How women, designated as poor, reconstruct identities and ways of life? — the PRSI or the processes of re-qualifying social-identity

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ABSTRACT

The sociological qualitative analysis of social identities and of the meanings of social action, the grounded theory and the 'writing as analytical praxis qualitative-method' have permitted me the co-creation of women biographies of un-qualifying/re-qualifying — oral discourses about their migration at the Pays Basque.

I argue that the "poverty studies traditions" reproduce and contains seven (7) epistemological obstacles and formulations on negative terms, and I underline theoretical contributors to the Identities Sociology, discussing the oppositions "personal/social" (Social-Psi), and "determined-objectives identities/assumed-subjective identities" (Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons and Pierre Bourdieu). So, I define "social identities" as the way the social-actor becomes a social-sujet (on the tradition of Touraine), considering three components (to explain).

Defining oral discourses as the condition to co-construct the social experience, I identify and explain, at the re-qualifying processes: 1) several reaction phases – on positive terms – and social-identities territory's implicated, as multiple meanings of the social action and identity-strategies (Risc, Strategic-Sacrifice); 2) four identity resources-capitals negotiated, affected, connected or stimulated.

Keywords: social disqualification, poverty, sociology of the identities, oral data, qualitative methodologies, women

Introduction

This paper addresses the centrality of the comprehensive and interpretative analysis of oral discourses about the social identities re-qualification — social identities re-qualification. Thus, oral communication is here considered as a main condition to co-construct "the social experience" (Dubet, 1996). I begin by situating the two axioms or prerequisites of our argument and the paper is organized along two other parts, in

order to support a methodological comprehensive approach of women designated as poor who have reconstructed their identities and ways of life — processes of re-qualifying social-identity (PRSI). This methodological comprehensive approach of the social trajectories' change suppose and needs an explanation, 1) in one hand, of the analysis about the social action's logics by the François Dubet; and, 2) in the other hand, of the identities as transactions processes presented by Claude Dubar (2006, 1995, 1994, 1992, 1991) — both contents articulated at the 2nd part of the text.

Two axioms or prerequisites

This paper is part of researches that the author has made since the late 80's concerning popular assumptions and the doctrines and concepts attributable to "the poor" (Toscano 1990, 1992, 1993a, 1993b, 1993c, 1994, 1995a, 1995b; Geremek, 1987). Those reflections leaded (Toscano 2002, 2006) to postulate:

1) the poverty studies' tradition carry on seven epistemological and positivistic obstacles and dichotomies:
    a) material *versus* not material and spiritual attributes;
    b) moralism (dignity *versus* not dignity);
    c) individual *versus* social problem and causes;
    d) condition that remains to the actor's pole *versus* condition that remains to the system's pole;
    e) naturalism;
    f) ethnocentrism (socio-centrism);
    g) androcentrism.
2) the tradition of poverty studies evidences the problem formulation's on negative terms — What is poverty? How do people get poor?

The instant paper, emerged from these two arguments and advances a proposition alternative to 2) — arguing, based on the *Sociology of the Identities*, that we may formulate the problem on "positive terms", such as "may people get out of the condition designed as poverty? How do poor leave that condition?". So, the approach of the dis-/un-qualification (Paugam, 1994) pointed us to study the un-qualification/re-qualification of women's trajectories (Toscano 2008, 2010, 2011). Consequently, with this text we intend to show the importance of the biographic sociological analysis of the un-qualification/re-qualification's trajectories.

The sense or the social action and
the identities as transactions processes

The present text points to an introduction of the F. Dubet's (1996) approach of the logic (senses, meanings) of the social action, as well points to a summary of the theoretical initiators of the *Sociology of the Identities*, its central issues and dichotomies.

Guided by the grounded theory we selected the "writing as an analytical praxis and qualitative method" (Paillé, & Mucchielli, 2003) as the main qualitative method of our analysis of 31 migrant trajectories of Portuguese women living in the (Spanish) Pays Basque. Considering our objective — formulate the problem on "positive terms": how the social actors designed as poor "get out" of this condition? — we adopted and followed three sociological perspectives:

1) that of Serge Paugam (1994), concerned to the social de-/un-qualification, and resituating the critical point of George Simmel;
2) another, much more generic, which consists on a large approach of the social identities;
3) and the F. Dubet's (1996) study of the meanings and logics of social action.

Although the F. Dubet's formulation is the focal point here, we need to comprise and attend, briefly, to the central discussion contained in 2). In fact, we dedicated more attention and had crescent interest on the logics of the social action after several reflections around the conceptualization of the "social identity". By reviewing some sociological approaches with detail — such as the founding fathers É. Durkheim (Toscano, 2010, pp. 24-28; 199), K. Marx (2010, pp. 36-41; 1999), and the last classic T. Parsons (2010, pp. 29-35; 2011); or others as Pierre Bourdieu (1964, 1968, 1972, 1979, 1980a, 1980b, 1993; Toscano, 2010, pp. 42-46), Anthonny Giddens (Toscano, 2010, pp. 96-99), or C. Dubar (2006, 1995, 1994, 1992, 1991; Toscano, 2010, p. 89) — in order to be acquainted with the three backgrounds and the following three assumptions that sociology of the identities rises.

The first is a central opposition: determined-external-objective identities versus assumed-internal-subjective identities. That opposition was already patent at the Socio-Psychologists who first focused on the social identity issue — the Bristol's researchers Henri Tajfel and John Turner (Toscano, 2010, pp. 47-58). It was clearly assumed by the sociological constructivism of Georg Simmel and Max Weber (Toscano, 2010, pp. 59-65) or, later, on Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann proposals (Toscano, 2010, pp. 75-77); and was clearly present at the evocations of the ethnomethodology (Toscano, 2010, pp. 72-74), at the principles of the rational choice theory (Toscano, 2010, pp.78-85) and even at the interactionism's programmes (for example: Mead, 2010: 65-68; Goffman, 1959, 1963, & 1987; Toscano, 2010, pp, 68-71).

Thereafter follows the perspective focused on the logics, the abilities and the powers of the social actors. In fact this one is opposite to the approach centred on the conditions and limits imposed by of different social contexts, social situations, or social relations and interactions (actors power *versus* system determinism).

Finally, the social identity is conceived as a plural (identities) and complex process embracing both objectivity and inter-subjectivity, and contextualized to its specific spaces- and times.

This reflection helped us to become conscious concerning the innovative theoretical contributors to the Sociology of the Identities of authors of the 80's[1] and the 90's[2]. But also helped to remain strong within our theme: if we want to learn — therefore, to study/research — how people reconstruct their social condition of 'poor' thus, we have to attend, and conceive and characterize the social identities as processes and transactions co-produced along the social interactions.

F. Dubet's approach has been central to discuss and refuse the classical oppositions: personal *versus* social, internal *versus* external, static *versus* dynamic. Actually, it helps

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[1]   Jean-Claude Deschamps (1980; 1982), Marisa Zavalloni (1983), Lorenzi-Cioldi (1988).

[2]   At the 90' we may refer Isabel Taboada-Léonetti, Carmel Camilleri, or Joseph Kastersztein (1990); than, Claude Dubar (1991, 1995); Edmond Mark Lipiansky (1992); at Portugal, Lígia Amâncio (1993); the key-ideas of Barbara Lloyd, Suzie Guth, Jean-Paul Codol, & Georges Lemaine (1994); Carmencita Serino, Maritza Montero, Deschamps e Devos, or Darío Páez (1996); as all the works of A. Giddens.

us by situating the integration logic as classically associated with É. Durkheim's theory and successors; the interaction logic, as classically associated with the sociological interactions theories; and other well known approaches associated to the logics of limited utility and rationality and the negotiation logic. The most important argument points to the idea that, for each of these major four sociological schools, the action is exclusively guided by one of each logic of action. But F. Dubet also generates a very useful and creative point of view when he remembers (teach/explain) us that the social actors may choose which and when to adopt one, or other, or each of those four senses/logics of action — even if those options face the social restrictions. It's remarkable how the approach of F. Dubet furnished us with a new perspective that helped to achieve the methodological way of analysis of the processes of re-qualification of women designed as poor. We have developed it to understand which logics of the social action they engaged or created during these processes. Our work identified that in different phases of their trajectories (phases of the re-qualification processes) women opted for different logics. We acknowledge: the women's actions revealed that different logics supported the gradual phases of her social-identity change or social mobility. After, the methodological process we have been working on is presented, concerning the identification of the re-qualification's social-types.

The Comprehensive and Phenomenological Methodology, the Grounded Theory approach: the processes of 're-qualification the social-identity' (PRSI)

This methodology launches on the related sociological knowledge as the several works of Alain Touraine (1965, 1976, 1978, 1984, 1992, 1998, 2005); C. Dubar (1991, 1995); as well the phenomenological and grounded theory principles and point of view. We tried to integrate that large platform with a complex explanation that includes the analysis of the factors, the identities-resources, the social-identities territories implicated, and the reaction phases, within other emergent aspects of the re-qualification.

Defining oral discourses as the condition to co-construct the social experience (Toscano 2010) we identified, through the co-created biographies, several logics of the social action along the phases of women's mobility.

Another important input came from the trajectories' analysis: various social-identities' territories are implicated in the re-qualification reactions' phases. In reality we observed that the phases of reaction are not only confined to:

a) the economic-material territories,
b) the scholar territories,
c) the labour-professional territories,
d) the housing-residential social-identities' territories; but also mobilized,
e) the sociability territories — relational-affective and psychological-emotional,
f) the socio-spatial territories,
g) the symbolic-representational territories,
h) the ethnic-cultural territories,
i) the societal social-identities' territories.

Besides, on positive terms, our analysis also highlights some identity-strategies of the re-qualification: risk; optimistic-realism; and — surely the most original conclusion — strategic-sacrifice.

Finally, we finish the presentation/paper by underlining and discussing 3 central conclusions about the re-qualification's capitals, the social reconstruction of the social-actor on sujet and about the social knowledge.

Taking into account the case analysis of women's lives re-qualification we may say that these processes — the social-identities requalification's — are improved by the nego-tiation and the mobilization of four principal identity resources-capitals: a) the situational resour-ces-capitals; b) the dispositional resources-capitals; c) the contextual-societal resour-ces-capitals; and d) the resource-capitals of subjectivity (subjectivaction).

In view of the co-construction of the actors as social sujets we tend to the next statement: the social identities are the way how social actors become a social sujet, considering three components:

a) the interaction conceived as the objective way, internal-external, of negotiating;
b) the negotiation defined as the objective way, internal-external, of the identity-mobilization;
c) the subjectivation as the inter-subjective way of the construction of the action system.

Sequentially, nowadays to face the inequalities and the global process of rationalizing the social memory, we need to intensify a grounded, implicated-engaged and inter-reflexive knowledge. In fact, we developed this line of thought conceiving the "later modernity" as an inter-subjective action system, which is orally co-created with other multiple discourses. Following this assumption we infer that only a grounded, implicated engaged and inter-reflexive knowledge may help sociologists on the interpretation and the (social) change of social inequalities.

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