Some resources for critical research:
reflections on intersectionality, *reflexivity* and *situationality*

Reflexões sobre metodologias críticas em pesquisa:
interseccionalidade, *reflexividade* e *situacionalidade*

Reflexiones sobre las metodologías críticas en investigación:
interseccionalidad, *reflexividad* y *situacionalidad*

Réflexion sur les méthodes en recherches:
intersection, *réflexivité* et *situationalité*

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Abstract

This article aims to provide a debate on critical methodologies for research. For this debate I centre on contributions from feminist research and post-colonial and decolonial studies on science concerning epistemological violence. In this sense, the understanding of inclusion and the acknowledgement of power relations in research are seen as key for epistemology, methodology and methods for research. Feminist studies developed key-aspects on power relations. In this article I will focus on the notions of situationality, interseccionality and reflexivity, which will be seen alongside dilemmas and paradoxes seen in examples of critical research. These aspects bring aspects regarding the inclusion of traditionally excluded, misrepresented or under-represented groups in research.

Keywords: *feminist research, post-colonial studies, decolonial studies, reflexivity, situationality, intersecctionality, epistemological violence*

Resumo

O objetivo deste artigo é discutir metodologias críticas para pesquisa tomando como eixo de análise contribuições de estudos feministas e pós-coloniais e decoloniais sobre a ciência em relação à violência epistemológica. Esta perspectiva faz com que o entendimento da inclusão e o reconhecimento de relações de poder em pesquisa sejam vistos como fundamentais tanto para epistemologia quanto para metodologias e métodos de pesquisa. Estudos feministas desenvolveram aspectos-chave sobre as reflexões das relações de po-

der em pesquisa. Neste artigo, focarei nas noções de situacionalidade, interseccionalidade e reflexividade, que serão debatidos com exemplos focados nos dilemas e paradoxos deflagrados em pesquisas críticas. Os aspectos levantados neste artigo apontam para elementos que permitem considerar grupos tradicionalmente excluídos, mal representados ou sub-representados em pesquisas.

Palavras-chave: *pesquisa feminista, estudos pós-coloniais, reflexividade, situacionalidade, interseccionalidade, violência epistemológica*

Resumen

El objetivo de este artículo es promover el debate sobre las metodologías críticas para investigación. Para ese debate, el foco será en las contribuciones de estudios feministas y pos-coloniales y decoloniales sobre la ciencia en relación a los aspectos entendidos como violencia epistemológica. Así, los aspectos como inclusión y el reconocimiento de las relaciones de poder en investigación son vistos como fundamentales para la epistemología y metodología y métodos de investigación. Estudios feministas han desarrollado aspectos importantes sobre las reflexiones acerca de las relaciones de poder en investigación. En el artículo el foco será en las nociones de situacionalidad, interseccionalidad y reflexividad, que serán debatidos con ejemplos de dilemas y paradojas vistos en pesquisas críticas. Los aspectos debatidos aquí invitan para un análisis de la inclusión de grupos tradicionalmente excluidos, mal representados o sub-representados en investigaciones.

Palabras-clave: *investigación feminista, estudos pós-coloniales, reflexividad, situacionalidad, interseccionalidad, violencia epistemológica*

Résumé

Le but de cet article est d'attirer le débat sur les methodologies critiques pour la recherché. Pour ce débat, centre de contribution des études féministes, post-coloniales et décoloniales sur la science par rapport à la violence épistomologique. Dans ce sens la compréhension de l'inclusion et la reconnaissance des rapports de pouvoir sont considérés fondamentaux pour l'épistomologie et méthodes de recherches. Les études féministes ont développé des aspects-clés sur les réflexions des rapports de pouvoir en recherches. Dans cet article je me baserai sur les notions de situationnalité, intersection et réflexivité qui seront discutées comme exemple dans les dilemmes et paradoxes déflagrés en recherches critiques. Les aspects suscités dans cet article apportent des éléments visant l'inclusion de groupes traditionnellement exclus, mal représentés ou sous-représentés en recherches.

Mot-clés: *Recherche feministes, études post.coloniales, réflexivité, situationnalité, intersection, violence épistomologique.*

Introduction

Focusing on epistemology: critical perspective and epistemological violence

This article[1,2], is based on the paper presented at the I *Simposium on Critical Psychology – Setting dialogues: critical theories, psychoanalysis, discourse analysis, feminism, post-colonialism, epistemology and methodology* at the University of Sao Paulo in 2013. The article brings some reflections from feminist and post-colonial studies in the areas of epistemology and methodology in research. There are innumerous contributions from these traditions and diverse feminist, post-colonial and decolonial perspectives, however, despite this theoretical diversity, this paper will point out some aspects from these perspectives as resources for critical research contributing to the debate on the notions of intersectionality, reflexivity and situationality, aiming at the inclusion of groups which were traditionally excluded, under-represented and misrepresented in research.

Thomas Teo (2008), from the work of Habermans, points out three main perspectives in science: 1- empirical-analytic, with the monologic productions of knowledge for the technical control over the object; 2- historical-hermeneutical, with the practical interst in interpretation and meaning; 3 - science with critical directions, from an emancipatory perspective and using self-reflection as a basic principle for research, which will be the basis for this article.

Critical perspectives consider and incorporate power relations in their analysis, thus in these epistemological studies, the traditional psychological concepts are also analysed, and universal and deterministic assumptions are put to question. Critical studies from perspectives such as feminist post-colonial and decolonial, marxist, foucauldian and psychoanalytic often denounce groups which were traditionally, and still are, excluded from research and from the production of scientific knowledge, and, in the field of psychology, these excluded groups are many times seen as "abnormal", "pathological", and devalued.

In critical studies the traditional division between subject and object is questioned. This division was previously questioned for example when Heidegger (1997) makes it explicit in the notion of Dasein (being-there-in-the-world), in which *historicality* is a determining characteristic of Dasein. Further, the notion of objectivity of science is challenged turning to be seen as a situated and partial (Haraway, 1988), and not as a universal, neutral and ahistorical truth. For this epistemological deconstruction, it is seen that critical perspectives do not only describe these discursive practices, but also show how discourse is formed by power relations and ideologies (Fairclough, 1992), the focus therefore, is in the processes of construction of reality through discourses that are socially located.

It is in this sense that psychology should consider these power relations, as there is no neutrality in science, since science is socially and historically located (Burman, 1998; Haraway, 1988). So, the analysis turns also to the discipline of psychology and its cultural processes and organisation of thought in society (Parker, 1989). However, for this analysis, the relations between power and ideology have to be considered, not neutralising or sanitising its effects (Parker, 1989). As Badiou (2002) highlights regarding philosophy: the need for philosophy to keep its critical sense and emancipatory politics.

Feminist research and Queer studies, as well as post-colonial and decolonial studies brought important contributions to critical analysis for the epistemology of science particularly highlighting the effect of universalising theories. A range of critical studies (Oakley, 1981; Teo, 2008; Haraway, 1988) pointed out the importance of including social categories that were traditionally excluded or misrepresented in research, considering the power relations within and outside academia and in the research process. Since not considering these relations, may risk reproducing pre-conceived ideas that

keep specific groups in unequal social positions, not being adequately represented and contextualised in the research process.

Critical analysis in psychology reveal that many times there is a (re)production and maintainance of particular social positions in research and theoretical development, which reflects psychology's own understanding of what is normal and pathological. Further, it is important to note that psychology, as well as medicine, are not restricted to academia, but also participate in the discursive construction of reality (Parker, 1992), in which reality is understood and expressed in medical terms, pointing to a "culture of psychology" (Mountian and Lara, 2011). Culture as pointed out by Foucault (1965) refers to "a way in which a specific culture, a knowledge organises itself, institutionalises, releases itself in a language that is it is own, and eventually reaches a 'scientific' or 'para-scientific' form"[3], in the case of psychology determining what is normal or pathological.

Rose (2008) critically analyses psy disciplines (psychology, psychiatry) and highlights the role of these disciplines in the construction of the self and subjectivity, and the effects of individualisation and pathologisation. We can analyse these power relations in the construction of the normal and pathological, particularly regarding the groups that often ocupy the position of the pathological, which can be questioned in terms of epistemological violence.

Teo (2008) analyses epistemological violence in research that excluded or devalued specific social groups, and points out examples of these practices of epistemological violence in psychological tests, which were developed not considering the social context or that were based on a specific idea of genetical heritage, reproducing racial and ethnic stereotypes. This is the case, for example, of the development of the IQ test (intelligence quotient), in which ethnic and racial minorities were seen as intellectually inferior. In this direction, other examples can be seen in the pathologisation of immigrants, that were associated to a range of mental illness (Liepsege and Littlewood, 1989) and in Brazil, we can highlight, the inferiorisation of Black and Indigenous people in science (Nina Rodrigues, 1939 em Chaves, 2003).

Furthermore, regarding pathologisation, women were portrayed as inferior and many times associated to mental disorders, such as seen in the history of hysteria, or they were simply not included in research (Saavedra and Nogueira, 2006; Rohden, 2003); homosexuality was seen as a mental illness, as transexuality is still considered (Arán and Murta, 2009). With these examples it becomes clear that science is historically and socially situated, making *situationality* key for research.

Power in research: situationality and politics in science

Feminist perspectives (feminist standpoint) have provided important aspects for research, claiming particularly the importance of circumventing the social conditions by which minoritised groups are located and how social categories operate within this, for example issues of gender are too often treated as 'natural' and self-evident attributions. These perspectives highlight how the research process itself is intrinsically part of it, hence, claims on the positionality of the research process, as well as the importance of a thorough reflection on the research relations are paramount for critical approaches.

The *situationality* of science is an important claim for feminist research put forward by a number of authors (Burman, 1998; Harding, 1996). Haraway (1988) challenges the neutrality and universality of science and discusses how 'objectivity' has been used in science, and the effects of this notion produced. It becomes curcial the understanding that knowledge is partial and situated, as Haraway (1988, p. 581) asserts: "feminist objectivity means quite simply situated knowledges". This

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[3] Translation by the author

puts traditional, as well as feminist perspectives, into a contextualized mode of knowledge production.

Following the debates on the politics of scientific research and the misrepresentation of specific groups, Harding (1986) questions: 'Is there a feminist method?', and calls attention to the importance of differentiating methods from methodology and epistemology, as these often appear intermingled as generally 'research methods'.

> Discussions of method (techniques of gathering evidence) and methodology (a theory and analysis of how research should proceed) have been intertwined with each other and with epistemological issues (issues about an adequate theory of knowledge or justificatory strategy) in both the traditional and feminist discourses. (Harding, 1986, p. 2)

The importance of this differentiation is that it makes it possible on the one hand to clarify the feminist social inquiry and its developments, while on the other hand, it allows to situate the research, the perspectives that are claimed and the type of knowledge that is possible to be produced, while also recognizing what can be known, for example the groups that are traditionally excluded from research (Maynard and June, 1994).

This feminist standpoint implies a continuous and thorough reflection on both the research in the field and also on the politics produced in science, bringing also paradoxes and dilemmas that are important to be acknowledged. It is important to highlight that debates on partial knowledge allow the incorporation of these dilemmas in the production of science, requiring here an epistemological turn, and a view of science as a type of discourse.

In order to situate the knowledge produced, it is crucial then to make it explicit the epistemology, methodology and method used in research. The research has to be historically and socially contextualized. Further, it is needed to describe the methods and methodologies that allow to include groups that are traditionally minoritised.

Feminist studies initially focused on women: how women have been either excluded or largely misrepresented in research. Saavedra and Nogueira (2006) point out how women were represented in psychological research following the debates of the feminist waves. These divisions are utilised here to briefly point out some debates during these historical periods, not inteding to reduce the range of debate within feminism in these large divisions. During the first wave (1850-1950), women were not considered in research or were misrepresented, often appearing as inferior to men. During the second wave (1960-1990), women started to occupy academic spaces and research and theories were developed from women on women and/or in comparison with men, mostly based on empiricist perspectives. It is at this point that a number of post-structuralist approaches started to take place, and its key debates were mostly seen during the period of the third wave (1990 – onwards), in which even the very notion of gender is deconstructed, while the notions of power and ideology, among others aspects, were then taken as central aspects.

From the end of XIX to the beginning of the XX century, ideas on the physiological and intellectual inferiority of women were at stake (seen in Galton, 1869; Hall, 1904; Wooley, 1903 in Saavedra and Nogueira, 2006). These ideas were put in terms of biological difference, where social and psychological elements were explained in biological terms. Thorndike (1910 in Saavedra and Nogueira, 2006) for example, affirmed that leadership and most important working positions should be destined to men, as they were more intelligent and with more energy than women. Women were largely represented regarding maternity, seen as the only destiny, and her brain was said to be driven by reproductive and sexual functions (Mountian, 2013; Rodhen, 2003; Engel, 1997).

These studies and perspectives were contested during the second wave, from the 1960s onwards. The invisibility and inferiority of women was put to question in both academy and in political and social realms. Omissions, errors and misconceptions were denounced, highlighting how the object of research was primarily male. In the 1970s feminist studies started to critique the very idea of science, particularly on the partiality of science. Studies on women, on both the differences as well as on the aspects known as feminine started to take place. This is in fact still debated, where some feminist traditions focused on ideas of 'natural' aspects of women, while other feminist researchers highlighted that gender does not determine psychological functions (Nogueira and Saavedra, 2006). This debate is seen in relation to psychology of women, and the most contemporary debates on the feminist critical readings of psychology (Mountian, 2016).

From the 1990s onwards, the debate around gender and sexuality becomes central for critical research. Here the notions of truth, neutrality, naturality and university intrinsic to science, are further challenged and deconstructed. Further, social movements and academic movements, also seen in previous periods, such as Feminists, anti-racist and and Feminist, Lesbians, Gays, Bissexuals and Transsexual movements, among others, provided important critiques regarding situationality, whereby the subjetct has to be seen in relation to their specific social and historical location.

The supposed neutrality and universality of science is contested, and the politics of scientific research is put into light. The notion of politics is developed within its broad spectrum, from the 'personal is political' it is clear, for example, that the traditional division in science and politics between the domestic and the public spaces is gendered (Federici, 1975). The politics of gender divisions are highlighted and contested regarding the politics of science.

From this, a range of research methods and methodologies – such as ethnography, visual methods, auto-biography, action research – was developed and applied aiming to allow marginalised groups that were traditionally misrepresented or under-represented in research to have visibility in research. Notwithstanding this, it is important to highlight that critical methodologies do not necessarily guarantee the representation and voice of marginizalized groups (Spivak, 1988; Mountian e cols., 2011; Gillies and Alldred, 2012).

Feminist researchers have provided a number of debates of the (im)possibilities and dilemmas of representation of marginalized groups. For example, Spivak (1988) when asking can the subaltern speak?, highlights the impossibilities regarding the language of the subaltern in relation to hegemonic listening. For this, Spivak points out key aspects of the imperialist epistemic, disciplinary and social violence. In this sense, the subaltern group is commonly defined by difference, and when regarding gender the subaltern subject is doubly obliterated, as the construction of gender reproduces the masculine domination. Hence, in the colonial production, the subaltern does not have history and cannot speak, and within this the female subaltern is even more obscured.

These deadlocks of representation provided important aspects to be accounted for, on the one hand, the importance of contextualizing science and the research process, and the importance of considering power relations regarding the intersections between imbalanced categories, and on the other hand, the highlight the crucial question on the possibilities of representation.

The relation between power and knowledge becomes relevant also to what is considered knowledge. Alongside the critiques to power in research and to the production of subjectivity, studies point out the need to review the notion of knowledge regarding its scope and the inclusion of local knowledges. This aspect has been discussed in a number of critical studies, in the development and review of local knowledge, as seen in post-structuralist research and dissident epistemologies, particularly regarding the critiquest of power-knowledge, or, in the relation power-knowledge-pleasure.

Intersectionality: discourse and power

The debates and perspectives put forward here concern the inclusion of groups who are not properly represented (or are misrepresented) thereby emphasizing the importance of the dynamics of the intersections between categories such as gender, class and race (Oakley, 1981; Stanley and Wise, 1990; Walkerdine, 1997; Harding, 1996; McClintock, 1995; Mohanty, 1994; Crenshaw, 1991; Hooks, 2000; Lorde, 1980), questions related to power and knowledge (Harding, 1996; Haraway, 1996), and the power position of the researcher (Burman, 1998; Oakley, 1981; Levinson, 1998). These perspectives analyse the structure of institutions through categories of power, considering the inequalities in relation to the intersection of social categories.

It is important, first, to highlight that gender, as well as race, and other categories, are not a fixed term that has the same signification everywhere, that is, the understanding of gender has to be socially contextualized. Yuval-Davis (1997, p. 9) clarifies this further, defining gender as a: "Mode of discourse which relates to groups of subjects whose social roles are defined by their sexual/ biological difference as opposed to their economic positions or their membership in ethnic and racial collectivities".

In this sense, as a mode of discourse, gender as described by Butler (1993) is seen as a "force of reiteration of norms, the repetition of 'regulatory fictions' that constitute the subject" (Butler, 1993, p. 95). Gender, as well as other categories, is socially constructed, and how this construction is (re)produced should be interrogated.

For this deconstruction, based on Foucault's philosophy it is crucial the attention to the social structures, and the inclusion of power, that is an ever-present dynamic that structures interactions in diverse ways (Burman, 1998). It is important to emphasise the understanding of power in Foucault, as pointed out by Batsleer and Humphries (2000, p. 11),

> Unlike the Hegelian tradition of the analysis of power, Foucault does not utilise history as a means of locating a single revolutionary subject, nor does he locate power in a single material base. His focus is on the myriad power relations that are networked throughout societies and which make centralised repressive forms of power possible. He posits a view of power as exercised rather than possessed and not primarily repressive, but productive. The analysis of discursive practices as sites of power enables an account of the way subjects are constituted by power relations.

Therefore, power is productive, it produces subjects and social positions. In this sense, it is important to look at the forces that are at play, as Foucault (1988, p. 91) remind us: "where there is power, there is resistance". Regarding social categories, we can then highlight understandings of race, as well as gender, treated as performative, not as a pre-given condition, but rather a shifting signifier, constructed within power relations, as an effect of specific encounters. The analysis turns to the historical fixity of discursive repetitions.

Post-colonial studies provide important resources for this critical approach (Fanon, 1986; Gilroy, 2000; Bhabha, 2010; Balibar and Wallerstein, 2002; Hall, 2008; Hook, 2006; Ballestrin, 2016), as seen, race and culture are understood as socially and historically located, bringing to the fore the analysis of the discursive production of the "Other", of the production of regimes of difference. In this way, traditional biological claims on race are deconstructed, being privileged the analysis on how discourses on race determine the position of the subject (Gilroy, 2000).

These discourses place the subject in a specific position, and here the concern is on the position of the "Other" in discourse, in the analysis of the processes that place the subject as the "Other". It is

crucial the understanding that 'minoritization' (Chantler, 2007) of some specific others are done through encounters. And crucially, this encounter is not symmetric, as Ahmed (2000, p. 11) points out, 'colonial encounters involve a necessarily unequal and asymmetric dialogue between once distant cultures that transforms each one'. These perspectives are important for a deconstruction of these social categories in intersection, as seen in the work of a number of post-colonial feminists (McClintock, 1995; Yuval-Davis, 1997; Burman, 2008; Chantler, 2007).

Regarding power in research, some ethical principles arise in the analysis of research relations such as the attention to the potential exploitation of participants and giving voice to disadvantaged groups or misrepresented groups (often according to structural positions such as, gender, class, race, age). From this a number of aspects have been highlighted in order to account for ethical aspects and to acknowledge power within and outside the research process, making reflexivity a key aspect for research.

Reflexivity in research: reflections from the field

Reflexivity on the process of research becomes a key strategy for critical research, particularly regarding questions on the power relations of the researcher as well as the power position of the research in the field. Researcher reflexivity is as Nogueira (2001, p. 50) points out: "the critical and public evaluation of the process and the interpretative resources".

Further, it is relevant to consider the understanding of power put forward here. Power for Foucault, as seen, is not related to domination or only to the forms in which power takes place, it is not a structure or an institution, "it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society" (Foucault, 1998, p.93). Power is related to the process, "the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization" (Foucault, 1998, p.92). As a process, through struggle, changes, and the support these forces have one to another, they constitute a system. Or on the contrary they isolate them appearing as the strategies by which they take place (e.g. state apparatus, law). "Power's condition of possibility, or in any case the viewpoint which permits one to understand its exercise" (Foucault, 1998, p.92).

The inclusion of the power relations in research is a hard task, as on the one hand it calls for a constant *reflexivity* of the researcher, and on the other hand, may expose the researcher which responds to a 'scientific' community that relies on claims of 'objectivity' for an 'always well succeeded' research.

Many feminist researchers claim on the importance of a *reflexivity* in research (Harding, 1996), as well as an 'interpretive vigilance' (Figueroa e Lopez, 1991 in Burman, 1998), as a way to acknowledge the power relations between the researcher and the interviewee (Stanley and Wise, 1990). It is important therefore to recognise the effects of power relations, including the hierarchical position of the researcher, on the results of the research. Here the social position of the researcher including the intersectional social categries such as gender, race, class, age and sexuality for the interactions with the participants.

Another aspect concerns when the interviews are conducted by feminists. Oakley (1981) questions the limits of structured interviews pointing out the dificulties and contradictions in research with women. From her research on pregnant women, Oakley (1981) highlights the importance of the non-hierarchy, of the engagement with the interviewees, and the effect of the interviews on the interviewees (in this case, the women talked about the therapeutic effect that the interview produced). The impact of the interviews to the participants should be carefully thought, as in some circumstances, the questions might trigger difficult memories for the participants.

Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) argue that *reflexivity* recognises the ambivalent position of the researcher, "reflection means interpreting one's own interpretations, looking at one's own perspectives from other perspectives, and turning a self-critical eye onto one's own authority as interpreter and author" (*foreword*). Reflexivity has been put forward as one way of promoting greater accountability for the research process and analysis. Kidder and Fine (1997) claim that:

> By virtue of human subjects regulations, ethical guidelines and contemporary considerations of researchers' responsibilities, researchers today who want to study a group or a site are usually required to state who they are, make their intention known, and obtain permission to be there. They might want to be invisible but usually aren't, so they are right to worry about how their presence might affect the people they observe. (Kidder and Fine, 1997, p.38).

This is a relevant assertion since the mere presence of the researcher seen also as a professional psychologist, social worker, sociologist, etc, which presupposes a power relationship, including also the dynamics with other social categories such as gender, class, age, race, sexuality and others.

There are two aspects I emphasize here, first of the impossibility of neutrality in research and of the researcher, that is always situated, and (re)produces power relationships, even without the intention of the researcher, and second, the importance of the inclusion (and its debate) of the 'other' in research.

In order to highlight some dilemmas and paradoxes of research processes and particularly regarding *reflexivity*, based on my previous research (Mountian, 2004, 2013) I bring examples from the fieldwork and how the process of reflexivity regarding the account of power relations allowed the deconstruction of discourses aimed at this study. The interviews conducted in this research aimed at highlighting the main discourses around drugs and the relations with gender, considering also race, age and class. For this, I interviewed people from a range of backgrounds and from distinct views on drugs, such as, people who used legal and illegal drugs for therapeutic purpose, recreational, and religious purpose.

Regarding the ethical procedures, the interviewees were informed about the intention and rationale of the research before the interview, and were aware they could refuse the use of audio tape and withdraw at any point during the interview. They could debate with the researcher about any point of the study and have a version of the research if required. These points are related to what is referred as 'informed consent' (Burman, 1998). Confidentially and anonymity were guaranteed to the participants and any information that they did not want to be disclosed would be kept out of the research and no information would be passed on to the institutions through which they were contacted. The interviews were conducted one-to-one, face-to-face, utilizing audio tape and video tape. The interviews were carried out in Sao Paulo (Brazil), in different settings in order to generate and contrast different discourses on drugs (e.g. religious settings, public and medical institutions, cafes, bars).

It is important to highlight some ethical challenges of research on themes that are morally saturated and on the areas that are outside legal spheres, such as drugs. First, it is curcial an attention to confidentiality and anonimity - not revealing, for example, details that could allow the interviewee to be identified. Second, as the field of drugs is often saturated with moral views, the interviews regarding drug use are also interpolated by these, which have to be accounted for. For this, the analysis required the understanding of interviewrs' power position, for example, pre-conceived ideas from the participants might have affected the answers. In this sense, the analysis did not focus on the individual subject, but rather, on the discursive position the subject occupies. As Burman (2003, p.5)

points out "the purpose of discourse work is not to focus on individuals but rather the cultural frameworks of meaning that they reproduce".

In this sense, the analysis focused on the social position occupied by the subjects and how power operated during the field. The aim of the interviews was then to situate them within broader discursive structures.

Taking these into account, it is clear that there were a huge number of elements to be considered, here, as a brief analysis on these processes, I highlight the institution and the position of psychologist of the researcher within this. In the *reflexivity* process, it is clear that the position of the interviewer is not neutral or invisible, triggering responses from the interviewees that perhaps would be different if asked in another context.

For example, in the interview with Q[4]., a member of the Santo Daime church (a religious syncretism, combining Catholicism, Spiritism, African religiosity and Indian shamanism, where there is the use of the psychoactive substance of Ayahuasca with other plants) it seems that the participant had ideas about the researcher's views beforehand although I didn't disclose my opinions about my views on drugs, Q. says: "**I cannot agree with you,** that any plant on earth would be a drug, unless you use it wrongly. Even cocaine, cocaine is a strong plant of power, in Bolivia they use it for work, to keep their pressure level OK, to go to the mountains, and work up there, because the air is difficult to work". This, as expressed by the participant, is a direct example of the intervention of the simple presence of the researcher.

In the case of the drug treatment institutions, the location of the interviewers (hospitals, in-treatment institutions, rehabilitation centres) as well as the condition of the participant (if s/he was voluntarily or not placed in the institution) had to be accounted. It was observed that the mere presence of the researcher, seen as a psychologist by the participants, my presence might have triggered specific responses. For example when I interviewed at the clinic for drug users, and asked participants what drugs are for them, their reply was frequently related to accounts of abuse, of escapism, degradation. As also noted by Butler (1997), there is a sort of confessional style, in which discourses of abuse and healing are prevalent.

> S[5]. What are drugs for me? Putz, nowadays they are, a way to fill an emptiness, a way to have a new adventure every day, not to have to face yourself, with your things, with your routine, with seeing yourself really, not having to see, for me is a constant escape.
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> G[6]. [What are drugs for you?] It is the thing that practically ended up (acabou) with my adolescence, it was a monster, a monster that appeared for me. And there is a side that it gave lots of pleasure, it is a escape for everything that I lived in my childhood, then it was an escape for me, I suffered a lot using drug, I was even arrested, I was arrested, I was very humiliated in the police station.
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> G. I know that I'm ill, I am a chemical dependent and I have to get treated (…). This is why it is difficult to explain chemical dependency to me, chemical dependency is very broad, you know, it hasn't a definition, it is a very abstract thing chemical dependency, there isn't a concrete thing in the chemical dependency to me. There isn't a shape, nothing concrete, it is something very broad that involves many things. Involves (…) many deficiencies, no, not deficiencies, many diseases, many pathologies, many things are involved. (What does it involve for you) Wow (nossa), many things, because I don't know the results of my test. (But for you, what do you think, what does it involve to be chemically dependent?) It involves

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[4] Woman, White, heterosexual, 31 years old
[5] Man, White, heteroseuxal, 27 years old
[6] Man, Black, heterosexual, 21 years old

lie, lots of, lots of dissimulation, the characteristic of chemical dependent is the lie, the dissimulation, the difficulty to accept rules, because no one who is chemically dependent accepts too many rules, ah, how is it called, difficulty to get in contact with feeling, lots of difficulty to get in contact (touch) with feeling, this is really chemical dependent, (…). These are the main. (Why does this happen? This dissimulation, lie). This is when you are already using drugs, but there are the traumas since young, childhood traumas, when we are children, have the traumas, isn't it. (Why do you think that this happens when the person uses drug?) I don't know.

Obviously this poses some questions and dilemmas that are part of the reflexivity of the research, such as: did these answers appear because this is the way they understand their experience, or is this the discourse of the medical institution, or is this the result of the interaction between the participants and the researcher? These issues highlight the inevitable relations between power and possibilities of representation in research. In relation to the interviews in these institutions, possible expectations or projections from the participants to the interviewer were also acknowledged, considering the position of the researcher, as well as psychologist, and the power relations of the research process (Marks, 1996; Burman, 2000). In this sense, the possibility of a relationship interviewer/interviewee established in terms of psychological expertise cannot be warded off. Instead such constraints have to be worked with, analytically and ethically, as resources for the study.

In the case of the study cited, these questions permeated the research and were also the fuel for the analysis, as I could flag the medical and religious discourses imbued within this, and the reproduction of these within the institutionalized drug user patients.

Final remarks

This article aimed to point out some aspects for critical methodologies, two main aspects were highlighted: first, the need to contextualise the research we produce, considering diverse aspects of power relations, and second, the need to continue developing critical methodologies for psychology.

It is evident that power relations are present in any research process notheless for critical, feminist, post-colonial and decolonial studies, these elements are taken as intrinsic to the research, that is, the impossibility of neutrality of the researcher is made explicit, and to account for the power relations within and outside the field of the research is a challenge that is posed for critical research. To consider these power relations it is required a thorough reflexivity from the researcher in the analysis of how power operates within the institutions and social relations, as well as the position of the researcher regarding the intersections between the social categories of gender, race, class, age and sexuality.

In this way, some questions should be reviewed in the production of research: which knowledge is included in power relations in science (Burman, 1998; Oakley, 1981; Mountian e cols., 2011) and excluded from science (Harding, 1996; Haraway, 1996; Longino, 2009)?; which groups have no voice or are not represented (Spivak, 1988)?; how are considered the social categories in intersection that have an unequal power relation, such as of gender, sexuality, race, class, age and other categories (Oakley, 1981; Stanley and Wise, 1990; Walkerdine, 1997; Harding, 1996)? Which are the methods and methodologies of research that can incorporate minoritised groups and challenge traditional power relations in science? Including the attention to how the research questions are posed (Oakley, 1981; Kitzinger and Wilkinson, 1993; Macleod, 2004).

These are key processes, that bring dilemmas and paradoxes for the researcher, as these dynamics are not taken for granted, but seen in its historical and social contexts. These reflections are

key for feminist and critical research, as seen, the idea of universality, neutrality and objectivity of science has (re)produced particular ideas on minoritised groups, either misrepresenting or not representing them. In order to challenge these, it is crucial the critical epistemological and methodological development for investigative strategies that allow to include marginalized groups also as active subjects in research.

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