

Comitato scientifico internazionale

Annie Benveniste

Université Paris 8

Micaela Castiglioni

Università degli Studi di Milano Bicocca

Mireille Cifali

Università di Ginevra

Enricomaria Corbi

Università degli Studi Suor Orsola Benincasa

Michele Corsi

Università di Macerata

Carmela Covato

Università degli Studi Roma Tre

Vasco D'Agnese

Seconda Università degli Studi di Napoli

Laura Formenti

Università degli Studi di Milano Bicocca

Maria Luisa Iavarone

Università degli Studi di Napoli Parthenope

José González Monteagudo

Università di Siviglia

Fabrizio Manuel Sirignano

Università degli Studi Suor Orsola Benincasa

Maria Grazia Riva

Università degli Studi di Milano Bicocca

Mariagrazia Contini

Università degli Studi di Bologna

*I volumi pubblicati in questa collana sono preventivamente sottoposti
a una doppia procedura di peer review*

Stories that make a difference

Exploring the collective, social and political potential
of narratives in adult education research

Edited by

Laura Formenti & Linden West

Volume stampato con il contributo del Dipartimento di Scienze Umane
per la Formazione "Riccardo Massa" dell'Università degli Studi Milano-
Bicocca

ESREA – European Society for Research on the Education of Adults
LHBN - Life History and Biography Network
Department of Human Sciences for Education
Milano Bicocca University

ISBN volume 978-88-6760-360-2



2016 © Pensa MultiMedia Editore s.r.l.
73100 Lecce • Via Arturo Maria Caprioli, 8 • Tel. 0832.230435
25038 Rovato (BS) • Via Cesare Cantù, 25 • Tel. 030.5310994
www.pensamultimedia.it • info@pensamultimedia.it

Contents

1. Laura Formenti and Linden West
The transformative potential of biographical research: questions and answers in a community of learners 9

- PART A
STORIES TO ILLUMINATE POLITICAL ISSUES,
TO ENHANCE DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT
AND TO FOSTER PARTICIPATION**
2. Linden West (Canterbury Christ Church University, UK), *Stories of distress in the city: Racism, fundamentalism, recognition and the role of groups* 23
3. Sofia Bergano (Polytechnic Institute of Bragança, Portugal), *Political and civic participation of women in Portugal* 31
4. Tine Brøndum (University of Southern Denmark, Odense, DK), *Narratives of (teacher) identity, community and democratic learning* 38
5. Angela Pilch Ortega (University of Graz, Austria), *Cooperative learning and social inequality in Chiapas* 46
6. Rebecca Tee (Canterbury Christ Church University, UK), *Using auto/biographical narration to understand the role of political inheritance in applied civics* 55
7. Chul-In Yoo (Jeju National University, South Korea), *Narrative truth, personal healing and social truth: The Jeju April 3 incident in Korea* 62

- PART B
ARTS AND MEDIA IN RESEARCH
AND PRACTICE, TO FOSTER PARTICIPATION
AND COLLECTIVE LEARNING**
8. Francesco Cappa (Milano Bicocca University, Italy), *The learning scene. Turning the academic space in a collective space of play* 71
9. Cindy Hanson (University of Regina, Canada), *Stitching the stories together. Intergenerational learning among indigenous women* 78
10. Diane Laurier (Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, Canada), *Le récit de création pour favoriser le développement artistique et identitaire de jeunes adultes autochtones* 85
11. Helena Oikarinen-Jabai (Aalto University, Finland), *Transforming images and narrations of Finnishness in a participatory performative art-based research setting* 92
12. Mike Spence (Canterbury Christ Church University, UK) *Videogames revived the social media star* 101

3. Political and civic participation of women in Portugal

Sofia Bergano

Polytechnic Institute of Bragança, Portugal

With this chapter we intend to reflect on how women interpret their political and civic participation in Portuguese society. In Portugal formal changes in this area have happened at a fast pace and have witnessed a growing political, academic and social interest in female participation in the public sphere. Being aware of these phenomena, it is important to try to understand how these changes are interpreted by women of different ages and from different social backgrounds. As indicated in the literature review, the participation of women in the public sphere is the result of a range of social factors including schooling and family education, the perpetuation of stereotypes that associate the exercise of power to the male gender, the legal recognition of citizenship rights, as well as many other social factors.

In this sense, it seemed appropriate to address the issue of women's public participation considering two main axes of analysis: age and social class. Thus, we selected three families, each with three generations of women and we conducted in-depth interviews with them to retrace their life stories.

In the first section of this work we will briefly review the political and civic participation of women in Portugal aiming to clarify the path of female participation so far. Then, we describe the decisions and methodological procedures of our study. Subsequently we present the main results of our research and finally we will share some closing thoughts that allow us to discuss the issues of participation from the point of view of different women.

Brief analysis of the political and civic participation of women in Portugal

It seems consensual to think that in Portugal the political participation of women is quite recent. According to Pimentel (1999), it was the *Estado Novo* that in 1931 granted women the right to vote and to eligibility. However, this right was far from universal, since only women with secondary education or those who were head of a household could vote and be elected. As such, most women would be excluded from the political participation processes, especially those belonging to the most disadvantaged social groups.

Another important aspect in the analysis of the evolution of civic life of women in Portugal is their participation in movements and feminist organizations. With reference to this we would like to mention that during the *Estado Novo* there were several organizations for women, for example, the *Obra das Mães pela Educação Nacional*, established in 1936, and the *Mocidade Portuguesa Feminina*, founded in 1937. These organizations were intended to promote the *Estado Novo* ideology and its action was essentially based on spreading nationalist ideals and the valorization of the family as the correct feminine place to be. This remitted women to the social role of wife and mother. In a divergent ideological framework, the National Council of Portuguese Women, which had been created during the First Republic, continued its activity during the *Estado Novo*, fighting for the right to vote, for the professionalization and female education, for fair labor remuneration, for mother and child protection, claiming also the recognition of the social function of maternity and to declare child prostitution illegal (Pimentel, 1999).

This ideological difference led to the belief that feminism was comparable to Bolshevism, individuality and immorality, and these were the arguments used by female elites of the *Estado Novo* to oppose other women's movements which led progressively to the outlawing of these movements (Pimentel, 1999; Tavares, 2010).

The 1960s in Portugal, were marked by the student crises (1962, 1965 and 1969) in which the participation of women was accomplished through their presence in the strikes and demonstrations. The 1970s were a period characterized by a major change in Portugal and the status of Portuguese women. In this period the Liberation Movement of Women arises in 1974. This fact, according to Tavares (2010), was linked to the criminal case against writers Maria Teresa Horta, Maria Isabel Barreno

and Maria Velho da Costa, for publishing *As Novas Cartas Portuguesas*, in 1972. The wave of national and international solidarity triggered by censorship and criminal prosecution to the authors of the book, who became known as the *Três Marias*, created the necessary conditions for the affirmation of feminism in Portugal.

According to Sineau (1995) a significant legal change began to occur from the 1970s which led to an idea of equality between husband and wife. This has supported a democratization movement of the couple and the political society. Nevertheless, the progressive participation by women in politics has been rather scarce. For instance, we noted that in 1987, only 7.6% of the members of the Portuguese Parliament were women (Sineau, 1995). This clearly illustrates the difference between the formal law and the real social and political practices.

The current moment in Portugal is strongly marked by the adoption of the Parity Law (Organic Law number 3/2006 dated 21st of August) which aims to increase the participation of women in the main circles of political decisions.

The journey of the democratic participation of women in Portugal started very recently and despite all considerable changes, a lot remains to be done to achieve gender equality in political decision-making spheres.

Methodology

In an attempt to realize how political and civic participation of women is perceived and experienced, it seemed appropriate to use a qualitative approach in this research.

As such, we considered it important and relevant to analyze life stories of women of families in which class differences are present. The objective is to identify and understand how the social, economic and cultural context can mark the discourses on political and civic participation of women. Another aspect which seemed relevant in terms of political and civic participation of women was their age. This is due to the fact that there has been a rapid change (a few decades) in the social roles assigned to women, as well as their rights, liberties and guarantees as citizens.

In this sense our main concern in this study was that the choice of participating families fulfilled the necessary requirements so that we could obtain a research plan that would allow two main axes: (a) the social class, and (b) the existence of three generations of women (relatives in direct

line: daughter, mother and grandmother) in each family to be interviewed by us directly.

The data collection instrument selected for the conduct of our study was the in-depth interview. After collecting the data we proceeded to the content analysis. The construction of data analysis categories started with the transcription of the interviews, which proved to be particularly useful to provide a first overview of the data.

Discourses on political and civic participation of women

To present and discuss the results we have chosen to follow the categories found in the content analysis, namely (a) the views about the political and civic participation of women, (b) the awareness of an uneven historical background for both men and women, (c) the importance of women's participation, (d) political activism, (e) the opinion about the quotas for women, and (f) the civic and community participation.

Regarding the participation of women in political and democratic life, we found a transversal awareness in all families and all generations on civil and political rights of women, and they all have the perception that major changes at this level began with the fall of the dictatorship and that from this historical landmark we have experienced continued progress.

Another aspect that we found, across all generations, was the valorization of the political participation of women. Despite this apparent uniformity, we must highlight that there are some intergenerational differentiation indicators: older generations refer that nowadays women's participation already occurs, in the second and third generations the discourse is marked by the observation that this participation is still very uneven. The arguments presented by women from more favoured families are related to the visibility of the competence of women, with the rights of citizenship, while in the working class family the idea that women can defend the interests of women in the spheres of political action is present throughout the three generations, on the grounds that 'a woman knows better about the difficulties experienced by women'. This idea mirrors a certain expectation which some female authors have dubbed as sisterhood.

With regard to political activism, just one of our participants referred to its link to a political party: the youngest of the middle-class family of women. She believes there is a relation between being a woman and their

political options. This, in some way, expresses the perception that not all parties welcome militant women equally and that the path that women follow within the parties is not similar in all of them. We would also like to point out that she also states that in certain contexts the political participation of women is done at the expense of a certain masculinization, which implies a masculine performativity that illustrates the symbolic association of political power to hegemonic masculinity.

Concerning the Law of Parity, opinions are not unanimous. As an example of scepticism associated with this legislation we have the opinions of the participants of the second generation of the most favoured families. According to these participants, the affirmative action measure providing the increase of women in politics is based on the assumption that inequality does not dignify the participation of women. According to them, the change that has to be made is related to mentality, resulting in a gradual process that will eventually bear fruit. A slightly different view has the youngest participant of the middle-class family who, despite considering that we should not have to set quotas for the representation of the genders in the candidacies to the political bodies, she considers that although it is not a desirable situation, quotas turn out to be a need for there to be an active participation of women in political decision-making spheres. Note that this participant is the only woman in our study who has an active involvement in a political party, which somehow can lead her to have a perception about this subject that distances her from the other participants. With respect to the participants who defend the quotas as a strategy to increase the political participation of women, we have the examples of all the women of the working class family.

When confronted with questions about their involvement and civic participation, the women in our study referred to both their social roles in the family and in the community and said that this was their most important contribution to social welfare. It is in this sense that we are able to state the transversality of the valuing of the roles that support the family and the neighbourhood network and friends and that these practices are interpreted by women as civic participation. Insofar, we find that this community participation assumes, in different families, different levels of formality, and that the degree of involvement of the different generations is also different.

Thus, in the most favoured family all women refer their participation in a non-governmental organization supporting socially vulnerable populations. This participation is intergenerational and continuous in time.

Despite the different degree of involvement in each generation, we note that currently the second generation involves more, occupies a position of management and that the participation of the other women of the same family is merely occasional.

In the middle-class family we highlight the participation initiatives in the religious life and education of the community and some volunteering action associated with Church. Also in this family all three generations of women are involved in the same type of activity, the woman of the third generation is a catechist as well as her mother and her grandmother before.

In the working-class family the networks of solidarity and neighbourhood support and work were referred to. Indeed, every generation claimed that, whenever they had time, they provided direct support to the family, neighbours and co-workers.

In every discourse the role of women in their social groups and supportive functions are perceived as closely linked to the ethics of care that follows, in the opinion of participants, a 'natural' female ability to relate with others, justified by the 'typical characteristics of women', such as a higher sensitivity to social issues, the ability to listen, to grow empathy, among others.

We would like to point out that these traits traditionally attributed to women and which in our study appear as areas of civic intervention valued by our participants, are highly regarded from the point of view of social cohesion. Nevertheless, these are areas of a certain social invisibility, far from the most prestigious political decision places, with a higher degree of social recognition.

Conclusion

The path of political participation of women in Portugal is quite recent and closely influenced by the political and social changes that took place in the last four decades. Despite the undeniable advances driven by legal changes aimed at increasing the presence of women in the political sphere, this change is perceived by women in our study regardless of their social background or age. The valorization of this participation is also unanimous. However, the small participation of women continues to be justified, even in part, by women themselves. As mentioned before, the position about the Parity Law is rather divergent, since there seems to be

more resistance to this legal action by women from most favored families which should have more conditions to carry out this participation. It is also a fact that in the most disadvantaged family women are confronted with major impediments and constraints to their participation in the public sphere, in particular, lower education and double shifts (working outside the home and non-shared housework).

Regardless of the social background or age our study shows that there seems to be a general acceptance that women participate in community life in other ways, less visible but nevertheless significant. In this regard the participants in this study justify the community support functions to be closer to the 'natural' characteristics of women, which turns out to highlight a traditional view of the role of women. It is therefore important to emphasize that this vision penalizes women twice as much, since, on the one hand it excludes women from the political decision-making positions associated with the male's, and on the other hand, it approaches women to tasks with lower visibility and prestige.

References

- Fonseca L., Araújo H. & Magalhães M. (2000). Integrando as metodologias qualitativas na sua contribuição para o campo educativo e de estudos sobre as mulheres. In *Actas do Seminário Internacional Coeducar para uma sociedade inclusiva* (pp.133-146). Lisboa: CIDM.
- Olesen V. (2005). Early Millennial Feminist Qualitative Research: Challenges and Contours. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (third edition, pp. 235-278). London: Sage Publications.
- Pimentel I. (1999). As Mulheres no Estado Novo e as Organizações Femininas Estatais. In A. Cova, M. Nizza da Silva (Org.), *As Mulheres e o Estado* (pp. 63-90). Lisboa: CEMRI e Universidade Aberta.
- Sineau M. (1995). Direito e Democracia. In Fe Thébaud (Dir.), *História das Mulheres no Ocidente: o século XX* (vol. 5, pp. 551-581). Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores.