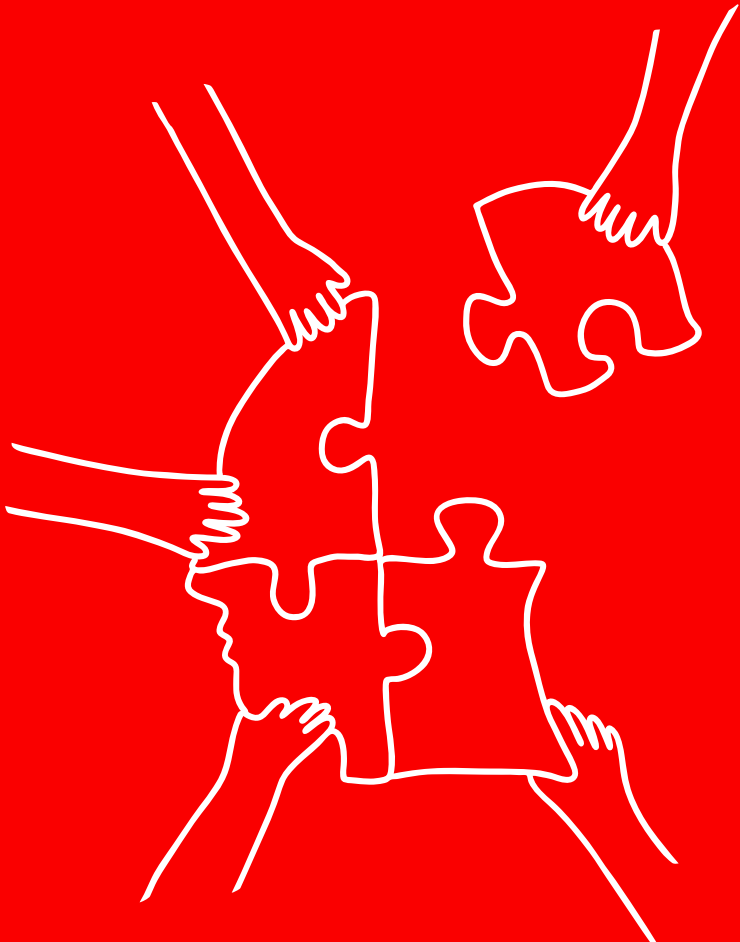


Intersectionality

HATE INTO ACTION
TRACKERS



Intersectionality

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GENDER IDENTITY

What is identity?

The notion of identity, in sociology, in ethno-anthropological sciences and in other social sciences, concerns the perception that a person has of themselves on an individual and social level; therefore identity is the combination of specific features that make the individual unique and unmistakable, hence it is what makes us different from each other. Identity is not immutable, it rather transforms with growth and social changes..



One of the extraordinary characteristics of humankind is that of displaying an immense variety of physical and, mostly, socio-cultural features, despite belonging to the same biologically homogenous race.

While in a more primitive era different populations did not possess advanced power and war instruments, with the triumph of capitalism the aspiration towards total domain of the territory and, consequently, towards control over others grew

exponentially, imposing social control through the obligation to homologate.

<https://hbr.org/2018/05/the-3-types-of-diversity-that-shape-our-identities>

<https://gap.hks.harvard.edu/defending-sexgender-binary-role-gender-identification-and-need-closure>

Patriarchy, just as racism, sexism, islamophobia, ableism, homophobia and all other systems of oppression is a power assignation system, not a simple "incorrect or discriminatory" individual behavior.

However, all discrimination systems channel into a single concept of supremacy of some human beings over the others. We cannot, therefore, properly talk about systematic oppression without talking about intersectionality.

AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH TO TACKLE HATE

Birth of the concept of intersectionality: brief history

Intersectionality is a useful concept to comprehend and analyze how different dimensions of identity (such as gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, social class, physical and mental abilities, religion) intersect with each other, creating one-of-a-kind experiences of discrimination or privilege.

Such term was academically coined in the 80s by the afro-american lawyer and activist Kimberly Crenshaw during a judicial process to emphasize how black women perceive discrimination experiences that cannot be fully understood when solely considering gender or ethnical-racial belonging, since they suffer specific oppressions specifically resulting from the interaction of both social dimensions.

Actually, one of the early written records of the relevance of this concept dates back to the mid-1800s, also in the USA thanks to Sojourner Truth who intervened in the Congress for the rights of women in Ohio, held in Akron, and gave a speech that later became famous under the name of "Ain't I a Woman" (Youtube link Kerry Washington). Sojourner Truth was an Afro-American enslaved woman who managed to emancipate herself and become a freewoman, by engaging with the civil rights movements of women and black people from a young age.

In her speech, she suggests that the objectives of the fight of white women seemed almost opposite to those she aspired to as a black woman. At the forefront, the right to work that she had never been denied, but rather imposed

on her by the enslaved black woman condition. Secondly, the duty of care jobs to which women were relegated in a domestic environment, that, in her case, was conversely a denial of the right to stay home with children. Such a right was denied to her in that, not only did she not have her own house, but above all her motherhood was shattered, since her children were even sold.

In terms of activism, Intersectionality is an approach that wants to enhance the complexity of human identities and analyze in a much more comprehensive and thorough way the injustices and inequalities in all social and institutional aspects, providing essential tools to create a more inclusive and equitable society.

Key principles of intersectionality

What are the instruments to adopt an intersectional approach to our sensitivity and analysis? Here are some principles that can constitute a useful guide.

Multitude of identities

As underlined in part 1, each person has a unique combination of social identities that influence their experiences and that may determine the way in which they are treated by society. A single experience as a "woman" or as a "black person" does not exist, since every identity is further influenced by other social and identity-related factors.

Intersecting oppressions

the forms of discrimination (sexism, racism, homophobia, classism, ableism) do not act isolatedly, but intersect with each other. For instance, a black lesbian

woman can experience discrimination not just as a woman or a black person or a homosexual person, but rather as a consequence of the intersection of all these identities.

Centrality of complexity and overcoming generalizations

Intersectionality encourages to acknowledge that social problems are complex and that people's experiences cannot be adequately understood with a monolithic analysis that isolates a single dimension of identity.

Why does intersectionality matter?

01

A MORE COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF DISCRIMINATION

Intersectionality provides a lens to comprehend discrimination and oppression experiences more accurately, going beyond single and rigid etiquettes and recognizing the complexity of identities.

02

VISIBILITY AND PRIORITY FOR THE EXPERIENCES OF MARGINALIZED AND UNDERREPRESENTED CATEGORIES

People with complex and multiple identities often remain invisible in social movements that focus on a single cause. For instance, in women rights movements, specific issues experienced by black women, women with disabilities or queer women are sometimes neglected or considered of secondary importance.

03

MORE EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE POLICIES AND ACTIONS

Intersectionality serves as a guide to develop policies, programmes and social actions that account for people's diverse experiences, avoiding solutions that favor a group to the detriment of others.

04

ACADEMIC RESEARCH AND DATA INTERPRETATION

Intersectionality promotes the collection of disaggregated data whose analysis is based on multiple aspects, considering different dimensions of identity and their interactions. This approach enables to produce more accurate analysis and statistics on discrimination or exclusion phenomena, avoiding generalizations that would otherwise obscure the needs of specific groups. For example, women face different challenges in the job market depending on their ethnicity, social class and physical abilities, which require targeted policies. Furthermore, intersectionality invites to take into account the context in which data are collected and interpreted, keeping their distance from oversimplified views.

05

AVOID UNINTENDED HARMFUL EFFECTS

The absence of an intersectional approach can lead to unintended consequences, even when meaning well. For instance:

- Women's protests in Iran: current protests for female self-determination in Iran were interpreted by some Western feminist movements as a demand for emancipation from hijab, thus reducing the complex struggle for freedom to a mere rejection of the veil. Actually, the right to freedom

for many Iranian and muslim women represents the freedom of choice, meaning the choice of whether or not to wear the veil without suffering from stigma. This misinterpretation had not only ignored the nuances of the issue, but also reinforced the stereotype "muslim women = oppressed", fostering Western islamophobia. Besides, historically, wearing the veil has also represented an anti-classist resistance symbol.

- Prohibition of plastic straws: many western administrations have banned plastic straws to counteract climate change, without considering the needs of people with disabilities or chronic diseases that require this tool to feed themselves or take medications. Sustainable alternatives, such as bamboo or glass straws, need to be sterilized and can harm those who suffer from tremors; edible alternatives, like pasta, can cause allergies or be ingested accidentally. An absolute prohibition threatens to increase the stigma towards people with disabilities that use plastic straws.

Possible solutions: to reduce such issues, it is crucial to involve those affected in the decision making processes, such as Muslim women for self-determination issues and people with disabilities in environmental policies, so as to adopt solutions that truly reflect their needs.

The imperative of a multi-sectoral approach for an effective combating to hate phenomena and speech

Which steps should be undertaken to counter hate culture?



Investigate and counteract institutional and normative violence

Hate speech is often originated and legitimized by institutions or social norms. Consequently, counteracting hate speech cannot disregard actions towards the reform of political and institutional praxis.



Analyze the role of culture and media

Traditional and digital media play an immense role in the diffusion and maintenance of harmful stereotypes. The partial or distorted representations of marginalized groups, especially women, encourage negative narratives that foster hate speech.



Promote the voices and actions of resistance of those affected

The experiences and perspectives of people that deal with hate speech on a daily basis have to be at the core of every intervention. It is necessary to involve communities in an authentic and disinterested way, to let them guide the dialogue on how to counteract the phenomena. Furthermore, combating hate speech

requires an extensive and intersectional network: establishing alliances with organizations that operate in other fields of social justice is the key to create a coordinated and sympathetic response that effectively addresses hate speech in many respects.



Promoting Awareness of Microaggressions and Discriminatory Language

Aside from explicit attacks, hate speech includes microaggressions, as well as subtler forms of racist, sexist, and discriminatory language that are harder to recognize at first glance. However, these forms of speech, often downplayed, can have cumulative harmful effects, especially on individuals belonging to multiple minority groups.

For instance, statements like "there are too many immigrants" or "women are too independent," while they may seem like simple opinions, contain problematic elements that can generate, reinforce, or justify discriminatory attitudes, generalizations, and a contraption between "us and them." Moreover, they imply that certain groups inherently represent a problem or even a social threat, thus suggesting that their presence or freedom of action should be restricted.



Educating on the Management of Digital Platforms and Online Safety

Digital platforms have the potential to amplify hate speech and often lack

effective moderation systems, as they typically rely on generalized algorithms. To address this issue, a multi-pronged approach can be adopted. On one hand, it's important to provide tools and resources for online safety, particularly for those at higher risk, by teaching the use of filters, blocking features, and reporting mechanisms to protect individuals from hate speech. On the other hand, raising public awareness about responsible and informed platform use is critical. This includes understanding the mental health impacts of exposure to harmful stereotypes and recognizing how seemingly "simple statements" can spread on a massive scale, leading to unpredictable and far-reaching consequences.

Examples of Hate Speech in Europe

To counter hate speech, it is essential to recognize it. Here are some examples of discriminatory behaviours commonly found across Europe.

HATE SPEECH AGAINST BLACK WOMEN: MISOGYNY AND RACISM

Black women often face hate speech that combines sexism and racism. Unlike sexist remarks directed at white women, those targeting Black women frequently include racist stereotypes, such as being "aggressive" or "hypersexualized," alongside sexist stereotypes such as being "incapable of being delicate or intelligent." This form of hatred attacks Black women not only as women, but specifically as Black women, targeting both their gender within a patriarchal system and their racial identity as marginalized individuals.

HATE SPEECH AGAINST MUSLIM WOMEN: ISLAMOPHOBIA AND SEXISM

Muslim women may endure hate speech that merges Islamophobia with sexism. Due to their recognizable aesthetic markers, such as the hijab or other

religious symbols, they are often perceived as oppressed or uncultured, while simultaneously seen as a “threat” to society. Hate speech against them not only attacks their religion but also portrays them as submissive women, reinforcing both Islamophobic and sexist prejudices.

HATE SPEECH AGAINST RACIALIZED LGBTQ+ PEOPLE: HOMOPHOBIA AND RACISM

Racialized LGBTQ+ individuals may face hate speech that blends racism with homophobia or transphobia. For instance, a Black gay man might encounter hate speech that not only targets his sexual orientation, but also relies on racist stereotypes, such as “sexual exoticization” or the perception of being “dangerous.” These attacks are intensified by the intersection of all of these identities.

HATE SPEECH AGAINST BLACK TRANS PEOPLE: RACISM, MISOGYNY, AND TRANSPHOBIA

Black or racialized trans people, particularly women, are often exposed to extremely violent hate speech attacks combining transphobia, misogyny, and racism. They are attacked both for their transgender identity and their racial identity, facing threats and stereotypes that are transphobic, sexist, and racist. For example, they may be targeted as being “too masculine” or “hypersexualized” as “objects of desire.” This often translates into a significantly higher risk of violence compared to that faced by white trans people or Black cisgender individuals.

HATE SPEECH AGAINST WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES: ABLEISM AND SEXISM

Women with disabilities may experience hate speech that mocks their disability (ableism) while also diminishing them as women. They might be labeled as

"useless" or "incapable of having a relationship," perpetuating prejudices that strip them of autonomy and dignity. This type of hate speech is amplified by the combination of sexism and ableism, furthering paternalism and infantilization often directed at people with disabilities in a framework of gender-based inferiority.

HATE SPEECH AGAINST FOREIGN WOMEN: XENOPHOBIA AND CLASSISM

Foreign women in Europe, especially those from countries viewed as "poor" or "underdeveloped," face hate speech combining racism/xenophobia with classism. They are often labeled as "job stealers," "inferior," or looked down upon because of their economic status and country of origin. Hate speech also targets their femininity and stereotypical social roles, justifying exploitative working conditions as more "acceptable" for these women compared to European women. Some rhetoric suggests that their immigrant status makes them inherently less deserving of rights that European women claim as a given.

HATE SPEECH AGAINST QUEER WOMEN IN RELIGIOUS CONTEXTS: ISLAMOPHOBIA AND HOMOPHOBIA

Queer women belonging to religious minority groups in Europe may face attacks from two fronts: homophobic hate speech targeting their sexual orientation and Islamophobic hate speech targeting their faith or cultural background. For example, a queer Muslim woman might face hostility from within her religious community due to her sexual orientation, as well as from external groups harboring Islamophobic prejudices.

HATE SPEECH AGAINST ASIAN LGBTQ+ PEOPLE: RACISM AND HOMOPHOBIA

Asian LGBTQ+ men often face hate speech blending homophobia with specific racist stereotypes, such as being perceived as "passive" or "submissive," reducing their identity to negative racial and sexual orientation-based stereotypes. This form of discrimination can also occur within the LGBTQ+ community itself, where Asian bodies are fetishized or racialized based on generalized stereotypes. Such attitudes flatten the complexity of individual identities rather than transcending superficial appearances.

HATE SPEECH AGAINST TRANS PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES: ABLEISM AND TRANSPHOBIA

Trans people with disabilities are often victims of cross-cutting hate speech targeting both their gender identity and their disability. This includes ableist stereotypes portraying them as "weak" or "unfit for society," combined with transphobic rhetoric that denies or mocks their existence.

HATE SPEECH AGAINST INDIGENOUS AND POOR WOMEN: RACISM AND SEXISM

Indigenous women living in poverty face hate speech that combines classism, racism, and sexism. They are often depicted as "uncultured" or "uneducated" and treated as "inferior" due to their cultural background and economic status. This is achieved through language specifically designed to devalue and dehumanize them on multiple levels.

These examples highlight the importance of intersectionality in understanding the nuances of hate speech, since they enable us to reveal how hate and prejudice intensify when looking from a more complex perspective, targeting individuals based on their overlapping identities, structurally marginalized, in which one can recognize themselves.

GLOSSARY

Gender binary

According to transstudent.org, gender binary is "a system that considers gender as consisting of two opposite and exclusive categories called 'male and female.'" These categories are defined by gender stereotypes—generalized and rigid beliefs about the characteristics, behaviours, roles, and qualities attributed to men and women. These stereotypes impose specific expectations and limitations on genders, often rooted in deep-seated cultural and social ideas, disregarding individual differences.

For example:

Men are often viewed as "strong," "rational," and "competitive."

Women are frequently described as "emotional," "sensitive," and "more inclined to family care."

Gender stereotypes can negatively impact individuals, limiting their choices and opportunities while perpetuating inequality in social, educational, and professional contexts.

Eurocentrism

Egyptian economist and political scientist Samir Amin defines Eurocentrism as the ideological distortion that reconstructs all human history through the lens of "white superiority." It involves analyzing social and cultural behaviors predominantly from the perspective of traditional Western European ideals and values.

Gender identity vs. biological sex

Historically, the concepts of gender and biological sex were used interchangeably. Recently, gender has been recognized as a separate category of socialization. Gender identity refers to the self-definition each person assigns themselves based on their sense of belonging to a particular gender. Biological sex, on the other hand, is primarily associated with the genital and genetic characteristics with which a person is born.

Misogyny

From the Greek μ *misēō*, "to hate", and *gyn*, "woman", misogyny literally means the hatred of women, perpetuated by men or even by other women. It can manifest in various forms, such as aversion to the presence of women in certain social contexts or the mockery of certain attitudes deemed socially "feminine".

Privilegio

Reni Eddo-Lodge, a British-Nigerian journalist, describes privilege as the absence of a problem: White privilege is the absence of the consequences of racism. The absence of structural discrimination, the absence of your race being seen as a problem before everything else, the absence of "lower likelihood of success because of my race".

Describing and defining this absence, to some extent, means to disrupt the centrality of whiteness and reminds white people that their experience is not normal for the rest of us. It is, of course, much easier to identify when you do not

have it, and you look as an outsider at the insularity of whiteness. I once wished whiteness, but deep in my mind, I knew that deluding myself into assimilation would only make me a poor imitation of something I could never be. But white privilege is the fact that you are white, your race will almost certainly have a positive impact on the trajectory of your life in some way. And you probably will not even notice it.

Source: Reni Eddo-Lodge "Why I no longer talk to White people about race"

Social positioning

Social positioning refers to the way a certain person is perceived by society and, as a consequence, whether they experience certain discriminations or privileges, but it is also the point of view from which one is granted or denied authority to address a particular issue.

The practice of positioning also allows to highlight the level of power, or more precisely, the scope of action, granted to a person to intervene in (and possibly change) certain systemic issues.

Racialisation

Omi and Winant define racialisation as a socio-historical process through which racial categories were created based on presumed physical characteristics and assigned a specific role within the socio-economic hierarchy. In this sense, "racial" classifications exist as a consequence of racism, which is, at its core, a system for

the distribution of power.

Source: Michael Omi and Howard Winant, On the Theoretical Concept of Race in Race, Identity, and Representation in Education, ed. C. McCarthy and W. Crichlow (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 3–10.

EXERCISE

a) The privilege Walk

The Privilege Walk is a useful exercise to encourage students to reflect on inequalities and different levels of privilege within a society. This exercise allows participants to picture in a concrete and tangible way how privileges and challenges can vary from one person to another. Here's how to organise the activity in the classroom:

01

PREPARATION

Briefly explain to students what privilege means: a social advantage or a favourable condition that cannot be changed, but that some people have due to factors entirely unrelated to merit, such as racial-ethnic category, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, etc.

Encourage students to participate in the activity without judgement, maintaining respect for everyone's experiences.

02

BEGINNING OF THE ACTIVITY

Ask the students to line up a starting line, side by side, in a large space like a courtyard or a sufficiently spacious room.

Explain that you will read a series of statements, and that they will have to take a step forward or backwards, based on the instructions given.

03

CONDUCTING THE PRIVILEGE WALK

Carefully read every statement. For each statement, those who feel represented by it will take a step forward or backwards, depending on the sentence.

For example:

"If your parents are graduates, take a step forward."

"If you had to work during your studies to economically help your family, take a step backwards"

"If you have always had free access to healthcare, take a step forward."

"If you have always been able to express your identity without fear, take a step forward."

Continue with several statements, covering various themes such as education, health, access to basic goods, security, gender, and sexual orientation.

04

FINAL REFLECTION

After reading all the statements, students will find themselves at varying distances from the starting line. Invite them to look around and reflect on their position compared to the others.

Conclude the activity with a group discussion. Ask questions like:

"How do you feel seeing the different positions where everyone ended up?"

"Did you expect to be where you are?"

"What privileges did you notice having or not having?"

Encourage a respectful discussion where everyone can express their feelings without feeling judged, highlighting that the different starting points are not about

personal merit but about circumstances and opportunities.

05

PURPOSE AND CONCLUSION

The aim of the Privilege Walk is to raise awareness among students on how privileges (or its absence) can influence access to opportunities, regardless of effort or ability.

Highlight that privilege should not evoke guilt, but foster awareness and responsibility to promote greater empathy and inclusion within the community. Explain that the activity is not a judgment of any individual, but a tool to better understand social dynamics.

The Privilege Walk is a powerful exercise to highlight differences that often go unnoticed, fostering a more empathetic and inclusive learning environment.

N.B.

Trigger warning: for some people who are accustomed to being associated with disadvantaged situations it is advisable to start with a brief introduction asking for their consent, acknowledging the potential for feeling particularly exposed and stigmatised by the position of disadvantage they may find themselves in at the end of the exercise.

Therefore, in cases of limited space or to make the visual impact less traumatic or discriminating against disabled people, the exercise can be adapted by using fingers and lowering one finger for each statement that does not apply.

b) Share your Privilege!

PREPARATION

Make a list of all your privileges, meaning all the favourable conditions that positively influenced your access to certain opportunities and are entirely unrelated to merit or any actions you have taken.

DEVELOPMENT

In pairs, discuss and explain how one or more of the privileges listed can be used to dismantle the oppressive system that upholds these advantages and to help provide access to such opportunities for another structurally marginalised group. For example: if I am a man and I am invited to a panel where I notice that only men are being represented, I could give up my spot to a female colleague or insist as a condition of my participation that the panel's composition be redistributed more equitably and inclusively.

FINAL CONSIDERATION

Share with the whole class the examples and the meaningful insights that came up from the pair activity. Reflect as a group on whether there are concrete actions you can take as a group to enhance or improve the participation of structurally marginalised groups in certain activities or opportunities.

CONCLUSIONS

According to il Barometro dell'Odio 2024 by Amnesty International Italia (<https://www.amnesty.it/barometro-dellodio-delegittimare-il-dissenso/>), offensive, discriminatory and hate-inciting contents continue to grow, and are amplified by television media which contribute to normalising its spread. The report identifies that the more targeted groups online are, in order: Roma people, migrants, activists advocating for the right to protest, women and members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Society is sliding towards increasing authoritarianism, fueled by growing social intolerance and hate. This trend threatens not only traditionally marginalised categories, but also the fundamental democratic values. Counteracting this trend is, therefore, essential: it doesn't only imply protecting those who are already at the margins, but also safeguarding democracy itself. Committing to a cultural and legal change thus becomes a collective priority to prevent prejudice and verbal violence from leading to a more closed and authoritarian society, undermining the principles of equality and inclusion.

HATE INTO ACTION
TRACKERS



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