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On the subalternity of social work and the duality of theory and practice (as the source of all evils)

De la subalternidad del Trabajo Social y la dualidad teoría-práctica (como fuente de todos los males)

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Abstract

Both the research that gives rise to this discussion and other studies carried out in Social Work reveal that there is still a theoretical and practical disconnection in professional performance. In this article, which is shown as a hybrid between research and discussion paper, this disconnection is problematized as the origin of the profession's subalternity, articulating it with serious consequences such as the neoliberal instrumentalization of the profession, the depoliticization of the discipline and the delegitimization of Social Work as a source of knowledge.

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Based on specific research with social workers in Sexual Exploitation of Children (SEC), we put forward some of the problematic hypotheses of the theory-practice relationship in Social Work in general, and of the work of protection and guarantee of rights with children in particular. One of the fundamental theses of the argument revolves around how these two dimensions are constructed in separate dualities as distinct worlds and how this disconnection places them, comparatively, at a disadvantage when it comes to enunciating proposals for action. To conclude, we propose an exit door that leads to an encounter between both theory and practice from critical self-observation. In this way, we offer as an alternative of reflection-action the investigative systematization of experiences; betting on its critical and complex version as a way of finding points of inflection, questioning and individual and collective conscience, from which to construct situated and also founded, polyphonic and transforming propositions.

Resumen

Tanto la pesquisa que da origen a esta discusión como otros estudios realizados en el Trabajo Social, revelan que permanece la desconexión teórico práctica en el desempeño profesional. En este artículo, que se muestra como híbrido entre documento investigativo y de discusión, se problematiza esta desvinculación como origen de la subalternidad de la profesión, articulándola con graves consecuencias como son la instrumentalización neoliberal de la profesión, la despolitización de la disciplina y la deslegitimación del Trabajo Social como fuente de conocimiento. A partir de una investigación concreta con interventoras sociales en Explotación Sexual de Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes (ESNNA), planteamos algunas de las hipótesis problemáticas de la relación teoría-práctica en el Trabajo Social en general, y del trabajo de protección y garantía de derechos con niños y niñas en particular. Una de las tesis fundamentales del argumento gira en relación a cómo estas dos dimensiones se construyen en dualidades separadas como mundos distintos y cómo esta desvinculación les posiciona, comparativamente, en desventaja para enunciar propuestas de acción. Para finalizar la discusión, planteamos una puerta de salida que lleve a un encuentro entre ambas líneas, teoría y práctica, desde la auto-observación crítica. De este modo, se ofrece como alternativa de reflexión-acción a la Sistematización Investigativa de Experiencias; apostando por su versión crítica y compleja como forma de encontrar puntos de inflexión, cuestionamiento y consciencia individual y colectiva, a partir de la cual construir proposiciones situadas y también fundadas, polifónicas y transformadoras.

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Introduction

The debate around the origin and consequences of the separation between theory and practice in Social Work seems to be anachronistic and never-ending. The role played in this problem by the neoliberalization of social intervention is important. The political conjuncture in which Social Work develops is based on technical criteria rooted in logics of effectiveness according to institutional objectives; although contradictorily, it exalts the individual responsibility of program participants in the "success" of the intervention (our quotation marks) (Harris, 2014; Hicks, 2016; Muñoz-Arce, 2019). All these elements account for the existence of a commodification of the profession anchored in the neoliberalization of intervention; however, we must clarify that not only neoliberal dynamics play an important role in the constitution of contemporary Social Work.

By emphasizing the personal responsibility of the "user" for the resolution of problems in a world of uncertainties (Abad Miguélez and Martín Aranaga, 2015), where people are at the mercy of circumstances and their situations are valued in terms of vulnerability, the capacity of the State to guarantee rights as a universal good is minimized (Güendel, 2015). This minimization of state role contributes, greatly, to hiding the social contingency (Butler, Laclau and Zizek, 2000) and the political, economic, social and ecological dimensions of the intervening action (Ortega-Senet, 2017, 2020).

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This scenario conditions power relations -between positions in the structure, between disciplines, between participants and professionals-, which directly impact the performance of Social Work and which are not always evident; but, in any case, they strongly limit the autonomy of the profession, both for the exercise and for the epistemological creation of practical knowledge. In this discussion we will understand autonomy in Gramsci's way as "the subjective emergence from the experiences of insubordination and gestation of spheres of independence and emancipation" (Modonesi, 2010, p.27).

In the context of the protection of children's rights in Chile, plunged into a deep and alarming crisis (Sánchez and Villarroel, 2017; Sanfuentes and Espinoza, 2017; Solar, 2015; Centro de Políticas Públicas UC, 2017), the theory-practice separation exceeds the mere epistemological discussion. This is an essential recursive dyad, since it is where the 'how', 'why' and 'what for' of social actions aimed at their comprehensive welfare are inscribed. Bringing analysis and (critical) awareness to the daily work with children has become urgent; not doing so has entailed terrible costs for them.

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The theory-practice relationship in the protection of rights has reached a serious point that evidences populations of social sacrifice[2] . In them are located especially polyvictimized children (Finkelhor et al., 2009), those who accumulate traumatic violence in their life histories and are involved in the wide network of services and programs, where social workers have played controversial roles; sometimes as part of the problem, sometimes trying to counteract, as they can, an incoherent and violating protection system (Hicks, 2016; Sanchez and Villarroel, 2017; Muñoz-Arce, 2020).

The discussion proposed here is connected to an empirical investigation; however, it is not presented as a results article. This means that the following reflections have their origin in the findings and in the new questions that the study has been procuring about what happens in the intervention with children whose rights have been violated and the role of Social Work. Thus, from a study of social intervention in such a complex problem as the so-called Sexual Exploitation of Children (hereinafter SEC)[3], it was possible to identify critical knots, tensions and resistances in the daily professional work (Ortega-Senet, Gómez and Tierney, 2022). The findings that emerged were not necessarily related to the difficulty and complexity of SEC situations, but to the limitations and contradictions of the national protection system -including judicial systems- and its autonomous capacity to work on a daily basis (Ortega-Senet et al., 2022; Ortega-Senet, Concha and Rivera, 2021).

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From the above, the question that opens this reflection is whether these limitations of autonomy are related to the well-known and insistent separation as distinct worlds of theory and practice, to which other authors have contributed in other discussions (Muñoz-Arce, Hernández and Véliz, 2017; DeLuca-Acconi, 2016; Caria and Pereira, 2016; Hicks, 2016; Hothersall, 2019). From this text, the intention is to complement the discussion by articulating it to the subalternity of the discipline, understanding it as the experience and subjectivity of the subalterns themselves in a relationship of domination and hegemony, from Gramsci's understanding (Modonesi, 2010).

The intention is to make concrete proposals and achieve steps towards a progressive overcoming of this dichotomy, enhancing the generating and transforming role of professionals and people involved in the processes of social intervention. Thus, after

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[2] We use "populations of social sacrifice" in terms analogous to environmental sacrifice zones, used in Chile as those territories offered for extractivism and contamination for the sake of economic "development" and the economic capitalization of entire habitats.

[3] We refer to this sexual violence as Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents (SEC) and not Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents (CSEC), following the terminology recommended by the Inter-American Institute of Children and Adolescents-Organization of American States. We will use the term CSEC when it is so used by the referenced source or institution.

a previous contextualization of the SEC and this study, a space for problematization is opened on three axes: i) the separation of theory and practice as dual worlds, where intuition and experience play fundamental roles to make up for the scarce epistemological and theoretical basis; ii) the review of the tensions and consequences of this separation; and iii) a proactive defense of the possibilities of learning and knowledge constituted from practice to confront a critical and vigilant Social Work.

Contextualization of the intervention against SEC

We do not want to miss the opportunity to introduce readers to this field of social intervention that is so socially and disciplinarily invisible, where social workers have not yet been able to develop all the potential for action and praxis that the problem involves.

The SEC "occurs when an adult takes advantage of the condition of vulnerability (age, social, emotional, gender, among others) of a girl or boy under 18 years of age to satisfy their sexual and erotic desires, giving them in exchange a payment in money, gifts or something as intangible as shelter or protection" (Consejo Nacional de la Infancia, 2017, p.12). The forms of manifestation of the problem are diverse, and we have few studies on them (ONG Raíces, 2010; Salazar, Álvarez and Vega, 2012; Consejo Nacional de la Infancia, 2017), however and in general terms, in Chile the following are recognized: sexual abuse and violence in exchange for money, gifts, favors or others with intermediation of third parties, called Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children; material with content of sexual abuse of children and adolescents, also called pornography; commercial sexual exploitation in the field of tourism; marriages and adult domestic partnerships with children and adolescents; and trafficking, the most common internal trafficking with a single trafficker, transitory trafficking or self-managed trafficking. In recent years, there is also the alarming prominence of the Internet as a space of violence and an antechamber for exploitation, such as grooming and sexting (Consejo Nacional de la Infancia, 2017). In fact, terms such as "online sexual exploitation" or "sexual exploitation facilitated by ICTs" are already part of the terminologies of the phenomenon (Grejer and Doek, 2016).

Today we do not have up-to-date data on the possible extent of this terrible sexual violence. The last specialized study (National Service for Minors-International Labor Organization, SENAME-ILO, 2004) evidenced 3,719 NNA victims in the country, a figure that, possibly even then, was a small percentage of the actual cases.

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We do know how many children have been assisted in the Specialized Programs (hereafter referred to as SP) on CSEC[4]. The data indicates that 1,502 girls, boys and adolescents participated in the SPs according to the Statistical Yearbook conducted by the Servicio Nacional de Menores (SENAME, 2018) in 18 programs spread over 11 regions. The SPs are all managed by SENAME Accredited Collaborating Organizations (ACOs), thus constituting a programmatic framework that, in ideal terms, is nurtured by the principles and guidelines stipulated from the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The complexity of the phenomenon, the clandestinity and the relationship with private and virtual spaces, also makes it difficult to classify sexual violence against children, and to differentiate it from other forms of violence, such as Sexual Abuse (SA). This difficulty to differentiate between violations is not a trivial point: how we name and determine them is directly related to the visibilization, their judicialization and preventive, restorative and post-restorative policies (Grejer and Doek, 2016; Reisel, 2017); that is: the conceptualization and delimitation that reaches the ESNNA completely determines all the intervention and its criminalization.

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The problem highlights the requirement for specialized work in this type of sexual violence due to the particularities of the victims and of the violence itself. In Chile, unlike other countries, a specialized program exists. These SPs are self-conceived as "islands of good practice" within the general framework of the Protection Network (Ortega-Senet et al., 2020, p.10); however, there are many gaps for reflection. At the national level, despite having social workers in all the SPs, we have not yet carried out a deep reflection on how the strategies and actions of intervention are being developed in this specialized framework. Hence the importance of building the social work discipline not only from good practices, but also from the critical analysis of what we do, where it comes from and the (theoretical-critical) basis of our daily practice.

Participants and methodology of the study

As we have already pointed out, the reflections we propose in this article arise from an exploration we carried out with young people that finished program of the SP on SEC and with professionals working in two SPs in the Biobío region, Chile. This research, which

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[4] These programmes depend on the National Service for Children (Servicio Nacional de Menores –SENAME) Protection System, which is detached from the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights and is constituted as the National Service for the Specialized Protection of Children and Adolescents, which includes the Specialized Programs on CSEC. SENAME's protection area was renamed Mejor Niñez (Better Childhood) and has depended on the Ministry of Social Development and Family.

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began with a small internal fund of the Católica de la Santísima Concepción University, has been shaped in the manner of Russian dolls that, starting from the smallest, we have been expanding: spectrum of work, incorporation of actors, perspectives and axes of analysis. Today we are carrying out a greater deepening through a research project funded by the National Agency for Research and Development (Chile) at the national level.

Although the research experience in the national project has already begun nurturing these ideas, we describe here the methodology of the primary study, the first exploratory research, which focused on the experiences of young survivors of sexual exploitation who participated in two SPs in the Biobío region, and on the perspectives of the interveners on specialized work. In order to incorporate the latter group, an objective was determined: to analyze the controversies - tensions, contradictions, dilemmas, ambiguities - of the professionals in the different dimensions of the intervention process in CSEC, for which we had the support of three Social Work students in their thesis phase.

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The participating professionals were mainly social workers, psychologists and educators, all of whom were considered social interveners. In total, 19 experts (n=19) from the region took part in this study, of which 16 were direct workers connected to the two programs under study, and 3 who did not work directly, but belonged to, the Regional Roundtable against CSEC in the same region of Chile.

Two fundamental techniques were used with the professionals: a) 11 semi-structured interviews that explored their experiences as specialized workers and experts on the topic; and b) a group technique called flowchart (Villasante et al., 2009). The flowchart is an ideal tool for the identification and analysis of the critical nodes of the intervention. This activity was completed in two sessions with all the direct work professionals (n=16).
For data analysis, the interviews were recorded, transcribed and organized depending on the source and using Nvivo 11. For the analysis we used open coding, focused and axial coding, according to Charmaz's (2006) Grounded Theory proposal. Emerging responses were grouped in relation to the axes: critical nodes, tensions and resistances. On the other hand, the Flowchart technique involves its own participatory analysis based on the interpretations built by the group itself in the same work process. With this tool, a reflective analysis is carried out during the same work process of the technique, in which the participants point out with arrows how the critical nodes are related in terms of cause and effect, and what control, in terms of influence, they have over these nodes.

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Of course, all ethical safeguards were carried out under conditions of information, confidentiality, anonymity, voluntariness, gratuity and respect, which were recorded and agreed upon by informed consent, and the report of the study results was shared with the participants. The parent study was approved by the Ethics Committee of UCSC.

The findings were presented in a results article (Ortega-Senet, Gómez and Tierney, 2022), but important discussions have been progressively developed, and are well worth exploring, in order to respond to the urgent task of problematizing Social Work, not only in the current serious situation regarding the protection of children's rights, but also to contribute to the open and still ongoing debate on what it is and where it is heading as a (trans)discipline.

The theoretical-abstract level and the practical-emotional level of social intervention as divergent worlds

Following the theoretical developments previously elaborated in this regard (Caria, 2014; 2017; 2020), we have two symbolic worlds that do not necessarily meet in the intervention: (1) a theoretical, rational and conscious form that knows and explains, in an abstract way, the place of things, intended to feed legitimate disputes about the truth of social and physical worlds; and (2) another practical one, which is nourished by collective knowledges in action, not very conscious. These have a predominantly moral and pragmatic content. They are attributed to the management of beliefs about what can be real, building intersubjectivity in collective and cultural action from everyday experiences and life trajectories.

In the context of professional work, the use of theoretical knowledge is materialized through a discourse that allows the justification of the reasons, the principles that support the empirical evidence and the objectives/means of social intervention. And, for its part, the use of practical knowledge is shown through everyday life, allowing putting into action social beliefs and pragmatically acquired wisdom, commonly sustained from the nonconformity of professional standards. In parallel, tension, disturbance and latent conflict are contained in the face of what is considered "unnatural" about what is done and said in social interaction (Caria, 2017).

These two ways of knowing are considered to contain a double epistemology, so that social workers operate within "a duality of socio-cognitive systems" of intervention. In

this dynamic, a subordination of "practical knowledge" to "knowledge" is established: an unequal relationship that arises from the hierarchies established by rational scientism. This subalternity renders professional knowledge invisible, being relegated to pragmatic purposes that never acquire the status of knowledge (Caria, 2014; 2017). Those pragmatic actions that are developed on a daily basis are configured as their own strategies, sometimes shared as a team and that gestate professional culture (Caria, 2017), sometimes as individual tools that they can use in their performance.

When we locate this separation in the specific case of work against SEC and this subalternity of the practice of Social Work is observed, we see how this everyday knowledge -practical, linked to face-to-face relationships- is connected with the most emblematic space of work performance: that of human and personal relationships. This positions the social practitioners in that imperceptible world of silent, intuitive, but also often improvised work, as has been seen in other research (Hicks, 2016).

In this dynamic that has been proposed, professional knowledge is therefore out of focus (for other disciplines and for the social interveners themselves), and instead highlights the emptiness of strategies, the lack of clarity of actions and, above all, the contradictions; these being almost as implicit characteristics of professional work. Moreno and Molina, (2018, p.8) point out regarding contemporary Social Work: "Through the observation of the relationships established by these actors, tensions, paradoxes and fissures in the discourse of contemporary social intervention are revealed". This reflection of the work of social workers impacts not only on the external vision, but also on the disciplinary recognition and self-confidence, which ultimately determines the autonomy, the field of action and recreation of praxis.

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Indeed, in the findings of the original research, the intervention teams pointed out some critical knots that especially affect Social Work and are related to the lack of specialized tools and strategies in the various dimensions of the work from the sexual body to the community; the limited scope of family and community work (levels of intervention where they are assigned), the over-intervention experienced by the families with whom they work in the sense of re-victimization, and the lack of reflection on their own practice.

The lack of awareness of the place it may be occupying in socio-political terms places the discipline in a social position that is counterproductive to the objectives of Social Work.

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The professionals against SEC, like any intervention professional, run the continuous risk of being part of the intervention devices (Saavedra, 2015; 2018) and being part of the reproductive game of domination and inequality in everyday life, turning the Programs and their actors into an operative of deployment of the "microphysics of power" (Foucault, 1993). When we think of the Protection Network, we are struck by a network involved in violence against children who are "sacrificed" with impunity (Agamben, 2006). At this point, the social interveners are caught in a fundamental tension between the Rights Approach (understood as fundamental theoretical principles of the work of protection and restitution of rights) and the practical consequences of the deployment of the protection network, where they are once again violated and naturalized as loss (Bustelo, 2005).

And can this entire problem be solved by bringing together theory and practice? In part, yes. On the one hand, because dismantling that dangerous assumption of both as an irreconcilable division frees us to be able to carry out a practice capable of generating knowledge and, therefore, situated and grounded knowledge; and on the other, to emphasise that the issue is not only theory, but what theory, understanding this epistemological crossroads as a political issue (Hicks, 2016). At the base of this potential we find that the elimination of the division between both worlds can contribute to the generation of key moments in practice: the practitioner's conscious moment of his or her own performance, and the conscious moment of the people who participate in the programs. That is, the places of all of them in a problem that transcends, that extends beyond their own experiences, and that is shaped as a social contingency (Butler et al., 2000) and not as an individual or family problem.

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The tensions that have been evidenced in various studies on the practice of Social Work in any of the fields of action (Gianna and Mallardi, 2011; Ferguson, 2016; Frost, 2017; Ornellas et al., 2019), as well as in childhood (Contreras, Contreras and Rojas, 2017; Sánchez and Villarroel, 2017) are interrelated and connected to the gaps of specifically critical theory. These tensions, even, begin to be unveiled already in the same processes of formative practices of students, where similar difficulties and contradictions are reproduced (Parola, 2020).

The reviews conducted on the theory-practice relationship evidence that theory does not always have a reflective and epistemological function, but is also used with a functional character to explain people's behaviors (Hicks, 2016). This functional theory is highly dangerous, in that it is seen as "technified", performance and efficiency oriented from parameters external to the children and their families; but contradictorily, focused on the participating individuals as responsible for their own achievements.

As already pointed out in other writings (Ortega, 2015), theory for Social Work has to have dynamic, feedback features, allowing us to understand that a given action is committed to a way of thinking about reality, of interacting with it and finding meaning. Hence the importance of this meaning being connected to the people involved in a given phenomenon to which we want to respond. In the case of severely damaged children, it is essential to know all those factors, histories and conditions that allow for concrete situations of violence and connect all those involved, in order to sustain collaborative work with victims and survivors.

The urgency to break down the boundaries between both worlds -theory and practice-, allowing the between practical knowledge and theorical knowledge, has its reason in that both are understood as a whole composed of inductive and deductive perspectives that complement each other, creating spaces for questioning in both directions (Velez Restrepo, 2003). Relieving the knowledge of the protagonists is fundamental, but the critical analysis must also ensure a micro political revision of Social Work as a reproductive apparatus of inequalities, of domination and hegemony relations (Gramsci, 1977), and a questioning of what is imposed as the real, the appropriate, the normal, the possible and the thinkable in sociocultural and political frameworks (Carañana, 2016; Ortega-Senet, 2017).

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Overcoming tensions between theory and practice

Some authors have related the preference of social workers for the public area to this separation between theory and practice. Ahmed-Mohamed (2013) points out that the fact of working for public agencies may have been a determining factor, due to the bureaucratic and normativist logic of public institutions, producing in the long term a disciplinary stagnation that admits only functional proposals.

Indeed, the difficulties to which most social action professionals are subjected, in general, are due to an organizational bureaucratic hierarchy that has also been legitimized by a large part of academia and the professionals themselves. Thus, the valorization of work has been raised from a search for "efficiency" in the provision of technical services (Caria, 2014; Vivero, 2017). This situation has been exploited by universities to offer undergraduate and graduate training that does not question in which positions Social Work is being left within the devices, and does not prepare students to monitor their own social action (Vivero, 2017), as well as develop professional autonomy, nor to establish a horizontal level of collaborativity in interdisciplinarity.

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In this context, interveners in child protection, as well as in other areas, are pushed towards a professional status as a giver of a technical service and not as producers of knowledge. In this structure, children and families who are involved in problem situations or violations, take an even more subordinate place, which is reflected in the categorizations as "users" or "beneficiaries" (Ortega-Senet, 2021), an even more difficult position, more subaltern to contribute to knowledge, not even to professional knowledge: that knowledge that is mostly constituted from the same daily interaction and daily performance (Caria, 2014).

This pragmatic compression of social intervention ends up disqualifying social workers, to the point where there is no difference for the employer (and for much of society) between technical and university graduates (Iturrieta, 2017). Faced with this situation of subalternity, often plagued by complexes, there are reactions on the part of social workers.

One may be an anti-intellectualist, or have an anti-theoretical attitude, which despises the possibilities of theory as misplaced, which locks professionals in a circle of learning feedback limited to their teammates or other like-minded colleagues. It also happens that the social worker is involved in technical courses with little relation to critical theory. This rejection of the theoretical and search for technical training as the only possibility of improvement, ends up being a submission to the neoliberal logic, which also despises theory and extols quantitative data and "objective" evidence over experience and ethical-political relations of intervention (Hicks, 2016), circumscribing social workers to a functional task.

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Another form of reaction are the daily resistances (Scott, 1985), which, arranged from denial (Holloway, 2011) -denying something to seek the opposite-, stand as a dialectic with "constituent power" and creative against what is not wanted (Negri, 2001, p.84). In these acts, professionals self-form, read and construct alternatives from their common senses of applied work based on their practice, their ethical principles and their values. It may be clearer than ever in child protection systems what is not wanted, but what we do to reverse it from our professional positions is perhaps the critical point yet to be resolved.

Resistant actions in social praxis, although they may have alleviated certain tensions in terms of micro-achievements, have not had the capacity to transform the work in child protection and redirect the intervention towards the logic of the Rights-Based Approach. Neither has it succeeded in building public policy from the bottom up, nor

in undoing the fictitious separation between theory and practice. Rather, many other colleagues have mechanized their work by the "habitus in various aspects of their practices" (Bourdieu, 1994), and have not been able to impose well-founded reflections that nurture the theory of intervention from critical positions. On the other hand, in the academy, despite the increase in research from and for Social Work, social theory connected to professional praxis and intervention research does not have a privileged place in disciplinary training.

It is essential to build sufficient autonomy for the creation of subjectivity situated in the daily life of the intervention (Guattari and Rolnik, 1999). This means seeking a deconstructive vigilance of the intervention in all its dimensions. For decades the Systematization of Experiences and its sister Participatory Action Research (PAR) have constituted, in various areas of critical Social Work, a prolific form of acute, analytical and propositional reflection on objects— epistemological, political, ethical and methodological foundations of social intervention (Villasante, Montañes and Martí, 2000; Barnechea and Tirado, 2010; Cifuentes Gil and Kauffmann, 2019). These methods seek a reflective practice that can be contrasted theoretically and reconstituted to return to the task inquisitively, in a wheel that should never stop.

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Systematization of Experiences is advocated here, particularly from among other forms of intervention research, considering the (poorly grounded) contempt it suffers in some academic spheres (Mallardi and González, 2013), and because it is one of the critical knots relieved as a loss of opportunity by interveners working against SEC (Gómez and Cid Arias, 2019; Ortega-Senet et al., 2020). Certainly there are other ways to achieve a research immersion in professional practice, such as ethnography, which is especially suitable for praxis research (Ortega, 2015; Silva, Sacramento and Mendonça, 2015). However, the Systematization of Experiences as an inquisitive and participatory analysis of the intervention has its own particularities that, precisely, aim to undo this division that we have been pursuing throughout this paper between the theoretical and the practical.

The Investigative Systematization of Experiences allows for the disclosure of professional knowledge in terms of experience, which implies a practical and symbolic mastery of the use of knowledge oriented by action (Shön, 1998), but observed from its protagonists, including the participants of the programs. This facilitates the break between practical knowledge and theorical knowledge, but also between professional experts and experts from the experience of the problem and, by the latter, I mean the people

who suffer the consequences of the social contingency. This opens up the possibilities of collective empowerment in relation to what is happening in intervention practices, in order to define them, explain them and seek creative alternatives in and beyond the micro-social levels of the relationship with people. Another of the possibilities it offers is that it allows for transformations in power relations, by involving all actors in the process of recovering experience, in its analysis, in its investigation and, especially, in the decisions of what to do with what is found.

Alfonso Torres-Carrillo, in his last article (2021), recalls that the Systematization of Experiences in its more investigative versions, is constituted as a complex tool for the critical understanding of the transformations and knowledge generated by the practice, from the critical appropriation of that same practice, being able to enunciate itself from its own subjectivity.

Research-reflective strategies of professional intervention, such as the Systematization of Experiences, when they are critical, emphasize that human (relationships, values, emotions, beliefs) and social (political, economic, cultural) processes are articulated categories of analysis in research. We mean "critical" systematization, that the process of systematization should be reflective and questioning of power relations in all symbolic, relational and practical dimensions; encourage the construction of utopias of social change enunciated among the protagonists involved; and maintain alertness against mechanics that are technified, functionalist, dominant, emotionally detached and habituated without awareness. These methods imply a vindication of the conjunction of all of them, giving each one the right role they play in a specific problem. It is thus constituted as multidimensional, polyphonic and articulating between the subjects who act and the critical consciousness of these actions (Cifuentes-Gil, 2021).

These methodologies are mainly determined, as Rosa María Cifuentes (1999) points out, by the context and practical developments, the intentions given to them and the working conditions in which they can be carried out; therefore, the author points out, rather than proposing a concept on systematization, she establishes meanings and a way of forging the claimed encounter between the task, the production of knowledge and its conversion into knowledge. In this approach there are many proposals and possibilities, where Latin American methodology activists such as Oscar Jara, Rosa María Cifuentes, Rocío Cifuentes, María Mercedes Barnechea, Alfonso Torres, Patricia Castañeda or Cecilia Aguayo make diverse and interesting work proposals that can help to constitute their own ways of systematizing experiences.

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The important thing is to observe and self-observe Social Work as a dynamic, as a heterogeneous collective in movement, "in connection with its historical and structural processes, its resistances and strategies in the face of inequalities" (Ortega-Senet, 2021, p.100). The systematization of experiences not only visualizes good practices and innovations, but also produces the self-questioning of the profession as part of a political culture that generates and reproduces inequality.

The idea of collecting, questioning, reflecting and discussing from the experience and the theoretically current can respond to the ambitious processes from "below" for the generation of inputs for public policies. Why not? Possibly taking into account the experience of those who live and suffer the child protection system in our country would have avoided a lot of drama, pain and injustice. When we look at the childhood network, in general, in its entire framework, we deeply understand the need for theoretically discussed strategies and a social response that is founded, situated and continuously questioned.

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Conclusions

This theoretical-practical dissociation is related to the status and recognition of social interveners, i.e., the greater the dissociation, the lesser the disciplinary recognition. It seems that this relationship is proportionally linked to the profile of "technician", and a progressive detachment from the theoretical models of intervention learned in their academic training, which would confirm that the dissociation between theory and practice favors a loss of symbolic power among professionals. This increases and is related to the marginality of the areas of social action. Somehow, Social Work accompanies the people with whom it works to the social margins also in a symbolic way in the production of knowledge. This marginality of knowledge also has no alternatives created from the practical knowledge o practical wisdom, pushing everyone to the alienation of their own practice, closing the perverse circle.

Faced with this panorama, it is considered that the Systematization of Experiences, or the critical participatory analysis of social interventions, could provide a useful tool to overcome this dichotomy between the two levels of relationship with work: the abstract theoretical level and the emotional practical level, generally dissociated, being able to find ways to generate interesting learning. Consciously establishing bridges and feedback paths between both levels would allow us to find strategies that undermine

the power relations between social workers and their programmatic contexts -plagued with contradictions and tensions-; between the interveners themselves from different disciplines, and for the "users" to stop being "users" and become participants in the action.

Francisco Escobar (1972) said, in a text that never loses validity, that in order to achieve liberation, Social Work must first liberate itself. This liberation involves undoing the false struggle between theory and practice, and this can be done by "looking inward". That is to say, looking at oneself as those who participate in the challenges of reversing unjust, unequal, excluding, anti-ecological social orders and doing so without complexes. This critical subjectivization facilitates the necessary task of recovering our autonomy and, with it, ontologically and teleologically reestablishing Social Work as a legitimate source of knowledge and wisdom. After October 2019, the whole country is in a new position of possibilities. The professionals of transforming social action, together with all the inhabitants of the Chilean territory, have, without losing sight of what has already been done, new opportunities to think big, with substantial changes in the forms of coexistence and relationship; we have a new great opportunity to reinvent ourselves.

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