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The Construction of Differences in the University Environment: A Study Using the Social Theories of Learning

La construcción de las diferencias en el espacio universitario: un análisis desde las teorías sociales del aprendizaje

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Abstract

Over the last several decades, rising unemployment and low salaries have caused many to blame *the others* for the crisis, fostering a negative attitude in the population toward outsiders. In this situation, the immigrant is seen as a threat, an illegitimate appropriator of the few social resources still available. This study approaches the construction of *the other* as inferior and stigmatic, using the point of view from social theories of learning. The methodology was a qualitative study of a biographical account without a complete sequence, using the sample randomly. The ancestors of our subject come from the pre-Incaic culture, the Huancas (from which his fictitious name, Wanca, was derived). He is a student from Huancayo, Peru: olive-colored skin, short height, protruding cheeks and dark hair. Her account reveals the construction of cultural and racial stereotypes in the university space, showing as well how these stereotypes are attributable to certain situations. In addition, studying the stigmatization of the immigrant facilitates an analysis of the modes of exclusion of other social groups due to their poverty, lack of education, or age.

Key words: Social theories, learning, qualitative research.

Resumen

En las últimas décadas, además del desempleo, la precarización de la inserción laboral y la baja de salarios, se ha focalizado la presencia de *los otros* como los responsables de la crisis y de un polo negativo de la ciudadanía. En este marco, el inmigrante aparece como una amenaza, un apropiador ilegítimo de los pocos recursos sociales disponibles. Este trabajo permite estudiar la construcción del *otro* como inferior y estigmatizable y hacer un análisis desde las teorías sociales del aprendizaje. La investigación fue de corte cualitativo y correspondió a un relato biográfico sin secuencia completa mediante el uso de la muestra a juicio. En el análisis del relato de la estudiante Wanca, puede observarse la construcción de estereotipos culturales de corte racista en el espacio universitario y cómo los usos de esta diversidad permiten atribuir determinadas situaciones a capacidades. También es posible observar que la estigmatización de los inmigrantes, anticipa y permite analizar los modos de exclusión de otros grupos sociales, ya sea por su pobreza, por su falta de educación o por su edad.

Palabras clave: Teorías sociales, aprendizaje, investigación cualitativa, teorías del aprendizaje.

Introduction

This work is part of a project researching the possibility of underlying cultural and social conflicts in students who repeat a course or class. These university patterns, defined as irregular when contrasted with some parameters, acquire sense when reconstructed and explained within the framework of practices and occurrences the protagonists experience in their daily lives.

In recent decades, with their problems of unemployment, job insecurity and low wages, there has arisen a focus on the presence of *others* as the perpetrators of the crisis. The decade of the 90s was characterized by downward social mobility, signifying a time of disputes over goods in short supply, and a search for someone to blame for the shortages, and for any other problems with society, education and health. Under these conditions the immigrant is seen as a threat, as a poacher of the few available social resources; then divisions will occur along fracture lines predetermined by Argentina's history of discrimination—regarding which the country is in a state of denial.

Being a foreigner in a country that boasts of having been a generous host to the migratory waves of the second half of the nineteenth century and early decades of the xx Century—many of the populace are descended from those who entered the country at that time—used to be an honorable condition, though fraught with contradictions. Argentineans see their “culture of tolerance” as one of their most important cultural values—everybody believes in it: the amalgamation of people blended together in the cultural melting pot...the integration and assimilation of a mass of people born in other lands, and who would “make up whatever the natives lacked.” In this sense, the migratory model contributed to placing the Europeans and other whites at the top of the heap of the immigrant groups. Immigration, was the indispensable element for colonization—immigration selected, culturally

assimilable, with the object of physically extending healthy agricultural activity. Says Novaro (1999, p.172):

“In view of the project of organization and progress, the Indians had to disappear, leaving room for immigrants who came to work. Today, the immigrants are different: Bolivians, Peruvians, Paraguayans, Chileans and Koreans, among others, and the social perception is that *they are a problem*.”

The objective of this work consists in analyzing the academic voyage of a student who takes a course several times (repeater), and the social conflicts that underlie her experience as a university student, using the images surrounding the diversity in the construction of *the other* and of the social theories of learning.

I. Methodology

Human behavior should be understood in reference to the meanings, feelings and purposes the actors assign to their activities. The understanding of these meanings, as well as the concern for understanding the common and the singular, demands an attention to the context and to the history which conditions them. In approaching this paradigm, known as interpretative, qualitative or constructivist, we emphasize the socially-constructed nature of reality, and the close relationship between the researcher and the object of research.

For this paper we have used qualitative methodology, a free-sequence biographical story, and a trial sample. This is a “snapshot” of a journey in the life of a student; her story is frequently used, and her words express conflicts and experiences in university life. We have availed ourselves of the position of Bourdieu’s “The Misery of the World” (1999), in terms of its procedure and analysis of the theoretical conceptualization, as well as fragments of transcribed interviews considered relevant to the study. We have permitted ourselves to imitate the posture of Bourdieu (1999) in “The Misery of the World”, as regarding his analytical procedure and theoretical conceptualization. We have also transcribed fragments of the interviews considered relevant to the study.

This study analyzes the experience of a student who decides to leave Peru to study medicine at the National University of Cordoba, Argentina. Her decision comes out of her fear of the terrorist group *Sendero Luminoso*.¹ Her family values the importance of education, and in order to maintain this cultural capital, moves to Argentina. This gamble is so important (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977), that along the way, her father, an electronics engineer, has had to work doing odd jobs.

Her autobiographical material includes her arrival in Cordoba, Argentina; get settled in the city; her realization of what she has left behind; the difficulty of registering and getting started in the medical school, the language barrier (although she is a Spanish speaker, there were difficulties in understanding the Argentine systems of meaning), the stigmatization she endures in the street and in class.

Finally, the study tries to relate some aspects of her academic passage with her journey as a person.

Wanca is an olive-skinned Peruvian student, short in stature, with prominent cheekbones and dark hair. She presents her final examination in Bacteriology and Medical Virology as an open-program student. After presenting it, she is invited to tell her story. Although she does not show up for her first interview, she returns later.

Wanca is thirty. Her surname is that belonging to the son of the Inca Pachacutec, who according to some historians, accidentally discovered the Continent of Oceania. Her ancestors come from a pre-Inca culture: the Huancas, a warrior tribe finally conquered by the Inca Pachacutec en 1450. After that, the tribe took the surname which the student now bears. Wanca lived in Huancayo, known as “The Incomparable City”, in the Central Sierra of Peru, 3,200 meters (about 10,500 feet) above sea level, in the Valley of Mantaro, on the left bank of the river of the same name. The city is in the Peru’s Department of Junin, above a region once inhabited by the Huancas.

Wanca relates that her decision to study medicine was not an easy one in the beginning. There were delays, and she felt discouraged, because there were people who tried to keep her out of the pre-registration course: “We didn’t want to go back; we were already here.”

Here is what Wanca says about her struggle to get into the pre-registration course for medicine:

I decided to change to Medicine in '92, and they demanded a lot of me. It even looked like they didn't want me to change majors. I remember that I changed majors along with some other people; there were five of us, all Peruvians. We presented an application...I remember that they told me, 'We will give you the answer in December,' and they didn't give us any results. Then they said: Well, we are going to put you on a provisional list, but we can't guarantee you anything. Then we went back in February, and they had already started the little course, and we couldn't get in. I think you could only have two weeks of absences; they waited until the course had already been going on for two weeks. Then we asked them why they didn't give answer us then, because if they didn't give us the test results we were wasting time, and they said, 'Well, we are going to mark you preset, I think that Monday they told us 'No', and then they told us, 'Well, talk with so-and-so, and if not, then with the Dean. And I think it was Wednesday that they finally accepted us, and we started attending—but we couldn't be absent even once. So the little course started for us after it had been going on for two weeks, so we couldn't have any more absences. And we saw, too, that it was because they already had so many students...There were a lot, and that was why they were trying to keep us out. It was to discourage us, but we insisted. We didn't want to go back. We were already here.

When they let you start the little course, you already had the maximum number of absences and you couldn't be absent any more; a teacher that looks after the attendance says it's open.

At least in the course, I remember, the man who was checking the attendance said we had to turn in the slip at the end of class. I stayed to ask the teacher a question, and I went and asked the question, and then I went back to fill out the slip. Then right there he said to me, 'But you were not in class. Why are you lying?' And I said, Why would I do that? Here I have got my notes on everything that was said in class. That really hurt me because after fighting so hard to get this place, and after the two weeks that had gone by, he said, 'You were not in class, you are out.' And I had been there. Then I started crying and I told him I was there (...) He was making a joke, but it was a very bad joke. I was with the other kids, and they were laughing, but when I felt so bad he just told me he was just teasing. I said, 'Oh, well!' (...)

Sometimes they surprised us, because they said, for example, Why did you come to study here? Aren't there any universities there?

"They thought we were poor, coarse, dirty cholera carriers."

Olog and Vives state (1999) that in their analysis of the migratory norm and of newspaper articles, ethnic allusions were observed; these allusions contribute to accentuating the discomfort certain groups of foreigners experience in their reception.

Societies at the end of the century emphasized how difficult or impossible it is for people of different cultures to live together in one city. It is important to point out, as do Rockwell (1997) and Achili (1996), that the multicultural presence, in schools, for example, cannot be considered a conflict between cultures. The same thing that happens to Wanca at the university occurs throughout Argentine society. The outbreak of cholera in Peru and the entrance of this infectious agent through the north of the country caused a division to be produced along this fracture line, and revealed in society (Ghiglino and Lorenzo, 1999).

Speaking about this, Wanca says:

I think those years were a learning time for everyone. I remember that years later there were cholera problems in my country...It was in 1992...That year, for example, you could always see a problem in the street...poverty, lack of hygiene, lack of culture...That's how it looked, so in those places they thought we were all like that: poor, coarse, dirty cholera-carriers...(laugh)...'And why are they coming?' Right?...So...I went through that a lot...

According to Neufeld and Thisted (1999), using terms related with sociocultural diversity to justify situations of social instability and exclusion that generate neoliberalism, skews the direct economic formulation. The example of these concepts allows people to attribute these situations or abilities (or the lack of them), to ethnic or cultural characteristics.

Sinisi (1999, p. 205), says in studying we/they relationships in school spaces:

In the we/they relationship, the construction of the alterization is accomplished by means of historical, dynamic and complex processes supported, on the one hand, by setting up theoretical/conceptual frameworks, and on the other, by emotionally charging the meanings, interpretations and images which the social actors attribute to these differences.

This situation, as well as physical appearance related with ethnic origin, constructs in the common view, the image of a stereotype with a stigma. Stigmas, according to Goffman (1963), are those “marks” that some subjects carry, and they signify a particular positioning from the point of view of those who construct them: those who construct stigmas consider themselves to be among the “normal”. On the subject of this, Wanca remarks:

For example, a teacher, I remember, at the end of class, she said to me, ‘Oh, you’re Peruvian, ‘ M-hm,’ I said.’ And why do you people come to study here? What do you come for? I don’t know why you come!’ she said. ‘You don’t study—you just seem like vagrants—, she said (all this in an exaggerated Peruvian accent).

And too, this was when they were selling arms, around ’97, and all that...There were several classes where the teacher talked to me like that...

About three or four classes a month that happened at school, and the truth is, it made me really mad because I didn’t come to class to talk about that. The guys, my classmates, would say to me, ‘Please forgive us’, they would say, and I would say, ‘What for?’ and they would say, ‘For all that stuff about the arms. ‘And one time the teacher said, ‘Why are you asking her to forgive you?’ Because Argentina sold arms to Ecuador,’ they said.’ So? What’s that got to do with it?’ And my classmate told her, ‘The government ought not to sell arms to a country that is a friend.’ And do you know what the teacher said? ‘Me, if I need the money, I sell.’

I thought to myself, ‘Sheesh! Where are the ethics? Where is the companionship?’ But it’s about more than ethics, because if some day I have children, and if I don’t have money, and they say, ‘Do you want to do abortions?’ what am I going to say? If I need money, am I going to tell them, ‘Yes, I am going to do abortions?’ So for me it’s not ethical. Even if I need money I am not going to do that. So I said to myself, ‘It looks like to me that she’s the one who’s got the problem here.’ I just didn’t say anything else to her, because it really surprised me.

What follows, shows a racial melting pot destroyed, a memory forgotten, and the loss of a people’s identity. Wanca continues:

Later, I told my family and my brothers about it...My brother enjoyed the story a lot, and he was really surprised...And he asked me, ‘What is that teacher’s name?’ And I said, ‘Her name is blah-blah-blah.’ And he said, ‘Aha! But that teacher is Syrio-Lebanese, her origin is Syrio-Lebanese.’ My brother said, ‘Here in Argentina...for some reason they say that it is a melting-pot of races, because here there are many descended from English people, Germans, Italians. There are not many who were actually born here.’

Because I've never talked to a Comechigon,² for example...There are not many Diaguitas,³ or it may be that there are more Wichís.⁴ But people born here in America, those you don't find. Then my brother said, 'You know what, I think that as the years go by, immigrants have children, and they have children, and they forget that their grandparents used to be foreigners, and that they had to go through this thing of learning a new culture, and adopting new customs and all that.

Then my brother said to me, I'm gonna talk to her. Well, I said, 'if you want to.' And he went to talk, and I don't really know what he said, but thing for sure...After the next class, the doctor (teacher) didn't treat me like that any more...She even called me "Honey" (giggles)...And she had challenged my pride...That's how I faced up to my own roots.

Then again, it is possible to analyze the interview from a phenomenological perspective. According to Berger and Luckmann (1995), daily life appears as a reality interpreted by mankind, and which acquires the meaning of a coherent world. In intersubjective relationships, *they* are understood and treated by means of *typifying schemes* that each person has internalized. That being the case, these schemes are reciprocal—we all have them—and in "face to face" relationships, there is a set of mutual interferences, so that these schemes enter into a negotiation process (Goffman, 1981).

Speaking of this, Goffman (1963) makes a theoretical advance in regard to the construction of the term "stigma." The word comes from the Greeks, who used it to refer to bodily marks connoting something negative or unusual in those who bore them. These symbols consisted in cuts or burns on the body, and meant that the bearer was a slave, a criminal or a traitor. In daily social life we deal with *the others*, without having to pay too much attention to them. The individual, on finding him/herself among strangers and in a situation of social interaction, uses a "facade", in which appearance and manners count, in the attempt to obtain information about *the other* and to define the situation. In this way, social behavior, appraisal, and the treatment considered appropriate is directly associated with the characteristics possessed by a particular individual. This is a performance in which the individual "shows" what s/he *is*, and informs the others about what they ought to perceive in that *is* (Goffman, 1981). What happens when the individual demonstrates, through his/her attributes, who s/he is? That is to say, what happens if a student informs that she is a student, and instead, what the others see is an unacceptable social identity?

Goffman remarks (1963), "Not all the undesirable attributes are a subject for discussion, but only those that are dissimilar to our stereotype of how a certain type of individual should be" (p.13). Social identity is constructed with those personal attributes or first appearances that allow *the other* to see in advance in what class they belong. Certain bodily marks are stigmatizing, since they are an attribute of a stigma, indicate danger, and fall within the stereotype *other* which explains the inferiority based on the attribute that justifies it. These bodily marks prevent full social acceptance, and the individual is discredited or discreditable. The person who has a stigma is not believed to be totally human, and we construct

the theory of the stigma: “an ideology by which to explain his/her inferiority and to be aware of the danger this person represents, at times rationalizing an animosity based on other differences, such as, for example, that of social class” (p. 15).

Regarding this, Sinisi (1999, p. 206) asserts, “For example, vis-à-vis a Bolivian, of a backward culture and poor, the reason for the stigma would be given as existing for being “black” and “slow”. This construction is accompanied by an exaggerated perception of diversity. It is generalized on the basis of a few observations, and before all the community members there are placed images of uniform, simplified and universal alterization. In this process a cultural stereotype with racial connotations is constructed.

II. Analysis based on the social theories of learning

How does Wanca coordinate this new pattern with her previous perceptions? What are the models she has adapted “in her head—models which also guide her perception, thoughts and words? Bruner (2001) maintains that the possible worlds are constructed with those “historical” fragments which are adjusted to the mental reality in the present situation. The perception of an individual acquires from the stimuli received, those which fit his/her expectation: What is the predicted state of the possible world? In the reading of this new trajectory, Wanca uses a previous model of important social divisions and differences, constructed in Peru. This aspect comes into view when she speaks of her father, who studied at the university, and now has to work doing odd jobs, a situation which would be deemed as shameful and embarrassing by others in Peru. Wanca says:

Because here it looks like there isn't much of a problem when you have to go out and work at odd jobs...for example as a domestic...even though...that is...It's not the idea of a professional working that way, but in Peru it's like a professional that does that kind of work has lowered himself, and the Peruvian sees that as bad... They see that as bad...that is, working as a domestic, cleaning, working for instance as a security guard...that's like saying that it's not much of a challenge to the intellect (laughter)...Like you don't need much upstairs for that. Then again, to the Peruvian, prestige is very important...that's why many Peruvians that work here...among us, there is a lot of talk like, “Yikes! He knew me in Peru when I worked at such-and-such a job, and now he sees me here like this...How embarrassing! So it's like a lot of times people cover up...they cover up...like, ‘I'm working doing this, but I don't want anybody to know it, I don't want to tell anybody that I am working at this job because I feel embarrassed. Plus, I learned to think it through a little and understand, and say to myself that it's good to live without worrying so much about the social side, and what other people are going to say, and sometimes I don't like this kind of thing about my own country, because sometimes the Peruvians themselves judge you a lot by those standards.

The way in which Wanca deals with discrimination, considering that it was already present in Peru, and that it formed part of her possible world and her level of acceptance of these situations, is perhaps with tolerance, since this attitude has allowed her to remain on course.

As regarding the representation of the teachers, in the schools these give meaning to their practice. In this sense, and on the subject of sociocultural diversity, Ghiglino and Lorenzo remark (1999, p. 157) that these things "...impact scholastic institutions in various ways: in scholastic achievement, regularity of attendance and relationships with classmates..."

It is important to consider the cognitive theories in order to understand the internal processes in Wanca's learning. According to Vygotsky's perspective, learning is a social construct: between the subject and the object of knowledge there is another person. This implies the emergence of a key aspect for the study of learning: internalization is produced through social interactions. In these interactions there is an area that Vygotsky calls the zone of proximal development, i.e. what an individual can do today with assistance, promotes and facilitates what s/he can do alone tomorrow.

Based on this, a number of questions arise regarding Wanca: What is her likelihood of learning and getting her academic degree in the context in which she finds herself, if *the other*, the one who must mediate between her and knowledge, applies stereotypes with racial connotations? How can she construct her learning and her thought processes while being stigmatized? These stories, do they simply denote a situation with no grave consequences, or do they always produce marks and changes in the possibilities of learning, and of a life without a solution for those stigmatized? What sort of self-image does *the other* develop? At what point, in looking at the other Wanca, does she begin to construct her own stigmatization? What was her academic path?

As a student, Wanca is a repeater; she has taken the course several times, and even when she registers for the examination on time, she does not come. Wanca took the course during the year 1995, and also the make-up examination. She registered for the final examination on December 20, 1996, but did not attend. After two years she lost her status of regular student in the major, because too much time had passed. She took the course again in 1998, and got a grade of 60 on the partial examinations. She did not appear for the final examinations, and again lost her status as a regular student. She registered as an open-plan student for the final examination March 15, 2002, and did not appear. A year and a half later, September 29, 2003, she arrived to take the final examination as a open-plan student, and passed it with a grade of 50. Altogether, it took Wanca nine years (from 1995 to 2003) to pass the course. In this period she had no extensions, and often did not appear to take the final examinations, nor did she appear for the first interview scheduled for this study.

During the examination in which she passed the course, she would respond to the questions after long silences, which appeared to anticipate wrong answers. After a delay, she would give the correct answer and the explanation with substantiation; this examination was different from other times, perhaps because of Wanca. Her face showed no effort to manipulate the situation; the answer was a result of her careful, thoughtful analysis.

Dialogue with Wanca correlates with Foley's article (1996), "The Cultural Production of the Silent Indian", in which he analyzes the silence of indigenous people among the *white classes*, in a field study. The image of the silent indigenous person, giving as little as possible, is a constant of educational literature, and regarding it, Foley (2004) states that:

Many educational anthropologists document the way white teachers interpret the indigenous silence as evidence of low motivation (...) or low cognitive competence. This leads the white teachers to lower their expectations with regard to the indigenous students, and to include them less in classroom activities, (...) and confirm yet again the explanation of the self-fulfilling prophecy of scholastic failure (p. 13).

When Foley asked a tribal leader the reason why he and others of the tribe were always so silent in class, he replied, "When you or any other white person comes to our village, do you speak the way you speak in the city? If you have a little common sense, strange situations make you speak less and participate less" (p. 19).

The author explains the indigenous silence when in contact with individuals of white classes, as the product of a cultural tradition that attributes different meanings to silence: from a learned linguistic tradition, to an image of response that seeks to construct its "*cultural other*". Having understood this, we can see clearly that the actions of the students cannot always be explained by the values of their cultures of origin, but can answer to adaptive or response strategies generated in the educational institution itself.

Goffman (1963, p. 30) explains the withdrawal and the bravado in stigmatized individuals in this way: "We feel that the stigmatized individual is very aggressive and very timid, and in either of the two cases, is very apt to read into our actions, meanings which we do not intend to give them".

In this sense, Wanca begins to question her character and her "slowness", which, when she is presenting an examination, "work against me":

This year (1998) I started to question my character...Sometimes I know things, but I don't say them...Or, it's like I was so mad at myself that sometimes I didn't talk, or I didn't say anything (voice breaking), as if I hadn't seen anything...for example, like I hadn't studied.

A little because of my character, because sometimes you...especially in a competitive situation, you have to speak loud and say...I read something like that (in a loud voice)...and I know the answer, I know what the teacher is asking.

Then, how does this withdrawal come into play, in connection with the profession Wanca has chosen? What does she understand the medical profession to require?

The way I am there doesn't help me either, because sometimes they doubted me too, because when you are in a hospital you have to defend your position, your judgment... There are people that for example are a little more dominating, and can sound right even when they are wrong.

However, to understand an opinion is to understand it as an answer to a question the researcher poses—the hermeneutics of the question. Therefore, in this study the questions are asked: In the students, what processes come into play—processes that distance them from what they seek, even when they seek what is in opposition to family mandates? What does being a doctor mean to them? An institution is, among other things, a cultural object that expresses the possibility of the group or collective to regulate individual behavior; this is a magma of imaginary meanings⁵ (Castoriadis, 2003) which are constantly giving rise to a world like its own world. These imaginary meanings give an answer to the questions: Doctors, who are they? What are they? Where are they? What do they do? The medical profession as an institution, pervades this analysis. Wanca feels the weight of this—the weight of the profession she has chosen, and this leads her to battle with her internal connections:

The responsibility of looking after people—I always feel that weight...I said that to wear this white coat⁶ I have to deserve it...do something (laughs)...From the time I was little, I put doctors way up on a pedestal.

When Wanca is studying medicine, she carries out duties outside herself and her actions, and defined by the law and by the customs of the medical profession. This profession has ways of thinking, acting and feeling, outside the individual, and endowed with a coercive power, by means of which its principles are imposed upon her. The medical institution is a cultural, symbolic and imaginary system which imposes imaginary values upon Wanca (Bruner, 2001)—values which are substituted for her own. This “putting doctors on a pedestal” is counterproductive when she feels insecure, slow and discouraged—aspects perhaps exacerbated during stigmatization.

If this is true, the institution and the society has stigmatized her because of her inferiority; here, then, is a new difficulty for Wanca—the imaginary significance of being a doctor, with its aspects that preserve as much existence of the social group known as “doctors”, as the way in which the power for the privileged use of economic, social and cultural commodities has been distributed. This new difficulty is, specifically, how she is going to be in “the place where the doctors are,” if the institution discredits her.

One possible way out seems to come from a doctor who is attending her mother:

They had told my mother that she had a tumor, and she had to have an examination. We went to a gynecologist, and he said she was fine—but she already had secretions from her breast! And according to what I knew, that meant it was malignant. And the gynecologist said (anyway, he didn't think it was very important)...and he said, “We are going to watch it.

The truth is that all this made me see that the doctors—teachers or not—are people that can be wrong. It helped me a lot to see that too...I saw the doctors themselves with other eyes. After that I didn't think they were so perfect.

The full impact of Wanda's interviews emerges when you are asked to construct a narration in the form of a fable—an account of her life in college. Wanda describes her life at Medical School as if it were a soccer game between Peru and Argentina, where the Peruvians pirouette around, but don't make any goals, and end up doing nothing, and along with that “nothing” comes discouragement—a discouragement that can be associated with the slow pace of her schooling, which is conflicts with the family rule of using time well. In Peru she would have complied with that rule, since she finished high school at age 16:

My parents taught me to value time. I had barely turned sixteen, and I had already finished high school. Then I expected of myself...then personally it's that...I felt inadequate, a little (...)

Sometimes I compare it to soccer, right? (laugh)...The Argentineans are good at soccer, and the Peruvians play well...but sometimes they pirouette around, but they don't make goals, and they end up doing nothing. I did that—I needed to settle down, speak up, take the exam and pass with the grade I wanted, but sometimes I got discouraged.

III. Conclusions

The first considerations before concluding, point to a need for further field study of Wanda's participation in these future analyses. In this sense, anthropology appears as a science of knowledge and reconstruction of logic, implicit in the action of the subjects. Access to a symbolically-prestructured object calls for dialog and participation in which productive compression is understood as a fusion of the horizons of the researcher and the objects of the study (Berger and Luckmann, 2005). This means getting involved in other people's way of life, directly and experimentally, so as to know what is inside the persons questioned. Through their participation, they would give new meaning to the investigation as part of a co-research group. In the study of this case, stigmatization and the imagined “doctor” appear as processes coming into conflict. These may account for some aspects of the analysis of a student's path, so that it is necessary, from the standpoint of critical ethnography, to share the findings of the research results, and to negotiate with the informants. In short, we must convert the object of the study into the subject who is doing the investigating.

Other considerations point to the importance of reflexivity in the continuation of this exercise. From the perspective of Anderson (1989), reflexivity appears as a dialectical process between the researcher's constructs, the logic of the informants' constructs, the research date, the researcher's ideological prejudices, and the structural and historical forces. In this process of creative uncertainty, Willis says that (1994, p. 5) important contradictions occur, and that there are moments when

one should initiate actions and set aside expectations so as to try different angles under different lights; and ultimately, capture the real subject of research, using a qualitative reflexive methodology with “this potential for cyclic control and for a focus on the wealth of the contradictions lived.”

Finally, these uses of diversity rest, in part, on the opinion of presenting ourselves to others as alternatives opposed to us (Geertz, 1996). These practices are part of social images related to diversity, classification systems, and social perception categories that are gradually inscribed on the mind, and it is through them that in the university spaces objective limits become felt limits and practical anticipation acquired through experience, which lead you to exclude that by which you are excluded (Bourdieu, 2006, p.482).

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¹ *Sendero Luminoso* (Luminous Path) is a Peruvian terrorist organization with Maoist tendencies, widely condemned for its brutality, which includes violence done to the *campesinos*, union leaders, authorities elected by the people, and the civil population.

² Comechigones: Argentine indigenous group. Downloaded from <http://riie.com.ar/?a=31543>
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³ The Diaguita, also called Diaguita-Calchaquí, are a group of South American indigenous peoples. The Diaguita culture developed between the 8th and 16th centuries in what are now the provinces of Salta, Catamarca, La Rioja and Tucumán in northwestern Argentina, and in the Atacama and Coquimbo regions of northern Chile. Downloaded from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diaquitas>
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⁴ The Wichí are an indigenous people of South America. They are a large group of tribes ranging about the headwaters of the Bermejo River and the Pilcomayo River, in Argentina and Bolivia. Downloaded from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wich%C3%AD>
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⁵ The term is applied in the sense of Castoriadis C, who in defining the imaginary meanings of society as “the radical imaginary as it is manifested at the same time and indissolubly in the historical act and in the constitution before all explicit rationality, of a universe of meanings (Castoriadis, 2003, p.2).

⁶ The white coat worn by doctors.