

Subalternity approached from intersectionality: A methodological proposal

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Abstract: We present a qualitative methodological tool called “Intersectional Loom” to graph and analyze the implications of subalternity from biographical interviews. The script of the interviews considered in a first step the construction of the loom. The entire script was applied in one or more semi-structured interview sessions. We propose a dialogic-recursive research process to promote self-observation, self-analysis, and re-positioning of the interviewed people. We seek to avoid (re)producing subaltern dynamics; participants could review and comment on the findings throughout the investigation. We present examples obtained from an investigation carried out with LGBT people from Chile, Colombia, and Mexico. We detail the case of a lesbian who considers that the identity categories influence her access to rights. The case of a trans man allows us to observe how camouflage operates. We conclude that the intersectional loom allows a respectful approach to the experiences of people located in non-hegemonic positions.

Key words: biographical method, intersectionality, qualitative methodology, subalternity, LGBT.

Resumen: Presentamos una herramienta metodológica cualitativa denominada “telar interseccional”, con la cual es posible graficar/analizar las implicancias de la subalternidad a partir de entrevistas biográficas. El guion de las entrevistas considera en una primera parte la construcción del telar; después, el guion completo se aplicó en una o más sesiones de entrevistas semiestructurada. Planteamos un proceso de investigación dialógico-recursive para promover la autoobservación, autoanálisis y re-posicionamiento de las personas entrevistadas; evitamos (re)producir dinámicas de subalternidad, y quienes participaron pudieron revisar y comentar los hallazgos del estudio. Exponemos ejemplos de una investigación realizada con personas LGBT de Chile, Colombia y México. Detallamos el caso de una mujer lesbiana, quien considera que las categorías identitarias influyen en su acceso a derechos. También abordamos el caso de un hombre trans, lo cual posibilita observar cómo opera el camuflaje. Concluimos que el uso del telar permite acceder, desde un abordaje respetuoso, a las experiencias de personas situadas en posiciones no-hegemonías.

Palabras clave: método biográfico, interseccionalidad, metodología cualitativa subalternidad, LGBT.

Introduction

The theoretical developments of subalternity (Spivak, 2011) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) suggest that people live multiple social identities, which create intricate webs of both access and limitation of the exercise of rights. Despite its theoretical richness, proposals for methodologies to address different social identities is an emerging challenge (Brah, 2013; MISEAL, 2014), especially in Latin American contexts, where the concept of intersectionality begins to be disseminated in academia around 2010 (Viveros-Vigoya, 2012 and 2016).

We affirm that the production of methodologies from Latin American contexts makes it possible to resist hegemonic currents with our own production, in the application of theoretical concepts that can help to understand the development of the dynamics of oppression in our contexts.

The purpose of this article is to present a qualitative methodological tactic¹ called “intersectional loom”, with which it is possible to identify, chart and analyze identity categories and hierarchies of identities, which configure specific experiences of limitation/access to the exercise of rights (social guarantees) and the obtaining of benefits. We consider this tactic of generating and analyzing empirically produced data as a contribution that adds to the various horizontal (Cornejo and Rufer, 2020; Corona-Berkin and Kaltmeier, 2012) and counter-hegemonic research methodologies developed from the global South (de Sousa Santos, 2011).

Subalternity and intersectionality: general concepts

De Beauvoir (2017) argues that all people set out projects with the goal of achieving transcendence, attaining their freedom through perpetual advancement. When transcendence cannot be expressed because the person is immobilized by some factual circumstance, there is a degradation of existence, which is experienced as a fall, which, if it is one’s own, is experienced as a moral failure; whereas, if it is inflicted, it takes the form of oppression.

1 Based on Michel de Certeau (2000), we propose that power relations manifest tactics and strategies. The latter are used by people in positions of power to impose a status quo, while people in subalternized positions use tactics to resist the strategies of hegemonic groups. We recognize that, within the order of world power-knowledge, the Latin American production of knowledge is in a subalternized position; therefore, from a position of resistance, we call our methodological proposal tactical.

This situation of limitation of freedoms and oppression exercised on certain minority groups has been explained by various theoretical approaches; in this article we propose an analysis from the approaches of subalternity (Spivak, 2011) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991). We consider minoritized groups to be those who are treated as a minority and negatively valued even though they may not constitute an effective minority, such as women, native peoples and people who do not feel represented in heteronormative patterns of gender identities and sexual-affective relationships, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, transvestite, transgender, intersex and queer people, also referred to by the acronym LGBTIQ+ (Laguna, 2016).

In the essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, Spivak (2011) argues that there are human groups that have been placed in subaltern positions within the historical narrative. Those who are placed in such positions are not considered to occupy a discursive position from which they can speak/be heard or respond, as this position is silenced by the dominant hegemonic groups.

Spivak (2011) makes a critique of the presumed monolithic identity and consciousness of these groups, as if they were a single, usually male, subject. She also raises a critique of academic/empirical work that (re)produces neocolonial cultural, economic and political domination schemes, due to the fact that intellectual work acts –deliberately or not– in favor of (re) producing the subaltern position of people, speaking for them, sustaining oppression.

According to Spivak (2011), this complexity lies in the concept of representation, of which she considers two meanings. On the one hand, representation as “speaking on behalf of”, when someone is not present. This perspective places the people represented in a sphere of invisibility, since they are not seen directly, but through the person who represents them. On the other hand, representation can take the format of a re-representation, a reformulation that can be given under an artistic-aesthetic or philosophical format, where it does not appear what it really is, but what it is re-presented filtered by the history, culture and biases of belonging of the one who represents (Spivak, 2011).

Based on Spivak’s (2011) reflections, we generate a series of questions: how to avoid falling into the trap of representation/re-representation, how to promote social change, which often motivates us as social researchers, if our own research dynamics (re)produce the dynamics of subalternity and oppression? These questions that mobilize us are combined with the

approaches of intersectionality. It was born as an attempt to conceptualize and theorize about the social inequalities that exist between different groups, initially with a focus on inequalities related to race and gender (Crenshaw, 1991). For Crenshaw (1991), who coined the term in 1989, structural intersectionality is defined as the intersection of inequalities present in two social groups with which a person identifies; for example, those to which a woman of African descent is exposed. Afro-descendants experience the discriminations/limitations of rights that both women and Afro-descendants suffer, generating a new web of subalternities whose effects are added exponentially.

Likewise, Afro-descendant women face the fact that neither the social movements and public policies that seek to protect women, nor those that seek to defend Afro-descendant people meet all their needs and do not focus on their rights; therefore, their specific situation of vulnerability remains unaddressed (Crenshaw, 1991).

In order to understand the configuration of inequalities experienced by different groups of people, it is important to observe the relationship between the group in the dominant position and the group in the subordinate position (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectional analyses make it possible to identify the multiple experiences of oppression lived by different people and also identify positions that do not suffer it because they embody the norm, such as cisgender, heterosexuality, masculinity or whiteness (Viveros-Vigoya, 2016).

Social inequities have been historically constructed and are sedimented in social structures and institutions (Choo and Ferree, 2010). The institutionalization of social inequities provides a degree of stability to the experience of social inequity, since changes in institutions tend to be gradual and difficult to implement (Crenshaw, 1991). Hancock (2007a and 2007b) argues that the intersectional approach must consider multiple categories and identities that are openly and fluidly related and reciprocally constituted. A category/identity that is dominant in one context may cease to be so in another, due to the fluid nature of their relationship. For example, for a cisgender man of African descent, racialization may be a predominant category in broad social settings and may lose relevance in micro-social settings, such as the neighborhood where he lives or in his family relationships.

Hancock's (2007a and 2007b) fluid categories approach generates several challenges when bringing intersectional analysis to the empirical field: how can we study inequities if they depend on categories/identities that are fluid and changing?, How to identify all relevant categories/identities if they change their importance according to specific contexts, how to focus on

the individual without losing sight of the social structures and institutions in which the individual develops? And how to keep in view the social structures and institutions that provide the settings in which people operate, without losing the richness of their unique individual experiences?

Subalternity and intersectionality from the biographical method

The biographical method allows the production of information through the moments and points of bifurcation in people's lives, in the paradigmatic border space between the individual and the social structure (Araujo and Martuccelli, 2010; Bassi Follari, 2014). This methodology makes it possible to study certain issues over time, through the analysis of a limited number of cases that allow for an in-depth study of the specific problem (Mejía, 2004), addressing macro- and micro-sociological issues (Hill-Collins, 2000).

We consider the biographical method to be pertinent, since it makes it possible to access the experiences of subalternity, taking into consideration micro and macro-social processes that sustain the systems of power in the (re)production and organization of inequalities, according to the different identities that unfold in the spaces of social relations (Hill-Collins, 2000). We consider that the analysis of social configurations that occur in a particular situated space can help to question beliefs about the mechanisms through which domination operates or manifests itself (Viveros-Vigoya, 2016).

People can be situated in diverse positions that intertwine, generating intersectional effects that are also diverse. For example, the fact of being a lesbian medical woman places her in subaltern positions as a woman and lesbian (compared to men and those who are heterosexual, respectively); It also places her in a dominant position as a health professional as opposed to non-professionals and those in less socially valued professions (Alday-Mondaca and Lay-Lisboa, 2021a).

The biographical method makes it possible to go deeper into the testimonies that are usually subsumed by the positions of subalternity in which these people and their problems find themselves (Alday-Mondaca and Lay-Lisboa, 2021a). Those in non-hegemonic positions can give these testimonies, which deserve to be (re)known as polyphonies that evoke multiple voices, lives and significant experiences, which are individual manifestations of more general phenomena (Bassi Follari, 2014).

We understand discourses as “ways of being in the world”; they are [...] always and everywhere social and products of social histories [...] Each of us is a member of many Discourses and each Discourse represents one of our ever

multiple identities” (Gee, 2005: 10-11). Discourse is therefore what someone says, including the way they say it and the identity they take on when they say it, which becomes ways of behaving and interacting with other people in various social settings (Gee, 2005; Montañés and Lay-Lisboa, 2019).

Discourses are based on theories about the distribution of symbolic (such as status) and material social goods, as well as about the people who should or should not have access to them. In this sense, the discourses that someone emits are a reflection of the discourse of multiple social identities and cultural models to which they have had access and have incorporated as their own (Gee, 2005).

Mohanty (2008) and Cabello (2018) argue that it is from non-hegemonic positions that hegemonic identities can be questioned, since those who are situated in such a position can visualize the consequences that the possibility of accessing/accumulating symbolic or material goods, which are more available for certain social positions, has on people’s lives (for example, access to prestige, as a symbolic good, is more available for heterosexual cisgender men, than for those who are not in such a position).

Analyzing biographical interviews from an intersectional approach allows us to unveil the different types of oppression/discrimination that arise from the articulation of gender, class, race and other identities that may emerge from participants’ discourses [lxs² participantes]. The objective is to make visible significant differences and similarities that enable an empathetic and rights-based understanding of the framework in which the subjects carry out their daily activities without losing focus on the resistance tactics they apply to stress and subvert the socio-structural conditions (Alday-Mondaca and Lay-Lisboa, 2021a).

The biographical interviews were conducted in more than one session, addressing different moments of the person’s life, focused on a theme associated with the central objective of the research (Bassi Follari, 2014; Mejía 2004). The interview script was semi-structured and also delved into emerging themes associated with this objective. Efforts were made to focus the interviews on the topic of study to avoid unnecessarily extending the time spent in the field (Castro, 2010; Yin, 2008). The initial interviews were more open and focused as the research progressed (De la Maza *et al.*, 2018).

The number of interviews was variable, depending on the interviewing skills of the person conducting the interview, the narrative capacity of each

2 In the original language of this article the use of the “x” in writing is adopted in order to transform the gender binary language, demanding the opening of the political space to other identities (Cabello, 2018).

participant and the experiences they have. For example, given that the theme of our research was about parenting, the experiences could vary according to the number of children the participant has/had been in charge of, the number of years the participant has been a parental figure, how long they have tried to exercise parenting without success, and so on.

The interviews were transcribed, organized and analyzed, giving rise to the emergence of new thematic axes from the discourses of the interviewees, which were to be kept articulated with the specific objectives of the research.

Construction of the “intersectional loom”: a description of the tactic

Production of information

We have called this tactic of information production/analysis “intersectional loom” in relation to the ancestral weaving practice of various Latin American peoples. This artisanal process is highly emotional and delicate, which seems to us to be a simile of both the work of the researchers and the work of self-analysis and self-observation of the participants, who unweave and reweave their lives in re-interpretations and re-significations that emerge throughout the process of self-revelation.

The main objective of the first biographical interview is to construct the intersectional loom, which will serve as raw material to elaborate the script for the rest of the interviews. To begin with, the person is told that we have different identities, which appear in different spaces of our lives, alluding to examples that can be close and understood by the participants (for example: being a man/woman) and that each of these identities allows us to do some things and makes it difficult/impossible for us to do others. People are asked to recognize some of their own identities and provide an example where they have perceived that difference, in order to ensure that the dynamics of the loom are understood.

After this, they are invited to reflect on which categories they believe are relevant to the research topic, as well as on the identities that constitute each of these categories. They are then asked to rank these identities in terms of how they access or are limited in accessing certain rights/social guarantees/benefits. In this way, the various categories/identities that are relevant to each participant’s specific experience are identified.

Certain important categories in the study of inequality are clearly presented because one’s own experience, the literature or common sense will guide us with respect to groups whose experience in a particular domain

is likely to be different; for example, sex-affective orientation and gender identity will commonly constitute relevant categories (Alday-Mondaca and Lay-Lisboa, 2021a).

Other forms of inequality refer to more complex categories, which are not so easily accessible. In these cases, the definition of the difference marker will arise directly from what the interviewee indicates according to their specific life itinerary (MISEAL, 2014) and will become particularly important, since it will constitute emerging information on the subject that was not sufficiently addressed in the previous theoretical/empirical development.

We began the work with an intersectional loom containing categories about which we dialogued with the participants. In our case, given that the study participants are characterized by a variety of gender identities and sex-affective orientations, we considered the categories: a) sexual difference, b) gender identity and c) sex-affective orientation, with some predefined identities for each as suggested by the previously reviewed literature (Alday-Mondaca and Lay-Lisboa, 2021a). In the gender identity category we included the option of “trans person”, to give rise to –after the person self-characterizes in this way– having the space to generate a more specific self-definition (female trans person, male trans person, non-binary/nonconforming, gender fluid/expansive, queer or any other with which they identify) (see Figure 1)³.

Once the three initial categories have been completed, we encourage the emergence of new identities that are not included in the basic loom, adding all the categories/identities that people refer to according to their experiences.

The loom built with each participant is used to promote joint reflection on the identities that emerge in their stories and the effects they have in different contexts and on their relationships. The loom is revisited in all interviews, allowing the inclusion of new categories/identities that are recognized in the narratives. Conducting subsequent interviews offers the opportunity to revisit points of contradiction, ambivalence, and imprecision inherent in the life narratives, which can be complexified with new emerging information (Botía-Mirillas and Jurado-Guerrero, 2018).

Information analysis

At the time of analysis, after the transcription of the interviews, a comprehensive reading of the interviews is made, identifying emerging

3 All figures can be found in the Annex at the end of this article (Editor's note).

thematic axes and contrasting the information with the identities that have been identified in the autobiographical interview. Attention is paid to the emergence of new identities that might not have been identified explicitly during the interview, but that underlie the narrative (Bassi Follari, 2014). Since biographical interviews are conducted on more than one occasion, the following sessions provide an opportunity to reflect on these new emerging identities and on the intersectional wefts they shape.

As the transcribed interviews are read, specific narratives are chosen to understand the inequalities, injustices and political hierarchies stated by the people, which are then aggregated in an analysis grid according to the thematic axes that emerge (Alday-Mondaca and Lay-Lisboa, 2021a). This organization makes it possible to carry out a theoretical counterpoint, broadening the understanding of the intersubjective effects of the categories/identities distinguished, in which the production and analysis of the information take place in a dialogic-recursive process.

Afterwards, the thematic axes found are organized into outlines, which are presented to the participants for their review and eventual modification (Alday-Mondaca and Lay-Lisboa, 2021a). These schemes can be used as input to evoke new themes in subsequent interviews. This recursive process makes it possible to saturate the multiple identities and to know in depth the intersectional crossings that occur between them. The dialogic process concludes when each participant states that they have provided all the relevant information regarding their experience.

Some categories/identities appear in the discourses of different participants, indicating that they are relevant in the experience of multiple people (Alday-Mondaca and Lay-Lisboa, 2021a). This makes it possible to construct joint looms, where common experience can be charted, without losing the depth of individual experience.

Production of information dissemination formats

The results are presented in articles, academic presentations, posters, audiovisual productions, etc., which are also subject to review by the participants, so that they can evaluate whether these products maintain their communicative intentions and whether the theoretical contributions included are relevant (Alday-Mondaca and Lay-Lisboa, 2021a). The purpose of this process is to limit the processes of representation/re-representation of people that could occur when accessing their experience from a theoretical/empirical interest. Following Tedlock (1987), we

believe that social science work should be dialogical both in the fieldwork and in its analysis. With this dialogic-recursive process we try to avoid (re) placing people in subaltern positions (see Figure 2).

Construction of the intersectional loom: examples of the application of the tactic

To illustrate the use of the proposed tactic, we will present two examples that are part of a research focused on sex-affective diversity, whose objective is to understand the experiences of motherhood/parenthood of LGBT people. We will comment on two cases: a 24-year-old lesbian medical doctor with no children, who participated in the biographical interviews together with her partner (a 24-year-old bisexual female nurse) and a 21-year-old transgender male activist with no children.

We interviewed 21 people, over 18 years of age, experts in the subject from the academic to the experiential sphere. Mejía's (2000) socio-structural sampling format was applied, incorporating LGBT people and key informants working on issues of sex-affective and gender diversity. We considered socio-structural conditions such as social/legal regulations regarding conjugality/affiliation/gender identity in the place of residence –for which we included participants from Chile, Colombia and Mexico– and personal issues such as age, the experience of having or not having children –since it seemed relevant to us to know the reasons for not having had children, as well as the conditions in which such maternities/fatherhoods are currently being exercised–, among others (Alday-Mondaca and Lay-Lisboa, 2021a and 2021b).

Figure 3 shows the socio-structural sampling scheme. In the first line we thought it was important to distinguish people who could have a structured discourse on the subject, due to their background and previous knowledge, we integrated an activist, a person from academia, a researcher and a psychotherapist as key informants, who may or may not belong to the LGBT community.

Within the unstructured discourse, that is, the one that arises from people's daily life experience and is not necessarily organized by a previous training, we consider it relevant to include LGBT people from different socioeconomic classes. To make a contrast, we included at least one person residing in a place where equal marriage was legal. Subsequently, we considered as an important difference whether or not the person was exercising parenthood at the current time.

Based on the relevant socio-structural conditions, the outline suggested that we interview 19 people; however, we were able to interview two people from academia and research, whose testimonies enriched the conclusions of the study, so that, in the end, 21 people were interviewed. This type of participant selection is recommended for study subjects who are difficult to access, such as those belonging to the LGBTIQ+ community.

Socio-structural sampling derives from the logic of negative case selection applied in comparative case studies (Neiman and Quaranta, 2006; Stake, 1999; Yin, 2008). The sample is chosen under theoretical parameters, directing the search towards negative cases, that is, those that are located at the opposite pole of a certain condition that appears to be relevant. For example, if a cisgender man is interviewed on a topic in which gender identity is presented as an important condition, the next person interviewed should be a transgender woman, in order to locate the edges of the phenomenon and di/convergent elements.

The production of data from the iterative search of negative cases, according to the conditions that emerge as relevant in the research, allows the generation of conclusive information with the objective of weighing the conclusions that are being obtained based on the discourses of those who participate. For example, if respondents who live in an environment where an equal marriage law has not been proclaimed state that the existence of such a law is necessary for the exercise of rights, a case is sought that can account for the effects that the existence of such a law has in their specific context.

The search for negative cases meant that the sample included people from: low, medium and high socioeconomic levels; with primary, secondary, technical, university, master's and doctorate degrees; from rural areas, small cities, regional capitals and national capitals; practicing Catholics, Evangelicals, non-practicing, atheist and agnostics; people of different age ranges and phenotypes; of right, center and left political tendencies; unemployed, with sporadic work and with stable work; people living in settings with gender identity law, without equal marriage and without adoption; without gender identity law, with equal marriage and without adoption; without gender identity law, without equal marriage and without adoption; with gender identity law, with equal marriage and with adoption.

It should be noted that this research has been approved by an authorized Scientific Ethical Committee, complying with legal requirements. To guarantee the confidentiality of the participants, a code was generated to

identify them in all instances of the research, using a self-assigned pseudonym or their initials.

We asked participants to identify relevant categories/identities regarding the exercise of motherhood/parenthood from the perspective of Diversidad Sexo-Afectiva y de Género [Sex-Affective and Gender Diversity] (DSAG). Subsequently, since we have identified a process of camouflage (Alday-Mondaca and Lay-Lisboa, 2021a) that appears in the experiences of LGBT people, we asked them if and how their experience changes by using this camouflage.

The camouflage occurs because LGBT people must face two demands: 1) from the heterocisgender world they are implicitly and explicitly required to behave in accordance with the gender and sexual orientation attributed to them according to the sex with which they are read; and 2) from the world of diversity they are required to homologate their experience to the DSAG (Barrientos *et al.*, 2016). In order to respond to both demands, LGBT people appear/attempt to go unnoticed depending on the environment in which they find themselves (Alday-Mondaca and Lay-Lisboa, 2021a and 2021b; González *et al.*, 2004).

What we seek is to identify the tactics of resistance that each person has constructed and applied in order to confront the subaltern positions in which the participants consider that they are trying to be placed. With this information, the intersectional loom is constructed, including the identities identified by each participant, and a path is traced that is specific to them.

The case of a 24-year-old lesbian woman (Na)

Regarding the category of sexual difference, the participant suggests that males would be the identity with the greatest access to rights/social guarantees/benefits; that women would be in an intermediate position, and that those with the least access would be intersex people. “Men have more benefits than women, in the macro, but in the micro I feel that the heterosexual man has even more benefits” (Na, personal communication, May 17, 2019).

Regarding the gender identity category, the participant considers cisgender men to have the best position, cisgender women an intermediate position, and trans people the most disadvantaged position:

Gay men, because they are men, also tend to have more rights and to hide their personal life, and in the end, lesbian women as women, and also, I feel that they hide it less and take away more opportunities [...] I know people who are trans gay or trans bi and they

also have a trans partner and it is more complicated, but they have fewer rights (Na, personal communication, May 17, 2019).

With regard to the sex-affective orientation category, Na suggests that heterosexual people would have greater access, followed by bisexual people, then gay men and finally lesbian women: “The bisexual entity is like being super, like socially not being shown as bisexual, tends of having more rights” (Na, personal communication, May 17, 2019).

Within the categories/identities that emerge from the participant’s story, the first identity that Na distinguishes as relevant in terms of the exercise of rights is nationality, because despite the fact that treatment should be equal in public services, this is not implemented:

The nationality, of course [...] we see it in primary care, there is a tendency to violate more rights, access to health, access to medicines, obviously, if you are Chilean, you will be privileged, because you are Chilean and the Ministry works for you, in quotation marks, but if you are a foreigner, they kick them, they beat them [bore them], they send them around, over there, over here (Na, personal communication, May 17, 2019).

One of the most influential identities in the development of her life history that Na refers to is professional training, identifying herself as a “Chief Professional”:

[Looking for a job] that would give you more freedom to have your own life and that they wouldn’t say anything to you, or that they would fire you because of that [...] I’m working in a place and I don’t know, and your boss is very homophobic, and he knows your life and for some reason he can fire you and you shit . Brígido [complicated]. And it happens. I remember and it was a very constant thought in me “I’m going to be someone cool [outstanding], so they won’t say anything to me or else I’m going to let my mom down” [...] if you are a doctor, nobody is going to tell you anything, nobody is going to question your life, ¿cachai? [Understood?] No one in the hospital is going to look at that, you know? Because in the chain, you are at the top [...] Even if you’re an engineer, if you’re shitting money, who’s going to care what you do? [...] for example, now that I arrived [the city where she works], in a new environment, it was all the same to me, I said: “No, I have a partner” and they could tell me something, obviously they didn’t tell me anything [...] I think if I hadn’t had like that pega [job] of coming in and puta [a shame], I’m the boss, maybe I would have hidden it, I would have said, “No, I’m single,” “I’m not into something,” or things like that (Na, personal communication, May 17, 2019).

The participant highlights the importance of the purchasing power category in terms of the possibility of accessing maternity/paternity from the DSAG:

If you want to pay an isapre [private health system in Chile], you have to have lucas [money], if you want to ask for a loan you have to have the lucas, or they will look for

you, then, another range of possibilities opens up, if you have the lucas [...] the issue of paying for the treatments, having a good advisor to adopt, you have to have the money. Also to prepare the environment where the child is going to arrive, to have clothes, toys [...] whether it is legal to adopt or medicines to do treatment, all those things, or the same to pay, I don't know, donor, you need money, it is expensive (Na, personal communication, March 9, 2018).

Na points out that lesbian women would be in an advantageous position with respect to gay men in terms of social acceptance of lesbian motherhood. In any case, both lesbian women and gay men would be at a disadvantage compared to heterosexual cisgender couples:

I think that, at least from what I have discussed with my friends, for them it is always more rigid, because of the fact that, between quotation marks, neither one of them is going to get pregnant, you know? So the topic is always like: "Hey, how did they have a child?" And in general, I don't know, in my opinion, a gay homosexual couple always attracts more attention, in a bad way, than a lesbian homosexual couple, as if they are always criticized more, they are targeted more, or it is coarser for people [...] they are always judged more when they are a gay couple [...] In fact, they have to pay more, a surrogate womb is much more money than an artificial insemination (Na, personal communication, May 17, 2019).

From Na's narratives, we constructed her personal intersectional loom, in which we plotted the categories and identities described by her. The gray color identifies the position that the interviewee self-designates in relation to the categories that she distinguishes as relevant to the subject; as well as the path that she describes as her experience, where the sex-affective orientation category is for Na the preponderant place of tension and loss of rights (see the loom in Figure 4).

Regarding the application of the intersectional loom tactic, Na raises the following reflections:

One tends to compensate [she refers to having studied medicine and being a "professional boss"], because one sees oneself in one part [of the intersectional loom] as being very well down and in another one one tries or is kept in one, so, in order to be good with oneself, these things happen [...] it must be very frustrating to feel that you are in all these situations, and then obviously things start to happen with people [...] it's like doing a mental exercise, like "something could be happening to me because I am in this situation, you know, I see myself vulnerable in many situations, so I tend to do that, or this kind of attitude, or, I don't know, to hide in this way" [...] They still continue to discriminate you at work, they will continue to discriminate you to form a family, so bitch, I wish it would be really nice and everyone would do their life as they want, but we are not there yet, if they still continue to discriminate you, they still do not give you access [...] [to do the intersectional loom] is a good exercise (Na, personal communication, May 17, 2019).

The case of a 21-year-old trans man (J.O.)

In our research, some participants may trace more than one path, since the process of camouflage could modify their situation of access to rights/social guarantees/benefits, depending on the information about them (for example, whether or not they are known to be LGBTIQ+ people) and the capacity or not to camouflage themselves in that space:

When doing paperwork, before I changed my name, of course, everyone was like, “Oh, yes come in, it’s your turn, what do you want to do?” and suddenly, of course, because you could see that I was a heterosexual cisgender man and suddenly it comes out like, “No, I’m here to do this because I have problems with my name, since I’m trans” and then I go back to... I kind of lose access and I go back down [referring to the loom], that’s what I suddenly feel, like I get to have that access as long as I don’t talk or certain things are not known (J.O., personal communication, April 23, 2019).

J.O. makes explicit the existence of a hierarchy of access to rights and benefits that is interwoven according to gender identity and sex-affective orientation, based on gender expression. Therefore, LGBTIQ+ people carry out concealment procedures/ fluid disclosure, with the objective of accessing certain rights/benefits in different social environments (Alday-Mondaca and Lay-Lisboa, 2021a and 2021b). This camouflage, as a fluid process of concealment/disclosure, is graphed on the loom by means of two paths: in gray the identity with which the person self-identifies and in black the identity with which the person feels is read in certain social environments (see the loom in Figure 5).

Regarding the use of tactics, J.O. comments:

It is quite interesting to see, because very marked discriminations are crossed [...] it’s clear that two gay fathers are going to have much less access to many things and much more discrimination and social segregation [than two lesbian mothers], it’s like more... like finding out up front that it’s not as bad as you think, but it’s worse. So, anyway, maybe to understand some groups that need immediate support, that may be having a very hard time these days [...] that marginalization influences many aspects [...] This little drawing [the intersectional loom] is quite good (J.O., personal communication, April 23, 2019).

The comparison of the looms (Figures 4 and 5) makes it possible to observe that the categories/identities that are relevant for each person are different. The application of the tactic of the intersectional loom makes it possible to make unique experiences visible, given that the categories/identities are conjugated generating or limiting possibilities of action. At the same time, it allows us to see categories/identities that are repeated

in the discourses of different people, for example, the relevance that both participants give to the educational level:

Of course, specific training [...] I think I am on the borderline between moderate and optimal, because, although I know many things, because of the career, because of educations that I am bordering, but I feel that I still need to learn more (J.O., personal communication, April 23, 2019).

The themes that emerge repeatedly in different looms give rise to consider possible points of joint demands/intervention that could impact a greater number of people; for example, public policies focused on supporting LGBTIQ+ people to stay in formal education and avoid school dropout or specific demands towards the health sector (Alday-Mondaca and Lay-Lisboa, 2021b).

The data analysis process included the memoranda of the researcher, the triangulation in the analysis of data and the conclusions of the work with other researchers and with the participants of the study, processes of constant reflexivity of the research team members, consideration of the convergent and divergent information that emerged in the production of data (Flyvbjerg, 2004).

These reflective processes took in consideration the ethical criteria and political implications that the research team and the participants raised throughout the development of the study. In this, we follow Flyvbjerg (2004), who argues that feedback from the people being studied improves the quality of the work done.

Based on Lugones (2011), we believe that the act of consciously inhabiting the self in the community is relevant, and that participating in this type of reflexive research could contribute to this act of awareness, through unveiling the categories where one occupies a place of oppression and where resistance is made possible. It should not be overlooked that domination is neither homogeneous nor concrete, but takes diffuse forms that are experienced by people in diverse ways, while the dominated/subaltern people are also diverse (De la Maza *et al.*, 2018).

Conclusions

Discussions on how to address macro- and micro-social levels with intersectional analyses include multiple perspectives: some argue that analyses have become unnecessarily introspective and focused on the narrative of identities (Hill-Collins, 2000); while other researchers argue that an emphasis on structures limits the possibility of understanding

the subjective dimensions of power relations (Bilge, 2010). We believe that the intersectional loom methodology proposed here contributes to face this dilemma with a tool that allows us to focus at the same time on macro and micro-social aspects that (re)produce the systems of oppression studied (Alday-Mondaca and Lay-Lisboa, 2021a and 2021b).

The tactic we propose, when carried out in a dialogic-recursive manner, would make it possible to modulate the effect of representation/re-representation of people located in subaltern positions (Spivak, 2011). The biographical interview planned for multiple sessions can become a space for self-observation, self-analysis and re-positioning of the interviewees, by making visible their circumstances and the mechanisms of oppression/discrimination in which they participate, they can be better prepared to organize resistance tactics that allow them to question and subvert access to rights/social guarantees/benefits that have been limited (Alday-Mondaca and Lay-Lisboa, 2021a and 2021b). We believe it is important to highlight that experience and social practice are sources of knowledge, as well as resistance, revolt and the emergence of new positions in the political space (Viveros-Vigoya, 2016).

Research on people belonging to subaltern positions has long been conducted from a hierarchical logic, in asymmetrical relationships (Spivak 2011; Tuhiwai, 2016). The constant revisions by the participants regarding the joint conclusions that are obtained, aims at tensing this asymmetrical relationship that occurs between researcher/researched persons. We try to make the participants feel that they are a central part of the process and exercise their right to have their voices heard with as little intermediation as possible, validating and making their own conclusions derived from their discourses and reported in this study.

We argue that the methodological tactic of the intersectional loom allows us to identify, chart and analyze the implications of subalternity, from an intersectional approach that can be applied to other specific social issues involving minority groups, such as women, indigenous peoples or others. This enables participants to distinguish categories and identities, the hierarchies of the positions of the various identities and the fluid nature of the interactions between categories, which shape concrete experiences of limitation/access to the exercise of rights.

When researching subalternized communities, it is crucial to develop respectful approaches to the experiences of each person and to use knowledge production tools that allow modulating the limitations in the understanding of such experiences, as a result of the internalization of hegemonic models

(Robaldo, 2011). Analyzing discourses of people in non-hegemonic positions makes it possible to unveil the different types of oppression that occur as a consequence of the articulation of gender, class, race and other identities. We believe that the social sciences could benefit from the use of this tactic in their approach to non-hegemonic groups, admitting that accessing them and representing them from the academy generates power dynamics, which we must recognize and deal with in effective ways, in order to avoid (re) producing dynamics of subalternity (Spivak, 2011).

One of the limitations that we can identify in the application of this tactic is that we have used it in individual interviews and in pairs; it remains to be tested its possibility and usefulness in group formats of knowledge production, where we believe it could also serve to support the emergence of common problems, collective discomfort and the organization of demands (Alday-Mondaca and Lay-Lisboa, 2021b).

The application of the tactic requires that the interviewer has theoretical knowledge about subalternity and intersectionality, with the objective of being able to detect categories/identities that people may not explicitly recognize, and thus facilitate their appearance in the discourses and evaluate them together with the interviewees.

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Annex

Figure 1

Example of intersectional loom

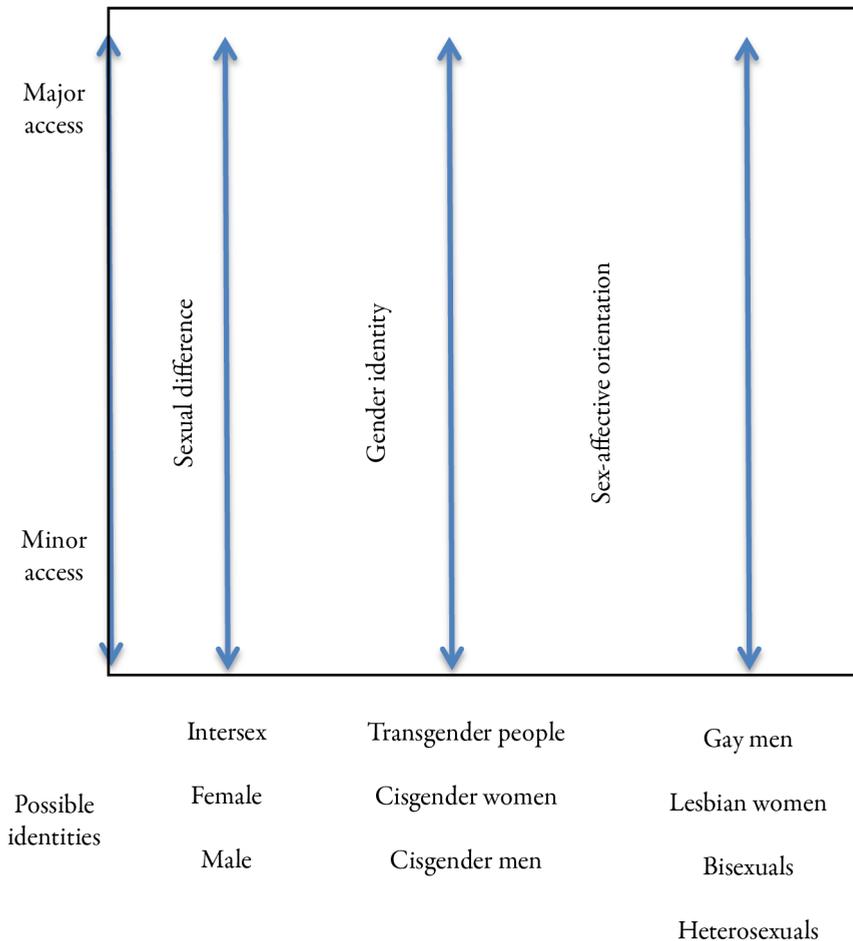
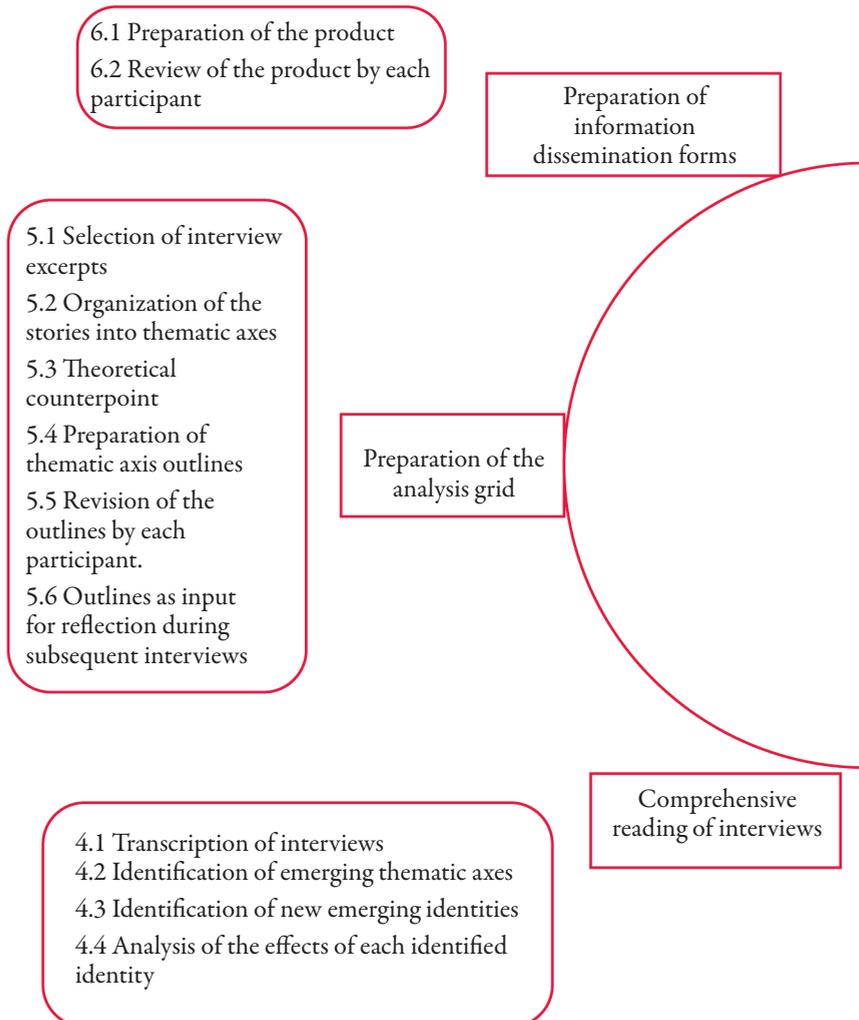
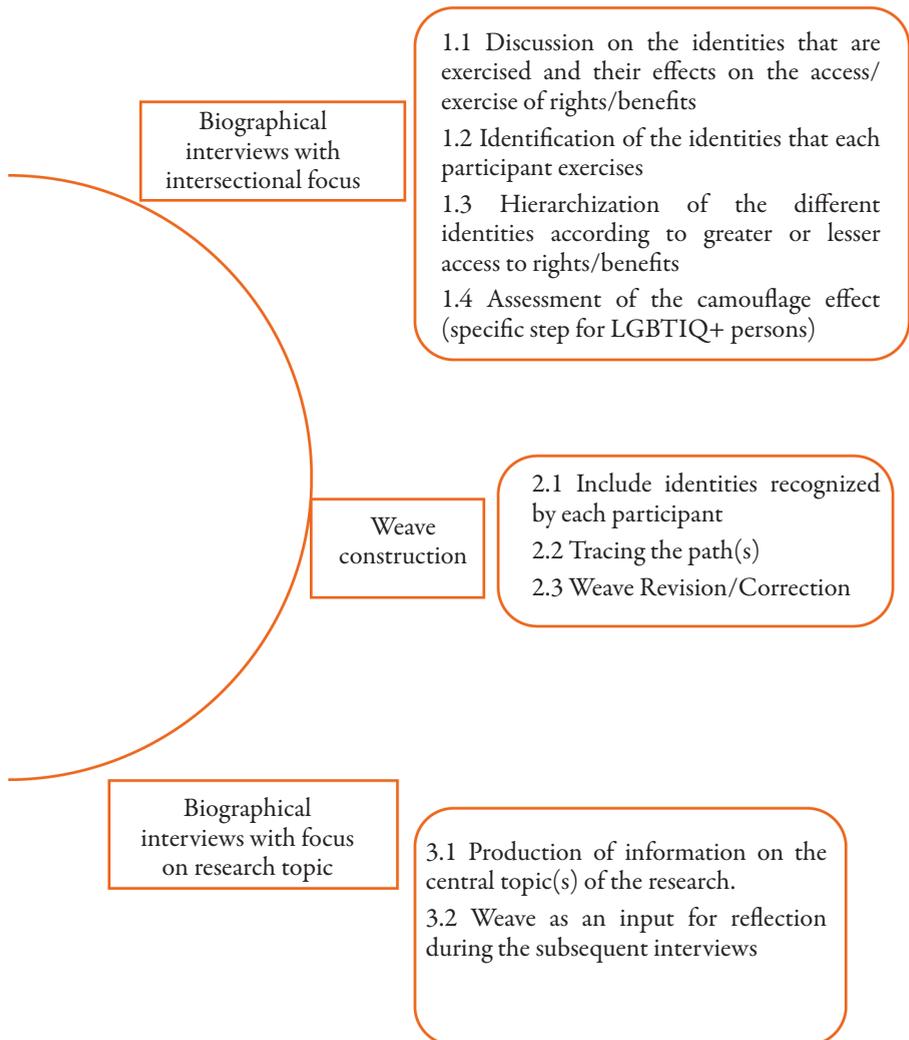


Figure 2

Intersectional loom production process





Source: Adapted from Alday-Mondaca and Lay-Lisboa (2021b: 5).

Figure 3

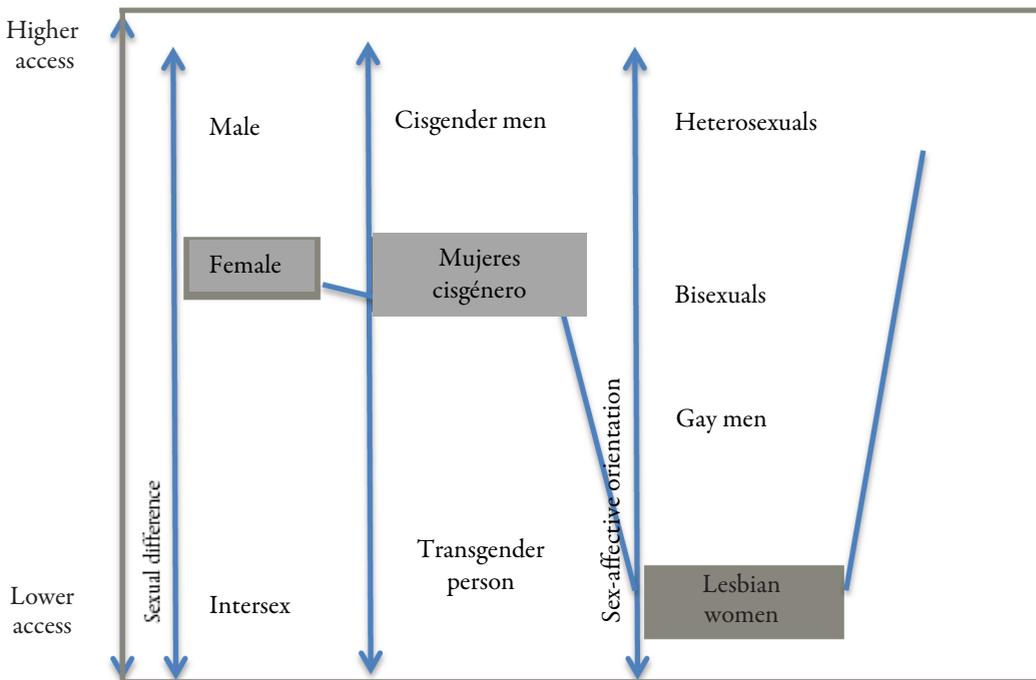
Socio-structural sampling

Speech	Structured				Unstructured		
	Activists	Academy	Research	Psychotherapy			
	1	2	3	4			
				Social structure	High average	Media	
					5		
				Legal structure	With equal marriage		
					7		
					Parenthood		
	Gender Identity						
	Sex-affective orientation						

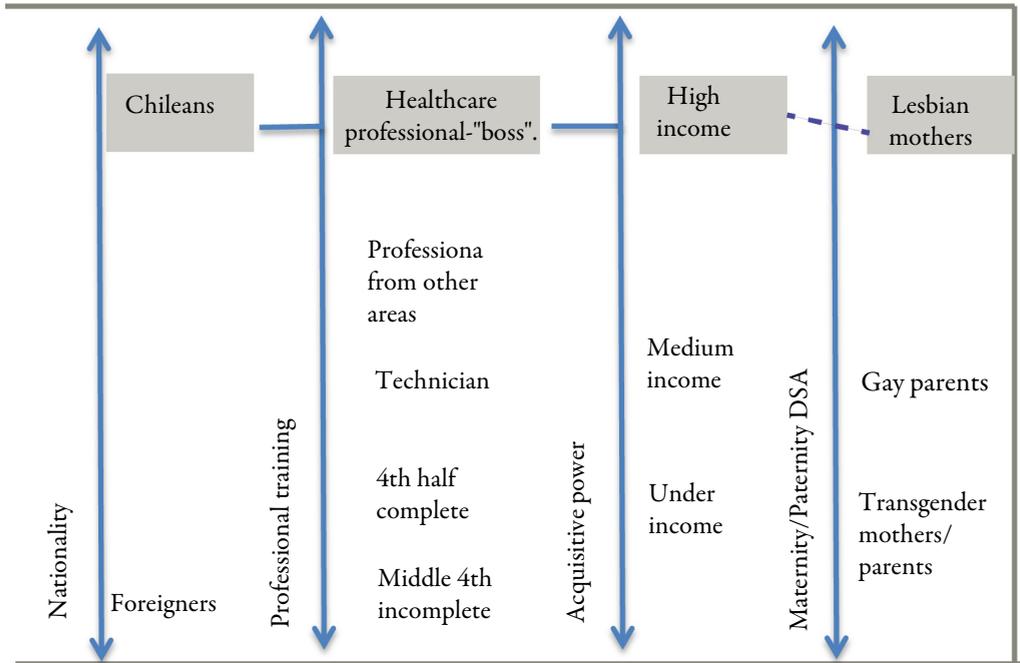
Unstructured										
Media									Low	
No equal marriage									6	
In practice					No practice					
Cis				Transgender		Cis			Trans	
Man		Woman		Male	Female	Male		Female		
				8	9					
Homosexual		Bisexual				Homosexual		Bisexual		
12	13	14	15			16	17	18	19	
Lesbian		Bisexual				Lesbiana		Bisexual		

Source: Retrieved from: Alday-Mondaca and Lay-Lisboa (2021b: 4).

Figure 4
Intersectional loom of “Na”



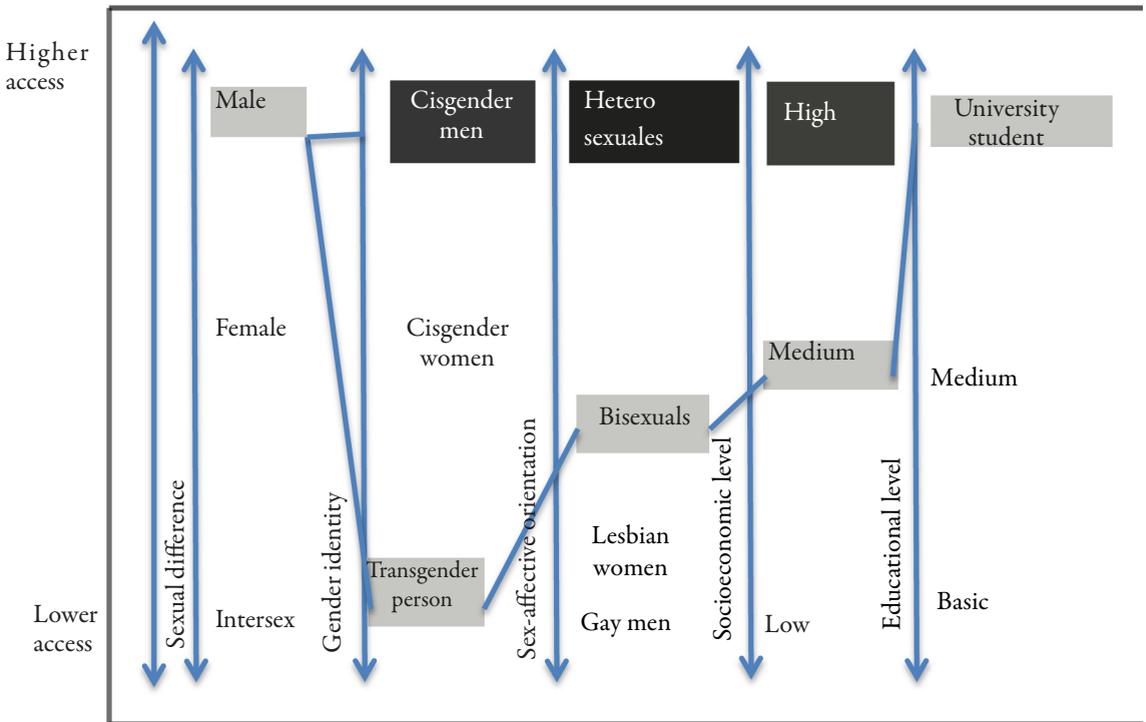
Identities



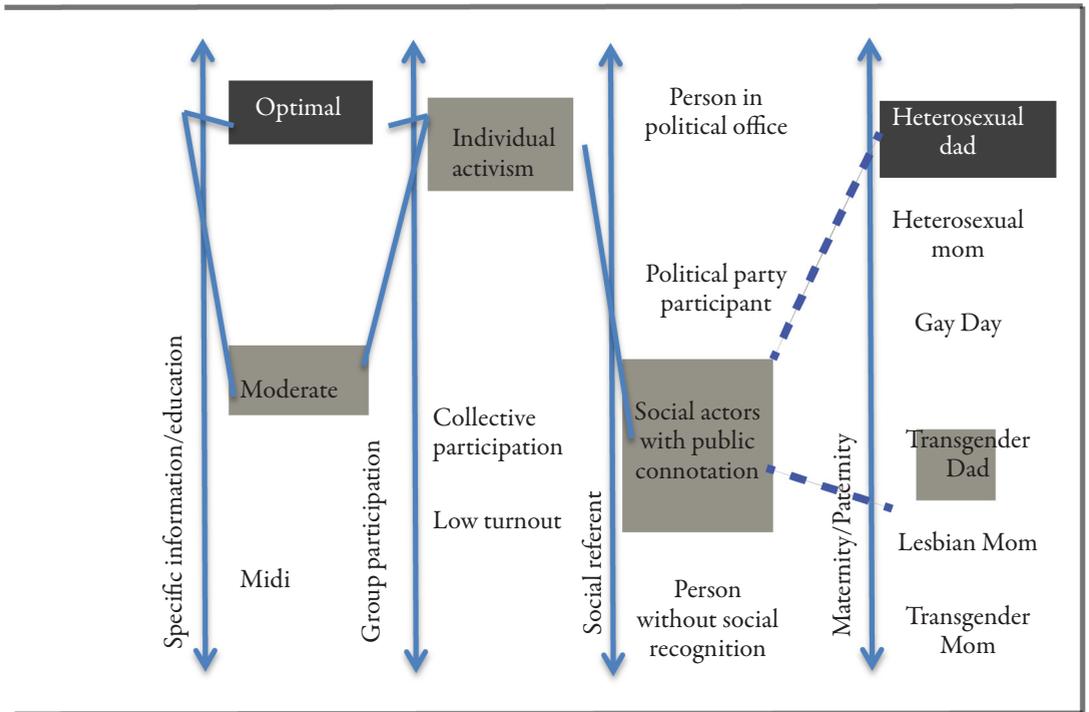
Source: Own elaboration based on intersectional interview.

Figure 5

Intersectional loom of "J.O."



Identities



Source: Own elaboration based on intersectional interview.

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