

## **From the subjectivity of the object to the subjectivation of research: Practices of social research in Chile**

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### **Abstract**

We offer a collective exercise in critical psychology, specifically in social research critique, drawing on our generational experience as researchers in Chile. In addressing the relationship between research and the concrete socio-political process where it is embedded, we discuss three related phenomena. First, the voice-raising effect of social research, making the subject matter of research a creative subject in dialogue with the researcher; this opens up political and ethical issues of social recognition and co-authorship. Second, the risk of ventriloquism contained in voice-raising research when the other side of the coin, the governmental function of voice-management, is not taken into consideration. Epistemological and ethical issues are highlighted. Third, the complexity of the double dialogue that researchers may keep with both othernesses, the studied other, and the other that demands research; and the potentiality of subjectivation that this implies for the development of the researcher as a voice in its own, as a partial and interested position within this dialogue. We discuss these phenomena illustrating each problem in terms of social research experiences conducted in Chile, particularly in the fields of memory, poverty, and youth.

*Keywords:* Subjectivation, Dialogism, Social psychology, otherness, co-authorship

## **From the subjectivity of the object to the subjectivation of research: Practices of social research in Chile**

This paper accounts for some social research practices from the point of view of our evolving research craft, stemming from our initial formation in social psychology and our familiarity with critical and discursive perspectives, and developed in Latin American contexts and institutional settings in Chile – thus fueling the meaning of the present discussion. Our departing point is the reflection on our own situation of subjects historically inscribed in particular research devices, thus becoming part of situated practices of social research. We assume that daily research practices, on the one hand, involve the problematic inscription in

what we call here 'research logics' and, on the other, make it possible to reflect on this problem.

In the Chilean context, from the 1980s onwards (Agurto, Canales, De la Maza, 1985) the openness of distributive research to approaches called 'qualitative' meant a redefinition and negotiation of the conceptions of research, subject of research and researcher, articulating them to a certain extent to the historical context and in agreement with an endeavor which became embodied and acknowledged as hegemonic. The emergence of the object of research as a subject to be listened to and recognized as such, arose as a need to respond to the political decisions of the investigative agenda of the social sciences in a period of military dictatorship.

In this sense, and following varied disputes which favored the so called qualitative openness in social research in the 1990s, emerged the importance of thinking about the study of the social object as a subject, and what we explore here as the challenge of understanding social research as multiple voices, actors, and collective subjectivities that comprised the social. We assume that qualitative logic made it possible to think about its object from the perspectives of *listening* and *subjectivation*, which not only modified the conception of its object but also inaugurated a new form of production of knowledge, knowledge of subjects, as well as opened the theme of the reflexive condition of the relationships among these.

In these terms, we understand qualitative social research as a variety of practices which are related to the praxis of critical psychology in the sense that they lead us to think of the production conditions as a social relationship. In the first place, social research is about someone. The matter of social research involves the construction of the other subjected to research, a categorization that will make it possible to search for an alterity, to constitute forms of recognition favoring the establishment of a certain social interlocution. In the second place, research is done for someone. The request for research, if not from the researched ones themselves, comes from a third party who ask for and use the generated knowledge to suit their own needs.

As will be discussed below in the body of this article, in order to understand the political conditions of possible social research in Chile over the past 20 years, it is fundamental to consider the produced relationships as a triadic structure. The interlocution relationships between the researcher-subject and the researched-subject are mediated by the relation that both establish with the agencies that request, validate or censor the obtained knowledge, and that are the addressees of this knowledge, which they receive according to its potential usefulness. From this point of view, we are interested in exploring how the relationships between researchers and researched are attached not only to the general problem of governmentality (Foucault, 1988, 1997), that is, the *conduct of behavior* of the others and oneself (Foucault, 1982), but to the specific order of a device. That is, we aim at understanding social research as a device resulting from the governmental policies to administer the social which, among other things, shape and guide research practices, including the research policies themselves. In this way, it is possible to show how within research practices there have historically coexisted, in permanent dispute, different logics or hegemonic discourses. This way of exploring research practices involves dealing with the manner in which the investigative craft is crossed by a certain articulation of technical, ethical and political aspects. From this point on, research can be understood as a social process which seeks, connects and acts as an agent of historically located social actors, generating knowledge on the basis of such social processes without transcending their arrangement. This

makes it possible for us to inquire about the commitments that research practices have acquired to broader social processes.

Considering that social research is a habitual practice, we are interested in questioning its exercise and particular effects from a critical tradition. We would like to focus on a line of research which enjoys a special protagonism, quantitative research, in as much as it has centered on 'giving voice to those who do not have a voice,' that is, on incorporating the subjectivities and the social cultures where the investigated phenomenon originates, as well as on problematizing the role of the researchers. Thus, the present article constitutes a reflexive analysis on the ways to inscribe and acknowledge oneself as part of the craft of social research in Chile.

In particular, the aim of the present article is to reflect critically on the logics present in the research devices which are put into practice, seen as a setting of the tensions and disputes which arise as part of the research process, and, at the same time, on the constitution of qualitative research as a critical exercise which, just as Parker states (2007), questions the ideological assumptions of the currently dominant models.

This article deals with three 'lessons' we have learned from a retrospective on our craft of social psychologists and researchers in Chile. After sketching the coordinates to guide the reader in terms of basic conceptual and historical tags, in the three main sections of the article we present these lessons or ideas, each one illustrated by means of a concrete case of research: memory, poverty and youth culture. These cases of studies are paradigmatic for us in the sense of Agamben (2002; see also Goodwin 2004),<sup>1</sup> because we do not intend to write an essay on the history of social research in Chile, but rather this article constitutes a means to account for the discussion about the tensions and subordinations (subjections) that permeate the craft of research, by considering the intertwining of social networks and the socio-political framework in which a given research piece is inscribed.

### **Hegemony and research critique**

Scientific research takes part in and feeds the consolidation of social devices, understood as semiotic-material matrices that exert power (Jäger, 2003). According to the very model of modern science, scientific research is understood as a means of domination (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944/1970). It contributes to the formation of a kind of knowledge beyond the romantic *knowledge for knowledge's sake*, which always moves on towards a particular endeavor and a specific practical power. Theoreticians as different as Bacon, Bergson or Foucault, to name but a few, elaborate variations on this problem. As regards the approaches of these authors, we would like to stress that scientific knowledge, both as wisdom and as the technical application of it, can only be understood as a strategic device that has an incidence on the understanding of what we are, being thus incorporated in the social process. (see also Ibáñez & Iñiguez, 1996).

In this way, we should not only wonder about the conditions of logical or cognitive possibility of science, but also, and maybe more importantly, about its political conditions of possibility (Perez, 1998). If social research has a close relationship with the problem of governance of

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1 "The paradigm is neither universal nor particular, neither general nor individual, it is a singularity which, showing itself as such, produces a new ontological context. This is the etymological meaning of the word *paradigme* in Greek, *paradigme* is literally 'what shows itself beside'" (Agamben, 2002).

social life, which is the modern political problem par excellence, then we should inquire into the concrete ideological configuration which, acquiring hegemony over other possible configurations, allows for and nurtures certain ways of research above others.

This argument appeals to us in the sense that scientific knowledge is required directly or indirectly by agencies interested in its eventual use in the areas of production or reproduction of a given order. Particularly, research on the practices and subjectivities points towards *knowing in order to govern*, that is, it produces knowledge that is predestined to keep or maintain the power relations that reign in a given community (Rose, 1999). In fact, the inalienable function of social research comprises a strictly political dimension, because the knowledge it produces contributes to the configuration of the social order, to determining the social field, and to the distribution of positions and identities, and in this way, to transform once and again the social into a reality that can be conceptualized (classified, ordered, predicted) and therefore managed. In this broad sense, social research bears a close relation with the problem of governance of social life, intervening in this process in ways that can be analyzed, thought of, and problematized (Lazzarato, 2000).

The condition of modern science leads us to consider the political function of social research in a radical way. So long as social research results in an especially relevant playing field in that it makes of its knowledge something real, then it is necessary to problematize the setting and ways of incidence of such knowledge. Thus, given the privileged condition of scientific knowledge in its explanatory rhetoric of social reality, it has come to be considered as a hegemonic domain. In these terms, what is *already known* is the thought that has gone through a process of hegemonization and is sustained by a series of semiotic-material relations (Balach *et al.*, 2005).

Positioning oneself as the subject of knowledge in the field of research in social sciences involves accepting a set of rules which are such because they have become hegemonic. This is the starting point of the setting and situation of research. On this subject, we can characterize hegemony as a relation by means of which an ideological configuration is constituted as a *universalized* whole; it governs the production of the meanings and identities originated under its influence for a given scientific and technological community. Hegemony is an action that exerts power provided that it fixes subjects and objects in certain settings, since subjects and objects are never fully constituted outside a dominant configuration that makes them exist in the field of social relationships (Laclau & Mouffe, 1987). The same as any other social practice, research emerges as a type of hegemonic relation in which the positions of 'subject-researcher,' 'subject of research' and/or 'demanding subject' are constituted. That is, the same set of rules would make of a given phenomenon the object of research, and of the subject who works with this phenomenon, a researcher. Subject and object are constituted in the rules that act as a significant whole of their identities, which in turn form an inseparable whole with the conditions that allow them to be.

In terms of relationships, the hegemonic research condition in a given society and time period determines the social interests to which research practices are objectively committed. This is independent of any justifications that might be offered, for example, by the researchers themselves, as well as the types of dialogic relationships (of collaboration, spying, complicity, apology, ventriloquism, strategy alliance, etc.) that may be established between subject and object. From the perspective of the interlocutory relations established by the researcher, the investigative practice is thus associated to the sociopolitical effect of its methodological and

conceptual devices; these make possible the dialogue with the other subjected to research and with the demanding other. This is the other specific aspect arising from the question about the hegemonic conditions of research.

When we propose to make a critical-reflexive analysis of our research practices, we move away from the position of an *omnipotent observer*, of an author supposedly liberated from the power relations that constitute research in a given context. Quite on the contrary, we use the term 'critique' to refer to an action based on the suppositions and limits of a field of knowledge, making a reflexive analysis of the possible actions that allow or limit its production in a certain political reality. In brief, critique acts on the naturalizing effects of hegemony (Richard, 1998). Our position, attentive to the political dimension, refers to the impossibility of eradicating conflict and power relations from any social phenomenon, existing under the condition of the impossibility of finding an essential principle on which the social order and its destiny can be based and defined once and for all (Laclau & Mouffe, 1987). Thus, critique is related to the politicization of the social and of the knowledge about it from its agonistic and acrimonious condition (Arendt, 1997). In this sense, we understand research critique or critique of investigation as that which intends to show the current and open character of the social, that is, the deep political sense of what is real. It is there that the possibility of exploring conditions allowing for the transformation of the social lies.

Research critique, as proposed here, involves contextualizing the production of knowledge in terms of its inscription as a historically located process. The notion of *situated knowledge* (Haraway, 1991) emerges as a proposal that tries to solve one of the main issues of the problem. As conceived in Balach *et al.* (2005) and the FIC Group,<sup>2</sup> it deals with considering that the position of the knowing subject stems from the power relations of his setting, and is embodied in research practices (see also Parker, 2007).

Attending to the situated formations of research implies that the researcher is not above the researched subject, but rather that the practice of investigating in its empirical and reflexive character produces and states its terms. Right now we will stress some aspects in this process that make it possible to interrogate the social commitments and the dialogic relations that sustain the hegemonic forms in our research experience in Chile.

### **Social research in context**

Thinking about social research in Chile nowadays places us in a global context that has outlined a setting never seen before in our country. Even though the spaces devoted exclusively to research are still limited in number, it is also true that the promotion of such places in universities and different governmental agencies has opened an adequate framework to enhance their growth and development. Such situation has been possible as long as social research articulates with the global trend that combines certain criteria of productivity, efficiency, competition, and usefulness. Certainly, a favorable scenario for social investigation, since the future projection of the investigative craft, country-wise, points towards professionalization, offering new resources and possibilities.

The formation of a class of social research professionals is underway, as shown by the new generation of young adults who have finished or are pursuing graduate courses in the country

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2 Fractalidades en Investigación Crítica, Doctorado Psicología social, Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona. See Fractalitats en Investigació Crítica (2005).

or abroad. We take part in this generation, either as part of the process or as its products, and as such we wonder here about the articulation of social research with the socio-political processes in which it is inserted, as well as about the socio-political effect of the methodological and conceptual devices through which the dialogic relationships with the other subjected to research, and with the demanding other, are made possible.

During the 1980s and early 1990s, social research in Chile assumes, marginally yet not less significantly, the critical role of providing social issues with a voice within the public sphere, against the attempts of media and police devices which intended to silence it as established by the dictatorship (Agurto, Canales, De la Maza, 1985). The military dictatorship does not resort to social research to manage social issues, but to other less sophisticated and more direct devices- repression strategies. In view of that, social researchers in Chile emerge as agents of critique, detached from the hegemonic mechanisms used to govern the population, as subjects maneuvering to safeguard a minimum of intellectual freedom in order to be able to point out social issues (hidden to public sight and ear) by means of the word. Thus, social research arises vindicating the social field as the place for that what is repressed, and as a platform from which to be heard.

Within this framework, despite and maybe due to its extreme marginality, qualitative research in particular emerges as a radical voice, with a strong epical connotation, and makes it possible to give social issues their own voice (see the meeting of investigations on youth, edited by Canales around 1990, under the title *From the shout to the word*). The researcher serves as amplifier of a voice that has been divested of public space; the researcher's discourse does not address the government, does not aim at designing public policies, but addresses the public space and serves the acknowledgement of social issues (everyday realities, necessities to be attend to, rights to be defended, experiences of the community) on the part of the social establishment (social civilian organizations, means of communication and spread of knowledge), contributing to the understanding of social issues from an alternate point of view to that of the dictatorship.

The transition to the post-dictatorial government during the 1990s meant to make use of such knowledge about subjects and identities. Once the repressed social problem has been pointed out, it is necessary to deal with the everyday realities whose existence has been acknowledged, with the diagnosed needs, with the violated rights, and the new experiences of the community. In order to cope with the problems that emerge as the social issues are recognized, it is fundamental to offer clear and differentiated recognition to the various subjects and identities on the basis of certain recognition policies. The knowledge of the social issues in this historical context where we have been formed as researchers involves the task of contributing to the recognition of the voices that had been previously silenced, erased, or leveled under repression, in order to pay special attention to them, offer them the floor to speak up, call each by its own name, and thus disclose the multiplicity of subjects and their discourse, without which democracy is not possible. Here the researcher takes up the new yet classic place of a hinge between a society that needs to be re-discovered and a government that needs to be built up.

As regards this political end, social research has so far adopted the hegemonic objective of taking a census and probing. This is evidenced by the relevance and development of the studies of public opinion over the last 20 years. Within this network of information, facing the one who requests knowledge researchers tend to configure themselves as informants, and to treat the social actor, the other subjected to research, as an informant of the social issue. By

setting the initial stages of our formation in research within this context, we stress the relation of research and the socio-political problem of the management of the social. Transforming the society into a democratic society required, in the first place, that in spite of the effects of military repression, research allowed for the political recognition of the voice of the actors that comprised the civilian society. In the second place, it also required useful knowledge for the management of the recognized subjectivities and needs. This social transformation is what characterizes our generation's investigative experience.

The focus of qualitative social research comes to be seen as a subject to be listened to, whether we call him 'addict,' 'madman,' 'victim,' 'inmate,' 'homeless child,' 'immigrant,' etc. This other subjected to research does not refer to a pre-existing or essential subject, one that we would need to 'discover' by means of various investigative techniques. On the contrary, from our perspective, the researched-other is configured during the research process, not only by means of categories and social attributions, but also by the mere act of socio-political recognition of that other as subject.

Within this context, we will elaborate a discussion around some of the lessons we have learned on the relation between research and the political problem of our era – the governance of the social – through paradigmatic fields of study such as memory, poverty and youth culture. We have arranged them in three lessons as if they narrated our biographical and generational research experiences diachronically; please note that this learning narrative comprises our current critical reflection and does not relate to chronological stages or constitute any form of progression.

### **First lesson: the recognition of the other and co-authorship. The case of memory studies**

The *Memory Studies* constitute one of the emblematic fields that illustrate the other subjected to research as a configured position in the research act. From the 1980s onwards, as pointed out by a number of authors (Huyssen, 2002; Jelin, 2001, 2002; Traverso, 2007; among others), collective memory became the focus of attention and concern in the area of the Social Sciences. In this context, the countries of the South cone, especially Chile, centered their attention on the production of studies of a specific past, namely: the period that refers to authoritarian or totalitarian governments, when Human Rights violation became an everyday issue.

In this field, the recognition of the other has not been an easy task to accomplish; nor have the emerging effects been trivial. It is not only about announcing a previously constituted voice, since in fact the doings of the dictatorship disarticulated the social actors and weakened its collective bases, but rather about raising a devastated subject, providing him with a name and a voice, constituting him as a subject. In this context, social research has the task of producing the subjects and their discourse by means of the identification, the localization, and the distribution of the social space subjected to re-conceptualization. Recognizing the other does not only involve naming and signaling the relevant social categories (*identification*); it goes on to fix places and guarantee the subjects access routes (*localization*), and arranging the multiplicity of subjects in an integrated cartography of society (*distribution*). Recognition is achieved by situating the subjects within a whole, and through it in their relationships among each other, making it possible to diagnose and prioritize needs.

The recognition of the other is not trivial in its ethical and political effects, because his

emergence and production not only informs about the social but, at the same time, allows for inter-appellation and dialogue, thus demanding in one way or another that that position be listened to. This is how the other subjected to research constitutes a legitimate voice, becoming inscribed in the dialogic and hermeneutic process, even if there is still a risk of being silenced by the sayings of the researcher or the demanding party.

The researched-other that predominates in Chile regarding memory studies since the 1980s to date is the *victim of political repression*. The configuration of this subject from the perspective of social research is sustained by the action of acknowledging and providing him with a voice silenced for a long period, marginalized and even exterminated from the public scene. Social investigators assume the task of *providing the voiceless with a voice*, generating the necessary conditions for silence to become word in the social sphere. Researchers are moved by political and ethical reasons, and assume the role of serving the marginalized voices and repairing the damage caused by Human Rights violations on the victims and their families.

Therefore, what really matters is that the victim's voice is recognized. This action speaks of the need to bring other voices to the social and public scene, voices other than the official voice that for 17 years (1973-1990) possessed every mechanism to extend its version and vision of the past, of the present, and of the future projection as well.

Studies centered on the *victims* have acquired enormous social, political, and academic relevance as long as the exercise of research is able to serve the marginalized voices, a research ethics that has been recognizable since the early 1980s. In the past few years, however, these same perspectives have begun to question the risks and effects of this kind of studies. In the first place, because the notion of *victim* highlights the fact of having been subjected to violence, and thus, to pain, suffering and discrimination, which according to Birulés (2002) would imply a political action directed basically to demanding compensation for the damages inflicted. Secondly, and based on the latter, 'to work the memory' from the *victim's* perspective brings about the danger of essentializing such subjection, hiding its position as social and political actor in the production of memory. In the third place, since by situating himself beforehand in the *victim's* voice, the notion of exceptionality is installed (Reyes, 2009) – 'it happened to others, not to us' – generating not only the depoliticization of the produced memory, but also its privatization.

Hence, one of the questions that arose among the members of the Memory Studies in Chile concerned the starting point to inquire about memory production. Trying to avoid some of the formulated dangers and implications, one of the options was and has been to investigate the memories of the *survivors* or of the *social fighters*, re-establishing the political projects of such subjects, and thus, inscribing the produced memories within political coordinates. This research option could ease our minds from a critical perspective, as long as it brings out the silenced and marginalized voices as well as it restores a political option, not only in the production of memories, but also in the exercise of research, by politically deciding 'where to start,' and contributing to the fighting scenario and to the memories of the recent past.

However, from critical perspectives memory has been understood as a social practice, that is, as a continuous, precarious, contingent, and contextual inter-subjective process, an issue that leads us to sustain that any version of the past, as stated by Halbwachs (1925/1992), will be constituted *in* and *from* the present. From this perspective, memory cannot be understood as naturalization, neither as a storage of inert footprints within the individual, nor as an external



and constrictive macro-conscience of individual awareness. Memory, or as Vásquez points out (2001), *remembering*, must be conceived and dealt with in its procedural character, which is eminently socio-communicative (Halbwachs, 1925/1992; Jelin, 2002; Middleton & Edwards, 1992; Ramos, 1989; Shotter, 1990; Vásquez, 2001). In fact, this process is dialogically produced as the past is narrated to respond to a concern, a questioning and/or a lack of understanding that needs to be tackled, argued, legitimated in a particular relational context; one *remembers* to respond to the current context which *complains* about a past projection (Reyes, 2009).

Two issues arise in this context. On the one hand, is it necessary to have different discursive positions in order to research on collective memory?, do we need to consider other points of view seeking the appropriation of the memory in order to be able to produce memories from the *victim* or the *social fighter*? To refer to right-wing or Armed Forces positions, to set just a few examples, has been a rather marginal research practice (Haye, 2004; Juricic & Reyes, 2000; Reyes, 2003, 2009; Tocornal, 2008), since, for a long time, these voices were considered hegemonic in the public and political scene. However, taking this into consideration, isn't it relevant, even for the political ideology of the critical perspectives, to approach memory production in ideological terms, introducing all the conflicting positions, attending to their effects as regards the social order?

Nevertheless, this questioning follows the same logic as the preceding approaches. Even if the dialogue between the different positions is introduced, *who* remembers is still determined beforehand. It is worth going a little further and, assuming that memory is a social practice, ask oneself if the act of remembering does not imply the constitution of who as well. That is, it involves a research process that produces subjectivation by becoming the listener of the other.

When researching on memory, establishing categories a priori— for example *victim*, *social fighter*, *Armed Forces*, among others—, rather than determining *who* narrates the past could be thought of only as the establishment of methodological categories to serve as a starting point in research. In this sense, they would be acting just as momentary positions since they articulate and vanish based on the relations they sustain. It is not that the *position* is determined beforehand, and later 'manifests' or 'expresses itself' depending on the presented scenario. Or, in other words, the notion of *position* does not a priori refer to a subject that performs the act of remembering. Rather, *position* will be understood as an effect of what is held in front of others, being the subject part of this effect.

Assuming this perspective implies that the different *positions* held through the analysis do not coincide with the various methodological categories defined in advance – for example, generational position, ideological position. This entails, for example, that the researched other, though delimited according to momentary fixations to allow for its methodological definition, is only literally produced in the research act itself. When we refer to the research act, we refer to the question that guides the methodological device that yields the data, as well as to their analytical and interpretative procedures. Therefore, the *who* of memory can be understood as *a posteriori* in research.

This leads us to the second question: what is the place of the researchers in this investigative process? Those who have worked on collective memory tend to position themselves in critical perspectives, especially if, as stated by Parker (2007), when wanting to relate research to social changes, locating what we do and say in the framework of cultural transformations and

abandoning any pretense of political neutrality. Paraphrasing the ILAS team,<sup>3</sup> there is some kind of ‘committed link’ with the researched issue and the other subjected to research on the part of the investigators.

The place of the researcher is that of someone who gives an account on somebody else – an other to another. He is the *victim’s memory*, or the *social fighter’s memory*, or even the *memory produced in the dialogue between different positions*. In this way, in the act of remembering, the product (the memory of) is stressed over the process. The consequence may be that the researchers take, or keep, a distance from the account of the past produced along the research process. As Ibáñez and Íñiguez put it, “It is about an operation enabling the researcher to *back-fold* from the political sphere” (1996). In other words, by offering a piece of news on an issue, in this case the collective memory of the other, the researcher is reduced to a mere *informant of informants*.

However, this image loses sharpness if we attend to two crucial issues. First, to the fact that in the act of investigating, *who* inquires, analyses, and interprets data, is the position of subject-researcher. Second, investigating on collective memory has implied, at least in memory studies in Chile, to inquire into issues that are contemporary to the researchers, and therefore, produce tension and conflict in them without being able to assume a neutral and detached position in the act of research. In this sense, the investigators are *giving an account* of an issue that, in some way or other, constitutes themselves as subjects.

The word investigate is said to come from the latin *investigare*, in turn derived from *vestigium* which means ‘following the track of.’ Based on what has been said above, we could sustain that such track is not merely a restitution of a past which is over, but a reconstruction of the past from and according to the present. Therefore, we would be speaking of a track that is produced during the act of investigating. In this sense, the other subjected to research in the memory studies is articulated in a dialogical field of positions in which the researcher is entangled. Thus, the track is neither the informant’s, nor of the person informed, but in that dialogical field. It results from the investigation, where both the researcher and the other subjected to research emerge as authors. In this way, the act of investigating is a creative action, in a work that produces the co-authorship of the researcher and the other subjected to research, leading to the question on the inter-subjective relationship that determines whether the process of investigation can be possible.

Summing up, our first lesson arose from a double investigative experience. On the one hand, the subjectivity of the researched, already questioned as object by means of the recognition of its voice as the position of subject, makes it very difficult, or unable to be reduced to the social or conceptual categories that emerge in the sociopolitical process opening the listening scope of the other. The subjectivity of the other manifests itself as a creative event that challenges the researchers. This lesson possesses a concrete historical meaning for us, given that the sociopolitical recognition of voices to repopulate the civilian society to which research serves in the 1990s is not preceded by pre-existing voices that have been awaiting their recognition, but by missing subjects, de-politicized voices, disarticulated social actors; research collaborates in the formation of new subjects and actors. On the other hand, the identity between investigator and author becomes problematized, not only because it attains authorship rights as a consequence of the creative efforts of the other subjected to research,

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3 Latin American Institute for Mental Health – non governmental organization oriented to give mental health attention to people directly affected by human rights violations during the military regime, 1973-1990.

but also because such efforts, which constitute the subjective material of the work of the researcher, suggest that research authorship is shared and co-generated in the investigative process itself (see Bakhtin, 1981, for the problematization of authorship along these lines). We have illustrated this on memory research given its paradigmatic character, but it is present in social research of different subjects: women, youth, poor people, homosexuals, indigenous people, etc., whose creative efforts within the research process position them as co-authors of their subjectivity.

### **Second lesson: research for social management. The case of poverty studies**

When investigative operations of identification, localization, and distribution are dealt with from a critical perspective that reveals them as de-politization practices, the strategies of politicization of knowledge emerge as an alternative to consider research practices. From there on, the practices of recognition of the other, the researched issue as subject, come into play. For research to contribute to the constitution of the other subjected to research as subject implies providing him with social existence (Castro, 2008).

While in the 1980s social research in Chile was lead by the ethical and political need to acknowledge social issues, in the 1990s researchers were moved by the ethical and political problem of serving (having to serve) population control and promotion devices. In the Chilean social context of transition to democracy in the 1990s, especially relevant practices arose as a means to organize some sort of intelligibility on the various social voices that, positioned as subjects, *caught the attention* of social research projects, leading at the same time to the need to manage this new multiplicity of voices.

Once the voices have been acknowledged, and hence incorporated to the public sphere, as long as social research formalizes social issues it is imperative to manage them. In the case of Chile, in this context social research became associated to community intervention strategies, self-management support, and advisory in the design of public policies that tackled social problems affecting subjects and private entities.

We were formed as social researchers within this setting, caring for the intricate position of the researcher and remaining detached from research practices of objectification. This investigative niche intended to find ways to retrieve voices that needed to be heard, raise identities, recognize authorships and favor the organization of their statements in terms of social demands, as a result of which social research came to be seen as a useful tool for democratic governability.

Alongside these efforts, in the 1990s the problem of the bureaucratization of research emerges, which from the perspective of the subjectivation of the researcher, manifests in his role of expert and the appearance of neo-managerial trends in the management of research. This bureaucratization consolidates in the last decade, especially in governmental agencies, institutionalizing funding programs for specialized areas, and simultaneously generating quality control criteria of the production of this knowledge on the part of research agencies. Universities themselves externalize the funding and control of research, encouraging investigators to do research through specific product-oriented projects.

When qualitative social research opens to considering the problem of reflexivity and the inter-subject relation established by research practices on social issues, it contributes to transform relations inherent to governability construction based on the recognition of social voices. What we have come to know as *voice management* operates as a mechanism that articulates with other logics of knowledge, other governance devices. In this sense, we would like to stress that the violence of social categorization, espionage, ventriloquism underlie what was to be understood as a recognition operation. That is, the violence involved in the researcher's game of resigning his condition of subject to become a loyal representative of the voice of the other subjected to research emerges through the recognition of the other. In some qualitative social research practices one tends to lose sight of the research work itself, creating the illusion that what are being shown constitute real *social facts*, that we are listening to the social voices in their original spontaneity, that the social discourse and its demands are translated into public policy devices. The piece of research referred to below makes it possible to show the problem of the irreducibility of the other subjected to research.

An approach that demanded the incorporation of the dimensions of subjectivity in the design and implementation of social policies emerged strongly in the early 1990s as a way to regain the voice of the protagonist subject in tasks as significant as overcoming poverty. Hence, since the mid-nineties, a new line of research arose with the aim of studying the so-called *subjective dimensions of poverty*, leading to the implementation of a sequence of investigations around the meanings, life stories, discourse and social representations of poverty.

When we examine this long list of studies, we can verify that we are facing a discourse tradition that propounds social research as the tool to 'rescue' the voice of a silenced subjectivity. The study *Voices of Poverty*, carried out by the *Fundación para la Superación de la Pobreza*,<sup>4</sup> constitutes a paradigmatic example of such tradition, since according to its authors, this investigation set to approaching an relevant issue in the life of those who live in poverty, namely: "lack of voice in the public sphere and lack of representation in the instances where the decisions that directly concern them are taken" (Funasupo, 2010, p. 11).

Our analysis places a question mark on the idea that social research practices can effectively hear the voice of those experiencing poverty, transmitting a clear evidence of this situation to the ones responsible of making political decisions that might concern them. We are questioning the theoretical possibility that social research operates as a *translator* between two complete voices, two constituted subjectivities. In fact, we are challenging the idea that this kind of research can attain the impossible process of standing in the shoes of the other.

The assumption we are challenging is precisely the autonomous and complete character of any form of subjectivity. When we analyze the studies along this line of research, whose origins can be traced to *Report on Decency* (Martínez & Palacios, 1996), or in the study *Empowerment, Poverty and Social Policies* (Irrarázaval, 1995), we can find some continuity in the description of the ways and means to describe poverty by the poor themselves, being able to identify in these first studies the bases of the terms used to describe poverty in today's research. The question we propose to formulate, then, regards the role of the practices on poverty research in constituting what they call the subjectivity of the poor. The preliminary

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4 Foundation for poverty overcoming – a private institution that, since 1994, attempts at contributing to social development by generating and mobilizing knowledge, instruments, and projects in policies and social intervention for the overcoming of poverty and social exclusion ([www.fundacionpobreza.cl](http://www.fundacionpobreza.cl)).

answer we put forward is that what the poor are today is related to what these research and intervention technologies have done along these years. We refer to the process through which a few procedures of the 'expert knowledge' of social sciences are inscribed in the practical exercise governance of subjectivities.

The *subjectivity of the poor* is not at all free from its social conditions of production; on the contrary, every minute it is being questioned by the various professional, media and community devices it articulates with. From our perspective, social workers, family support, researchers, trainee psychology students, focus groups moderators, volunteers from different organizations, all participate in a long chain that constructs the poor as subject but also subjectivize them as such. In any case, they locate the poor in a specific place, with a given name, certain expectations, a way of organizing, and a way of dreaming. The subjectivity of poverty emerges as an effect or result of this chain or articulation to which it is subjected.

In this way, the research *Voices of Poverty* does not describe the subjectivity of the poor, but rather it adds up to the chain of articulations that shapes it, determining its existence in one way and not another. This subjectivity cannot be described in terms of an inner constitution, a nature or ontology of the fact of being poor, precisely because according to our experiences that arises as an impossible task, since what is meant to be investigated is comprised by the devices to which this research practice belongs. Therefore, we can say that this study does not describe or translate, but informs; it gives shape to the subjectivity from what it constructs as knowledge of the other by means of subjectivizing a voice, responding to the need of our society of governing itself each time more efficiently on the basis of a reflexive knowledge of its own voices. Summing up, investigating has to do with governing.

Then, if social research practices institute rather than describe subjectivity, how can we study such subjectivity as a whole before carrying out the research practice? To what extent can social research be considered a voice management strategy such as ventriloquism, rather than a translation? With this metaphor of researcher as ventriloquist we wish to refer to the illusion to make intelligible a subjectivity that would be *freed* from what holds it. A ventriloquist, for example, is one that speaks on behalf of someone who cannot speak in front of an audience who is eager to see the illusion on stage. Regardless of any moral issues, the place of the ventriloquist is an interest position to analyze the role of the researcher in a number of studies that propose to recover the voice of the silenced, such as the case of the investigation we mentioned, where the aim of the researchers was: "to rescue the representations and meanings of the phenomenon of poverty for the people who find themselves in that situation..." (2010, p. 12).

Within this research tradition, the researcher rescues the voices of the poor so they can be heard. But ventriloquists lend their voice to those that cannot talk on their own; it is them, the ventriloquists, who complete the meanings, the representations, and the discourse of the voiceless. In the case of the studies on the meanings of poverty, this ventriloquism is represented by the colonization suffered by the speech of the poor on the part of what names them and brings them into existence. The poor are not free subjects that say what they think about poverty; they are what the discourse on poverty has produced, that is, the result of a voice-management operation based on which they name themselves.

When we analyze the representations of poverty that articulate along this line of research, we can clearly identify the participation within our society of the devices that attempt to exert a

psychological influence on the social. In our case, these discourses are expressed in the *de-collectivizing of the community life of the poor* by means of notions such as ‘social capital,’ and in the *individualization of unemployment* through concepts such as ‘entrepreneurship.’ These categories from which the meaning of poverty are articulated, speak of a governmental strategy that constructs individuals whose poverty becomes moralized by the psycho-social differences that emerge from notions such as personal endeavor, flexibility, creativity, and self-esteem (Sandoval, 2009; Rojas, 2010).

It could be argued that research-ventriloquists have made it possible for the poor to become respectable, habilitated, supportive, enterprising subjects, as well as docile, respectful, hard-working people; that is, ventriloquists have provided the poor with a voice that places them where they can exist in a social perspective, with forms of existence dependent on their own subjectivation logics and governance strategies that capture them as voices. In this case, research as political device appears as an answer to the question of who is the other as subject, responding from the hegemonic discourse.

It is evident that our research has only found what is possible to be observed given its conditions of existence. Could it have been different? As long as our research practices do not intend to attend to its effects, as long as its way of objectivizing social issues is not problematized, the illusion of ventriloquism will be kept alive, as well as these technologies that simulate the social voice and say what the society wants to hear in order to govern.

### **Third lesson: the ungovernability of research craft. The case of youth studies**

Our third lesson deals with the operation that is triggered by social research once we have understood that it comprises a complex dialogic field, in which we have learned to see researchers as products of an operation of subjectivation in the dialogue or interlocution with others, of taking a stand at the same time as regards the other subjected to research and the other demanding research. Investigators carry out their research through the crossroads between these two interlocutory axes: in relation to the researched-other, and to the demanding-other and his request for useful and applicable knowledge in the area of social management.

Considering that the other subjected to research will not be reduced to the knowledge generated through the investigation (it acquires his own voice), and that the circle of research as informant of public policy agencies demands that the demanding-other also be identified as a voice in itself, the investigator appears as another voice, as a subject that must become a third party in the framework of this complex dialogue, crossed by a number of different interests. Particularly, the interest of public policy agencies has an unavoidable importance since the demand for social knowledge does not originate in the other subjected to research; the recipient of research is the same management system that administers the other subjected to research. The public policy agencies demand generation of knowledge that makes it possible to inform or legitimize decision for an improved social management.

Attending to the assumed knowledge of the researcher on the part of the researched-other and the demanding-other, it is possible to infer that research itself is expected to be governed by the researcher, that biases are to be controlled, and the authenticity of the knowledge generated, both to objectivate the voice of the researched-other and to guarantee the usefulness of the knowledge for the demanding other. In our experience in Chile, the

relationships between research and the political problem of social governance are translated as a request for confidence and scientific accuracy inside the research process, supporting the potential usefulness of knowledge in the management process.

The third lesson refers precisely to being able to recognize how the hegemonic ways of socio-political structure, where research is inserted as a systemic component, correlate to the hegemonic forms of research. The demand for scientific accuracy is nothing but the rational control of the research process itself, the discipline of thought guided by method. Metaphorically, we say that the interest focused on socio-political governance is reproduced inside research as a demand for the internal 'governance' of research that depends on information control devices, on neutralization of biases, on process planning and management, all coordinated so to reduce the risk of producing knowledge that says less or more than what can be administered as useful, applicable, realistic, or politically correct knowledge. These devices are nothing but the method (qualitative or quantitative), the techniques and tactics of gathering and analyzing data, no less than the concepts and theoretical assumptions used to guide research. Our metaphor, however, is not justified, since the broader concept of governance is used by Foucault (1988) to analyze the relation between the technologies of the self and the technologies of domination. The analogy is supported by the reconceptualization of the methodology in terms of a *research technology*, that is, as a particular case of the technologies of the self. In such technology, not only the construction of knowledge that is valid for a given community and within a form of domination is at stake, but also the subjectivation of the researcher as such, either in the hermeneutical position of the one who interprets the other, or in the objectivizing position that neutralizes his subjectivity to analyze the other. In this Foucaultian sense, we say that there is a continuum between the problems of systematization, stabilization and regulation of the socio-political governance of the social, and the problems of the methodological governance of research.

More precisely, our third lesson consists of assuming that at this crossroads between these two axes of interlocution, social research not only runs the risk of becoming *ungovernable*, but its own *ungovernability* can be used as a resource. That is, the resistance of the other subjected to research to be reduced to knowledge generated by investigation, on the one hand, can cease being perceived as an obstacle to research and rather, be handled as the material of research itself. On the other hand, the fact that the demanding-other could belong to a circuit of information of public policy agencies, can also not be considered as a restriction but rather as object of analysis in the construction of social knowledge not separate from the dialogic co-constitution of the positions involved.

Within this context internal to research, it is possible re-problematize the position of investigators between the demanding-other and the researched-other. Therefore, the methodological and conceptual devices of research must make it possible to maneuver so that investigators can take a stand, as long as the supposed internal governance of research is problematized. The example discussed below shows how our experience reflects the tension between investigator and demanding other around the issue of governance of our own research, as well as the implications this type of positioning has as regards the broader problem of social governance.

In 2007, the United Nations Development Program and the Chilean Ministry of Education called for proposals on an ethnographic and biographic study on youth subjectivity, in order to attain a minimal understanding of the cultural transformations as a result of which young

actors became unpredictable in the eyes of the adult generation. Organisms demanding social research seldom ask for an ethnographic and biographic study, unless driven by new trends. In any case, this opens the possibility for funding research that, otherwise, is typically carried out within a purely academic context and with limited resources. In general, public funding (in this case funding came from the Ministry of Education) is assigned to projects which guarantee will come to good use, basing the production of knowledge on conventionally accepted methods. In various geographical contexts and time periods, the prevailing view in this respect has set aside any 'soft', non-scientific methods, such as those associated to ethnography or narrative analysis of life histories. The request of an ethnographic and biographic study in this case should, then, be interpreted.

Even though the call for submissions for research projects consisted, conceptually speaking, of a rather confusing document, there was no ambiguity whatsoever as regards motivation: the proposed study should be aimed at dilucidating the keys to permit political and police actors in the educational system understand the new cultural dynamics of the young. The demand for research was to answer these questions: how is the vital sense constructed in urban youngsters, and how are the bonds with others and with institutions intertwined in this construction? What are the practical, non-discursive codes with which these youngsters make sense of the world? What sensitivities and uneasiness move their everyday practices? The subject of this demand defined the language of research in terms of distinctions such as adult/youngster, familiar/menacing, discourse/practice, past/future, and of relationships such as research-control, subjectivity-discontent, and practice-code.

Concretely, research should disentangle the articulatory principles of juvenile subjectivity, specifically that of the urban population, following recent cases of student demonstrations that had surprised the authorities. In fact, the previous year had taken place the so-called 'penguin-uprising' (Chilean school children wear a uniform consisting of white shirt and black jacket, looking like penguins as compared to the crowd), which mobilized high-school students in different urban centers along the country against educational policies promoted by the government. The organization of this movement was a novel and surprisingly efficient one: against every logic of central organization, militancy or political affiliation, students were able to coordinate simultaneous actions in hundreds of educational centers from one day to the next, and over a couple of months, arousing the sympathy of teachers, guardians, and a large percentage of media audience. With little ideological substance, without elaborated discourse, with no representative to address directly, and no physical strength whatsoever, they managed to avoid the classical police repression, halting Chilean education for two months and compelling the government to listen to a group of brats too young to have citizenship rights. Students coordinated their actions over the Internet, using the computing and mobile devices provided by the very schools, their families, and in general, the knowledge and technology available in the society. Text messages represented the main code, not completely available for adults, who reacted in awe and unease. In synthesis, the invitation consisted on proposing a piece of research that informed on who these youngsters were, how to dialogue with them, what to expect of any future uprisings, in the conviction that the revolt evidenced profound cultural transformations that would be generating subjects whose innovative way of relating to the society, the school and the family required a deep analysis (deep from an ethnographic and biographic perspective!). This socio-political interest makes historical sense as long as the generation of young people that led the 'penguin-uprising' is currently (five years later) the protagonist of the largest student revolt in Chile the last forty years, generating some sense of ungovernability in the political authority.



In this context of conceptual interests and guidelines, we presented a research proposal (Haye *et al.*, 2008) and thus, we took a stance on this issue. The risk, as usual, consisted on lending one's efforts to serving the dominant group. The researcher was summoned, as some sort of explorer of the unknown, as a Columbus in the sociological world of the new cultural forms, but also tacitly, as a government informant of what is taking place in the darker, emergent areas of the social domain. A research proposal could not be generated without, simultaneously, taking a certain position as regards the one who is demanding knowledge as well as towards the subject signaled to become the object of knowledge to be produced, thus altering the setting.

Our research team came mainly from an academic background, not used to replacing theoretical issues by governmental interests. We made an attempt to modify the context from the perspective of the concepts, generating a proposal that emerged from questioning the distinctions and relations the demand took for granted, and re-interpreting them from a conception of subjectivity, discourse, research and youth whose theoretical approach resulted interesting enough for the demanding agents. Our first proposal was accepted and privileged given its challenging and innovative perspective, as we were informed in the first meeting meant to generate, together with a team from the demanding agency, a second version of the proposal; a more detailed and consensual investigative plan. Our dice were cast.

The idea of subjectivity as regards an underlying and stable structure that refers to concrete facts was re-converted into subjectivation, understood as becoming-subject, an event that takes place in time, in one form or another. In particular, subjectivation as a process was especially pertinent to the popular notion of youth as a transient period. The question on the articulatory principles of juvenile subjectivity was replaced by another on the many ways of juvenile action, of taking a stance as a youngster towards the others. Thus, juvenile subjectivation became conceptually tied to discourse in another way, since we centered our research precisely on the ways we position ourselves in front of others, which, according to some dialogic approaches (Billig, 2011; Haye & Larrain, 2011), constitute discourse as event and becoming, which therefore also configure the subject-object relationships in research.

From this perspective, we suggested working with a group of youngsters summoning them as speakers, as subjects of discourse; concretely, as authors and not as informants of their group. Based on a few previous experiences we were familiar with, we designed a research device – the 'photobiography' – which was also a subjectivation device. Each youngster received a photographic camera and was instructed to take pictures that later would become part of an audiovisual collage of their world. Instead of an interview, the young people participated in a work session together with a researcher, editing the audiovisual montage. Once they had learned how to operate the computing application, they could continue on their own composing of a one-minute trial editing. Then, the research team started the analysis by asking: what movement of position-taking did each youngster assume towards our device? How can such movements be characterized in terms of positioning operations that allowed recognizing culturally available forms by means of the studied cases? This way, we changed the question of the investigation, without losing touch with the distinctions and relations the demand had assumed a priori.

The research process involved a permanent conversation with the demanding agency team. The methodological control of the interpretations became a permanent, recurrent issue, since

the demanding team saw no guarantee that the analysis would reliably come to fruition. The analysis the analyst makes of the discourse display of the other subjected to research, from our perspective, already constitutes a response to the other within a given interlocutory context. As regards a responsive position-taking on the part of the analyst, the identification of the ways of position-taking among the youngsters under research is a discourse operation that takes place in this dialogue with the researched-other, to some extent planned and stabilized through methodological devices, but also inevitably current, considering that researchers are not above the said dialogue but submerged in it. As to the problem of the biases of interpretation posed by the demanding agency team, we proposed that analysis be understood as a process of listening and position-taking, that is, as a discourse act attentive to the changes in the dialogue so as to re-introduce any such changes in the research itself.

From this perspective, the results of the study cannot be understood as information directly supplied by the youngsters participating in the investigation, but as the reflexive but equally creative response of the researchers to the young people's words, in turn offered as a creative response to our first inquiries mediated through the photobiographic device. In this way, we denied the possibility of methodologically controlling the interpretation, risking the governance of research as a whole. This led the discussion with the demanding agency team: on the one hand, the interest in the trustworthiness and usefulness of the results, and on the other, the reliability of a strategy that sought, at every moment and in every aspect of the investigation, to incorporate its own ungovernability into the research practice so as to use it as a device of methodological, epistemological, ethical and political reflection. The researchers insistently argued that such strategy, and the reflection it entails, offers an even greater degree of self-regulation of research, as compared with the control of analytical biases, but without mechanically responding to the system of social governance in which researchers are asked to participate. Certainly, our research experience with youngsters does not offer any general solution to this problem, nor does it point to any successful tactics to avoid serving the socio-political problems of governance. In fact, the study we are referring to was not published or included in any UNDP report at all; on the contrary, in order to contribute to a chapter on juvenile identities, a team in the agency had to stay working further with the sample of youngsters to carry out a focus interview and analyze its content. However, this experience has illustrated us on the complexities, not only methodological, but also ethical and political, involved in our formation in the research craft.

Above all, the outstanding feature in this research experience is not so much the problem of object subjectivity (that the subject of study could be reduced to an object), a classic problem which is explicitly approached in terms of the other subjected to research as interlocutor and author, as the more complex problem of subjectivation within the investigation as a whole. The teaching we draw from this is related to the multiple forms of subjectivation research involves, and the becoming-subjects facing each other between researchers and the various others. On the one hand, the researched other is questioned by means of a subjectivation device: not only a way to express subjectivity, but to produce it by managing to hold a position towards others in a particular ideological context, determined among other things by the academic status of the researchers, and the ministry and United Nations establishments that framed the project. As a rebound, at this point the researcher is questioned as such, and as the listening-other. On the other hand, the demanding-other is frequently the one who begins the round of questioning, leaving their personal mark throughout the process. As long as the position of the demanding-other is also questioned by the researchers as a voice, or recognized as a contestable position, another set of subjectivations comes into play between

the agency that demands and provides funding for the knowledge and the investigators. The latter are placed by the demanding part, now taking the role of listeners of the product of research, in the position of the other who speaks. More specifically, the researchers become the subject that is expected to supply discourse reporting reliably on the other subjected to research.

The researcher, then, becomes both an other who listens and an other who speaks. However, the dialogic processes that investigators face with bigger or lesser expertise in this middle ground prevent the disappearance of this double subject, objectivized by means of a methodological governance into a high fidelity transmission channel. At an epistemological level, the clear, distinct division between objects and subjects falls apart. It is replaced by a new matrix, a new fabric in which the uttering subjects and formulated objects are comprised by and come from the research device. The subjects constituted in research, from this perspective are the result of objectivation and subjectivation operations requiring a complex approach, attentive to their ethical and political as well as to their methodological and epistemological dimensions.

### **Concluding remarks**

In our reflection on the research craft as social psychologists in Chile, we have attempted to explore the link between research in social sciences and governance devices. We have intended to refer to our own experience in social refer as if it were a journey, starting from the problem of the subjectivity of the object towards the subjectivation of research, such as the title suggests. A synthesis of such journey will shed light on some implications and questions left without an answer.

The starting point is a well-known, yet not necessarily well assimilated lesson: not to lose sight of the agency of the researched subject in the research process. When this agency potential is not taken into account, and research focuses on its objectivating power, investigation is reduced to a new positivism by pretending to capture the social voices transparently. This leads to a few questions we consider crucial in order to generate a reflexive device on our research practices. Therefore, from the first lesson, which problematizes the other subjected to research, some questions arise. First, what categories of subject are dealt with in the research design? – a question that aims at unveiling the assumptions that constitute the basis of inquiry; and second, how are these categories interrogated during the investigative process?, a question about the way the researched-other is configured in the research process.

Even though in some way our second lesson is a result of the first, it seems to be more difficult since the model of research as representation of the voice of the other dominates even qualitative research. On the contrary, when such subjectivity of the researched is introduced in research practices, investigators begin to take a stand as regards the other subjected to research, establishing asymmetric social relationship; a complex interlocution takes place, in which researchers and subjects of research construct one another as interlocutors in such a way that it is not at all transparent for them. In our investigative experience, to consider the subjectivity of the object entails reflecting on the social categories, the concepts and the questions of research belonging in a broader socio-political aspect, which become adapted, selected and prioritized upon by the agencies demanding knowledge. This, in fact, contributes to the opacity on the interlocution between researchers and subjects of research, feeding into this mesh of power relations that overwhelm them. We have problematized this second lesson

from the demand articulated in the social context, leading us to ask: how can the other we intend to know be understood from the perspective of the demand? What are the reference terms it poses? How does the other subjected to research face and resist the categories and strategies ascribable to the investigators? These questions point to situating research practice within the strategy and hegemony games that fuel the social sphere.

The issue of subjectivation of research opens radically when noting that researchers also have to position themselves, in a coordinated and simultaneous manner, when facing the demanding-other; thus, on all sides investigators have to become subjects through the research process. Right away, this leads to questions such as: what is the usefulness of research? Who is it useful for? What is it useful for? This way, the interests that come into play are unveiled, as well as the political and ethical dimensions of position-taking of the investigators. Our third lesson, emphasizing the role of the researcher towards the other subjected to research and the demanding-other, in turn leads to questions on the difficulties this condition involves. In addition to ventriloquism, discussed above, what other sides of the researcher can we describe? How can some aspects we are familiar with, such as that of the spy, the watchman, the expert, be understood from this perspective?

These constitute some of the obligatory interrogation axes that originate in our approach to the political issue in social research. Largely, the articulation of these questions is supported in the tripartite conceptual structure we have used to rebuild our three lessons. Each one of the latter correlates to the problem posed by each of the *actants* in the field of social research: the other subjected to research, the demanding other, and the researcher himself. As approached here, the event of the researched-other leads us to the political and ethical aspects of social recognition and co-authorship. This otherness is the subject that, within research, is compelled to talk. Therefore, the other who is studied in social research practices is properly constituted as a speaker. This entails situating research within the domains of discourse. Second, we dealt with the metaphor of ventriloquism as a means to explore the epistemological and ethical issues involved in the de-politicization, in the forms of silencing and negating the governmental function of social research. The event of the demanding-other, in this sense, configures the position of the addressee of the discourse, referring to the otherness to whom the knowledge to be constructed in the interlocution established between researcher and the other who is compelled to speak. This demanding-other is not only a voice in the field, but, from the perspective of hierarchical power relations in research practices, the first voice: the one inscribing research in a governmental schedule. Third, we approached the complexity of the dialogue that researchers are to hold with both othernesses, and we signaled the issue of the subjectivation modes of the researcher as regards his own voice, as some kind of unobjective and self-serving position taking within the tense dialogic field that configures every research. The event of the researcher as interlocutor opposing the demanding-other and as a listener opposing the researched-other has enabled us to re-think the methodological, epistemological, ethical and political aspects of research as a whole, as a result of conceiving social knowledge as a statement addressed to whoever might request it, and built as position-taking towards the other who resists.

We consider that this tripartite conceptual framework is worth noting since it involves a great heuristic power which has made it possible to open and articulate a set of relevant issues regarding our experience, and some sort of critique towards our research practices. This conceptual framework, based on the notions of interlocution, listening, voice and addressee (Bakhtin, 1986), involves proposing scientific research in general as some sort of discourse

and, particularly, that each social research practice configures a complex discourse field structured by multiple power relations. Such triadic framework emerged from our collective reflection on social research practices in Chile. Thus, we do not propose to generalize it to other experiences, but to consider the power and limitations of this scheme in our concrete reflection in order to apply it critically to other experiences.

On the other hand, the perspective from which we have reflected on research practices in Chile in this study could be considered as a critique to research, but as such, also as critical research. Our interest in understanding and de-constructing the socio-political conditions of our experience historically immersed in social research practices, shows solidarity with the task of the so-called critical thinking, which according to Wacquant (2002) implies “questioning, in a continuous, active, and radical manner, both established forms of thought and established forms of collective life – “common sense” or doxa (including the doxa of the critical tradition) along with the social and political relations that obtain at a particular moment in a particular society”. (p.83). Thus, in our analysis we tried to assess the pragmatic effects of research discourse and practice in certain fields of knowledge – memory, poverty and youth studies – in the framework of social research in Chile since the end of the military dictatorship. Such analysis aims precisely at questioning common sense and social and political practices which support, produce and dominate research practices in a given historical period. In this way, we sketch the theoretical possibility of exploring how else things could be conceived in the inter-play of researcher, researched-other and demanding-other, and what new relations arise for us from these new conceptions on investigation and on ourselves the researchers.

This exercise of research critique is interesting to highlight since it represents a reflection on our own research careers. The analysis of the political conditions of feasibility of investigative practice refers to a given historical period because it affects us biographically. That is, the ‘learnings’ that were analyzed in the study do not constitute findings that emerged from a particular approach or theory, but rather, they represent productions – constructions- of theoretical artifacts that were articulated from the final motivation to de-construct and de-naturalize some specific research experiences. Hence the crucial importance of approaching the way researchers are constituted as subjects by the society they belong to, and, in consequence, how their actions are conditioned by the representations and definitions that as social subjects they have of the practical situations in which they take part. This implies considering social science as equally immersed in the breakdown and expiration of the classical epistemological categories.

What we understand as a reflecting condition of research craft involves making explicit the disputes faced in research practices. Including the position of the demanding-subject as part of the device, signals the need to consider the logics that dispute the hegemonic domination entailed in investigative practices. That is, social research and its possibilities can be explored in relation to the logics that in a given period provide research practices with meaning and location. The competition faced by the logics of *object governance*, *subject governance*, and *voice governance* within the hegemonic field of investigation, entail the political need to state their consequences. Specifically, the research device could objectify, de-politise, or ontologize these consequences, but as inner to the research process is the researcher's task to address them and discuss them. In other words, the critical position we are putting forward here is not a particular attitude within the *researcher - researched other - demanding other* triad, but the search or creation of room to take position as a reflecting agent of research. In

line with the notion of the political inspired by Laclau (2002), it is related to the concepts of contingency and hegemony, and these with rhetoric. Research is not meant to optionally turn into a specifically political attitude; it is to be recognized as political due to its agonal structure.

Nevertheless, this critical perspective on research also intends to represent a questioning of the stabilization of critique as a theory or a particular methodological approach, proposing it an activity which is permanently coming back to itself, constantly analyzing its effects and feasibility conditions; we assume that whenever a hegemony weakens, another one is instituted. Likewise, we assume then that there cannot be critical thinking where there is no hegemony; critique is not understood as an end, nor as a sign of identity. Paraphrasing Donna Haraway (1991), this study is an invitation to rethink how our theories and research critique practice are building meanings, objects and bodies, not to be denied or to be left empty, but to dwell in meanings and bodies with a future.

Finally, social research and the place we as social psychologists have in it involves holding an undeniable position in the conditions that transform the subjectivation regimes (Rose, 1999). The social psychology schools we have been part of in our formation and in Chile, currently emerge as niches that carry out research by suggesting ways to undermine the effects of the symbolic imposition of the expert word. The emerging researchers are interested in discussing and reflecting on the effects of the processes of subjectivation as individualization, as psychologization, or as naturalization of the identity. In this sense, the examples mentioned above do not refer to the end of a road, the destination of research, but they constitute paradigmatic quotes of how our research craft is tinged by coexisting logics that remain today as research practices, each with different consequences in social governance.

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