

Editorial

Writing is a creative act, but it is, above all, a political act: a possibility to appear publicly, to illuminate certain unseen dimensions of a debate, to read the world and position eyes. Writing, from this perspective, constitutes a powerful manifestation of the intellectual tradition of social work, which from its origins has called for the generation of knowledge that lays the foundations of the profession and discipline.

Today we have the honour of presenting to the academic and professional community *Propuestas Críticas en Trabajo Social – Critical Proposals in Social Work*, the Journal of the Department of Social Work of the University of Chile, which arises precisely under that commitment, seeking to promote debate and the construction of proposals in the face of the impacts of capitalism, inequalities and oppressions that affect various sectors of society.

We face critical times on a planetary scale. The dismantling of well-being and regressions in social protection systems, xenophobia, racism, gender violence, pollution and environmental disaster, new forms of war, state terrorism and institutional violence, configure these times of crises. These are critical times in both senses: in the sense of horror and in the sense that they can constitute a critical impulse towards the deconstruction of political imaginaries, the creation of proposals for transformation and the search for alternatives, as Penelope Deutscher and Christina Lafont (2018) have proposed in their almost foreboding book *Critical Theory in Critical Times*.

In this scenario, writing from a journal positioned in a social work department has a profound meaning that dislocates the traditional way of understanding academic production. The search and invitation that we extend from our journal is to create proposals -critical proposals- that make the knowledge that comes from research, theoretical discussions and situated reflections, available to the public interested in these debates: an uncomfortable audience that mobilizes with inequalities and discrimination, a restless and alert audience, open to debate and motivated by the construction of alternatives for a dignified life without distinction.

Social work at the University of Chile lost its continuity and development in the time of Pinochet's dictatorship (1973-1990). With the re-establishment of the career in 2014



and its configuration as the Department of Social Work in 2019, a field has been created that encourages the debate on “the social” as an object of reflection, research and intervention. *Propuestas Críticas en Trabajo Social - Critical Proposals in Social Work* is one more manifestation of this disciplinary project that has emphasized the production and dissemination of knowledge from a perspective of high integration between intervention and research, defined under high standards of demand in terms conceptual, methodological and ethical, as suggested by the international guidelines for the production of knowledge today (Committee on Publication Ethics, 2019).

This is a journal underpinned by diverse critical perspectives, bilingual and transdisciplinary, that aims to continue the intellectual tradition started by the *Revista de Servicio Social*, academic journal published until 1969.

A bit of history

According to Vidal (2016, p. 44), the relevance that the School of Social Work at the University of Chile gave to knowledge production and academic publications was expressed since 1960 “that is the case of the publication of its *Revista de Servicio Social*, from the University of Chile, campus Santiago, an annual publication which first issue was published in 1960 and the last one in 1969”.

The Dr. Lucio Córdova School of Social Service, created in 1940 during the government of Pedro Aguirre Cerda in the city of Santiago, initially depended on the Ministry of Education. In 1948 it was incorporated into the University of Chile and in 1951 to the Faculty of Legal and Social Sciences (Vidal, 2016).

The topics addressed by the *Revista de Servicio Social* were diverse, although a perspective promoted by the editorial team is observed: a clear intellectual concern related to the question about the nature of social service (nowadays social work) and its links with the generation of knowledge using the scientific method. This suggests that, from its beginning, social work discussed the role of research in the development of the profession, which expressed in the relevance of research in the curricula developed by the Dr. Lucio Córdova School between 1964 y 1970 (Vidal, 2016).

Between the years 1964-1965, efforts were focused on compiling the history of the formation of the Dr. Lucio Córdova School of Social Service, as well as analysing the actions carried out at the international and national level (internships, conferences, seminars, studies) by the direction of the School to improve the study program offered

to students and teachers. During the years 1967, 1968 and 1969, the journal's concern was oriented to the discussion on the definition of the profession of social service and its relationship with social sciences.

In this last period, the discussions about the scientific nature of the profession strongly marked the history of the profession and the discipline beyond the decade of the 70s and 80s in Chile. This debate was opened by the article published by Ernest Greenwood, because he - within the discussion on the distinctions between science and technology - defined social service as a "technology" considering it an eminently practical profession. The professionals, from this perspective, were "in charge of applying the theoretical knowledge generated by the social sciences. These sciences were devoid of the value and ideological dimension that characterized the practice. From this field, for the professor, social work could not generate knowledge that would contribute to the theory of the social sciences" (Vidal, 2016, p.45).

Today, fifty years later, it is possible to question and answer with evidence that reading of social work. The production of disciplinary knowledge has expanded significantly in recent decades, through the development of more than 164 doctoral programs, academic journals indexed in the catalogues with the highest publication requirements and the development of research networks promoted only in the last decades in various countries (Matus, 2018). Social work has opened fields of study and nurtured lines of research, contributing from the dissemination of knowledge (Taylor & Sharland, 2015) and obtaining impacts at the policy level (Klammer & Leiber, 2020),

The question, however, no longer lies in whether or not we generate knowledge from social work, but in the way in which we do it, how we disseminate it and in the service of what objectives are available.

The purposes of our journal

Nowadays, academic journals constitute a space in which meetings and discussions, tunings and controversies take place, which allow for expanding the margins of knowledge and disseminating them widely through various technological devices: websites and social networks allow productions to go beyond geographic boundaries. However, the endogenic, elitist, geopolitical and colonial bias that many of the academic journals on social work maintain is also clear (Roche & Flynn, 2018; Kamali & Jönsson, 2019; Muñoz & Rubilar, 2020). Likewise, and as presented in the work of Muñoz et al. published in this first issue, asymmetries are observed in terms of the

conceptual and methodological foundation of the articles published in these journals, as well as the political scope of findings coming from reported research.

The journal that we present here intends to make a radical turn in this sense, articulating both conceptual and methodological demands, as well as political ones. In other words, we aspire to publish discussions that are robust in conceptual terms, justified with methodological rigor, aligned with the ethical standards of scholarly publishing, and, at the same time, politically involved and committed. The commitment to developing a bilingual journal, which speaks not only in Spanish or Portuguese, but also in English, lies in the need to open the borders of language to establish bridges and translations -literally and metaphorically- that assist in breaking the endogenist and insular character of debates in social work.

We hope that our journal will become an instrument of public incidence that contributes to the debate around social phenomena of high public interest, to the generation of social work knowledge in dialogue with other disciplines, and to the creation of repertoires and intervention strategies from a perspective cosmopolitan.

Contributions in this issue

The launch of an academic journal is never possible without the collaboration of those who believe and work to enhance the profession and discipline, in this case, of social work. The formation of our National and International Editorial Committee, as well as the Evaluation Committee, shows the links that have allowed us to lay the foundations for this production to be published today. The authors of the works that make up this founding issue have also given us an important vote of confidence. We deeply appreciate their generosity.

The journal is divided into four sections: original articles, translations, reviews and interviews. This first issue presents **8 original articles** that show the theoretical plurality of what we call “critical tradition” in social work. We wanted to start the discussion by precisely showing the diversity in terms of thought matrices, analysis focuses and proposals that emerge from the critical tradition, which are not only framed by specific theoretical approaches, but also stated from a geopolitical place that is particular.

The discussion opens with the work of Melisa Campana (Argentina), entitled "Critique and resistance: what are the possible trenches?", where the author analyses three key problems for social work from a poststructuralist perspective: subject and



subjectivation, the problem of inventing the common and the imperative of happiness, posing profound questions about the meaning and scope of social work today. It is followed by the work of Vasilios Ioakimidis (England), "Social work in the global neoliberal context: solidarity and resistance from a radical perspective", which from the radical tradition of Anglo-Saxon social work proposes a reading that breaks with the micro-macro binomial present in the disciplinary discussion, contributing with hopeful proposals based on the international experience of fighting for the profession.

Two important contributions from the critical Marxist tradition are presented next. In his work "Social work and Marxist critique", José Fernando Siqueira (Brazil), presents the coordinates for a propositional debate from the Marxist tradition and the profession of social work from a Latin American perspective; and Elaine Rossetti Behring (Brazil) offers an acute analysis of the political situation and the possibility of thinking about emancipatory society projects in her text "*Social work and corporate projects in Brazil.*"

In a turn towards the clinical, structural linguistics and psychoanalysis, Saul Karsz (France) questions the very notion of criticism in his work "Critique of critical thought. Cartography of contemporary positions regarding criticism and some theoretical and clinical orientations in the matter", while Alicia González-Saibene (Argentina) invites us to a genealogical reading of the disciplinary construction of social work with her article "The impact of philosophical and theoretical / epistemological productions in the constitution of the discipline". These coordinates allow us to question precisely what we have understood as "critique" in our profession and discipline since its origins.

With the same concern for the foundations of social work and its forms of justification, and from an analytical perspective, Barbra Teater and Katrina Hannan (United States) share their results of empirical research on the use of theory in professional intervention. Their work entitled "Where is the "social" in Social Work? An analysis of the use of theory in the intervention of social workers", provides us with a critical interpellation about the individual and depoliticized focus of the intervention of social workers in New York City, but that undoubtedly reflects a broader trend that is a consequence of managerialism in professional intervention on a global scale.

In a similar vein, one that seeks to empirically analyse the orientation of the intellectual production of social work through the examination of academic journals and research networks, the last article in this section offers a discussion on the rationality of cognitive capitalism and the politics of promotion of research. The article is titled "What do social work research journals and networks tell us? Expressions and conceptions around the



construction of disciplinary knowledge” and is the result of the collective work of the Interdisciplinary Studies in Social Work Research Cluster of the University of Chile.

In our **Translations** section, we are pleased to present the work of Linda Smith, originally published in 2014 in the South African journal *Social Work / Maatskaplike Werk*. Her article “Historiographies of South African Social Work: Challenging the Dominant Discourses” analyses from a dialectical-historical perspective the individualistic, liberal, colonial, masculine and “white” discourses that have dominated the production of social work in South Africa. With the dissemination of this work, we hope to contribute to the knowledge and recognition of the professional struggles of South African colleagues and to the identification of common experiences around what it means to build a profession and discipline under the weight of a strong colonial heritage.

In the **Reviews** section you will find two unavoidable suggestions, if it is a disciplinary discussion in social work. Taly Reininger critically analyses “The Routledge Handbook of Critical Social Work”, edited by Stephen A. Webb (editor, 2019), while Fiorella Cademartori comments on “The faces of social work in the world. Per(e)sistencias under late capitalism”, by Paula Vidal Molina (coordinator, 2017).

To conclude this first issue, we present in our Interviews section a conversation with Dimitra-Dora Teloni, PhD, a Greek social worker, academic and activist, who shares her experiences of radical social work and practices of collective resistance to the policies of austerity, xenophobia and fascism in a hopeful testimony that accounts for a social work intensely linked to social movements.

We hope you enjoy each of these contributions and continue to accompany us on this path that we have embarked on today.

Santiago de Chile, April 2021.

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