

# Symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology as methods of valuation of subjectivities in social research

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the relevance of qualitative and participatory methodologies in education, bearing in mind the principles etnopedagógicos in the construction of social research in the educational field. In circumstances of investigation the interactivity and participation are mediators in that process because it contributes to the identification and representation of subjectivation of the subjects researchers in insertions and engagement with the object of research. The identity is discussed as action and interaction of actors and IBM research. These theoretical, methodological components pertinent to symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology, prioritize the subjectivity, the interaction and participation of the subjects in the polls from a micro vision to reach a understanding macro, proposed by etnométodos within the social research in contemporary times. Bibliographic search result, intends to consider the contemporary speech driven breaking traditional paradigms that force the neutrality as added value to the production of knowledge.

**Keywords:** Ethnomethodology, Symbolic Interactionism, Interaction, Social Research, Research Methodology, Everydayness, Intersubjectivity

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## 1. The Interaction in Educational Research as a Source of Identity and Significance of Knowledge

Theoretical and methodological aspects of research in education enable the discovery of differentiated forms of visualizing the object in the field of empirical research. It is not a question of elaborating an epistemological discourse for fitness for observed reality, but to realize the spontaneous manifestations the light of theoretical and methodological grants that will assist scientific findings in the educational field investigations fundamental. The symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology are currents of sociological thought that emphasize the search for information associated with the importance of the participation in the *locus* of action.

## 2. The Interacionism Symbolic and the Ethnomethodology in the Understanding of Identity and Subjectification of Researchers

The *symbolic interactionism* is a chain of sociological thought that originated in the United States and held significant space in Chicago school in the mid-1930. Its chief architect, George Mead (1863-1931), became a reference in academia by investigations into the formation of the *self* (himself). Mead emphasized the steps in the formation of the social identity of the subject, in which the interaction represents relevant element in the Constitution of the identification process. The theoretical framework of reference and analysis of social theory, initially developed by George Mead, wins the title of symbolic interactionism.

This chain of sociological thought, which deals with social issues on the prism of interaction of individuals in groups, has as its philosophical pragmatism of John Dewey (1859-1952), North thinker-American who participated in the Chicago school and gave important contributions to the field of education, among which stand out: the emphasis on the need to establish interactions between knowledge and action, the construction of autonomy in pedagogical practice, as a way of redefining the paradigm of individualism, and the search for human relations based on cooperation, on optics of the interrelation between individuals and society, means and ends, theory and practice.

The analysis of this intervention and current research part of everyday reality of the actors, in order to build understanding about the process of formation of the subject in the Middle, unlike the traditional, positivist basic sociology the model depicts the man in society as devoid of judgments of value and quality about the facts and about you (GARFINKEL, 1967, p. 66).

The theoretical contribution of this school has the prospect of establishing relations of knowledge, approach and researcher interaction with the object in social research, considering the subject products of their own actions and meanings. In this conception of reality, the micro-sociologic notion of meaning has nothing to do with the idea of meaning, namely, it is possible to perceive the reality from the *locus* of action, assigning to the construction of their subjectivities and established online, as produced in the process of interaction in the middle. In this regard, Lapassade (2005, p. 24) Notes:

*The interactionist believe that the meaning is not imposed by culture, by society, but built by the actors. The basic idea is that "reality" is not transcendent to the activity of the members, but built or produced by members in the course of their interactions.*

The interaction, in the chain of thought interactionist, is a principle that justifies the investigation because it allows the researcher consider the rapprochement with the subjects relevant to the empirical work in the field. It's about prioritizing, as theoretical perspective, analysis of research references currents of thought that configure the reality as features in contemporary times. The valorization of subjectivation in investigative reflections in the field of education makes the analysis to prioritize the memory of common sense as significant.

The tradition of the *Cartesian paradigm* reinforces the dichotomy between scientific knowledge and common sense, overlaying the first against the second. Modern science is valued as a faithful representation of reality, although ownership of the elements that make up the common life, don't think they're as authentic sources, it maintains the integrity of the information collected and adapted them for the most part, its postulates. These adaptations in many cases, withdraw from the research originality. It is a procedure that is maintained as tradition and prevails in many academic investigations.

The symbolic interactionism conceives the formation of the identity of the individual in interrelation with the social environment. About it, Hall (1999) notes that the identity is not congenital and not fixed but concerns an interactive process, historical, ethnological and cultural frame, formed in the relationship between me and the other, the local and the global, filling space between the inside and the outside, between the personal and the public world, between individuals and societies, between the theoretical and the empirical. Is this interrelation that individuals involved (re) claim the investigative personality, in a dialogical communication and dialectic, therefore, between the personal world of inter-subjective (subjectivity) and the public world (objectivity). Such "relationship between several individuals, gives rise to 'intersubjectivity' or 'intersubjetiv', as a bridge between the subjectivity and objectivity" (FERRATER MORA, 2005, p. 1550). It is in this identification process that, to (HALL, 1999, p. 12-13) in design in our cultural identities, making it more:

*[...] variable provisional [...] the identity became a celebration formed mobile and transformed continuously about the ways in which we are represented or spoken to by the cultural systems that surround us. Is historically and biologically not defined. .*

The procedural character, temporary and variable is one of the features of formation of identity, which is why there are flexibilities, changes and transformations of the personality of the subject in the context of socioeconomic and cultural, as well as the transformation of this context. The social environment is an agent training, adaptation of multiple learnings that accumulate over a lifetime. It is possible to think the identity retains the Dialogic character of reconstruction, because significant changes happen in the course of life, with new learning, breaking paradigms to rethink or questioning of social norms learned as truths, both personal and collective.

Thinkers such as Berger & Luckmann (1985) in the classic work of Sociology of knowledge *the social construction of reality*, make important analysis of the representation of the self in everyday life, when focus on the symbolic interactionism as a theoretical stream toward the understanding of social reality. The authors depict the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity in the field of the subject's action, seen as collective action (intersubjectivity), when the subjectivity of each becomes important benchmark for the other and communicative basis of intelligibility of the world, i.e. taking into consideration the communicative interaction between subjectivities of the subject as a measure supplementing the possibilities of communication and action (communicative action) and yet, what they "share cognitively in common" (SCHUTZ, 2012, p. 346). The construction of identity, in this perspective, is formed in the interaction, which implies the I and the other, a condition not dichotomous, but complementary. Thus, regarding the discussion about the Constitution of identity and biological or historical relevance, it is important to note that Hall (1999) defines it

as a non-biological and historical condition, while Berger & Luckmann (1985, p. 73) consider the existence of the two elements, to argue that:

*[...] the formation of the self must also be understood in relation to the ongoing organic development and with the social process, in which the natural environment and the human environment are mediatized by significant others.*

The organic development in the biological sense, and the relationship with the social process, in identity formation, are relevant aspects for understanding that this construction has many dimensions, as there is embedded in the relationships and people, i.e. the Intergroup subject himself and fellow with the community or environment or space territory. This interaction involves multi-referential elements, which are mediators in the formation of identification, namely: the organic matter is understood as the body and biopsíquicas and spiritual reactions; the social space the values and societal norms; the political and economic relations and, finally, the cultural dimension, which is the ability to transmit human symbolic interactions beings from generation to generation.

According to Hall (1999), the identity is the result of the interactive design of individuals and societies. We see this process as conditioned to mobile forms such as celebration are represented or spoken to by the cultural systems in which we live. The author presents a version of CHAP the modern emerges from the structural changes in the course of human history: Protestant Reformation, Renaissance, rationalism, enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, when the individual citizen has become enmeshed in the bureaucratic machinery of the State apparatus.

The symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology have similar understandings in the conception of the subject in your *locus* of action. To Coulon (1995), these chains are constituted as Constructivist epistemologies, because both consider the role played by the actors, in their daily lives, in the construction of process of interaction with the environment. The rationale for the choice of these theoretical fields of scientific thought, as benchmarks of analysis of interactions of individuals, consists in the fact that one complements the other, whereas interactionism is centered on interaction and ethnomethodology in valuing origin. We consider, as Bourdieu (2001), that freedom scientific objectivity flees the methodological secular tradition in academic research; and argues that

*[...] It takes many times, to do science, to avoid appearances of science contradict even the standards in force and challenge the current criteria of scientific rigour [...] The real science, in most cases, have bad appearance and, to advance the science, we must often run the risk of not having all the signs of previous scientific theories. (BOURDIEU, 2001, p. 42).*

Search, however, prioritize other forms of research, considering them as relevant to the scientific work.

The theoretical assumption etnometodológico geared

toward understanding the intentional and subjective processes of individual memory and collective subject, Commons, recognizes the reality from the local, i.e. the spontaneous manifestations of individuals, as a micro-power relevant and representative of the social reality that is experienced by actors throughout their lives without "simplify the communicative and behavioral environment texture" (GARFINKEL, 1967, p. 72) of individuals involved. It takes from the micro analysis to understand the corporate macro-texture.

The prospect of analysis presented here, take as a reference the approach of Alain Coulon (1995), which contextualizes the historical trajectory of the ethnomethodologic movement and prioritizes existing common elements in the practicality of life. For the author, the subject, practical meanings that engender structure the social life, which is symbolized in the language. Like this:

*The ethnomethodology will defend the scientific activity, being crafted from identical operations those used by ordinary actors, is the product of a mode of practical knowledge that, by itself, has the possibility of becoming an object of sociological research and be questioned scientifically. (COULON, 1995, p. 17).*

The interactions between subjects constitutes a phenomenon of human rationality that aggregates counter-hegemonic forces and part of the vision of the social body, manifest in the identities and collective memories and therefore meets the stories, inter-subjective life of the subject. The conception of rationality, in this study, related to the ways of living in society and are interwoven with what is irrational, in the sense of purely biological, emotional or strictly. To Coulon (1995, p. 35), "[...] the existential sociology, individuals Act obeying the irrational and emotional elements. Are predetermined and free: are influenced by structural constraints and remain fit to change."

We can consider that interactionism and ethnomethodology are theoretical and methodological references that have similar origins, since there is convergence with various thinkers' ideas to the embodiment. The symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology are currents of sociological thought that highlight the search for information associated with the importance of the participation in the *locus* of action. The interactionism represents a philosophy and ethnomethodology is a valuable instrument of empirical research allowance. Both, therefore, are articulated in this study as epistemological basis. The thought that prioritizes qualitative approaches, in academia in General, is of decisive importance for the reconstruction of a story told by those who staged the historical process (GARFINKEL, 1967, p. 66-72). This focus on research therefore considers as crucial: prioritize knowledge of common life, valuing subjectivities, the life stories, the interaction of the subject and the collective memory of the local manifestations.

### 3. The Meanings of the Field, as a *Locus* of Research and Knowledge Construction

The academic research in General, comprise the construction of a theoretical and methodological framework based from an explanatory model in order to be able to adapt to the field of empirical research. So, this "top-down" has traps and the main one is the incompatibility of theoretical construction systematized in relation to observations, that by means of a language incapable of representing all the nuances of the phenomena. The consequences are conflicting for the researcher and research, which can be viewed, especially in the construction of the text without the participation of social agents seen as object of investigation.

To avoid the straitjacket in which many researchers conceive of scientific knowledge there needs to be critical reflection on construction of knowledge, on the observation of the field chosen for the research in social research. The choice of appropriate methodological approach to the parsed object's fundamental theoretical construction with relevance and coherence. In this perspective, careful and systematic attention to the theoretical and methodological research has relevance, considering the principle of spontaneity in the relationship face-to-face and on the information collected. The research in which there is no direct observation, especially when the subject demands it, reinforces concern about the accuracy of the data and information. Bourdieu (2001) reflects on the construction process of research, the limits and challenges of science and the importance of the research field in itself, as elements that allow the researcher to think relationally, i.e. establishing connection between the site investigated and social structure, to observe:

*The notion of field is in a sense a conceptual shorthand of a construction mode of the object that will command or steer all options search practices. She works as a sign that reminds us of what there is to do, namely, that the study in question is not isolated from a set of relationships that withdraws the essentials of its properties [...] it takes thinking relationally. (BOURDIEU, 2001, p. 28)*

Thus, Bourdieu stresses the importance of the research field in the locus with regard to knowledge that need to be explored. The notion of field, to the author, is "[...] discoveries of a construction mode of the object, where the methodological procedures need to be viewed as a modus operandi that guides and organizes scientific practice." (BOURDIEU, 2001, p. 161)

The choice of theoretical and methodological study in this respect, proposes a peculiar way of looking, describe, understand the research in the field of research and flees from the strain imposed by a theoretical framework drawn up for the purpose of checking the in-place object. The insertion of the researcher, in this circumstance, is what allows you to make careful analysis of his work. The more the researcher

seeks to be aware of the findings of the investigation, the more it delimits and fleshes out your observed object.

Qualitative approaches consider the knowledge of common sense, as allowance, for the theoretical and epistemological construction, to the extent that the scenarios explored reveal important knowledge that translate into fundamental understandings for the study. The relevance of knowledge of common sense is thus the differential of ethnographic research associated with the interaction, rapprochement and participation with the subjects of the research. For investigations working with memory and collective identity is fundamental to using life stories. The light of this understanding, therefore, have a high relevance all aspects, human and materials that make up the scenario explored. The field of observation is presented, in this perspective, as a space for the pursuit of knowledge and interaction with the subjects, in addition to the signification in gathering relevant information, as Lévi-Strauss (1985, p. 397):

*The man is not content to meet; knowing, the more he sees himself knowledgeable and the true purpose of your research becomes a little more each day this indissoluble pair consisting of a humanity that transforms the world and auto-transform in the course of its operations.*

The indissoluble pair between researcher and research of Lévi-Strauss (1985) refers to the process of interaction established as a principle that justifies the approach, because the research is geared generally to gather data, interpret empirical sources, infer latent and manifest analyses, enter the subjectivity, interact with the subject and offer contributions, from the proposed study. The inter-subjective dimension is crucial to the humanities.

The point about field work and its effects, it is necessary to mention the contribution of Malinowski (1978), which stressed the importance of "looking" differentiated in scientific investigations. To Malinowski (1978), the researcher needs availability, commitment to research, without losing lucidity, IE not let engage sentimentally and compromising the interpretations about the object studied. On the other hand, the subjective character of experience of the researcher in the field of research is important as a source and gathering information and contributes to the approach actually observed. To do so, insert, collect, infer with relevant interpretations, socialize, participate, understand the reality and put up as the other means, also, be able to think conceptually as a researcher. This anthropological approach in the construction of academic theories, especially in the field of education, points to a multiculturalism underlying the building of the social sciences and humanities.

The symbolic aspects of common sense constitute a valuable contribution to the understanding of local knowledge, to the extent that, analyzed, are relevant to the construction of global analyses, in this way, the microstructures to reach to macro-structure. Thus, the macro-structuring interpretations on academic research in General lose their predominance in virtue of the alternative

development of theoretical constructs with ethnomethodological perspectives and interactionist, because these chains gain relevance in the reaffirmation of the subject in their culture.

The concept of culture, important to the analysis interactionist and ethnomethodological tradition, as exposed by Geertz (1989), concerns a synchronic vision of the place as singular value applicable to be interpreted and understood with scientific rigor. The diachronic analysis, macro-structuring and deductive lose predominance in investigations as a result of the significant growth of studies which adopt theorist-qualitative references. The methodological procedures that allow interaction with the subjects of the research can be considered an equivalent to those who advocate the need to adopt the neutrality and detachment in relation to such subjects.

For no other reason, symbolic representations are included in the local dimension in relation to the global. Ethnography as methodological feature lets you learn both the place of culture as the global structure. According to Geertz (1989, p. 21-24), "[...] the culture (is located) in the mind and hearts of men [...] understanding the culture of a people expose their normality, without reducing its particularity."

The stories of life effect as methodological procedure allows you to recover the memory and recognizing the identity of the subject in relation to this interface and passed experienced between the subjects of the research.

We can consider that we are dealing with an "etnobiography", that is, the completion of work with life stories associated with participation, integration and interaction in the subjective field of actors, which refers to the memory and the identity of each subject.

The research that gives priority to a qualitative approach does not posits certain conclusions and considerations closed, since it promotes dialogue with different researchers and even suggests other developments and other aspects of the investigated object. The subjectivity of the researcher in the field of research is different from other social actors in connection with of County, because he has a critical view of the proposed research, is involved with your affectively object. For (CARDOSO, 1986, p. 102), "the researcher engages completely and their values, their worldview cease to be obstacles and become a condition to understand the differences [...]".

In the case of subjective involvement of the researcher with the reality of a specific location, such as micro-power, makes it possible to understand the scale macro-structural. For Haguette (2005, p. 19), the qualitative research had a remarkable development in the 20th century, which has generated important discussions. Here's what stresses:

*The big question that arises today, for the social scientist, especially in peripheral countries where his acting approaches with more of the consequences of violence exacerbated power of few over many, is not, in our view, the field of social research methods and techniques, but the scrutiny of his own world view, fundamental prerequisite of what her stems, real analyst activity, an interpreter of*

*others 'experiences and protagonist that seem necessary. (HAGUETTE, 2005, p. 19)*

The real analyst that Haguette (2005) depicts, has vision different from that of many other analysts who arrogate of reality with reading or with the media or other sources. There are considerable differences regarding the apprehension of reality on the part of those who experience, for example, social inequalities and who just limited to the use of primary and secondary sources.

In this way we can understand that the researcher builds and rebuilds the identification process in social research because it involves the discovery of a knowledge manifesto, for both real. This attribution of reality contributes to redo the process of subjectivation understood as ontological condition of social existence.

#### 4. Final Considerations

The appreciation of subjectivity in the research social presents the discovery that the involvement and participation in the research are findings relevant to the fidelity of the information collected in the field of empirical knowledge. The construction of the theoretical and epistemological fundament for the observed reality from the prevailing discourse of scientific neutrality in investigations, represents historically traditional legacy without adequate to contemporary reality, mainly in social research in education. For both the symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology are currents of sociological thinking that predominate in the vision of qualitative research approaches that involve representations of minorities in the society.

The inferences of qualitative, interactionist ethnomethodological and for the construction of knowledge through social research represent the traditional paradigm breaks and the establishment of a contemporary discourse reinforces concerns about diversity, plurality and the multiculturalism of the actions, interactions in human relations.

The insertion as a participant of the spontaneous manifestations of a particular culture allows the affective involvement in order to seek information secure and backed in the locus of research, so that you can empathize with the subjects investigated, i.e. put up as another in its place, understand their roles in that context.

The discourse on the need to remove the pre-notion and feelings in the research field as country's scientific objectivity loses effect in contemporary times in face of involvement with the topic. The guarantee of objectivity from the appropriation of knowledge of reality represents the formulation of reliable findings on knowledge construction. However for the social research in the field of education, methods that enhance the subjectivation of ontological vision centered on the phenomenological subject in the polls increasingly gain space by redefining the prospects, including quantitative approaches, which currently maintains with interpretive complex inferences and even dialogical.

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