renders this position as not susceptible to scrutiny as

'subjects to be studied' (Agrela, 2004: 39). In teaching courses on intersectionality to public and private social service practitioners in Barcelona, we invited participants to examine their daily practice from an intersectional perspective. We structured an observation script to examine intersectionality in professional practice in three sections:

- Accessibility: descriptions of the people who arrive at the service / activity.
 - How do people reach the service (word of mouth, referral, dissemination of the service ...)?
 - In what language (s) is the service / activity disseminated?
 - Facilities / limitations to assist (public transport, schedules, physical barriers, child care space ...).
 - Who "does not" come to the service? Why?

- Interactions: description of the people who participate in the different interaction spaces (meetings, attention sessions, virtual spaces).
 - How is participation in different spaces?
 - Who speaks, who listens?
 - Technical elements present in the interactions (templates, didactic material ...).
 - Configuration of the physical space. Description: tables, desks, chairs, sofas, desks.
 - Body language in the interactions between participants.

- Perceptions and feelings: impressions of the session and the participants.
 - What comes to your mind when you interact with different people in the context of your work?
 - Give an example of three people who participate in the service (users, professionals ...) and explain the impressions and images that have been suggested to you.
 - What impression and images may have this people about you?
 - How do you feel in different work spaces? Why?
 - How do you think your cultural background affect your work?
 - How do you think different axes of oppression affect the attention / activities that are organized in your work space?

The observations produced intense debate regarding the intersectionality of positionality. The writing of one of the professionals propitiated the first debate:

The spaces have white artificial light, air conditioning, monochromatic walls, rigid furniture and plastic; there are no infrastructures to regulate personal energy (food, drinks, space to rest, ...). The space follows Western norms and, therefore, adjusts to what we expect from a space.

The participant's analysis concluded that the organization of the space, considered as innocuous and neutral, reproduce localized social and cultural practices. In this case, the space and what it contains (as well as what it does not contain) corresponds to what is normatively understood as a "neutral" space for attention and provision of services.

The practitioner continued:

The characteristics of the space simply do not help in some of the basic objectives of the project, those that have to do with proposing other ways of relating And, in this sense, we must question the norm, the habit, and provide a different alternative that, even if only a little, breaks with the established norms. Space does not do it, it is not a good ally.

Here, the practitioner asks about the impact context on the feelings of the service users, especially in the case of the two Moroccans service users. The analysis highlights the normative nature of service provision contexts and how they constitute how people inhabit them; the organisation of the space contributes to the intervened/intervened differentiation. This process of differentiation is interwoven, in the narrative of the professional, with that of the national and cultural origin of some of the users. Hence, the practitioner proposed that in the next meeting of the group, he will suggest that everyone sits on a rug on the floor and take tea during the session (practices associated with Moroccan customs). With this suggestion, he intends to intervene in the normativity of the physical space to generate changes in group

dynamics. It had never occurred to the practitioner, even though he had worked with this group of service users for some time that the configuration of the space is constitutive.

The next story spoke about the imaginaries that affect the practitioner's task. In this case, the rapporteur is also the object of inquiry. In his analysis, the axes of differentiation relate to social class and educational attainment. The practitioner observes these axes through an action that triggers different reactions towards different users:

"a user with university education arrives late to the session and I approach him with a reminder of punctuality. On the other hand, my tone is closer to admonishing to another user who does not have this level of education because I associate unpunctuality with disorganization."

Although the description does not recognize it, the asymmetric professional/user relationship reproduces the axes identified in the writing. The story performs a critical scrutiny of one's professional practice without questioning the role of authority with respect to one's professional position.

In the third story, a practitioner reflected on the relationship between her position and that of some service users regarding certain axes of differentiation:

"These days I have realized that it is easier for me to put my hand on the back (as a symbol of encouragement) of the women who share with me the characterization of being immigrant women, especially if they are from South America. By listening to their stories ... I understand them without needing many words. They do not know that it is a characteristic that we share but I think and I feel that we tune in a particular way."

In this fragment, the practitioner identifies with the category 'immigrant woman'. Due to this identification, she empathizes with the users who share this position despite the fact that the practitioner's membership in the category 'migrant woman' is unknown to the migrant service users. In this case, attributes such as skin colour, the fluent use of the Catalan language or her position as a practitioner are decisive in the ways in which she is "read" in this context: as an autochthonous woman. The narrative shows a gap between her experience and the users' attributions. This suggests that the processes of differentiation that emerge from social stratification processes happen in different ways. In this case, the status of "migrant" has different implications and recognitions for different people. Therefore, the dynamics of categorial stratification involve contingent elements that depend on the specific context of the interaction; elements and relationships that can only be analysed when they materialize in specific configurations. The practitioner's reflection continues:

"But, on the other hand, not sharing the category 'migrant woman' with the user can lead to self-deception. When understanding and accompanying a woman with a profile

of high social class and 'autochthonous' ... let's say that I have to fight against my prejudices of 'you have had everything'".

This extract introduces an interesting movement. On the one hand, in the two cases she addresses, she refers to the effects that emerge from the tangled functioning of different axes of differentiation. In addition, she reflects on how her position influences her professional practice. On the other hand, in this fragment, the effect of differentiation favours subordination dynamics that affect the position that could be considered "privileged" in terms of economic status and national belonging. Stratification mechanisms are not deployed in the same way in all cases, but, also that the variation, is involved in the hierarchal configurations, which result from specific relational contexts. Therefore, the effects of differentiation processes are diverse and should not be reduced to the constant iteration of dominant dynamics of subalternization. A further angle concerning axes of differentiation and context arises when the practitioner reflects on the impression she believes the service users have of her:

"Most, except for those who are younger, judge me by my age. They think I'm too young for this job. Some, out of curiosity, ask me directly. Others confess to me, after a few sessions, that at first they distrusted me for this reason."

Here, the practitioner is reporting on the effects of differentiation that affect her position in the context of being a professional; in this case, the matter of age, and what is expected or not about age. Given that her recognition as a practitioner (differentiation) is linked

to her knowledge and skills for proper professional practice (context), her expertise is called into question when she is asked about her age.

Contextual intersersectionality accounts for the effects of subalternization that arise from axes of differentiation. Critical observation of how assumptions about service users constitute the professional attention they receive, opens the possibility of analysing the procedures that contribute to the reproduction of these assumptions in specific spaces of intervention. It is important to ask about the configuration of the practitioner position and how these positions are legitimated, since intersectional studies on this position are scarce.

Suryia: Intersectionality is a theory that deconstructs borders, but it seems that contemporary debates and applications about intersectionality are contingent on one border or another, which runs counter to the spirit of intersectionality (Nayak, 2015).

Marisela and Joan: Although affirmative identity politics have enabled recognition of multiple subject positions, the fragmentation of these positions has led to a political paralysis. In the current international contexts of social and economic precariousness, Fraser asks:

Why is there no broad coalition of new-New Dealers: trade unionists, unemployed and precarious workers; feminists, ecologists and anti-imperialists; social democrats and democratic socialists? Why no Popular Front insisting that the costs of fictitious commodification should be paid, not by 'society' as such, nor by nature reduced to a

sink, but by those whose relentless drive to accumulate capital precipitated the crisis?

(Fraser, 2013: 127)

Certain formulations of intersectionality have not enabled collective working. First of all, the intersectional perspective has accentuated, in some cases, identity policies by asking which of the axes of differentiation is the most relevant. For example, in the Barcelona context, the city council, adopting an intersectional perspective, has an office of "gender mainstreaming", in which "gender" is considered to be the main axis that intersects with the other axes. This prevalence of the gender category is reflected in the grant forms, where all areas must define gender indicators. Thus, it is assumed that a primordial axis (gender in this case) crosses any subject position in any situation, while other axes may or may not be present; an approach that tends to invisibilize other possible axes.

Second, the intersectional perspective has suffered the debates of identity authenticity; the question becomes if a certain person 'can' be included in a certain category. This debate has been virulent in the case of the inclusion of transgender women in women's groups, being analyzed in terms of transphobia or male privilege. When an additive perspective of intersectionality is adopted, the debates of authenticity identify the positions of maximum intersectional oppression. If 'woman' is a position that suffers from oppression, 'black woman' is a position that suffers a double oppression, and so on. Reading in terms of identity politics

has led to the desirability of oppressed political positions (but not of the conditions of oppression), leading to what Hancock (2007) calls 'Olympiad of oppression'. Understanding oppression in terms of identity rather than contexts of oppression has led to the confrontation between different positions within social activism. Therefore, we consider necessary the development of an intersectional perspective that pays attention to how contextual arrangements define the axes of discrimination (i.e., having a legal status) instead of considering these axes (i.e., being a migrant) as attributes of the person. Subject positions are contingent and associated with specific production contexts. The contingency of position acknowledges that certain contexts generate 'blind spots' that make certain contexts of oppression invisible to certain people; these processes of invisibility must be denounced and transformed.

Finally, instead of focussing on a set of 'subjugated intersectional categories', we understand intersectionality as an analytical and practice toolbox to deal with experiences of people and groups within historical and contextual classificatory frameworks. To limit the intersectional toolbox to a set of subaltern positions obscures the relational character of power relations and produces an understanding of oppression dynamics in terms of personal traits. For example, an analysis of the position of 'white gay man' in terms of homonationalism exposes how certain geopolitical contexts activate and appropriate the position of 'gay white man' to be included in 'the nation', contributing to the exclusion of other 'gay identities' (Puar, 2007).

Suryia: How can intersectionality enable us to think about the predicament at the heart of liberation movements articulated by Avtar Brah in the following way: 'At what point, and in what ways, for example, does the specificity of a particular social experience become an expression of essentialism?' (Brah, 1996:95)

Marisela and Joan: Brah (1996) questions the existence of a definitive essence that transcends history and culture. At the same time, she recognizes that dominated groups appeal to shared experiences that reaffirm a seemingly essential difference with dominant groups in what, following Spivak (1987) and Fuss (1989), can be called 'strategic essentialism'. Strategic essentialism can, however, become pure essentialism; an essentialism where the struggle against one form of oppression leads to reinforcing another. Intersectionality allows for the articulation of diverse struggles by recognizing that, for example, the struggle against the processes of racialization and genderization share common strategies and that we embody multiple axes of differentiation. However, the situation is not so simple.

Certain understandings of intersectionality consider the axes of differentiation as intrinsic characteristics of the subject; a socially assigned, constituting badge. From this perspective, a white heterosexual woman and a white lesbian woman have two distinct badges, with relatively different personal experiences and needs. We could argue that the category "lesbian" is an example of "strategic essentialism" that can be used politically to make visible the experiences and needs of women who feel identified with this category. But what about the intersection 'heterosexual white woman' or 'white lesbian woman'? It could be argued that

they are categorical intersections that can be politically used to visualize privileged positions. However, the use of these intersectional categories tends to essentialise and homogenize the experience of a certain groups of people. For example, in our study on social services for migrant women in Barcelona (Montenegro and Montenegro, 2013) we found that the use of the category 'Latin American woman' by practitioners assumed a particular experience of patriarchy in Latin American women; an experience that European women had liberated themselves from. This assumption established an 'intersectional hierarchy' where the 'European woman' was located in a 'better position' than the Latin American woman. This process of 'essentialization' of women's experiences does not take into account the diversity of historical and social processes that mark the functioning of patriarchy in different countries, and in different social classes, in Latin America and Europe. In this sense, it is important to differentiate between the political use of identity to claim the recognition of certain experiences and identities, and the governmental appropriation of these identity categories as a form of population management.

Brah (1996) suggests the use of 'diaspora spaces' privileging 'routes' over 'roots'. In this sense, we are 'subjects in movement', where the axes of differentiation are temporary and in constant transformation. Under this understanding, 'the home' is a temporal territorialization within a more general movement of diasporic nature. Following this metaphor, the social categories by which we are defined and define ourselves constitute 'home'; that space that we feel like ours and in which we feel more or less comfortable. However, the social and personal categories constituting 'home' can be vertiginously transformed. This is exemplified in Brah's description

(1996: 7-9) of her experience, at the end of the 1960s, when her body was "read" as "Indian" in the US and "Pakistani" in Great Britain. The transformation of our position in the social system affects the categorical references that define us; a categorical vocabulary that mutates according to the social and historical context in which we find ourselves. The notion of 'diaspora spaces' suggests an intersectional space in transformation where psychosocial and geopolitical processes converge and where borders, axes of differentiation and locations are formed. The unequal distribution of vulnerabilities responds to systematic and repeated asymmetric differentiation practices that are updated in specific situations where certain differences become structurally significant.

Suryia: How can intersectionality be utilized to imagine / realise alternative social work relationships / models / interventions for liberation?

Marisela and Joan: Intersectionality constitutes a perspective that addresses the way in which subjectivation processes are traversed by unequal and hierarchical power relations. There are three figurations that we believe may be transformational in the realisation of intersectional social work interventions.

a) First, the concept of 'agency', referring to the ways in which people adapt to and transform the power structures in which they live. The action of social movements is an example of a collective agency. From the spaces of intervention, we need to generate procedures that take

into account the personal and collective trajectories of the people we work with; those actions or initiatives community psychology define as "invisible fights for dignity". These are actions that deal with the conditions of oppression from the perspective of the participant. Recognising the agency of the participant questions the 'provider-lacking' dichotomy; a dichotomy often associated with the categories of people attended by the intervention services.

b) Second, we must continue to deepen participatory procedures that allow participants to make decisions regarding intervention processes. Contextual intersectionality is vigilant of the reproduction of subalternization processes; thus, spaces for participation that question these power relations are needed.

c) Finally, the notion of articulation must be a basis for reflection and action. Strategic alliances can be established with non-governmental positions that transform the context of the intervention. We could take into consideration the set of social agents that are producing discourses and practices for the critical transformation of power relations in terms, for example, of sexism, xenophobia, homophobia and transphobia, classism, or capacitism.

ⁱ Jefatura del Estado. Ley 16/2003, de 28 de mayo, de cohesión y calidad del Sistema Nacional de Salud, Pub. L. No. 10715, 128 Boletín Oficial del Estado I (2003).

BOE.es - Documento consolidado BOE-A-2003-10715

[Bloque 5: #a3] Artículo 3. De la condición de asegurado. 1. La asistencia sanitaria en España, con cargo a fondos públicos, a través del Sistema Nacional de ...

ⁱⁱ Jefatura del Estado. Real Decreto-ley 16/2012, de 20 de abril, de medidas urgentes para garantizar la sostenibilidad del Sistema Nacional de Salud y mejorar la calidad y seguridad de sus prestaciones, Pub. L. No. 5403, 98 Boletín Oficial del Estado 1 (2012).

BOE.es - Documento consolidado BOE-A-2012-5403

Última actualización, publicada el 15/08/2016, en vigor a partir del 15/08/2016. Texto original, publicado el 24/04/2012, en vigor a partir del 24/04/2012.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ministerio de Sanidad, Servicios Sociales e Igualdad. Real Decreto 1192/2012, de 3 de agosto, por el que se regula la condición de asegurado y de beneficiario a efectos de la asistencia sanitaria en España, con cargo a fondos públicos, a través del Sistema Nacional de Salud, Pub. L. No. 10477, I. Disposiciones generales, 186 Boletín Oficial del Estado 55775 (2012).

BOE.es - Documento BOE-A-2012-10477 Todos los españoles, así como los ciudadanos extranjeros que tengan establecida su residencia en el territorio nacional, son titulares del derecho a la protección ...

^{iv} Ministerio de Sanidad, Servicios Sociales e Igualdad. Real Decreto 576/2013, de 26 de julio, por el que se establecen los requisitos básicos del convenio especial de prestación de asistencia sanitaria a personas que no tengan la condición de aseguradas ni de beneficiarias del Sistema Nacional de Salud y se modifica el Real Decreto 1192/2012, de 3 de agosto, por el que se regula la condición de asegurado y de beneficiario a efectos de la asistencia sanitaria en España, con cargo a fondos públicos, a través del Sistema Nacional de Salud., Pub. L. No. 8190, § I. Disposiciones generales, 179 Boletín Oficial del Estado 55058 (2013).

BOE.es - Documento BOE-A-2013-8190

Real Decreto 576/2013, de 26 de julio, por el que se establecen los requisitos básicos del convenio especial de prestación de asistencia sanitaria a personas que no ...

^v Jefatura del Estado. Ley 3/2007, de 15 de marzo, reguladora de la rectificación registral de la mención relativa al sexo de las personas, Pub. L. No. 5585, § I. Disposiciones generales, 16 Boletín Oficial del Estado 11251 (2007).

BOE.es - Documento BOE-A-2007-5585

Documento BOE-A-2007-5585 ... Ley 3/2007, de 15 de marzo, reguladora de la rectificación registral de la mención relativa al sexo de las personas.

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