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CRITICAL PROPOSALS IN SOCIAL WORK

PROPUESTAS CRÍTICAS EN TRABAJO SOCIAL

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Propuestas Críticas en Trabajo Social – Critical Proposals in Social Work

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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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Greetings from Dr. Silvana Martínez

President of the International Federation of Social Workers

As President of the International Federation of Social Workers, I am very honoured by the opportunity to express and share with readers a few words on the occasion of the launch of the first issue of the Journal *Propuestas Críticas en Trabajo Social - Critical Proposals in Social Work*. It is undoubtedly an excellent initiative by the colleagues of the Department of Social Work of the University of Chile, whom I congratulate for this publication and fundamentally for the effort and commitment involved in the hours dedicated to this project, which enriches the entire professional group.

As an Argentine and Latin American Social Worker, I want to particularly highlight the imprint and critical profile that colleagues have chosen as the editorial line for *Propuestas Críticas en Trabajo Social - Critical Proposals in Social Work*. It is a key ethical-political option of enormous value and importance in these times of strong neoliberal onslaught in Our America. Recovering and vindicating the processes of construction of critical thought situated in our Latin American historical-political reality is an arduous but essential and urgent task, to decolonize power, knowledge and the processes of subjectivation.

The launch of this first issue of *Propuestas Críticas en Trabajo Social - Critical Proposals in Social Work* is in itself a fact to celebrate, like any initiative that invites, provokes and calls for the production and socialization of knowledge in Social Work. However, in this case the significance is much deeper since it is an initiative that recalls the Social Service Journal that the University of Chile published until 1969, becoming a tributary of that journal. Then came the bloody military coup against the constitutional government of Salvador Allende, the dark dictatorship of Pinochet and the long closure of Social Work as a career that lasted until 2014 when the Department of Social Work was reopened.

With the reopening of the career and then the creation of the Department of Social Work, colleagues have taken up the idea of strengthening the profession and the production of knowledge, with a critical sense from a broad and multiverse perspective. In this sense,

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Propuestas Críticas en Trabajo Social - Critical Proposals in Social Work condenses the meaning of a restorative political act, of vindication and resistance, since it clearly and forcefully demonstrates that "they have not defeated us" and that the struggle continues.

I celebrate the edition of this Journal, for the possibilities it brings to publish, disseminate and discuss research results, essays, reflections, make visible professional knowledge and intervention experiences, express ideas and build hope and political resistance. I celebrate the courage and convictions that animate this project, the construction of meaning and the option for an emancipating critical perspective in the production of knowledge, as a contribution to the ethical-political task of social transformation and the construction of rights and popular power.

I greet and congratulate the colleagues of the Department of Social Work of the University of Chile for this emblematic political gesture, for planting the flag of Social Work high and for demonstrating that "the only fight that is lost is the one that is abandoned", as Ernesto "Che" Guevara maintained. Without struggle there is no conquest and without conquest there are no rights. I wish you the best of success in this endeavour. Your success will contribute to the consolidation of the professional group and this will always be my greatest concern as President of the International Federation of Social Workers and my greatest pride as a Latin American Social Worker.

Mar del Plata, Argentina, April 2021.

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ARTICLE

Critique and resistance: what are the possible trenches?

Crítica y resistencias: ¿cuáles son las trincheras posibles?

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Abstract

This article aims to contribute to the theoretical-epistemological, but also ethical-political, discussion of two key categories of critical social work: criticism and resistance. To do this, it analyses three sets of problems from which the three sections of the text are organized, namely: i) subject and subjectivation: the problem of autonomy-guardianship-responsibility; ii) the affections, the alliances: the problem of inventing 'the common'; and iii) de-colonizing pain and joy: the problem of the happiness imperative.

Keywords:
critique; resistance; social work; neoliberalism.

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Resumen

El presente artículo pretende contribuir a la discusión teórico-epistemológica, pero también ético-política de dos categorías clave del Trabajo Social Crítico, como son las de crítica y resistencia. Para ello, analiza tres conjuntos de problemas a partir de los cuales se organizan los tres apartados del texto, a saber: i) sujeto y subjetivación: el problema de la serie autonomía-tutela-responsabilidad; ii) los afectos, las alianzas: el problema de inventar lo común; y iii) des-colonizar el dolor y la alegría: el problema del imperativo de felicidad.

Palabras clave:
crítica; resistencia; trabajo social; neoliberalismo

Introduction

With pleasure, but knowing that it is an enormous responsibility, I accept the generous invitation to write in the first issue of what will be not only a social work journal, but also an immense commitment to cooperative, respectful and constructive debate. This is crucial especially in these agonizing times or maybe because of them. Just a few months ago we were witnessing an unprecedented popular revolt in Chile, with seismic aftershocks in Ecuador, Guatemala, and Peru. At the same time, we received the election results in Uruguay, turning the knob towards neoliberal conservatism, joining the consortium that Brazil undoubtedly leads in our region. And suddenly we experienced 'a stop'. A virus sent us back home and forced us to confine ourselves, forced us to retreat.

The question of criticism and resistance has become urgent. It is urgent because "the day after" (and the first resistance is to refuse to call it a "new normal") the streets are once again the scene of popular struggles and those founding inequalities remain visible.

The question of critique and resistance raises other questions: What are our trenches going to be made of? What politics, what ethics? What societal project will they help to cement? What utopia will guide them? The brand of the premise that Susana Murillo gave us gives me a clue: de-colonizing pain is an emergency. This is my aim here.

In this article I will construct three sets of problems to think about the possibilities of 'the collective' today –because, for me, collective and resistance is the same thing. The sections of this article will be organized on three sets of problems: I. Subject and subjectivation: the problem of autonomy-guardianship-responsibility; II. The affections, the alliances: the problem of inventing the common; III. De-colonizing pain and joy: the problem of the happiness imperative.

ARTICLE

Subject and subjectivation: the problem of autonomy-guardianship-responsibility

If we think, from a poststructuralist perspective, that the subject is not an *a priori*, that is, it is not the explanatory principle of the social, we can concentrate on the effects of subjectivation. This leads us to focus on the mechanisms of power, that is, on the subjective effects that politics brings with it. It is important to note that it is not the same as talking about "subjective effects or impacts": what we want to look at is what type of subject is assumed by the political framework -I emphasize political framework-, and what subject does it produce (a responsible father, an empowered woman, an integrated immigrant, an employable youth, a neglectful mother, and so on). In short, as Matus (2018) says, Social Work does not work with individuals as such; no one comes to a service as a "natural person"; rather, it emerges within a specific analytical category: battered woman, street child, unemployed youth; and if that social categorization is carried out in stigmatizing terms, those subjects will carry that mark persistently. For this reason, among other things, it is central to understand language as a battlefield. A clear example is to observe the epistemological, ideological and political difference between "crime of passion" and "femicide".

So, the problem of recognition is not merely how to include more people within the existing norms, because in addition we have already discovered the colonial dimension that all promise of inclusion holds, but to consider how existing norms assign recognition in a differential way… and how to alter them (Butler, 2009). This is where a historical dilemma is tied to our discipline: the tension between autonomy and guardianship, which is being updated today in the field of social policy in terms of responsibility. This refers to what Matus (2018) calls the paradox of responsibility: the imperative nature of the assigned responsibility grows to the extent that individuals have to take responsibility for circumstances for which they are not de facto responsible. This paradox is intensified by the fact that originally the modern conception of self-responsibility had emancipatory characteristics. There is a permanent capture and swallowing of our words by the neoliberal matrix; our words, which are also our flags. In that sense, Wendy Brown (2015) will say that responsabilisation promoted by social policy is the assignment of moral weight to the end of the chain. Social policy assigns you the task of discerning or taking the right self-investment and entrepreneurship strategies to thrive and survive. It is not necessary to notice, for the rest, the dose of perversity that these positions contain.

But, fortunately, normative production of the subject is a repeatable process: the norm repeats itself, constantly "breaking" with the contexts that are defined as "production conditions." For this reason, "the idea of repeatability is crucial to understand why

norms do not act deterministically. And it may also be the reason why performativity is, finally, a more useful term than construction" (Butler, 2009, p.231).

Having said all this, I believe that we can invent effective types of interrogation to challenge political frameworks: What new norms are possible and how are they produced? What could we do to produce a more equal set of conditions of recognition? What could we do to change the very terms of recognition in order to produce more radically democratic results? (Butler, 2009). But, of course, that is not going to happen on its own, one at a time. It is not an act of will or conversion. It is an act of resistance. And resisting is produced with others. As Butler beautifully puts it, it is about an "embodied and pluralistic performativity (...) an embodied claim for a more livable life" (2017, p.31).

Affections, alliances: the problem of inventing the common

Butler's question in *Marcos de Guerra* (2009) really challenges the heart of any political project that we invent and build. The question is central and inescapable: "What is the relationship between affect and a judgment and practice of an ethical and political nature?" (2009, p.29).

Just as a livable life depends on very concrete living conditions, "affection depends on social supports to feel: we come to feel only in relation to a perceivable loss, which depends on social perception structures; and we can only feel affection, and claim it as our own, provided that we are already enrolled in a circuit of social affection" (Butler, 2009, p.80). These social supports are, then, material conditions of life and they are also the ties with others, the alliances.

Butler's hypothesis is that joint action

> *can be a way of questioning through the body imperfect and powerful aspects of current politics (...) it is this specific body and these other bodies that demand employment, housing, health care and food, as well as a perception of the future that it is not a debt impossible to repay; it is this concrete body, or these bodies, or bodies like this body or those other bodies, which live in conditions in which life is threatened, infrastructures are annihilated and precariousness increases (Butler, 2017, p.17) .*

So, when bodies congregate in any public space, "they are exercising a plural and performative right to appear, a right that affirms and installs the body in the middle of the political field and that demands economic, social and political conditions for the

body that make the most dignified, more livable life" (Butler, 2017, p.18). If not, let us think of the bodies of immigrants drowned, or almost, in the Mediterranean; the bodies of boys and girls caged along the Yankee borders; also the bodies of millions of women on the streets of Our America every March 8, every June 3, every green tide (although international organizations speak of us as a "vulnerable group"); black citizens who continue to be executed by the police in the United States. The power of this materiality is immense.

One of the ways that Butler points out (also Spivak, also Ahmed, also many feminist thinkers) is to capitalize on one of the most relevant effects of collective actions, namely: to verify that it is a shared situation, and that these bodies are together opposing the individualizing morality that makes economic autonomy the norm precisely in conditions in which self-sufficiency is increasingly unviable (Butler, 2017). Therefore, a key and perfectly acceptable challenge from our professional intervention is to pierce and dismantle that individualizing and exasperating form of responsibility, replacing it with a concept of solidarity that would ratify our mutual dependence and that opens the way to a form of improvisation (Butler, 2017).

If we have the power to work with those populations considered disposable, who collect stigmas, attributes and nomenclatures of the quasi-subject; if every day we attend dozens of "cases"; if we share our institutional spaces with many others who also want to subvert the rules of this violent and unequal order; if we have filled libraries showing the flaws or insufficiencies or even the perversities of social policies (especially those that we consider "good" or "progressive") ... well, if we have our hands in such mud consistently, why not think, as a collective, what alliances can be established between populations, groups, subjects, who are considered disposable subjects? It is the question of Isabell Lorey (2016), on how to organize the unorganisable. Precariousness is a condition, it does, but it is not and cannot be an identity. However, it can operate "as a field where alliances can be established between certain groups that, apart from being considered disposable, do not have much else in common" (Butler, 2017, p.34). We have a problem if we continue to think of social problems in sectoral or autonomous terms: indigenous peoples, women, the unemployed, teachers, young people ... it is there that precariousness can operate as a transversal condition of all those to whom access is denied or withheld to the category of subjects. And it is not that they are outside or on the fringes of our societies, but that they are in its very heart, because they are its residue. So, precariousness cannot be an identity, a new label, a brand, "we, the precarious ones"; but it can be an anchor for broader and more effective political alliances, the substrate for "an egalitarian social and political order in which an interdependence between people can occur that is acceptable for life" (Butler, 2017, p.74).

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I said that a first acceptable challenge is the fight against individualization and, therefore, in favour of collectivization. A fruitful clue in this regard has been offered by Dardot and Laval in the book entitled Común (2015). They go straight to the point: private property. And the first warning they give is that, like language, law is a strategic and vital battlefield:

> *the worst thing that can be done is to leave the law in the hands of those whose profession is to dictate it. The system of norms is always a terrain where conflicts are at stake and the law is as such a field of struggle (2015, p.25).*

The common term, the authors say, designates the emergence of a new way of opposing capitalism, even of considering its overcoming. Common refers to a regime of practices, struggles, institutions and research that point to a non-capitalist future (Dardot and Laval, 2015, p.21 and 22). You cannot think of the common without demolishing private property. The institution of individual private property, which grants dominion and exclusive enjoyment of the thing, is the decisive piece of the building: “This institution, whose principle consists of removing things from common use, denies cooperation, without which nothing would be possible, and ignores the accumulated common treasure in which all new wealth finds its conditions of possibility” (Dardot and Laval, 2015, p.23). Therefore, and here lies the most interesting aspect of the proposal, the dilemma is not between common property or private property, but between those things that cannot be appropriated and both private and public property (Dardot and Laval, 2017). In other words, the common, which is found in the principle of what makes us live together, refers to those things that cannot be appropriated. Hence the thesis that the authors maintain: if the common must be instituted, "it can only be so as inappropriate, in no case as an object of a property right, whether it be collective or state" (Dardot and Laval, 2015, p. 264); “The common that should be instituted can only be so as unavailable and inappropriate, not as a possible object of a property right” (Dardot and Laval, 2015, p.271).

If we at least give ourselves the possibility of examining the common as an effective political principle of transformation of our institutions, perhaps we can begin to build collective projects of conversion-transformation-subversion of public services into institutions of the common. Perhaps from here we could remove the corset of measuring the more or less high levels of de-commodification of services and give, consequently, another density, another thickness, to the dispute for the public.

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I spoke about the common and the collective, about how to think about collective projects in new democratic ways. You don't have to invent everything; many bodies have already been offered in this arena. So, as an example, as a legacy, as a Benjaminian flag to be retaken, I would like to very briefly recover the experience of the queer movement and the feminist movement.

As it is known, the term queer appeared in the United States towards the end of the 1980s, to designate all those sexual practices and identities that deviate from the sexual norm. The word queer, as insult, was reappropriated to make it the place of action and political claim; the abject nomination as a place of identification (as a performative inversion of injury, says Paul B. Preciado); the object of the injury becomes the subject of the enunciation and, therefore, a political agent.

The queer movement's claim is to redefine the democratic horizon; it is to react to the integrationist identity politics of the white Western homosexual world and also to react to the female subject as the sole agent of feminist politics. We could say that the queer question is: Who / what is or are the subjects of contemporary feminism? It is a critical position with respect to the naturalizing effects of all identity; therefore, as we say with respect to precariousness, the queer condition is not an identity, but a political position. Therein lies its potential.

As Paul B. Preciado argues in *La muerte de la Clínica* (2015), the neoliberal, contemporary pharmacopornographic verification apparatus is no longer scientific, but is commercial and mediatic. The verification apparatus of contemporary sexuality is the market and it is the media. And, therefore, we are in a configuration of the production of sexual subjectivity that has little to do with what Foucault described in the birth of the clinic. With these lenses, Preciado shows how HIV-AIDS is the first disease of the neoliberal condition. The activists will focus on the two devices for verifying the production of HIV / AIDS: the critique of the representation of the disease in the media and the drug industry and the way in which that industry is handling patents.

The initial question in this section, reformulated with the queer and feminist experience behind it, could be: What is the place, the possibility, the modalities, the alliances for an anti-neoliberal, anti-capitalist, anti-drug-pornographic resistance? How do we link our struggles, how do we de-autonomize them, with what mortar, with what adhesive?
Preciado (2015) will fight for the formation of a transverse rebellion and resistance movement, through alliances that are not resolved in identity logics, but in a set of strategies and synthetic affinities, which we will have to collectively invent. This supposes processes of collective assembling, processes of exchange of collective

knowledge, “putting the body” not to immolate oneself but to produce, with other bodies, something else. Without a political horizon that guides and brings together, we will only add frustrations and more bodies thrown to their death. Therefore, a necessary step is the one that Sara Ahmed invites us to take: the challenge of unveiling “(...) all the possible ways in which the emotional incorporation of the unequal occurs” (Cuello, 2019, p.18).

De-colonizing pain and joy: the problem of the happiness imperative

In one of his radio columns, analysing the children's film Inside Out, Juan Sklar concludes with his characteristic wit:

> *Sadness is the way humans have to ask others to come closer. It is the gesture that your animal makes to say that it cannot alone, that it needs to be accompanied. It is a request for help that you do not control. It is the way this species found to face defeat as a group. Sadness is not productive, nor is it successful, nor is it sensual. It is a feeling that cannot be expressed in Instagram stories. Being sad is a respite from your own desires, from your own expectations of success. It is a shared defeat. It is the truce of humans for themselves. A life without sadness is a violent life. If sadness does not express pain, anger, fear or disgust does. Shared defeat becomes a common enemy, a witch hunt, a rejection of the strange. A productive and social media system that forces its participants to always be happy, always independent, always powerful, is a condemnation of isolation. Eliminating sadness implies erasing the bridges of affective tissue. The revolution of joy is the revolution of loneliness (Sklar, 2019).*

This obligation to be happy, to be joyful, this "turn towards happiness" is not accidental and is not unrelated to the neoliberal onslaught of recent decades, quite the opposite. As Nicolás Cuello points out, “the current reorganization of neoliberal politics supports its expressive languages, affective repertoires and organization policies of the public in discourses based on the spectacularization of trust, creativity, dialogue, will and sacrifice, in a subjectivity mediated by the business matrix of meritocratic verticality and the pacifying consensus ”(Cuello, 2019, p.15). And it is that neoliberalism, as an ethos and as a form of emotional government, imposes its order on all aspects of our life ... for this very reason Dardot and Laval (2013) have characterized it as a “new reason for the world”, because it permeates all dimensions of our existence. In this context, happiness, "due to its aspirational nature, works invisibly as a guiding guide to the experience of what exists" (Cuello, 2019, p.16).

This device of happiness organizes and installs, according to Diego Sztulwark (2019), a psychic agenda that purifies the antagonism of psychic and social orders, cauterizing those violent emotions that politics brings. Let's seek consensus, let's compose, let's mediate, and let's find balance. How is it possible to think about politics without conflict? Replacing the conflictive, dynamic nature of politics is a sine qua non of any aspiration of resistance. It is not possible that we all agree on everything. That is why the dispute, the construction of hegemony, the contestation and the counter-argumentation make sense. Pure consensus is narcotic fiction; it is an invitation to apathy. Another thing is to establish tactical agreements, meeting points that backbone those strategic alliances that I was talking about above. But that does not mean peace, order and harmony, but rather organizing a political project around hegemonic positions in permanent movement. And with only one certainty: the adversary is neoliberal capitalism in all its various forms and garments.

As I said at the beginning, I believe that a premise of every other project is to decolonize pain. And now I add: also joy. Here, the power of Ahmed's Benjaminian gesture is enormous. It invites us to rummage through the rubble of the emotional garbage and

> *make explicit the conditions by which discourses of happiness, enthusiasm, will, improvement and positivity have become disciplinary mechanisms, spiritual governance techniques that support modes of organization based on inequality and exploitation (Cuello, 2019, p.19).*

Ahmed characterizes the science of happiness as

> *a knowledge of a performative type that, when finding happiness in certain places, constitutes them as good places, as what should be promoted to the category of good (...) Insofar as promoting what causes happiness seems to be a duty of everyone, their own happiness becomes a duty (Cuello, 2019, p.29).*

So we must be happy for others, not as a right, but as a responsibility. But, in addition, feelings are attributed to objects, in such a way that some things (and not others) become a cause of happiness or unhappiness. Two typical examples of happy objects are family and marriage (heterosexual, of course).

Ahmed makes us a disturbing and, at the same time, vital proposal: remove the rubble, the ruins, the sad, the unhappy, because those unlivable, disposable lives have a history and a materiality. She wonders: "Is it possible to rewrite the history of happiness from the point of view of those who have fallen from grace?" (Ahmed, 2019, p.45). Because, just as we speak of unequal and differential distribution of precariousness, so there is also an unequal and differential distribution of happiness and unhappiness throughout time and space.

What Ahmed manages to reveal is that the promising nature of happiness is the source of its effectiveness, because it implies a resignation, a postponement, a flight forward according to which, if we do the right thing, we will achieve happiness.

> *The only way to preserve happiness as a social promise is to postpone it, in such a way that we imagine that this promised happiness will arrive at some point, for us or those who come later. Happiness is what makes waiting bearable and desirable" (Ahmed, 2019, p.78).*

What, if not this sacrificial postponement, can explain the rise of neo-liberal and neo-conservative governments waving the flags of joy, hope and light at the end of the tunnel? Happiness works, effectively and efficiently, as the "technology of hope" (Ahmed, 2019, p.366), operationalized to unsuspected limits by neoliberalism in its permanent renewal of the arts of modeling and subjectivation.

Again, learning from the feminist experience is critical to deactivating that machinery. Says Ahmed:

> *We could describe feminist genealogies as genealogies of women who not only refused to place their wishes for happiness on the right things, but also dared to express their unhappiness with the very obligation that such things should make them happy. The history of feminism thus becomes the history of those women who caused problems, refusing to follow other people's goods or make others happy (2019, p.137-138).*

And it is that feminism which implies the development of a political conscience regarding everything that women must renounce in the name of happiness.

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Again, politics. When an object embodies the persistence of stories that cannot be erased by happiness, that object becomes an unhappy object. It is imperative to recognize "the impossibility of overcoming certain stories; those stories persist, and we must persist in affirming the unhappiness that their persistence produces in us" (2019, p.313). The first example that comes to my memory is the Chief of Cabinet of the Argentine national government between 2015 and 2019, in a report to the National Congress, saying that the most important thing they had done as a management was to place animal figures on the banknotes, replacing the heroes: "because it is time to leave death behind and think about life, about the future." The cute little animals were erasing and denying the history of Argentine independence. There is no story, no memory, no politic.

Yes, at one point Ahmed's provocation is heartbreaking, because it shakes us out of indifference:

> *The freedom to be unhappy would be the freedom to let ourselves be affected by the unhappy, and to live a life that could affect others in an unhappy way (…) it would also imply the freedom to cause unhappiness to another due to our acts of deviation (…) any policy of justice will necessarily cause some unhappiness, even when this is not the purpose of our action (2019, p.387).*

I insist there is no politics without conflict, without dispute, without contention.

For this reason, raising the flags of our dead, of the struggles that precede us, is urgent. As Ahmed says, "inheriting feminism is perhaps inheriting sadness. Sadness is the result of becoming aware not only of gender as a limitation of possibilities, but also of the unnecessary nature of said limitation" (2019, p.161). The fight against the obligatory nature of happiness is also a fight waged in the name of happiness as a possibility. De-colonizing pain and also happiness is a prerequisite for any anti-capitalist and anti-neoliberal project that aspires to build collectives on foundations other than the market, private property and competition, whether of high or low intensity.

Conclusions. Thinking (with others) is resisting

I certainly do not claim to offer prescriptions or normative models. I am just drawing some possible lines so that we can think together about the possibilities of resistance in a context as hostile as the current one. To do this, I raised three sets of problems, one referring to the processes of subjectivation, another to alliances around the common, and the third to dismantling the imperative of happiness as a device for social discipline or technology of hope. From what has been said so far, I want to highlight some notes to leave the debate open.

The first thing I would highlight is the need to challenge power (not only the obvious or obviously "bad"), what does have force, what does contain transforming capacity, which requires subjecting apparently progressive practices to a deep critical analysis, innovative, emancipatory, rather than adopting a conformist stance or an idealized vision.

The second mark to highlight is for a kind of Foucauldian mantra: it is not so much about solving a problem as about trying out ways of intervening. I think it's a clear legacy: let's ask other questions, change the modes of interrogation, challenge the apparent certainties and get ready to invent other modes of response, other explanations. As far as we are concerned, at least, as teachers, researchers, social workers, let us try to get rid of the canons of "the production of scientific knowledge" and its constraints and rather try to produce serious and socially useful knowledge. Let's not be so tied to definitional and precious claims and rather let's test the critical use of concepts, which are ultimately tools that need to be put to work. And let us not remain unscathed in the face of propositions such as "those who have the least", "the most disadvantaged sectors" and phrases like that, at least let us suspect. Let us not forget that these apparent trifles are not innocent semantic lapses, but deliberate ways of thinking and understanding social relations, which have very concrete material and political consequences.

Finally, I highlight the urgency and the requirement of the theoretical-epistemological work; which is another way of saying that we return, to blow it up, to the problem of disciplinary and professional subordination. If we want, as a professional and disciplinary field, to intervene in a different way, it is essential to think differently. Therefore, theoretical work is a requirement. Matus (2018) has claimed social work is not an “applied” discipline but is based on theoretical-epistemological positions and constitutes a way of seeing and is reflected from her. Only from that place is it possible to dialogue with other social sciences from a non-subordinate threshold.

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With the firm conviction that the theory is not "applied", I strive for the production of categories and concepts at the height of the complexity and horror of our present. On that substrate, perhaps, we will make the clay for our trenches.

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ARTICLE

Social work in the global neoliberal context: solidarity and resistance from a radical perspective

Trabajo social en el contexto neoliberal global: solidaridad y resistencia desde una perspectiva radical

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Abstract

Neoliberal capitalism has had a brutal impact in terms of increasing inequality throughout the world. This is closely related to the mental health problems growing among the general population, including social workers. In this article, I propose that there cannot be critical social work based genuinely on the search for social justice that does not emphasize human relationships; nor can there be social work based on human relationships that does not aspire to the promotion of social justice on a structural level. To argue around this position, discussions about neoliberalism and its impact on human relationships are addressed as a broad framework to think about social work today. The professional past is problematized and the current conditions in which the intervention of social workers takes place are analysed, which lead to reflecting on the possibility of resistance. Based on the analysis of the acts of resistance of social workers in

Key words:
Neoliberalism; radical social work; human relationships; resistance.

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some European countries, a radical project of social work is proposed, which puts solidarity and care at the centre as a transforming impulse in our societies

Resumen

El capitalismo neoliberal ha impactado de manera brutal en términos del incremento de la desigualdad en todo el mundo. Esto tiene una estrecha relación con los problemas de salud mental que enfrenta de manera creciente la población en general, incluyendo a las/os trabajadores sociales. En este artículo planteo que no puede haber un trabajo social crítico, basado genuinamente en la búsqueda de la justicia social, que no ponga énfasis en las relaciones humanas; y que tampoco puede haber un trabajo social basado en las relaciones humanas que no aspire a la promoción de la justicia social en un plano estructural. Para argumentar en torno a esta posición, se abordan discusiones sobre el neoliberalismo y su impacto en las relaciones humanas como un marco amplio para pensar a trabajo social hoy. Se problematiza el pasado profesional y se analizan las condiciones actuales en que se produce la intervención de las/os trabajadores sociales, para pensar desde allí la posibilidad de la resistencia. En base al análisis de los actos de resistencia del trabajo social en algunos países europeos, se propone un proyecto radical de trabajo social, que pone al centro la solidaridad y el cuidado como impulso transformador en nuestras sociedades.

Palabras clave:
Neoliberalismo; trabajo social radical; relaciones humanas; resistencia.

Introduction

In March 2019, our profession celebrated the International Day of Social Work under the motto "promoting the importance of human relationships". This was a very well received topic that rightly generated much discussion about the nature of our profession and the links that exist between the way individuals and their relationships are shaped in different socio-political contexts. This observation leads us to the central question in our discussion here. In a profession historically concentrating most of its activity and energy on working with individuals it has, in many respects, neglected what we might call the "structural level", the "macro level" or the "social work based on social justice".

My answer to those questions is decidedly negative. The thesis that I want to defend in this article is that, on the contrary, there cannot be a critical social work guided by the principle of social justice that does not emphasize human relationships. But neither can there be a social work based on human relations that does not aspire to the promotion of social justice at the structural level. From a radical perspective, these two dimensions are intimately linked and any effort to separate one from the other -the micropolitics of resistance and critical social work on a structural plane- will inevitably reduce social work to a technocratic activity or an abstract pseudo-political activity.

In this article I will address three main and interrelated areas that derive from this thesis, in order to reflect on what it means to think about solidarity and resistance from social work in the global neoliberal context. First, I will present an analysis of how neoliberalism affects human relationships and people's mental health. Second, I will analyze elements of the political economy of social work, discussing the impacts of neoliberalism on the working conditions of social workers based on the results of a study carried out in the United Kingdom by the British Association of Social Workers in 2019. Third, and with the purpose of moving towards a rethinking of social work from a radical perspective, I will critically review some passages of professional history that allow us to problematize and rethink the principles of social justice of social work. Finally, I will present some proposals that are framed in what in the United Kingdom and other European countries is called a radical approach to social work (Ferguson et al., 2018), including a reflection on the relevance of international alliances and the commitment to demands of collectives and social movements as part of the political agenda of the profession and discipline.

Human relations in neoliberalism

In recent years, our societies, which have been aggressively reshaped as market-oriented economies, have experienced an unprecedented and overwhelming new epidemic: mental suffering.

According to the World Health Organization, WHO (2017), in the countries of the European Union (EU), Iceland, Norway and Switzerland, 27% of the adult population (here defined as 18 to 65 years of age) had experienced at least one of a number of mental health problems in the year prior to the visit (this included substance use problems, psychosis, depression, anxiety, and eating disorders). Rates of distress for women were significantly higher compared to men (33%). The data also showed that these mental health problems affected people from lower-income households, the unemployed, and people receiving state benefits much more significantly.

Mental health problems are not new, of course. They have been observed and experienced since the creation of the first human communities. However, the important question, from a social work perspective, is what really accounts for the huge increase in distress experienced in the Western world today. I am referring to the factors that influence anguish and other mental health problems that are intensified in certain segments of the population, the most impoverished sectors.

Traditional views on distress and mental health issues, which have also greatly influenced social work, have not been able to fully explain this increase (Hart et al.,

2019). This is because attention has focused on individual pathology, trying to explain mental health issues in a similar way to physical illness, often attributing symptoms to chemical or hormonal imbalances or, more recently, prioritizing a neurological understanding of the development of individuals. It is what has traditionally been called the biomedical approach, one of the dominant theoretical bases of disciplinary training in social work. Certainly, the biomedical approach does not always capture the underlying cause of distress.

As Ian Ferguson has mentioned in his recent book "The Politics of the Mind" (2017), the biomedical model individualizes anxiety - in other words, it focuses the understanding of the phenomenon of anxiety on the individual who experiences it. The starting point, from a radical perspective in social work, is to challenge that belief that is still ingrained and that is reproduced daily in professional interventions. Challenging this biomedical, neutral and aseptic matrix implies understanding that the significant increase in levels of distress is closely related to the pressure that neoliberal capitalism exerts on people's lives.

To this I would add social inequality as an additional factor that is fundamental. Researchers Wilkinson and Pickett (2010), in their extensive epidemiological work on inequality, have confirmed what generations of social workers have witnessed in the first line of their professional intervention: it is the material circumstances that mainly shape the lives of the people, not their morality. Their book highlights the horrible effects that inequality has on societies: it erodes trust, increases anxiety and illness, and encourages compulsiveness and binge drinking. With reference to mental health, researchers have suggested that until recently it was difficult to compare the levels of mental health problems between different countries because no one had collected strictly comparable data; but recently the WHO has established global mental health surveys that are beginning to provide data. These show that different societies have very different levels of mental health problems. In some countries, about 5% of the adult population has suffered from a mental health problem in the last year, but in the United States, more than 25% have.

In their research, Wilkinson & Pickett showed a relationship between mental health problems and income inequality in eight developed countries: The United States, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Germany, Italy and Japan. The conclusion suggests that mental health problems are much more frequent in more unequal countries. Mental health problems were also found to be more common in the wealthier countries included in the study.

A similar pattern has been observed for different variables such as crime, obesity, physical health, among others. Sheet by sheet and case after case this research shows that the most unequal societies create sicker and more unhappy individuals. Therefore, improving human relations is a collective and not individual matter, which requires structural changes to the way in which the economy of our societies is organized and not merely individual behaviour changes.

The catastrophic impact of inequality has been exacerbated in much of the world by the effects of the "protracted recession" that took place in 2008. To be more precise, social inequality has been specifically exacerbated by ideological decisions driven by political leaders, governments and the International Monetary Fund (Ioakimidis et al., 2014). The holy trinity of neoliberalism (commodification, privatization, and austerity) was again invoked in response to the global crisis. The effects of that "long recession" have, of course, been experienced very differently by different sectors of the world's population.

Austerity policies - maximizing social spending in dismantled European welfare states - has been the short-term economic, ideological, and political strategy that has dominated Europe for most of the last decade. Its appeal to governments is that it seems to provide a clear, simple, and moralistic explanation for the current crisis; for example, the existence of excessive government spending has been argued, especially in social assistance where thousands of lazy or work-shy people are supposedly taking advantage of the State.

The solution to that crisis, as this simplistic analysis suggests, is to cut wages, cut public spending, and raise taxes. In almost all cases, this solution has also involved "structural reform", which means greater market flexibility, pension cuts, privatization of public companies, and so on. A report by the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (Oxfam) published in early 2016 showed that 1% of the world's population currently owns more wealth than the rest of the world combined. Even more starkly, 62 people own as much wealth as the poorest half of the world's population. "An Economy for the 1%" showed that the wealth of the poorest half of the world's population, 3.6 billion people, has declined by a trillion dollars since 2010. This 38% drop occurred despite the world population increasing by around 400 million people during that period. Meanwhile, the wealth of the 62 richest has increased by more than half a trillion dollars to 1.76 trillion dollars (Oxfam, 2016).

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The working conditions of social workers

In this scenario of dismantling well-being in Europe, the alienation, the intensification of work and the atomization that characterize aggressive commodification are reflected in the deterioration of people's mental health. In relation to the working conditions of social workers, this becomes even more evident as the liberalization of our economies has created insecure, intensive and poorly paid jobs.

This brings us to the second main reason why emphasizing human relationships is a timely and meaningful decision, even more so if we take a radical approach to social work. If we assume that fostering a relationship with the people we work with is a process that involves the active and proactive participation of both sides, and that any aspect of personal or professional life that affects both sides must be considered, we cannot ignore the conditions of specific issues that social workers experience in their jobs. We have already outlined the big picture and identified the mental health and financial pressures many of the people we work with are experiencing.

Obviously these conditions tend to vary from country to country, but the point here is that social workers do not choose their profession because they want to get rich - if they wanted to get rich, then social work would not have been the right career. Most social workers choose their profession primarily because they are committed to social justice and want to achieve transformation in people's lives. However, the form and function of neoliberal economies affect social work experiences in their jobs. While we are a fast-growing profession in terms of numbers and influence, there is still much that needs to be accomplished in terms of working conditions.

In a recent study commissioned by the British Association of Social Workers in 2018 (Ravalier & Boichat, 2018), it was the distress reported by social workers themselves that attracted the most attention. And the results were stark and alarming:

- Compared to the UK average, social workers' working conditions were worse than 95% of other employees working in both the public and private sectors,
- Almost half of the social workers declare they are not satisfied with their jobs,
- Two thirds of them have worked while they were ill. They have done it at least twice in the last year,
- Social workers worked an average of 64 days per year over what they were hired to do (an average of 11 unpaid overtime hours per week),

• 60% of social workers stated that they wanted to leave their current job in the next 15 months, compared to 52% reported last year.

• Almost 40% of those surveyed have sought to leave the profession completely.

• The main stressors identified by the participants were the high administrative burdens and the cases in which they intervene, in addition to the anguish when seeing the lack of resources to provide better care to the users.

The interesting thing here is that, in many respects, social workers face conditions that are not very different from the situations experienced by the users of our services (alienation, anguish, unsafe jobs, etc.).

This observation leads me to the main argument I want to make: if we want to achieve change through the fostering of transformative human relationships, we must rethink social work and develop critical, comprehensive, non-stigmatizing and anti-oppressive models

A complex past

The third reason that highlights the importance of reclaiming and reimagining radical social work in the era of neoliberal capitalism is related to our own history as a profession (Ioakimidis & Trimikliniotis, 2020).

We must remember and celebrate social workers who were pioneers in promoting human rights. From the 19th century settlement movement in North America to the reconceptualization movement in Latin America, from the resistance of indigenous communities to the creation of the Social Work Action Network -SWAN for its acronym in English-, there has been a fascinating history of criticism in social work that, although largely unexplored in the Anglo-American world, has substantially influenced the profession. Many social work pioneers promoted human rights and put their own lives at great risk of being persecuted, imprisoned and killed.

However, we must also explore those parts of our history where social workers have been complicit in some of the most horrifying events humanity has witnessed in the twentieth century. Several historical incidents highlight examples of notable brutality, informed by the unfolding of equally extraordinary political junctures. In Europe, these cases can be linked, above all, with the rise of fascist and Nazi ideologies and their pseudoscientific concern for the creation of a "master race" through eugenics. Some social workers and social pedagogues were directly involved in the process of monitoring the organization of families and the indoctrination of children.

Unfortunately, the instrumentalization of eugenics in the context of social services did not end with World War II. Until roughly the 1970s, social problems in the United States, such as poverty, crime, and unemployment, were largely considered "hereditary" within impoverished social classes and were therefore addressed through targeted practices to prevent these classes from "spawning". Recent research suggests that in some states (especially North Carolina) this practice lasted well into the 1970s and affected more than 7,600 families living in poverty and belonging to ethnic minority groups (Ioakimidis and Trimikliniotis, 2020).

Colonial social work also provided fertile ground for human rights violations. For example, in Australia, Canada and New Zealand, First Nations, and First Nation fathers, mothers, and families were deemed "unfit" to educate their children. As a result, between 1971 and 1981 alone, more than 3,400 indigenous children were sent to adoptive parents in other societies, and sometimes in other countries.

We need to be brave and confident as we explore our own history and, in particular, the specific chapters in history demonstrating that relationship-based social work can easily fall into a serious violation of human rights if it does not take into account more broadly the ideological structural context it serves.

Social work based on human relationships: a radical perspective

Part of the current discussion about social work, its meaning and its possibilities in the midst of neoliberal capitalism, is reflected in a crucial question: how do we define what we do? In fact, the different ways in which international social work organizations and social collectives and movements have been involved in this debate reveal the ideological tensions that divide the social work project. This is not simply a theoretical or abstract debate: defining social work has an impact on what happens in professional intervention. When they emphasize individualistic and moralistic interpretations of social work, they tend to reduce social work to a merely formal technical activity.

It is for this reason that we have to radically rethink social work, in a way that encompasses human relationships but at the same time appreciates the importance of the larger social and political structure. Social workers must understand and address not only the symptoms of distress, but primarily the public causes of pain and misery.

Despite recent deviations and misinterpretations of the term, the concept "radical" has historically referred to a political theory and practice that aims to understand and target the structural causes of social problems (Ferguson et al., 2018). In the context of social welfare, it is not uncommon for state policies to promote values exactly opposite to this

perspective and to ignore the structural causes of the difficulties experienced by users of social services. For example, it is still possible to hear that the poor are poor because they are lazy, that women get pregnant because they want to receive benefits from the state, or that refugees are excluded because they do not want to accept our culture. We can still see that people with mental health problems are ridiculed.

In radical social work, based on social justice, the use of various methods and techniques (such as work with collectives, interventions based on art, promotion, awareness-raising, working with cases from critical perspectives and social action with communities, among many others) is aimed at supporting the victims of an unequal system, but also at creating the conditions for emancipation and resistance to the apparently natural order of our societies. That would lead to the creation of socially just societies.

As I mentioned earlier, neoliberal economics and oppressive practices have not been sufficiently challenged. But despite the politics of fear that has spread to the different corners of the world, many countries have seen extraordinary resistance from social workers. This shapes what we can call a "politics of hope," in which solidarity constitutes a form of resistance within a system that strives for competition and individualism in all domains of life.

On many occasions, social workers have led these initiatives, offering wonderful examples of what an inclusive, participatory and democratic welfare state should look like. For example, in Spain, during the financial crisis and the draconian neoliberal reforms that followed, social workers were very active in the La Marea Naranja movement (Ioakimidis et al., 2014). This movement emphasized resistance in the face of cuts and the demand for more resources for social services and brought together a wide range of groups and institutions related to welfare.

In Greece, during the same period, social workers committed acts of “civil disobedience” (Ioakimidis & Teloni, 2013). When the government imposed a regressive, horizontal main tax payable through electricity bills, social workers disobeyed instructions to work with tax collectors to identify households that would have difficulty paying. By disobeying the law, they made sure that they protected the dignity and rights of the poorest in society and were not involved in this dishonest, unpopular and oppressive policy. On the contrary: they delegitimized politics and joined the social movement that opposed the funding cuts.

Last but not least, social workers in Britain knew very well that the austerity measures and the privatization of social services implemented by the conservative government of Cameron in 2010 would lead to social catastrophe and therefore they lobbied members

of parliament extensively, but also mobilized at the grassroots level. An admirable and inspiring movement, the anti-austerity movement, supported by the British Association of Social Workers, brought together a group of social work colleagues, users and academics - all who have experienced first-hand the impact of cuts in public spending and welfare reform -, to march 100 miles from Birmingham to Liverpool, protesting against austerity policies under the slogan Boot Out Austerity. It was an excellent example of political organization of social work from the bottom up, aimed at the defence of social services.

Opposition to market fundamentalism in social policy is rooted in two factors: first, the certainty that social policy and the welfare state should be primarily concerned with meeting human needs rather than driving competition, efficiency, and profit from the market; and, second, the awareness that neoliberal forms of social work, including their domination by meaningless evaluation and recording processes, which are stored in a computer without regard to substance, have seriously undermined the possibilities for critical professional action.

As I have already mentioned, one of the victims of this neoliberal rationality has been human relations in the provision of social services. Another victim has been the work with collectives and with communities. It was once a key part of political responses to poverty in Britain and elsewhere. Community-based social work approaches, particularly those that promote community "self-help" can, of course, be at least as conservative as individual-based approaches. However, a radical approach to working with communities, as well as with social movements, offers clear possibilities to address structural inequalities and to highlight the link between private and public problems.

As part of this process, social workers must use the evidence that comes from their own intervention and research, to emphasize and claim the need for an inclusive, redistributive and universal state (Ioakimidis, 2013).

This formidable body of evidence that social workers can gather from their interventions and research forms a knowledge base that reaffirms the value of universalism and solidarity in social policy. This means claiming the need to guarantee the wide range of social rights and services that cover the entire population in the different stages of life, where there are criteria to prioritize children, people with disabilities, the elderly, etc., but always from a universal logic of provision of social services, inspired by the principles of redistribution, recognition and unconditional defence of democracy.

Conclusions

Against those who deny that social workers play a role in the fight against oppression and for a more egalitarian society, I argue that we do have the capacity and potential to do so. However, given the brutality of the forces against all of us who seek to build a better world or simply defend the universal character of rights, we must not be under any illusions about the contribution the profession, sometimes weak and disorganized, can make.

That is why it is extremely important that professionals form alliances with social organizations, unions, with professional social work associations, with organizations of service users, to promote alternatives.

As an example, in the UK, the Social Work Action Network -SWAN- (Ferguson et al, 2018) has linked up with the British Association of Social Workers, the Disabled People's Association Against Social Spending Cuts, Disabled People Against Cuts, and the organization of users of social services Shaping Our Lives, to publicly denounce the adjustments of austerity policies, and to campaign more effectively against their effects.

Strengthening these networks and learning from the experience of professionals, academics, students, service users and campaign activists in different countries is a priority. However, this is not just about sharing information, it is also about showing solidarity. We all benefit from developing solidarity.

We must claim solidarity as a core value. Reaffirming our common humanity is not only the most effective way to challenge the fundamentalists, racists and xenophobes in the market, it also challenges the narrow and selfish individualism that we reproduce in our day-to-day behaviours.

Finally, and to close and open these reflections at the same time, I would like to recall that our global definition states that "social work promotes social change and the empowerment and liberation of people" (International Federation of Social Workers, IFSW, 2014). Have confidence in the capacity that people and societies have to change. Radical social work, when it is democratic and empathetic, does not lose humanity or care for human relationships and can have a transformative impact on individuals and societies. And this alone is a great reason to be proud of our profession throughout the world.

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CRITICAL PROPOSALS IN SOCIAL WORK

PROPUESTAS CRÍTICAS EN TRABAJO SOCIAL

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ARTICLE

Social work and Marxist critique

Trabajo social y crítica marxista

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Abstract

This article offers essential elements for a fruitful debate on social work, Marx, and the diverse tradition associated with him. It does so considering the multiple tensions between a typical profession of the monopoly-imperialist era of capital and a critical social theory of capitalism as a social order, which has allowed the expanded reproduction of capital in the historical and particular conditions of Latin America. The objective of this text is to elaborate some notes that establish a propositional debate between a profession that works in the management of the multiple social tensions created and recreated within the framework of world capitalism as a metabolic social order, and a theoretical tradition whose legacy is progressive anti-capitalist. Although this dialogue is contested and full of traps, it is an important debate to captivate the most critical tradition of social work in

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ARTICLE

Latin America. It can stimulate research and social interventions built from the concrete life of Latin American peoples.

Resumen

This article offers essential elements for a fruitful debate on social work, Marx, and the diverse tradition associated with him. It does so considering the multiple tensions between a typical profession of the monopoly-imperialist era of capital and a critical social theory of capitalism as a social order, which has allowed the expanded reproduction of capital in the historical and particular conditions of Latin America. The objective of this text is to elaborate some notes that establish a propositional debate between a profession that works in the management of the multiple social tensions created and recreated within the framework of world capitalism as a metabolic social order, and a theoretical tradition whose legacy is progressive anti-capitalist. Although this dialogue is contested and full of traps, it is an important debate to captivate the most critical tradition of social work in Latin America. It can stimulate research and social interventions built from the concrete life of Latin American peoples.

Palabras clave:
trabajo social; marxismos; crítica; teoría social.

Introduction

Although this article raises the possibility and need for social work to contribute from the studies of Marx and his diverse tradition, it must be recognized that it is not a proposition that can be announced abstractly, as an empty speech, only epistemological, that is, as a certain "application" of a set of scientific assumptions for social work to the work of professionals. This complex debate requires a certain type of epistemology capable of counteracting the "ideological decadence" (Lukács, 2015) and the "miserable reason" with a structuralist and / or irrationalist basis (Coutinho, 2010), which affects different theoretical traditions (including part of the Marxist tradition). Any process of knowledge production based on these questioning bases raises two central issues:

a) a type of ontological science committed to mental reproduction, as a critique of the materially existent, objectively placed, historically explained and located, in constant and permanent movement, as knowledge that reproduces the "logic of the thing" (Marx, 2005, p.39). That is, it deals with the real life of real social beings, as a social theory enlightened and oriented by the perspective of the whole (Lukács, 2010, 2012 and 2013);

b) there is no space for the arbitrary application of concepts and categories to reality and

social work, without the proper reconstruction of the mediations in the context considered, and with the profession; a fact that prevents the logical-scientific manipulation of real life, which frequently adopts the "practical" ones as theoretical models.

That said, some questions are relevant: would this debate be possible and viable today? Would this interlocution be valid at a time of absolute civilizational regression? If so, how can it be stimulated under current historical conditions? How can a critical and creative dialogue be articulated between a profession whose genesis is committed to managing tensions and structural contradictions and a critical tradition of capital and society that allows its expanded reproduction?

What arises here is that this debate, in the particular sphere of social work, is not only possible, but absolutely necessary, if it is to stimulate a critical approach to the reality with which social work professionals act on a daily basis. Furthermore, the dialogue with Marx and his tradition is essential for training and professional work, although it is surely not the only theoretical reference that makes explicit critical positions. This process is unthinkable without a serious debate on the concrete conditions of production and reproduction of the life of social beings in a given sociability (that of capital), at a certain historical moment of the accumulation process, in particular regions (Latin America and its dependent conditions), with diverse impacts such as different social classes constituted there and their diversity (men, women, whites, blacks, native peoples, among others).

The Marxist debate in social work: genesis and material basis

The Marxist debate on social work in Latin America has a very precise genesis: the second half of the 1960s, within the framework of the reconceptualization process that was proposed, from different perspectives, to counteract traditional social work (Netto, 1981). Still, this heterogeneous and complex movement that shook the profession cannot be explained solely from professional frontiers as an endogenous movement. Two universal and central theses are fundamental to explain the genesis of social work as a profession, as a critical-objective expression of a movement of reality itself, under certain historical conditions and based on a historical legacy:

a) Social work is a profession structurally linked to the monopolistic order of capital (Netto, 1991), that is, it was objectively demanded by the capitalist labour market from the imperialist phase of capital (Lenin, 2008). This phase of accumulation concentrated large-scale production (initially guided by Fordism), created monopolies, instituted finance capital as a fusion between bank capital and industrial capital, and intensified

the export of capital in the process of colonial reorganization and dependency (Fernandes, 2009)[2]. It is a complex process that was born from the contradictions of the order of capital itself, the expanded reproduction of it, the deepened class struggle in the second half of the 19th century, immediately exposed through the refractions of the "social question" - here understood as an expression of the general law of capitalist accumulation (Marx, 1984)[3].

b) What explains social work as a profession is its particular insertion into the social and technical division of capitalist labour, as a specialization of collective labour (Iamamoto and Carvalho, 1985). Although the scientific statute and the area of knowledge are important for social work itself and its relationship with other disciplines (including for the interdisciplinary approach), what determines the nature of this profession is the labour market that establishes the conditions and objective-materials of the professional intervention (Iamamoto, 2007). Therefore, the management of pauperism occurs in the field of bourgeois social inequality and the multiple inequalities that are restructured from this material base (gender, race, ethnicity, among others), Still, these two important theses, formulated from very precise and universal historical-material bases, need to be rethought throughout the historical movement of capital itself and the adjustments of this sociability in at least the last 100 years. Furthermore, it is necessary to take into account how this complex process has been reproduced and changed in Latin American realities marked by dependent capitalism and a strong (although not homogeneous) colonial tradition and, with it, the particular movement of social work in the American continent.

Examining the Latin American reality is an essential procedure to understand it and explain the social work practiced here. Therefore, it is necessary to analyse in what way imperialism, neocolonialism and dependency (commanded by the financial fraction of capital), in the monopoly phase of capitalist accumulation, have hit Latin America and imposed limits on the freedom of the peoples that live here. Such a procedure requires the radical analysis of the ideology that hides, naturalizes, justifies, inverts and generalizes as truth (Marx and Engels, 2007), theses and proposals that reaffirm submission and dependence. As has been said in the introduction to this article, it is about evaluating a type of knowledge oriented by the ontological point of view, that is, by the reproduction of real life of real social beings, historically located, as a science that goes beyond descriptive miserable reason. In other words, it is a knowledge

[2] "Financial capital has considerable force, it can make decisive, in all economic and international relations, which is capable of subordinating, and really subordinates, the same States that enjoy the most complete political independence (...)". (Lenin, 2008, p. 47).
[3] The word "social question" was taken up and re-signified by conservative thought, from the second half of the 19th century, with the aim of characterizing a set of social problems that affected Europe during the industrial revolution (on this debate, consult Marx and Engels, 2010). Still, the explanation of it is unsustainable without the Marxian observations formulated in chapter XXIII of "Capital" (Marx, 1984).

oriented by the point of view of totality (Marx, 1989; Lukács, 2012), capable of decoding the logic of reality itself, producing ontological-materialist knowledge without identifying representations about reality with the very dynamics of reality. What matters is the rational-scientific pursuit of a movement that constitutes reality; the rationality that mentally reconstructs - as a theory - the historically located real movement (Netto, 1989; 2020).

What has characterized Latin America in the field of political economy? How can the process of reconceptualization of social work be located in this context? Where is the Marxian and Marxist-inspired debate established by this profession located in this complex scenario?

Latin America has played a strategic role in capitalism from the first moments of the necessary primitive accumulation of capital, explicitly initiated in the late sixteenth century, in the phase known as mercantilism. The economic base imposed here was underpinned by the looting of its natural agro-mineral resources, taking the slavery of blacks and native peoples as the paradigm for labour exploitation. It should be emphasized that this process was marked by the violence imposed by the central economies, but also by the resistance of the native peoples, blacks, Afro-descendants, and native Latin American people. Looting, violence and genocide, at different times, have been used and reproduced. Some examples among many: a) the elimination of diverse native peoples that resisted colonization in different ways (Tupis-Guaraníes, Mapuches, Wichis, Diaguitas - Quechuas, Andean Quechuas -, Yamanas, Huarpes, Aimaras, Tobas, Onas, Calchaquíes, Matacos, Mazatecos, Comechingones, Yanomamis, Sanavirones, Quichuas, Man, Asháninca s, Xavantes, Yukpa, Paítavyterás, Pemóns, among many others); b) the resistance of the enslaved black peoples (Quilombo de los Palmares, with Zumbi, and the Haitian Revolution of 1791 led by François-Dominique Toussaint Louverture, for example); c) the peoples that fought against colonialism, in favour of the Latin American "Great Homeland", constituted from a complex Euro-Afro-Native American mixture (many of them commanded by Simón Bolívar, José Artigas, José Martí, among others); d) the cowardly massacre promoted by the Brazil-Argentina-Uruguay coalition against Paraguay led by Solano López, in the Great War (or the War of the Triple Alliance, 1864-1870); e) in addition to the broad resistance that has been constituted throughout the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century: anti-dictatorial struggles, armed movements, various anti-capitalist, anti-colonial and anti-imperialist projects, progressive rebellions

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highlighting the Cuban experience of 1959. And these are just a few historical examples that cannot be forgotten[4].

It is worth emphasizing that the conservative modernization imposed in Latin America, especially from the middle of the 20th century, together with the dictatorship of the great North American monopoly capital (Ianni, 2019) and the reissue of labour exploitation (as super-exploitation - Marini, 2008), created a certain type of uneven and combined "development" (Fernandes, 1968; Oliveira, 2003), which reactivated the historical Latin American dependency[5]. The modernization of the central-southern cone of America was readjusted to the gear of the world economy in constant and intense change over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries. In this process, colonialism was reorganized in the monopoly-imperialist era of capital (Lenin, 2008), and with it, dependence -constituted in the context of two great world conflicts (1914-1918 and 1939-1945) and the later development of capitalism (Mandel, 1985).

And what about social work in Latin America? The profession had its genesis, was consolidated and developed in this complex context of profound instability. This has required changes and revisions of the professional community, either to deal with the multiple refractions of the social question, or to, at the same time, tune the profession to the enormous structural limits imposed by the expanded reproduction of capital in Latin America in the process management of the general law of capitalist accumulation (Marx, 1984)[6]. Among the professional proposals elaborated, more or less conservative, more or less progressive, the so-called “process of reconceptualization” was established, which convulsed the profession in Latin America over 10 years: 1965-1975 (not exactly and in a heterogeneous way on the continent)[7]. In this context, a progressive group was formed within social work, not necessarily Marxist (but influenced by that tradition), which questioned the more conservative approaches of the profession and sought an "authentically Latin American" dialogue. Some characteristics of this heterogeneous group are:

a) A certain type of social work committed to the particular reality of Latin America, anti-imperialist, impacted by very diverse progressive influences - not without problems and often eclectic -, also inspired by the tradition of Paulo Freire and of liberation theology; perspectives committed to the fight against various types of

[4] Part of the content of this paragraph was exposed in the article “Capital and destruction of rights in Latin America”, recently submitted by this author to the Frontiers Journal of the University of the Republic.

[5] In this process, the civic-military dictatorships of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s were devastating.

[6] The general law is to tend to favor constant capital (destined for the means of production) to the detriment of variable capital (part of the surplus value consumed in the payment and reproduction of the labor force - its general costs). It has increasingly created a surplus population called by Marx relative overpopulation, industrial reserve army, available labor force.

[7] It must be emphasized that it was an extremely heterogeneous movement, lived in different conditions and times (as in the cases of Chile, Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay, for example). Also, non-existent in countries like Paraguay and Cuba (for different reasons).

oppression, articulated with different groups of the left, armed or not; libertarian social movements; projects defending the Latin American political redemocratization and the "national liberation" of the nations that constitute it, some inserted in the world and Latin American Marxist tradition, with different theoretical-practical appropriations of the original sources;

b) Emphasis on a type of social work stimulated by a material base that required thinking about the profession beyond its own borders (Netto, 1991; Silva, 2013), which did not mean that the profession stopped reproducing and reissuing endogenous approaches. This created better conditions for the constitution of a social work committed to expressing the fabric of what was materially put, stimulated by real historical processes. Here, the Latin American material base, its particularities, began to feed the concerns of the social workers;

c) In addition to what has been stated in the previous items, it is important to emphasize that criticism here has the potential to value permanent study and research, the link with universities, with progressive social movements, with a certain type of broad and generalist training and radicalism politics for a practical-militant insertion. It is committed to theoretical-practical actions (such as praxis) that extract, from reality itself, the decisive elements for an intervention with political intentionality and practical effectiveness. It is a debate with the potential to stimulate an analysis beyond the empiricist formalism, with an ontological "vocation" to move from the reality that cannot be explained only within the boundaries of the professions (although it does not disregard them).

The influence of Marxian and Marxist inspiration on social work in Latin America is structurally linked to this context of anti-imperialist struggles in favour of the liberation of this part of the American continent. Its genesis is tied to two structuring elements:

a) The objective reaffirmation of the historical Latin American social inequality, based on the imposition of the paradigm of conservative modernization and uneven and combined development, both committed to imperialist interests and to the reissue of dependency;

b) The resistance struggles waged against this model, in which a certain type of theoretical basis normally without Marx, that is, inspired by certain Marxist traditions owed little to Marx himself, or that had original approaches that deviated from him[8]. This was imposed as a certain type of application of European Marxist assumptions to

[8] These are some examples: the approach proposed by Stalinist-Marxism or the different analyzes of social work that are the main sources of the studies of the French Marxist structuralist Louis Althusser. It is not a question, here, of disqualifying this tradition, much less their historical importance, but rather of indicating the innumerable problems raised from them. It must be emphasized that this limit was not created by social work, but by the way in which Marx and the Marxists were incorporated into the Latin American debate with external and internal stimuli.

the Latin American reality, which were characterized by making interpretations detached from Marx or, conversely, by the creation of orientations disconnected from Marx's contributions, "typically Latin American". The two paths agree on an absolutely decisive aspect: they annul the perspective of the totality and, with this, are unable to reconstruct the necessary mediations to explain the way in which capital has immediately imposed itself in Latin America (as singularity) and the particularities -rich in mediations- here constituted in a universality globalized. The consequences are explicit: a Marxism without Marx's dialectic, a certain kind of critique of political economy without history and dogmatic, and a revolutionary perspective incapable of being realized.

However, important approaches of Marxian and Marxist inspiration have matured in social work in recent decades, in the process of struggling for the political redemocratisation of Latin America. In them, the critical legacy accumulated since the reconceptualization process has been re-evaluated and the studies of Marx himself, and part of the non-dogmatic European and Latin American tradition, have been deepened. In this process, studies of all Marxian works and of some important authors have gained strength: Gramsci, Lukács, Lenin, Rosa Luxembrugo, Hobsbawm, István Mészáros, among others, but also intellectual cadres of Latin Americans - or who studied Latin America - such as, for example, Mariátegui, Enrique Dussel, Caio Prado Junior, Florestan Fernandes, Octavio Ianni, Clovis Moura, Paul Singer, Julio César Jobet Bourquez, Theotonio dos Santos, Ruy Mauro Marini, André Gunder Frank, Vânia Bambirra, Heleieth Saffioti, Claudio Katz, Ricardo Antunes, Carlos Nelson Coutinho, José Paulo Netto, Marilda Iamamoto (the latter two from social work in Brazil). It is still necessary to highlight the vast tradition that has been established from the legacy of the Cuban Revolution and the Chilean path to socialism of Salvador Allende.

But some questions are central to this article: how do we deal with this debate from a social work perspective? How can we do it while considering the differences between a profession structurally linked to monopoly capitalism and a critical social theory of capital society? Would this dialogue be useful, relevant and valid in the field of anti-imperialist resistance? To what extent and in what way?

Contributions of Marxian and Marxist criticism in Latin American Social Work

An elementary aspect must be taken into account to support the proposed debate. As Netto (1989) suggested, no matter how much better and more qualified the dialogue established between social work, Marx and their traditions may be, a Marxist social work will never be constituted. What does this mean specifically? That they make up

two dimensions that cannot be identified by erasing and cancelling by decree, as simple speculative exercises, aspects that constitute their nature. As a profession and discipline, social work has structural links with monopoly bourgeois society that allows for the expanded reproduction of capital. In addition, it is a profession that acts in the refractions of the social question from very well-defined limits and borders. At the same time, Marx's social theory and Marxisms are committed to overcoming the bourgeois order, that is, the radical critique - taken from the roots - of the elements that structure capitalism and capital, as a praxis that destroys all bases that allow the subsistence and reproduction of capital as a social relationship of exploitation in different phases and moments of accumulation.

How, then, can the debate be raised? It is not a speculative, messianic, idealistic and scientistic imposition that devalues the ontological-material basis that constitutes the nature of both, which would generate significant analytical-interpretative and practical misunderstandings. The possibilities were also correctly summarized by Netto in his 1989 article: social work and social workers can explain the nature of the professional work performed, the social meaning and their work in capitalism, using the important Marxian contributions of part of its most qualified tradition[9] On the other hand, the Marxist debate, particularly in Latin America (and this is essential), could appropriate important aspects that constitute the harsh reality of Latin American peoples, since social workers occupy very peculiar work spaces, directly linked to the management of pauperism and different oppressions, as few professionals do. Here, not only is the possibility of dialogue imposed, but also the need and usefulness of this dialogue, although without accepting an idealistic relapse (Marx and Engels, 2007)[10].

A mistake frequently made in this dialogue is linked to the temptation to "apply Marxism" to social work. Beyond countless dogmatic attempts that messianically attribute tasks of collective and class social praxis to the profession (which is a brutal reductionism and an unattainable task), another type of light appropriation is imposed: a certain type of initiative that draws the method of Marxian social theory and defines it as the part that interests social work. In other words, if on the one hand this debate is commonly reduced to the application of "Marxism" to social work (as "Marxist social work"), the impoverishment of this dialogue is also reflected through theoretical-professional initiatives that separate the method of Marx from the whole of his social theory, valuing it as the main aspect to be absorbed by the profession. What is proposed in this article is different from these alternatives and from other forms of incorporation that, by different theoretical-practical arrangements, make the

[9] Of course, it is not the only reference and the only tradition that could critically contribute social work, but it is absolutely unique and essential.

[10] Men make their history not as they wish, but from the objective conditions that affect and hit them, which were transmitted from the past (Marx, 1987).

juxtaposition between profession and social theory (or fragments of it).

Marx's social theory is objectively based on three essential bases, articulated and historically in motion, without which it is absolutely innocuous: a) the dialectical method, which offers the scientific bases to mentally reconstruct and theoretically expose the dynamics of reality; b) the critique of the labour theory of value, absolutely articulated with the historical-objective changes of it throughout the genesis, constitution and consolidation of capitalism and capital, as a real social relation of accumulation-exploitation that is mobilized and changes; c) the historical and objective possibility of the revolution, as the human emancipation of men and women, as social beings, that is, the overcoming of the order of capital from the contradictions contained in it, as social praxis, without any speculative-idealistic procedure.

It must be said that there is neither dogmatism nor orthodoxy here in relation to Marx's observations made from the historical conditions of English industrial capitalism, nor in relation to revolutionary paths. Orthodoxy is valid only in the method of analysis, although here it is necessary to underline that it allows us to carry out analytical heterodoxy, that is, to explain the changes, contractions and movement of reality itself throughout the historical movement, inspired by the point of view of the totality and of the multiple determinations rich in mediations. Nothing less dogmatic than that.

The debate between social work, Marx and the Marxists requires a type of professional training that values a science guided by the ontological dimension, that is, oriented by a type of reason that has as its starting point the elements that act in the production and reproduction of people's lives, in a given sociability, based on a certain historical legacy, that considers the genuinely human problems with which social workers work (Silva, 2013). This type of training should train intellectuals[11], that is, professionals who think about reality from solid theoretical bases (not only located in Marx and the Marxists), cultured and broad - although without relapsing into eclecticism. The objective is to propose a professional work not supported by an instrumental reason, only operational, reproducing bureaucratic features, totally institutional, with responsible compliance and a sounding board for official regulations. The technical-operational dimension is no less important, but it is commanded by a rich process that starts from the reality objectively lived by the population with which social work intervenes; the immediate dimension of it, the way in which "social problems" are immediately manifested for professional work. This dimension makes up the concrete totality (Lukács, 2010, 2012 and 2013) as an essential starting point for a professional approach rich in multiple determinations, which contemplates real demands, stimulates

[11] Not to be confused with strict academic training.

creative and non-institutional intervention (although it does not disregard institutional boundaries). It is a profession that needs to enrich the analysis about itself, based on labour relations commanded by the bourgeois order and about the work carried out by salaried social workers who fulfil a socially demanded function, inserted in the social division and work technique in the current management of the general law of capitalist accumulation[12]. It is not, therefore, an epistemological statement, a scientific imposition, an application of explanatory models and sectorial intervention (health, social assistance, justice, among others), but rather an ontological determination guided by the perspective of totality, without which the nature of the profession, nor of the work demanded and carried out by the social workers can be explained.

What are the practical consequences of adopting this perspective?

First of all, social workers do not deny the demands immediately presented by people seeking certain care, nor do they limit themselves to them in their emergency, that is, to the way they initially appear as "social problems." Deprivations and needs in the field of the production and reproduction of life are critical and must be observed. However, relevant and articulated demands with various requests, not immediately presented as priorities, are frequently not made visible. It must be emphasized that social work inspired by Marxian and Marxist observations, does not confuse what is said with what in fact exists. *Discourses, although relevant, do not reveal truths, but rather the way in which a certain consciousness interprets its own deficiencies and needs based on objective conditions*. The field of ideology is essential - because it interferes with real life- but needs to be analysed as a dimension marked by interpretative deviations that change the intellectual reproduction of reality, justify misunderstandings and omit essential aspects -consciously or not. Therefore, truth is not limited to diverse and "plural" interpretations (as posited by heterogeneous postmodernity), nor does truth only exist if consciousness recognizes it (as phenomenology sees it). For example: hunger is not a real problem because people say it or recognize it, but because hunger really exists with objective effects, regardless of the consciousness of the people impacted by it. That is, hunger exists independently of people's consciousness, although it is not recognized by the hungry conscious themselves.

Here a question arises: are there important demands, not immediately visible and frequently not recognized by social workers? What type of approach, in the work of social work, should professionals take into account, to contribute to the manifestation of what is not immediately revealed? Social work - inspired by Marx's social theory - starts from immediately revealed demands, but makes them more complex by exploring their nature, their foundations, scrutinizing complex, apparently simple processes. It is

[12] Changes in the job market have been brutal. New studies are urgent on it. Intense precariousness has hit the diverse working class, of course the social workers: "uberization", teleworking, outsourcing, for example. See Antunes (2018) and Raichellis (2020).

not about investigating people's lives or imposing on them a way of thinking that they have not identified. On the contrary, it is about problematizing what is apparently simple, recognizing that this initial appearance is no less important, but the way the complexity appears immediately. So, a request for an emergency basket of food may not just be a space to keep people alive. It can and should be a space to broaden the professional approach, working on ontological demands, treating them critically (theoretically and practically), ethically and politically, using a set of instruments and techniques available to know, think and act with social complexes which the individuals and their subjectivities are a part of (whether they like it or not). For this reason, individuals are not guided by discourses and subjectivities, rather they are social beings that construct and reconstruct subjectivities as part of a complex social process determined by a certain objectively existing sociability. And this society is no different -in our case, the Latin American bourgeois order. The professional room for manoeuvre, made up of very precise objective and subjective conditions, is inherently contradictory (Iamamoto, 2007), limited to making structural changes, but no less important. What is behind these stories by Latin American women and men?

"There are people who sell shifts [in the queue for social services] for $ 100. They even take mattresses to sleep. So, when they offer shifts, they are not enough. Besides, I don't have $100 to pay so that's why in general we don't go [to get an appointment]."

"I don't remember any time in my life when my stomach didn't roar. One day I ate and three did not. Now it is still the same, only that at least we know the causes of the death of our children: diarrhoea, pneumonia, lack of vitamins ... malnutrition (...) Our conditions were worse than those of the animals, but at least we could survive. I am not ashamed to have looked for work, to plough like a mule. I alone raised eight children."

"I was a student of Law and had a friend from the university, we always met on Friday. He was white and studied Engineering. We were about 20 years old, more or less. I got off the bus and went walking by Bom Fim [Porto Alegre's bohemian neighbourhood in the 1980s], which was full of people, until I faced a patrol of the Military Brigade. They approached me directly, and asked what I was doing, where I was going and what I had in my bag. They said that I didn't have to be there. When I said that I was a Law student, that I would find a friend, the police laughed. I showed what I had in my bag, my packed lunch and a version of the Civil Code, but they were not satisfied with that. No one helped me. When I asked them to gather my belongings, they got furious. I was saved by the commander of the operation, a black captain who returned my bag to me. That day I realized that police violence against black people is a requirement of society."

"They called us shitty indians, parasites. They took my minor nephew out by his hair and put him on the floor, I asked them please not to hit him and they told me 'shut up fatty, you are pigs, you all have to go to die in the Chaco, you are black'. They stepped on his feet, beat him on the hands. They hit my brother-in-law with the butt of a gun and broke his shoulder."

"I hadn't come out of the closet yet when my 'best friends', one night we were enjoying, suddenly made a circle around me. They started asking me if I was gay, because there were rumours. They said that if I was gay, they would beat me up for walking with them and not saying anything. At the time I was sure I would, but I was afraid to come out of the closet. I decided to shut up so that they wouldn't hit me at that moment and, when I returned to my residence at night, I received a blow to the head, they threw me to the ground and kicked me several times."

"I did not know what femicide was, but when they showed me the photos of how they found my daughter and they explained to me what this crime is, I knew that this had happened to Campira, because my girl was full of blows, naked, and Joy cut her hair and took it away, like it was a trophy, Margarita mentioned." [13]

Although professionals have the ethical commitment to contribute to people not dying, it is equally ethical to think beyond this border. There are genuinely ontological demands, as a field of struggle for increasing levels of social, political and human emancipation (Marx, 2009). The question is: What do we do with our work? What are we not doing and could do? It is exactly on this aspect that all the ontological-intellectual creativity of professional work must be concentrated. It is not about attributing to the profession tasks that it will surely not fulfil, but about enriching the analysis of reality and contributing beyond the interdisciplinary juxtaposition of the fragmented knowledge that comes together to interpret reality, recounting it to manage it. This must be articulated with other important initiatives in the professional field and outside it, in social movements, unions and political parties that fight for civilizing guidelines. Professionals can and should articulate these dimensions, but not assume that these functions are identical. In other words, the strategies and procedures of a union activist and a social work professional are not the same, simply because they are different spaces of action that require equally particular strategies. Furthermore, professional work is intelligently contaminated by militancy (as an overcoming of militantism), as militancy is informed by professional work. The secret is not to have explanatory or intervention models, but to be fond of explaining the logic of reality

[13] Stories available at: https://www.losandes.com.ar/relatos-de-pobreza-la-v-da-de-los-que-se-van-a-dormir-sin-comer-y-se-sienten-olvidados/,https://www.ecrimesim.alloutbrasil.org, https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/mundo/la-vida-rota-historias-de-feminicidio-en-al, https://latinta.com.ar/2017/05/mujeres-originarias-relatos-de-tortura-represion-y-encierro/and https://www.accioncontraelhambre.org/es/te-contamos/blog-testimonios/maria-guatemala-no-recuerdo-ningun-dia-que-no-me-hayan-rugido-las-tripas

itself, drawing on the experiences and accumulated knowledge to concretely analyse the scenario which one works with daily, reconstructing this particular movement and evaluating the possibilities.

Surely this path requires effort, discipline and encouragement to permanent research and study. It is not just something that can be conquered solely with individual effort, much less an achievement acquired through instrumental and purely operational science. It requires collective work that articulates individual skills and study groups critical of ideological decadence and the different forms of descriptive science. It is necessary to recognize that it is not easy at all to produce knowledge from this perspective, in a highly regressive scenario that persecutes everything that some type of subversive danger may mean in times of "normality and democratic formality", of more or less authoritarianism explicit and naturalized. This persecution has a clear purpose: to dismantle critical reflection anchored in real life, discouraging the analysis scrutinized in it, eliminating ontological science, genuinely human problems and the transformative potentialities of the scientific horizon. When traveling through this "dim path", social work and any type of profession and human action tend to operate instrumentally, reproduce immediate official norms, mechanize intervention through protocols or, in other words, validate "immediate truths". Captivating genuinely ontological research and study, inside and outside universities, at different levels and spaces, is a central task for social workers inspired by Marx and the diverse tradition associated with him. How is this orientation different from other critical orientations? In addition to the radically ontological, materialist-dialectical analysis, this does not nurture any hope of reforming capitalism and thereby offering capital eternal life. The defence of life, the criticism of the refractions of the social question and the innumerable oppressions reissued in the conditions of dependent capitalism have a precise orientation: progressive anti-capitalism.

Conclusions

The debate between social work, Marx and Marxisms is not only possible but absolutely necessary for the most critical fraction of this profession in Latin America. In addition, it is useful in the field of professions and progressive anti-capitalist Latin American resistance. The current highly regressive scenario requires analytical radicalism and the ability to practice grand politics. Surely this interrogates, at the same time, the updated systemic conceptions, the apparently rebellious and radical postmodern tendencies, the Marxisms reduced to application, as well as the diverse immobile perspectives that do not appreciate this debate. The resurgence of reactionary conservatism, the absolute civilizational regression that has hit the planet, the impact of this in Latin America and in the profession, impose this dialogue as something

absolutely necessary, although insufficient. It is necessary to know the different trends present today in Latin America, their central theses, their foundations, either to compose civilizing forces and stimulate increasing levels of social emancipation or to combat those who oppose it inside and outside the profession. Social work has something to say and contribute in the field of resistance.

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CRITICAL PROPOSALS IN SOCIAL WORK

PROPUESTAS CRÍTICAS EN TRABAJO SOCIAL

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ARTICLE

Social Work and Projects of Society in Brazil

Trabajo Social y Proyectos Societarios en Brasil

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Abstract

In this article we discuss the main projects of society disputed on the Brazilian scene. This analysis allows us to draw conclusions about the whole of Latin America and the world situation, discussing the expressions of social work, its challenges and conditions for the defence of the ethical-political project built by the Brazilian Social Service after the Virada Congress of 1979, forty-one years ago. At that time, we bravely held legitimate collective elections, which today are challenged by these times of reactionary tones, but also marked by struggles, resistance and contradictions. The strong winds that blow in several Latin American countries, especially in Chile, show us that "everything changes", as the beautiful music of Julio Numhauser says, immortalized in the voice of the

Keywords:
social work; neo-fascism; ethical-political project; Brazil

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ARTICLE

Argentine Mercedes Sosa. That is to say, nothing is and should not seem impossible to change. Therefore, we will focus on a more generalized characterization of these social projects, seeking to carry out some mediations with our professional project.

Resumen

En este artículo buscamos discutir cuáles son los principales proyectos de sociedad disputados en la escena brasileña. Este análisis permite sacar conclusiones sobre el conjunto de América Latina y la situación mundial, discutiendo las expresiones del trabajo social, sus desafíos y condiciones para la defensa del proyecto ético-político que fue construido por el servicio social brasileño luego del Congreso Virada de 1979, hace cuarenta y un años. En aquel momento hicimos con valentía elecciones colectivas legítimas, que hoy son desafiadas por estos tiempos de tonos reaccionarios, pero también marcados por luchas, resistencias y contradicciones. Los fuertes vientos que soplan en varios países de Latinoamérica, especialmente en Chile, nos muestran que "todo cambia", como dice la bella música de Julio Numhauser, inmortalizada en la voz de la argentina Mercedes Sosa. Es decir, nada es ni debería parecer imposible de cambiar. Por tanto, nos centraremos en una caracterización más generalizada de estos proyectos de sociedad, buscando realizar algunas mediaciones con nuestro proyecto profesional.

Palabras clave:
trabajo social; neofascismo; proyecto ético-político; Brasil

Some characteristics of the professional ethical-political project in Brazil

At a conference that we held in 2016, the Brazilian Congress of Social Workers in Recife, we affirmed that in the face of capitalism in crisis and decline, and a new type of coup which led the government of Brazil to usurpers and predators -the government of Temer-, a situation in which the shielding of democracy, social inequality and violence is intensifying, and in the face of the greatest attack on work and rights since the neoliberal hegemony was established in Brazil, still there are pillars that allow Brazilian social work to remain in the field of strategic engagement with workers, the side we chose in 1979. Since then, we have not permitted the professional category -understood here as a means of professional practice and field of knowledge- to be captured by the ultra-conservative winds in a socially favourable environment for them. We are talking here about the pillars of the collective construction of Brazilian social work of the last forty years, which have also helped us to face the traps of Cardoso's neoliberal counter-reform, neoliberal co-optation (Cislaghi, 2020) and class conciliation, marks of the period prior to the new coup in 2016. We have maintained political autonomy of professional organizations and a critical attitude.

One of these pillars is the strength to analyse both the materiality and the spirit of the times in which we live, which has allowed us to identify the diverse projects of society we are currently experiencing, their material base and socio-political movement. We refer to critical theory, especially the fruitful dialogue in the Marxist tradition, which nurtures the production of knowledge, professional work and political praxis, and which has allowed us to closely follow the movement of reality, economic and political circumstances and the formulation of professional strategies. There was a clear and growing process of maturation of the theoretical and methodological categories of this tradition, breaking with the initial "positivist invasions" and with a schematic and impoverished Marxism which Coutinho (2010) called "miserable reason".

We also have the experience of the political-professional leaderships in the political organizations of Brazilian social work - the Federal Council of Social Service (CFESS), the Regional Council of Social Service (CRESS), the Brazilian Association of Teaching and Research in Social Service (ABEPSS) and the National Executive of Social Service Students (ENESSO) – which have strong legitimacy being rooted in decision-making procedures and in the definition of a broad agenda of professional struggle, linked to the demands of Brazilian society. Neither the erosion caused by the ultra-conservative project -which already existed, but has gained strength since 2016- nor the transformation of segments of the left during the years of class coalition governments, could cause the loss of political autonomy and the leadership of national political organizations in the category. However, these demanding times require attention, always in search of the best strategies either in the battle of ideas or regulatory processes and, above all, in alliance with broad sectors of social activists who share the same agenda to prevent the overthrow of political leadership and the main guiding values of the profession. The good news is that there are new generations of social workers imbued with this project, and with important experiences of professional and social and political struggle. But there are also disturbing elements in Brazilian social work, although a minority: the presence of references to the past of a confessional social service and even adherence to neoliberal and ultra-conservative theses, which appears especially, but not exclusively, in virtual social networks, as an example; parliamentary initiatives to deregulate the professions defended by these sectors; the attack on the quality of professional training through the rupture of the relationship between teaching, research and extension; the open search and with inconsistent arguments and disqualified by "cultural Marxism", with implications for research and pedagogical projects in our field, among others.

This neoconservative presence surprises some people, but it shouldn't. We have to understand it as an element of reality: history determines us and in the face of the social growth of conservatism we are not obviously isolated. We never were. A professional

category is necessarily plural, crossed by corporate projects that dialogue with professional projects, as we learned from Netto (1999). And there are new conditions in the dispute for hegemony, both in society and in the area of professional knowledge, reflected in the general environment of Brazil, Latin America and the world. Hegemony is not a simple majority, but an intellectual and moral direction. Thus, if there are socially unfavourable conditions for the decisions we have made since 1979, it is not the first time that we are facing a regressive environment. The ethical-political project of the Brazilian social work was constituted in the resistance to the civic-military dictatorship in Brazil and in the Latin American continent. In the redemocratisation process, we confronted the neoliberal policies of Fernando Collor and Fernando Henrique Cardoso. We made no concessions to the transformism of the Workers' Party (PT), which did not break with the neoliberal fiscal adjustment environment. We safeguard political independence, while acknowledging some important social achievements -but meagre compared to expectations- in the period between 2003 and 2015. But today, in fact, we have unprecedented conditions caused by the new type of coup of 2016 and its consequences in the 2018 elections, with the electoral victory of the extreme right that governs the country, as we will discuss later.

There is also a third pillar of the Brazilian professional project: the agenda of struggle that we have been consolidating in these four decades against conservatism in all its forms, including that of the current neo-fascism and ultra-liberalism - inseparable partners. From the deleterious fiscal adjustment program, through the living and working conditions of the majority, it is that a strong and violent State has been required, which criminalizes protests and dissent, in addition to the deployment of ideological and political mechanisms for part of the apparatus of private hegemony, which justify such socialization of the costs of the crisis of capitalism. We have designed this agenda: defend public social security, social and labor rights, democratic freedoms, agrarian reforms, fight against all forms of discrimination and prejudice, against structural racism and LGBTQ+ phobia, for the rights of women and indigenous peoples, against social inequality, etc., all in conjunction with political subjects present in Brazilian society.

In essence, it is an anti-capitalist and socialist agenda, since contemporary capitalism, mature, decadent and in structural crisis (Mandel, 1982, 1990; Mèszáros, 2002), does not include it; on the contrary, it blocks it, emptied of democratic pipelines. In 2016, at the CBAS, we pointed out that despite the great difficulties that were already there, we had instruments to face them, not with a guarantee of victory, because social struggle is always risky and without a predetermined end, and history presents a haemorrhage of senses (Bensaid, 1999). We made an ethical-political choice in Brazil, to stand alongside the workers and recognize ourselves as workers registered in the social and

technical division of labour, as analysed by Iamamoto (1982). If we have an aggressive attack from the right, we have to ally ourselves in a united front strategy of the workers, "with the unrepentant social subjects who feed and maintain a theoretical-political and professional culture of the left in Brazil" (Mota, 2016 , p.40), fighting decisively for the values that guide the professional ethical-political project of Brazilian social work, inscribed in the Code of Ethics of Social Workers (1993), in the Law of Regulation of the Profession and in the Curricular Guidelines of the Brazilian Association for Social Work Teaching and Research.

Is there "news on the front line"?

As Arcary (2018, p.1) says, "he who does not know who he is fighting against, cannot win"[2]. Let's see, in general terms, which are the current projects of society that seek expression in Brazilian social work.

The far-right project flirts with social work, although it goes against the ethical-political commitments present in the main governing documents of the profession in the country. We are facing a devastating society project and it is necessary to go beyond its superficial expressions to understand its meaning and defeat it on the streets, at the polls, in institutions, in families, in communities, in tribes, in social networks, in all spaces. Such a project is more than a nightmare, which will only happen when (and if) the working class wakes up and new elections are held in the country "restoring civility". This is the solution that some sectors of the left seem to be waiting for - contrasting civilization and barbarism, not socialism and barbarism as in the well-known formulation of Rosa Luxemburg. This perspective is limited to institutional-parliamentary politics and seems to face each daily shock in a timely manner. Part of the explanation for the crude silence of segments of the union and popular movement in the face of the social security counter-reform approved in Brazil in 2019 may lie in this reading of reality. Another part certainly resides in the new morphology of the world of work (Antunes, 2018) that hinders the political organization of workers, as well as in the real bureaucratization of certain union leaders.

Another strategy has been to harass and erode the current government and some of its most damaging heralds. At the same time, there was a strong commitment to the fight for Lula Livre, as the only counterweight and without any self-criticism of the recent past, where several of these elements of barbarization of life were already underway,

[2] https://revistaforum.com.br/politica/integra-do-discurso-historico-de-valerio-arcary-quem-nao-sabe-contr-quem-luta-nao-pode-vencer/ Consulted in August 2020.

without great and consistent combat. It is worth clarifying that we were totally in favour and advocated the freedom of Lula, so that he would leave a prison that had exclusively coup and anti-democratic motivations with an unjust and flawed judicial process. Furthermore, we believe that systematically eroding this government / project, which clearly has “feet of clay”, and building short-term political and electoral alternatives is also fundamental. Right now, in the second half of 2020, municipal elections are underway and will be a test of strength in Brazil. But we emphatically note that this reading and strategy is insufficient and weak, such is the urgency to stop the devastation. It is necessary to deepen the fissures and contradictions of this project and widen them much more to sustain the current course of events, which acquired dramatic, incendiary and genocidal contours in the COVID-19 2020 pandemic[3]. The streets should speak much louder than they have already done in Brazil, following the example of our Latin American brothers, especially in Chile and Argentina.

Bolsonarism expresses in Brazil a corporate project of the extreme right with traces of fascism. A project that has articulations with Steve Bannon and heralds of the extreme right around the world, in a planetary movement, according to Michael Löwy (2019). For Löwy, the crisis of capital leads to a kind of "identity panic", which refers to patriotic, xenophobic and fundamentalist discourses. The text is very interesting, as it shows the differences of this project in Europe and Latin America. But we will stop at the “Brazil above all” of the Bolsonaro government, which is leaving indelible and deepening traces of destruction, as time passes and its measures are implemented. These are promoted by tweeters, live streamings and others, which encourage the worst in Brazilian society, increasing all kinds of violence, as if to tell the monsters who were supposedly asleep in their resentment (Kelh, 2004) that they can now do whatever they want: buy firearms to supposedly protect the family, set fire to forests, invade indigenous lands, quilombolas and small producers, kill women and LGBTTQ+, whip young blacks who steal chocolates, impose the power of the milicias and narcomilicias in the favelas, kill one person every two days in Rio de Janeiro (Jornal O Globo, 09/01 / 2019), carry out “death caravans”, fight against the necessary social isolation in the pandemic (Behring, 2020). These people who die from a bullet or from Covid, have colour and it is black, because “the cheapest meat on the market is black meat,” sings Elza Soares in the music of Abebe Bikila / Jonas Ribeiro. After all, as Goya said between the 18th and 19th centuries, "the dream of reason produces monsters".

Meanwhile, the ultra-neoliberal economic agenda and the offensive intellectual and moral counter-reform are advancing, with a view to solidifying the bases of legitimacy of this social project that is based on the most deeply rooted individualism, the

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secularization of the State and a wide menu of devaluations that up to now have been a smokescreen for ultra-neoliberal economic measures, but with them they form the whole in motion. Such devaluations are not bizarre excesses: there is no rude government that suffers from verbal and political incontinence on Twitter and another that "works", according to the newspaper O Globo, the same vehicle that defends its economic measures, especially the counter-reform of social security and the Draconian spending ceiling of Constitutional Amendment 95, approved in 2016 under bombardments in Brasilia.

Are we facing a fascist project? It is necessary not to trivialize the use of this term. That it is a far-right project that attacks rights and places itself at the service of capital - with an emphasis on US imperialism - there seems to be no doubt. The point is the characterization of fascism and other variants, such as proto-fascism or neofascism, given the difficulties of fitting the current Brazilian reality into a synthetic term that expresses previous historical processes and that has certain characteristics, mediated by national particularities where fascism was constituted as a social process and became a political regime (Italy and Germany). It seems certain that we are not facing a fascist regime. The signs of an anti-democratic recrudescence possibly bring us closer to an "armoured democracy that does not dispense with battleships" within the framework of semi-Bonapartism (Demier, 2019), but which can unfold into an open dictatorship (and Bonapartist or fascist), if the dynamics of social struggles do not stop it.

It seems to be a consensus that the term fascism comes from the fascio littorio, a bundle of sticks, a symbol of the power to punish in the Etruscan tradition and of authority and power in Roman culture, and that it was incorporated into the government of Mussolini as of 1922 in Italy. Fascism is a totalitarian political regime, of a single party, with a hypertrophy of the police apparatus, marked by "nationalist exaltation", "anti-liberalism" and "anti-communism", with the defence of the State as "leader of the national economy", characteristics that the current Brazilian government would take away from the idea of fascism, given its visceral ultra-neoliberalism. However, the search for a precise characterization is complex, since political regimes and governments are not presented as ideal types. It is necessary to extract its movement, its features from reality. If fascism was initially marked by the fight against financial "predatory capitalism" (which would be responsible for the 1929/32 crisis), the sequence was one of association with large economic groups, at the same time that corporatism with workers was instituted there in the 20s and 30s. Here, then, we have another feature that differentiates the fascism of yesterday from the current one, given that it is not a question of co-opting collective bodies of the working class, but of instituting a possessive, meritocratic individualism, which is combined with the precariousness of work. There was a strong entrenchment of fascism in the urban

middle classes, unhappy with the economic crisis of the interwar period and with the political tensions between liberals, social democrats and socialists. This element is present in what we have been living with at the peak of the long wave of stagnation (Mandel, 1982), expressed in the breakup of Lehman Brothers in 2008, despite the fact that the socialist movement today does not have the strength of a recent revolution (October 1917) and with real possibilities of spreading as in that historical moment. Thus, to justify the attacks on democratic freedoms, it is necessary to choose other scapegoats: terrorism, Nicolás Maduro, Cuba and the Workers' Party (PT), in the name of corruption.

Fascism can be approached as a movement or as a regime, which results from the former, but should not be confused with it, and whose outbreak comes from the crisis of capitalism between the two world wars. Fascism can also be characterized as an open dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, exercised without the mediation of the institutions of parliamentary democracy, in a bourgeois counterrevolution that mobilizes petty-bourgeois layers, against a strong workers and popular movement (which today we do not have, but there are scapegoats, as noted above). These layers are driven by a kind of resentment and by fictitious goals and rewards that are more symbolic than material. Elements of irrationalism, voluntarism, anti-capitalism and anti-socialism converge here, when fascism is expressed as a revolt movement of the petty bourgeoisie, an element that we can clearly identify in recent Brazil, after the capture of the large mobilizations of June 2013 due to the discourse of corruption (Demier, 2017). At this time of open dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, without being directly led by it, fascism and Bonapartism are processes that converge, the latter being a kind of temporary transfer of political power to a force that has relative autonomy in relation to the central nucleus of ruling classes and seeks to resolve the class struggle with technocratic and repressive solutions.

A Marxist interpretation of fascism can be found in Ernest Mandel (1976), commenting in a long presentation on the well-known text by Leon Trotsky - On Fascism (1931/1932). For him, despite a diffuse verbiage, as we saw previously, fascist regimes throughout the history of the 20th century were far from questioning the immanent laws that govern the capitalist system, so that materialist, historical and dialectical analysis must seek to expose what these regimes really do or have done, let alone what they say. The autonomy of fascist governments and regimes, in short, from political power in relation to the ruling classes and economic contradictions, is very relative. Its highest expression is militarism, which is far from being, or is today, the opposite of monopoly capitalism. Therefore, for Mandel, fascism denotes the irrationality of capitalism as a whole in its mature and decadent phase, which explodes in particular political conditions, having a “very real and rational origin” (1976, p.27). If the petty-bourgeois

and fascist mass movements mobilize hatred and aggression, it is not because that is part of some kind of sleeping human nature, or for purely psychological reasons. For Mandel, this need for terror and violence had, in Italy and especially in Germany, a deep relationship with monopoly capitalism and its demands for reproduction after the debacle of 1929/32, and with imperialism, before the resumption of profit. In other words, "what is really essential is private property and the possibility of accumulating capital and extracting added value" (Mandel, 1976, p.27). At this point, the rise of fascism was (and is) an expression of the grave crisis of mature and decadent capitalism, a crisis of reproduction of capital. In this sense, "the seizure of power by fascism is the alteration by force and violence, in favour of the decisive groups of monopoly capital, of the conditions for the reproduction of capital" (1976, p.29). If fascism is not the desirable and "normal" form of bourgeois domination, there is no doubt in using it in certain conditions -of crisis-, mobilizing the enraged petty-bourgeois faction to crush the popular workers' organizations, even in the form of phalanxes and paramilitary squads. For Mandel, as also for Trotsky (1976) before him, the answer to fascism lies in the united front of the workers, that is, a front that brings together the group of class organizations for resistance and self-defence against the "crushing of classes". The workers, the destruction of their organizations and the suppression of political freedoms at a time when the capitalists are incapable of governing and dominating with the help of democratic mechanics, are "putting the petty bourgeoisie" at the disposal of their worst enemies" (Trotsky 1976, p.117).

Based on these considerations, without evidently trying to exhaust such a complex and controversial issue, we can summarize that there are clear elements of fascism in what Bolsonarism as a whole is doing to and unleashing on Brazilian society in a context of structural crisis of capitalism, although he has not established a fascist regime - an open dictatorship. This is a hypothesis that unfortunately cannot and should not be ruled out. Conversing with Arcary (2018), even considering that the majority of [Bolsonaro's] voters were not fascists, we are facing neofascism (Mattos, 2020), which is not and cannot be an exact copy of the fascism of the past. We are facing a combination of tragedy and farce, paraphrasing Marx. The tragedy is the devastation that this project promotes. The farce is a simulacrum, where "nationalism" is associated with the delivery of public goods for the enjoyment of imperialism (which refers to Mandel's previous words); where "fighting corruption" means equipping institutions for shady interests; where the general elections are contaminated by the arrest of the main adversary and the fake news in association with companies like Cambridge Analytics, denounced by the impressive documentary Privacy Hacked (2019). In fact, current neo-fascism, in Brazil and elsewhere, is a political requisition for the process of economic reproduction in times of capital crisis, which depends on the public fund and intense processes of expropriation of workers (Fontes, 2010; Boschetti, 2018).

Therefore, the bourgeois business project uses this path, without shame.

A devastating project

Let's look at some elements of this totality that moves in a perverse and neo-fascist direction, in favour of big capital. The devastation is materialized in the criminal fires in the Brazilian Amazon and the Pantanal, which increased dramatically between July and September 2020, compared to previous years, as shown by data from the Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais - INPE (questioned by the government). Spurious initiatives such as the "Day of Fire" in 2019, built by WhatsApp by the homonyms "good men" - businessmen, farmers, merchants and their friends grileiros (land grabbers by falsifying documents) - in the south of Pará, are undoubtedly signs of the climate of impunity that has been installed in the country since the beginning of the extreme right-wing government. Land grabbing is nothing new in the country and it has not found the necessary brakes before. Yet the intensity and wickedness are unprecedented, even casting a cloud of soot over South America's largest city, São Paulo, in a ghoulish metaphor for the bad omens lurking in Brazil. And along with that, threats came to indigenous peoples due to the international movement of leaders and activists committed to defending the environment. These threats were widely denounced in marches in Brasilia and in countless articles in the press. But the devastation is not only of nature, it is also human, since the role of the world's largest tropical forest in containing global warming, that Ricardo Salles (Minister of the Environment) and his accomplices want to minimize and even deny, is central. On the other hand, it is important to say: global warming is the responsibility of the big monopolies and imperialist countries, of the emission of carbon dioxide (which the US and China lead), and of a predatory relationship with natural resources. The same people who cry out for the Brazilian care of the Amazon are those who send garbage containers to Brazil. In other words, planet Earth is heating up because capitalism in crisis, mature and decaying exhausts it. And he finds in the Brazilian government, with its indulgence and complicity with the arsonists, the best of all worlds. If the Amazon is a strategic concern, we cannot forget the devastation that occurred in the form of environmental disasters in Mariana, Rio Doce and Brumadinho, before the current government. These were the announced tragedies produced by the predatory and productivist development model of raw materials, adopted in Brazil and in many Latin American countries.

More precisely, the materialization of the devastation that we saw in the dramatic images of the burning forest is the product of a certain relationship between man and nature - the capitalist form of production and social reproduction - that puts both at risk and constitutes, in the present, a bleak future. The man-nature relationship is historical

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and social, that is, it is about decisions, especially of those who own the means of production, the bourgeois proprietors, and those who, in the immediate and insatiable desire for loss of profit, suffer an abominable presentism. Precisely because of his passionate selfishness, which, unlike the Smithian utopia of the 18th century, did not and will not lead to well-being and the general attention to human needs, the predatory productivism of capital in its mature and decadent phase is a true destroying machine of men, women, nature. And therein lies the essence of the Amazon problem, fierce in the reactionary environment produced by neo-fascist Bolsonarism.

More directly devastating for Brazilian men and women are the measures implemented by the ultra-liberal economic program in Brazil, since the coup in 2016. Today we know that the coup plotters wanted much more than the measures that Dilma and Joaquim Levy began to take. They wanted Constitutional Amendment 95[4], the labour counter-reform (2017) and another pension counter-reform (2019). The aim of the measures was to create a good "business environment" to extract added value and make the biggest possible cuts to the public fund. The public fund, as an assumption of the expanded reproduction of capital in times of crisis, is currently highly disputed (Behring, 2010 and 2012). This was one of the important meanings of the Coup d'Etat of 2016, which paved the way for the electoral victory of this project in 2018.

The approval of Constitutional Amendment 95, still in Temer's government, was a central element of the ultraliberal New Tax Regime, the consequences of which are in the Draconian counter-reform of the recently approved pension plan and in the recent attacks on educational and social policies under the Presidential speech that "there is no money for nothing" -as if it were a force of nature to which the government must surrender and the workers must accept. In the case of education, such attacks are part of the State's counter-reform agenda, combining its economic face with the intellectual and moral offensive, in the sense of making the country more dependent and heteronomous, emptying the investigation, and in the same step, suffocating the social criticism that occurs in public universities, with a view -by force- to forge adherence to the *Future-se* project. The latter, proposed by the truculent former minister Weintraub, brought the great novelty (SIC) of Social Organizations (OS) -public-private alliances- in the management of universities, which has been in force since the State Reform Master Plan of 1995 but now is accompanied by the destructive insinuations of the present: alienate public assets to establish a financing fund, for example. Regarding OS, there are already numerous studies in the health area that show that these are true pipelines of public resources for the private sector, without necessarily improving the efficiency of services (Cislaghi, 2015). At the same time that the government made this

[4] That practically freezes the primary spending of the federal government for twenty years, while preserving the payment of interests, charges and amortizations of the public debt.

proposal, the 2020 budget promised to halve the resources of the Coordination of Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal do Ensino Superior (CAPES - institution responsible for postgraduate studies in Brazil) and equalize the budgets of the Federal Institutions of Higher Education, without taking into account their abysmal differences. It is worth saying that the banks are happy with the direction of education, not only because of the movement in the Stock Market of the "sharks" of education -conglomerates such as Cogna Educação- given the strengthening of the private sector, but also because of the supply of credit, an educational opportunity for graduate students to do their studies at low interest rates that will leave them in debt like Chileans! Although there seem to be no resources at all and the fault lies with pension rights and other social and public policies, the problem of public debt remains intact and financial institutions smoothly drill into public funds every year (Behring, 2017; Salvador , 2017; Behring, 2020). And that is how the ultra-neoliberal elements of the ongoing program are justified: the sale of 17 state-owned companies, the participation of foreign capital in the auctions of the pre-salt oil fields, the counter-reform of the social security system or *Future-se*.

Who are the big beneficiaries? US imperialism that seeks to value niches at a time when a new endemic and global crisis is being announced, including the offer to carry out a joint "environmental policy" with that country in the Amazon, with the participation of North American companies. National and international financial institutions, lenders of Brazilian public debt securities, especially domestic debt, since pension funds, which seek to favour the pension counter-reform, are the main creditors here. There is a Brazilian bourgeoisie whose anti-national, anti-public and anti-democratic character -according to the analysis of thinkers such as Florestan Fernandes, Octavio Ianni and Ruy Mauro Marini - is even more evident. Just look at the latest statements and movements from the Federation of Industries of the State of São Paulo (FIESP), which describe these ongoing processes.

The results of this resurgence, since then, of the environment of permanent fiscal adjustment that marks the Brazilian redemocratisation, as I have argued in some academic works (Behring, 2019a and 2019b), are destructive: data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics - IBGE- show that, as an effect of the Temer labour counter-reform, in 2019 there were around 36 million workers living in precarious working conditions and with low incomes, since the average income of Brazilian workers fell from R$ 2,311 per month to R$ 2,286 per month[5]. Precariousness and informality mark a world of work without rights. This absence of rights tends to increase when a pension counter-reform is approved, which increases the time of contribution and work to receive a retirement pension under the low ceiling of the

[5] USD$ 442 to USD$ 438.

public pension. And what is the meaning of the constitution of this world of precarious work and without rights? It is the modus operandi of capital in its passionate search for value, the accumulation of which depends on the subsumption of labour. It is capitalism in its purest form, depleting the labour force as a way to rebuild its rates of profit, which corroborates the earlier debate on the main function of fascism.

We are facing a marked impoverishment of the population, the explanation of which refers to the general law of accumulation according to Marx (1982). Its effects on sociability are heart-breaking: the growth of the street population, the generalized violence on the streets as a desperate survival strategy, the growth of organized crime by trafficking and by militias and narcomilicias that "employ" young people without perspective and discouragement. These same young people are encouraged to individually go out into a labour and consumer market that is not open to everyone. The other side has been a brutal growth of the criminal face of the State, with the use of excessive and deliberate violence against poor and segregated populations, especially young people and blacks, reproducing Brazilian structural racism. Also, the increase in the number of deaths by the police, of deaths in general in the context of endemic violence and growing incarceration -between 1990 and 2017 there was an increase of more than 700% of the Brazilian prison population-, which today is the third largest in the world (Simas, 2020). Apart from the "stray bullets", we have the pointless loss of life produced by the public security policies, a product of the neo-fascist common sense spread by the project underway in the country, in which "the good criminal is the dead criminal". Such "violence from above" and "acts of public security", recalling Loic Wacquant (2007), promote a brutal daily confrontation, with the right to helicopter fire on marginal neighbourhoods. This makes life in entire communities on the outskirts of large cities a true hell, from which the new apostles of salvation take great advantage, who make everything an individual matter, of behaviour, of contrition. Since life on Earth is hell, let's find a passport to heaven. The sealed document for salvation is evidently expensive and the signs of enrichment of these merchants of faith are numerous and they have not encountered consistent restrictions in recent decades. The result is that Bolsonarism is based in this space of the working poor. Workers who fight every day for their most immediate survival, mostly disorganized and with whom it is decisive to talk to turn the game around. Social workers can contribute to this dialogue!

We could list other devastating elements: censorship in the field of art (cinema, theatre); machismo as a central component, in addition to the aforementioned structural racism; the accelerated militarization of institutions; the dismantling of democratic control structures; intervention in institutions, schools and universities, lack of respect for the democratic elections of rectors, directors, officials.

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The key is to be clear that Bolsonarism is presented as a horrendous face of the bourgeois offensive in a time of capitalist crisis, which expresses a radicalization of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism, recalling Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval (2016), is more than an ideology and more than an economic policy: it is more than capitalism equal to itself. Neoliberalism transforms the crisis into a mode of government, in a close look at what Mota (1995) characterized as a culture of crisis, as if the crisis was the responsibility of everyone equally, and its costs should also be socialized. Neoliberalism disables the democratic game. There is a kind of neoliberal subjectivation that operates in the sense of social egoism as a social norm of possessive individualism. And above all, neoliberalism is the materialization and ethos of the bourgeois reaction to this moment of capitalism in structural crisis, a product of the law of value as capitalism's social organizing relation. Contemporary capitalism under the aegis of the neoliberal social project and in today's Brazil, ultra-neoliberal, produces an immense offensive on the workers in search of the best conditions for their exploitation, in the "passionate search for value" in the very current terms of Marx: those unemployed, precarious, impoverished and disorganized; the most heterogeneous working class, put in reserve, deprived and destroyed.

To face the new condition of the world of labour, ultra-neoliberal capitalism draws up a social policy in its image and likeness to face the expressions of the social question: focused on absolute poverty - with programs to combat poverty increased with the support of the Bank World Poverty Report 1990 - selective, inducer of activation for work (workfare) or "productive inclusion", articulating in general benefits with conditionalities that point to insertion in the labour market through qualification courses, which expresses an interpretation of structural unemployment as individual responsibility and demerit, although there is no job offer for everyone and the reserve army is a condition for the process of exploitation of workers "free as birds", as Marx said. Now it is about expanding capacities, as a condition to exercise freedom in the market, as Amartya Sen, Nobel Prize in Economics, whose main inspiration is Adam Smith, informs us. The buzzword is empowering workers to care for themselves and their families in the context of free competition in a market for the few, in the midst of the era of Keynesian full employment and corresponding politics and social rights, when we have the intensification of expropriations.

From this general condition derived from changes in the world of labour and from the state's misery for social policies, the state of misery that Wacquant speaks of is generated, in times of permanent fiscal adjustment. It is bad social policy for those who cannot pay, with services disrupted and the precariousness of the workers who operate these services, which includes social workers. This process also includes directly induced privatization mechanisms: dismantling to privatize. But there are also

processes of appropriation of the public fund through public-private alliances, in its various formats. In the Brazilian case, we have the perennial strategy of the State Reform Master Plan (1995), of the constitution of a non-state public sector, which involves health, education, social assistance and environment policies: from there they are deployed as the new legal entities of the counter-reform of the State, social organizations, public foundations of private law. These are processes that question the pattern of rights outlined in the processes of political emancipation, where the most consolidated experiences in the universalization of rights have arrived.

Projects that oppose ultra-neoliberal neo-fascism

There is a second project of society, today with less force after years of neoliberalism, that does not break with the logic of capital, but rather seeks to manage it in the expectation of capitalism with a human face, in an attempt to regulate and control its most destructive impulses. It is a project that was born out of the international socialist movement at the end of the 19th century when the left discussed the strategy of reform or revolution to reach socialism and was divided between social democrats and communists. This field emerged from the great crisis of capitalism of 1929/32 and from the two world wars that tragically exposed the meaning of leaving market forces to their fate. And this project was encouraged by his disastrous participation in the defeat of the German revolution in 1918 and 1919, which culminated in the assassination of Rosa Luxemburg, among others. It was also consolidated due to the tragic trajectories of the socialist experience in Eastern Europe, it must be recognized.

But the most important impulse that catalyses the possibility of social democratic hegemony in the so-called post-war glory years came from the defeat of Nazi-fascism, from war as a perverse process of accumulation and from the third technological revolution arising from the war and applied to the durable goods and the spread of the "American way of life", conditions to enter into a long wave with an expansive tone of capitalism between 1945 and the late 1960s. With the Keynesian-Fordist social-democratic approach, which raised the welfare state in some parts of the world, this project sailed in the longest period of growth of capitalism under very determined conditions, that allowed improvements in the living conditions of the workers in a geopolitical situated way, and most importantly: the Americanist / Fordist ideological counterpoint that Gramsci already identified in his classic text, in the context of the "cold" war, in a world polarized. This is the world of the Beveridge Report, the world that Ken Loach portrayed so well in his film The Spirit of 45. A world that begins to unravel in the late 1960s, when young people realize that full employment is coming to an end, that this working class is white men and there is no stable place for women and blacks. And when a new crisis of capitalism arises, with neoliberalism and its antisocial

austerity measures, a bourgeois reaction that has lasted 40 years in the world and more than 20 years in Brazil, the social democracy is also in crisis. In Brazil, there are segments that demand regulation for a more humane capitalism that is not commanded by its most perverse and predatory sectors, generally the rentier traders on the stock market. Would the regulation project be enough to contain the fear of extracting value in times of structural crisis of capitalism? The social democratic project found its limits with the passage to a long wave with a depressing tone, as reported in the basic study of Mandel (1982): economic limits with the end of full employment and the expansion of precarious work and intellectual and moral limits, when the Social democratic governments, in alliance with the Eurocommunist parties, capitulate to the neoliberal agenda, sometimes under the argument of governability, yielding more and more to the pressure of the bourgeois reaction. Perry Anderson (1995), an obligatory reference to debate neoliberal hegemony in the world, shows the renegade movement of social democracy in relation to its original left reformism, and its turn towards the so-called third liberal social path, that is, a counter-reformist and neoliberal turn. This shows the strong hegemony of the capitalist project, which occurs in proportion to the exhaustion and defeat of the projects coming from the left, both social democratic and bureaucratic-Stalinist.

This defeat, whether expressed by the agenda actually implemented by social democratic governments in Western Europe since the mid-1980s, or by the fall of the Berlin Wall and capitalist restoration in Eastern Europe, is the basis for thinking today about the condition of affirmation of a third project, the socialist societal project, with which we think our professional ethical-political project has a greater identity; although social democracy which has been renewed and overheated and ultra-conservatism / neo-fascism also compete for the hegemony among us.

This is a moment for the reconstruction of a project of the socialist left, according to its time. With social democrats it is possible and sometimes necessary to form tactical alliances in defence of rights and against expropriations, maintaining a critical distance from their positions. On the other hand, to advance a project of the left today, it is necessary to make all the criticism of Stalinism and its variants, without concessions. A socialist project for the 21st century does not have gags, Kafkaesque processes and conspiracies to physically eliminate those who disagree. It has in democratization an inescapable element: it defends the power of the majority over the minority. It is not guided by destructive and anti-ecological productivism: it is eco-socialist. It is feminist and anti-racist, and acts against homophobia and all forms of oppression and persecution of behaviour. A socialism that respects the ancestral knowledge of the native peoples and their lands and customs. To prosper and gain material and political strength, this project needs to learn from history. We remember the precise words of

Daniel Bensaid when he says:

> *The misery of the world is more unbearable and unacceptable than ever. Another world is needed. But the dead past weighs heavily on the present. Stalinism discredited the revolution, social democracy and reforms […] After the great social and moral defeats of the 20th century, we have the right (and the duty) to start anew, to rearticulate the broken threads of emancipation, to change the world before it [definitively] plunges into social and ecological catastrophe (1999, p.125).*

Therefore, to contain an offensive on so many interlocking fronts, a response that involves economics, politics, culture, exploitation and oppression is urgent. It is essential to continue questioning the neo-fascist project to lead it into a free fall, deepening its cracks and contradictions. The fight agenda cannot go back and bet on a purely electoral future. It needs to be present and forceful here and now, on the streets, in virtual media, in universities, in debates. Each space of dispute becomes central, as an educational space for the construction of a counter-hegemony, resistance and self-defence. And we, social workers and students, are part of this process of widening cracks and contradictions, based on social struggles.

We need an anti-capitalist left at the height of the demands of this time of crisis and decadence, of this form of organization of life that leads us to death, the "necropolitics" (Mbembe, 2018) associated with the State of Exception (Agamben, 2004): mature and decadent capitalism. Nothing is more emblematic of necropolitics than the Brazilian government's attitude to the Covid-19 pandemic, which involved denial, genocidal naturalization and programmed ineptitude, causing more than 150,000 deaths. A left capable of making a united front to fight against setbacks, against the mortgage of the future. A left that can unleash a broad campaign of popular mobilization demonstrating the ongoing devastation that only the streets can contain, since the institutions of armoured democracy (Demier, 2017) seem incapable of taking action to curb barbarism. The overcoming, with greatness and courage, of the fragmentation in the field of the working class and its instruments and organizations, for a forceful and not exclusively electoral confrontation of devastation, is of the greatest urgency. We speak of the formation of a united workers' front to defeat Bolsonaro on the streets. In this same tone, it is urgent to affirm an alternative as a whole, of a program of transition to socialism, since capitalism, in its essential movement, has only been able to offer the destruction of the many for the benefit of the very few. The Brazilian Social Service

elections, since 1979, accredit us, free from all voluntarism and messianism (Iamamoto, 1982), to be part of this collective construction.

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CRITICAL PROPOSALS IN SOCIAL WORK

PROPUESTAS CRÍTICAS EN TRABAJO SOCIAL

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ARTICLE

Critique of critical thinking. Cartography of contemporary positions regarding critique and some theoretical and clinical orientations on the subject

Crítica del pensamiento crítico. Cartografía de posicionamientos contemporáneos a propósito de la crítica y algunas orientaciones teóricas y clínicas en la materia

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Abstract

The article discusses contemporary positions around the notion of critique, questioning both the schemes that comprise it in binary terms -positive acceptation of critique postulated by progressive positions versus negative acceptation of criticism assumed from conservative positions- as well as the neoliberal version of critique. The latter formulates some objections and proposes necessary changes under the essential condition of contributing to the

Keywords:
Critique; ideology; subjectivity; objectivity; neutrality

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reproduction of the global system. Both the positive and negative meanings of critique are subsumed by this neoliberal version, in which self-proclaimed 'realist', 'constructive' and 'modern' dominate contemporary discourse. The overlaps between these meanings of critique are multiple, going beyond the disciplinary and professional framework in which they are enunciated. In this sense, three theses are proposed on the question of contemporary critique: i) there is no critique in general, indeterminate, without precise orientation, without explicit or implicit social commitment, without theoretical framework or ideological positioning; ii) all critical meanings mobilize subjective logics which are, at the same time, irreducible; and iii) the binomial "necessary objectivity / impossible neutrality" plays a determining role in the different meanings, in their internal dynamics, in their alliances and in their divergences, and also in adhesions and rejections. Finally, a reflection is offered on the safeguards that critical thinking should satisfy in order to continue its task and face, with some success, the challenges of the contemporary moment.

Resumen

Palabras clave:
Crítica; ideología; subjetividad; objetividad; neutralidad

El artículo discute posicionamientos contemporáneos en torno a la noción de crítica, cuestionando tanto los esquemas que la comprenden en términos binarios –acepción positiva de la crítica postulada por posiciones progresistas versus acepción negativa de la crítica asumida desde posiciones conservadoras- como aquella versión neoliberal de la crítica. Esta última formula algunos reparos y propone cambios necesarios bajo la condición esencial de contribuir a la reproducción del sistema global. Tanto la acepción positiva como la acepción negativa de la crítica son subsumidas por esta versión neoliberal, la cual, autoproclamada 'realista', 'constructiva' y 'moderna', domina el discurso contemporáneo. Las imbricaciones entre estas acepciones de la crítica son múltiples, desbordando el marco disciplinario y profesional en el que se enuncian. En este sentido, se proponen tres tesis sobre la cuestión de la crítica contemporánea: i) no existe la crítica en general, indeterminada, sin orientación precisa, sin compromiso social explícito o implícito, sin referencial teórico ni posicionamiento ideológico; ii) todas las acepciones críticas movilizan lógicas subjetivas las cuales son al mismo tiempo irreductibles; y iii) el binomio "objetividad necesaria/neutralidad imposible" juega un rol determinante en las diferentes acepciones, en sus dinámicas internas, en sus alianzas y en sus divergencias, e igualmente en las adhesiones y rechazos. Finalmente, se ofrece una reflexión sobre los resguardos que el pensamiento crítico debiera satisfacer para proseguir su tarea y enfrentar, con algún éxito, los desafíos del momento contemporáneo.

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Introduction

"Critical", "critical thinking", "critical movement": usual formulas in different domains of experience and knowledge. Endowed with a positive aura in social work and in the social and human sciences, these formulas usually arouse immediate adherence. They function as banners of recognition. Their presence in a discourse indicates divergences of form or substance with respect to other discourses, laws, institutions and practices. In partial or complete opposition to the existing state of affairs, critical discourse does not claim to be neutral. It affirms a more or less explicit commitment in relation to ideals of progress; it advocates rectifications of greater or lesser importance to what exists. Its adherents usually serve in political or cultural groups, publications and progressive institutions, or in a personal but no less committed capacity.

A typical scenario that is not, however, unique. Several others are possible, also very widespread. Above all, the strictly opposite scenario: critical positions arouse strong reluctance and rejection in the conservative media. Synonymous with destabilization, if not destruction of ancestral values and customary practices, they are reproached for their lack of creative capacity, their ignorance and underestimation of the concrete imperatives of the social, literary, union or political sector in which they operate. A notable exception: when it comes to denouncing adverse positions, especially progressive ones, in order to reveal undercurrents, inconsistencies and errors. In this case, the critique is continuous, bitter, exalted. It is affirmed that the critical modalities deployed in front of them are nourished by social resentment, typical of losers, and even the doubtful mental health of those who make it a system. On the contrary, those who practice a measured and circumspect use of criticism are supposed to be calm, unassuming, which does not prevent some virtuous anger when their ideals are misrepresented.

On the one hand, an eminently positive sense of criticism, progressive, left. On the other, a radically negative, conservative, right-wing meaning. It is a term-to-term confrontation. It is usual for the positive meaning to denounce the caricatural representation of critique by the negative meaning, which, in turn, highlights the partisan impregnations to which her opponent yields and from which she considers herself exempt. Typical figures characterize each meaning. In one case, critical disassembly, a procedure that the positive meaning uses in order to reveal the interested maneuvers of the opposing field. In the other case, the ideological imprint, that concealment of reality from which criticism conceived as a systematically positive value suffers. It is usually confronted with truth, science, honest research, the right measure and other principles defined as indisputable, which of course every individual or civilized group respects. On more than one occasion, the first letter of the cited

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principles is a capital letter, a linguistic resource that underlines their intangible majesty.

The binary scheme -positive vs. negative meaning of critique- corresponds to a persistent reality, modulated according to disciplinary fields and political situations. It is found everywhere. To the point that, if progressive positions assume the positive meaning and conservative positions the negative meaning, it can also be argued, conversely, that the criticism accepted or rejected indicates the progressive or conservative character of a position. This scheme has a real defining power. Its terms function as a line of demarcation.

However, as in any binary scheme, polarity excludes nuances, interpenetrations, and intersections between its different elements. Therefore, it excludes the original combinations. This is what happens with a relatively recent position that, from the union and political dominance, is gradually installed in the social, health and educational fields. It is not impossible for it to progressively become the hegemonic position in these fields, taking into account the clever ideological and political camouflage that it entails.

This new stance ingeniously rescues the positive meaning of criticism by opposing it to this meaning, that is, to its origins. A sort of return to sender, so to speak. We are in the presence of a meaning in its positive way, but a radical difference, devoid of budgets and progressive objectives. Perfectly contemporary, this new look position emerges within the framework of neoliberalism today triumphant in multiple spheres of individual and collective existence. It is the neoliberal version of the critique or, if you prefer, the neoliberal critique of the existing world, insatiable and always dissatisfied with the still incomplete implantation of neoliberalism in this or that sector.

It is no longer a question, as in the usual negative option, of rejecting criticism or stigmatizing its systematic use. On the contrary, the criticism is clearly and emphatically affirmed - as the exclusive attribute of the once negative but finally modernized option, if not uninhibited. Such is true criticism, criticism worthy of its name, which at the same time confirms the excesses of others and designs viable paths of renewal. It is precisely here to forge constructive critique. Ad hoc formula, typical of this position, underlines how far critique is acceptable and when it becomes harmful. Its constructive character attenuates its critical status. This beneficial critique for the global system or for the social or cultural sphere in which it intervenes formulates some objections and proposes necessary changes -without ceasing to contribute, an essential condition, to the reproduction of said system. Therefore, if its dominance is in danger, it can pass tactical alliances with extreme positions with which it does not necessarily coincide but are useful to it - a common phenomenon in the political domain.

Freed from its immobility of yesteryear, the negative meaning transformed by the neoliberal machinery has become a self-proclaimed realistic option, as if it had gone through a facelift. It thus hopes to blur the rather dark and obscurantist notoriety that the negative meaning has in certain spaces. It hopes at the same time to overcome the supposedly inauthentic and gratuitous criticism practiced by the positive and progressive sense. Today, it continues to predominate in all kinds of antiquated positions, incapable of modernization, recalcitrant to any profound modification, to any effective progress. This is illustrated by this third meaning, a good part of the workers' unions and parties that call themselves progressive, both clinging like leeches to old apocalyptic myths, and even revolutionary ones. The positive meaning is part of the same decline and generates identical disappointments. In short, from now on the era of realistic, constructive, modern criticism extends. A new world, a new critique is underway. Higher business schools, among other institutions, usually transmit this type of discourse. Mutation -some say revolution- celebrated by vast cohorts of writers, teachers, essayists, journalists, in numerous countries. His motto is that critical thinking is no longer a monopoly of positive meaning and, in politics, of progressive currents. Therefore, a choice must be made between optimization (neoliberal) and stagnation (progressive).

What can be deduced from this quick overview, but hopefully eloquent enough, regarding critique?

Its complexity, undoubtedly. Each meaning, which we have mentioned in the singular, actually includes multiple internal varieties. They are all plural and disparate. Each one names a group. The singular makes it possible to isolate the common denominator(s), undoubtedly indispensable, actually scattered in heterogeneous declines.

Pointing out such heterogeneity is a useful score against dogmatic uses that imagine both admitted critique or disqualified critique as the archetype of all possible critique. Complexity, too, because all the meanings evoked are socially situated, articulated to certain worldviews, to certain doctrines regarding economic inequalities and ideological and political differences, to conceptions regarding gender specificities. Neither option is reduced to the mere professional framework. Its defenders and followers can ignore it, and even become disinterested in what they classify as a context outside of critique. But it is rare that his detractors succumb to such naivety; on the contrary, they tend to insist again and again on this strategic dimension, both professional and extra-professional. How to ignore it, indeed. In force in the field of social work, the different options also intervene in union and political action, within disciplines such as epistemology, pedagogy, philosophy. They practice social science assiduously. Its integration into common sense, typical of the middle classes, reinforces

the obvious and natural appearance of the negative option and tends to discredit the positive option. As for the realistic version, we know that it occupies a growing space in managerial discourses, the demands of unions and employer pressure groups, self-designated publications as moderate, a good part of journalistic networks, cultural campaigns in the direction of the popular classes.

It can then be deduced that, in terms of critique, contemporary options are ordered with respect to neoliberalism: for, against, in association -none without it. This determining parameter, implicit or explicit, facilitates the expansion of negative and realistic meanings and accentuates the antiquated and utopian character of the positive meaning. Such is the socio-historical condition thanks to which, regardless of their internal qualities and flaws, certain meanings prosper, and others become bogged down, must be rebuilt and restored in terms of guidelines and procedures. The intelligence, the expertise, the cultural capital of its defenders and attackers are not at stake, because we are not in the presence of a vague context that would magically stop at the threshold of this or that meaning. Said socio-historical parameter constitutes a condition of existence or, on the contrary, a weighty obstacle. Inexhaustible source of inspiration or ever-alert censorship.

Let us reaffirm then that all meanings go beyond the professional and disciplinary framework in which they are enunciated. Such is the reason for their eventual convergences and their frank oppositions. It is also for this reason that its defense or its rejection give rise to consistent polemics, censorship and large-scale mobilizations, conscious and unconscious adhesions and discrepancies on the part of the human subjects that carry them. The different meanings operate on a specific object -critique- which is also a pretext to address other, more general problems. Its modus operandi on its notorious objects suggest the alliances and oppositions likely to unfold in other spaces, on other objects.

Consequently, perceiving them as purely intellectual squabbles or mere personal points of view implies ignoring that they are socio-historical positions in art, social work and political action. The more you take them literally, the less the rich dimensions that each carries appear. And less is it understood that they provoke arduous controversies, impressive affinities, powerful disagreements.

Three theses on the question of contemporary critique

LAt this point, we would like to submit three theses on the question of contemporary critique for the reader's consideration. Further discussions should correct this initial outline.

ARTICLE

Thesis 1. There is no critique in general, indeterminate, without precise orientation, without explicit or implicit social commitment, without theoretical framework or ideological positioning. It is not a question of any kind of ought to be, of a desirable state or simply possible (there should be no indeterminate critique, let's avoid it, etc.). This first thesis confirms a real state, an unavoidable situation: in fact, such a criticism does not exist, nor can it exist.

Indeed, no meaning is exercised outside of concrete social history, but in a space framed by specific forces and circumstances, crossed by questions and problems that each option deals with, in its own way. This is valid for yesterday, for today, and most likely for tomorrow. Exercising a meaning -positive, negative, realistic- consists of arguing, supporting or challenging, in taking sides based on certain theoretical and ideological references. Condition sine qua non to account for the forms and contents of each meaning, the allies and adversaries that are requested or could be requested, the objectives that are pursued and the particular position that defines each one.

It is then clear that, whatever the position on critique, it does not stand by itself, stating it does not automatically make it intelligible, let alone justify it. Criticism works by delegation. Defending it, rejecting it or inventing an unprecedented formula implies confirming or questioning the theoretical and ideological references that this criticism represents. It is not essential that adherents and opponents are aware of this objective data, ultimately impossible to avoid: critique is a link in a chain that extends here and beyond it. Supporting or rejecting critique -in reality, a particular critical modality, endowed with specific contents and objectives- is an act in itself, a defined operation and is also, at the same time, indissolubly, a symptom to be deciphered.

Criticism travels solely and exclusively through meanings, declensions, interpretations. It is inexorably inscribed in a particular position: critique means a certain critique. Therefore, saying "critical", "critical thinking", "critical will" and other formulas of the same caliber are equivalent to saying little and implying a lot, probably too much: opening doors to all kinds of misunderstandings.

Thesis 2. All critical meanings mobilize subjective logics which are, at the same time, irreducible. Double thesis, dialectic. Whatever the meanings, they assume individuals and human groups that carry them out or challenge them, that associate or exclude each other and even dispute in the name of this or that theoretical-practical position regarding critique. Starting from this necessary human presence, as in any other domain, questions of status and social prestige, collaboration and competence, are put into play as well as intimate elements, narcissisms and their inexorable hurts, preferences and significant grudges in the history of the subjects: the theme of the

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critique serves as a support or excuse in order to express -sublimate- or decant imaginary configurations, old frustrations and anxious loves that do not necessarily concern it, but serve as an outlet for them. In summary, the affable, hostile or indifferent reception of the critique, as well as its institutional and social paths, are related to personal interests of all kinds, with ethical positions of all colors, not always exemplary, for the rest.

Taking this subjective variable into account, identifying the direction that it prints in the elaboration of a meaning, the ingredients that it accentuates or on the contrary discards, helps to unravel absurd situations at first sight and apparently irrational arguments. Taking into account the subjective variable constitutes an irreplaceable contribution to the rarely linear logic of a system.

Complementary benefit: said variable indicates that none of the three meanings embodies a self-propelled entelechy, operating in a closed circuit. They are not mummified entities but living evolutionary formats. The passions they arouse do not present an exclusively intellectual or solely political aspect. Women and men manipulate them, get fired up by them, agitate them, agree to pay dearly to make them succeed. Capital reserve, however: it is impossible to establish a psychic typology or, even more far-fetched attempt, a psychic causality of the different critical meanings on pain of succumbing to psychologism, that theology that causes social configurations to derive from subjective desires converted into predestined recipients of those settings.
Now, if human subjects intervene in the approval and rebound of critical positions, if indeed they are essential to the existence of each and every one of them, in no case does their presence justify why this. In this sense Hamlet is never far away: There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy (Shakespeare, (1975 [1603]). In other words, the subjective variable becomes theological variation when it pretends to explain and explain itself without any external resource, when this partial explanation is supposed to be omni-explanatory, the foundation of things and beings, the human world is abandoned in search of some celestial nimbus.

It's about nothing less but also nothing else, that of an important, significant dimension, and above all not unique dimension. Nothing to do with a sovereign cause or with an essential purpose. Abusive extrapolations, such as psychologism, can be overcome when attention is paid to the singularity of situations, a singularity that includes at the same time that it exceeds individuals and collectivities; because there are also institutions of all kinds, relations of power and subordination, economic mechanisms. Proceed on a case-by-case basis, examining what is at stake each time and how this game is actually played out. If the subjective variable can clarify certain situations, it can also throw a thick smokescreen over them.

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In any case, let us discard the hypothesis of a subjective intrusion into the objective mechanics of critical meanings. Instead of intrusion, articulation, hinge, joint. Nothing more superfluous than to insist on eradicating subjective logic. Nothing more interesting than working thanks to and despite them. It is then clear that no sanitary cordon is capable of transforming subjective problems and social configurations into impermeable worlds. It is, however, possible that an epistemological cord prevents us from embroiling these elements in a kind of undifferentiated magma.

Let us enter the second phase of our dialectical thesis, a corollary of the preceding one. Postulate: once a text is produced, its author becomes one more reader of such a text. A reader who joins all the others, without particular privilege. A reader who may be too much when he insists on the subjective conditions, intentions, pleasures and displacements of his production, on what he wanted to express, what he would like to be understood from the writing -to the detriment of the theoretical and political dimensions, that is, of the records objectives of the particular contents, of the scope and limits of the text. Under these conditions, questioning the result (architecture and logic of the critical meaning) is frequently perceived as a questioning of the honesty of the producer(s), such a narcissistic wound inflicted on their omnipotence— as if the essential thing consisted of not getting to the point. The same thing happens with the distinction "authentic criticism / false criticism", self-justification of the realistic option, perfectly useless to think about the internal and external dynamics of the options. That is why reasoned debate is a rather rare event and the parade of parallel opinions such a normal ritual.

In short, critical meanings are not subsumed in individual or collective subjectivity. Their arguments, positions, allies and adversaries, theoretical and ideological references, their goals, mobilize eminently conceptual, social, economic, corporate, and of course political perspectives. They are animated by objective logics, at least trans-subjective. As such, they function beyond the consent of individuals and groups. They obey intrinsic mechanisms, causalities and limitations. They display rationales that individuals and groups can celebrate, ignore, or misrepresent without affecting their workings - unless, of course, they penetrate into those workings and work on them accordingly. In this sense, critical meanings are comparable to bodies that, taking into account the law of gravity, fall towards the center of the Earth with or without the agreement of the subjects involved in this fall. However, since there is no fatality, the fall of the bodies as well as the critical meanings admit alternatives, exceptions, minor or major modifications.

Operational consequence: when discussing the different critical positions, careful attention should be paid to the possible confusion of levels and the amalgamation of

records. Consider then that the objections, replies and other attacks that one receives can represent signs, marks, indications to be reworked. If our adversaries are not always right, they are always right in any case. In a word, depsychologization work is a highly sensitive task for health. It is often fruitful to replace narcissistic excitements with some ethical clarification. The quality, relevance and even effectiveness of each of the critical meanings are at stake.

Thesis 3. The binomial "necessary objectivity / impossible neutrality" plays a determining role in the different meanings, in their internal dynamics, in their alliances and in their divergences, and also in the adhesions and rejections of individuals and groups in their respect. The dissemination or censorship of these meanings is closely correlated with this binomial. Agreeing on a strategic position opens the way for a series of advantageous elucidations.

Let's start by evoking the problem that this binomial allows us to elaborate. It is, in effect, a classic of epistemology, social sciences, law, professional practices in social work (diagnoses, in particular) and its clinical analysis (the so-called "supervision") and discussions of common sense.

What is it about? The title-topic of this article ("critique of critical thought") could be extended indefinitely: "critique of critique of critical thought", and so on ad infinitum. Endless duplication. How far can we go and how do we know that we are successful? On what does this criticism of the criticism take support and how can we be sure that a new criticism will not be necessary? Let us remember in this regard that, in his youthful writings, Karl Marx (2006 [1844]) subjects the position of the so-called young Hegelians to an irony as ruthless as it is correct. In order to establish the criticism of any system on a definitive basis, they invent "critical critique", which is supposed to go beyond the limits of simple criticism. Ingenious ruse, Marx points out, who wonders, however, who and how guarantees such criticism squared. Why not continue the cloning? Many other authors, before and after Marx, are confronted with this really arduous problem. Not just authors, really. All sorts of court instances operating in various domains (legal, professional, etc.) are requested in order to state the last, definitive, authentic and true word in an existing or likely litigation, establishing lines of conduct and possible concessions. Will the word thus obtained be objective and / or neutral? For their part, the courts know that far from setting the perennial rules of the binomial "objectivity / non-neutrality", they actually outline provisional and relatively admissible commitments.

A hard problem indeed. Above all, because of the general understanding that permeates it. Indeed, it is assumed that "objectivity" and "neutrality" go hand in hand, the presence

of the first implies the presence of the second and vice versa. Non-neutrality is then synonymous with non-objectivity, and vice versa. Reason why the negative meaning simultaneously denounces the non-neutrality and the deficient objectivity, if not null, of the positive meaning: it presupposes that each of these factors explains the other. For this reason, it tends to dispense with a precise definition of one factor and therefore the other.

This current interpretation is not, however, the only possible one. Not especially the most fruitful. The synonymy "objectivity = neutrality" unnecessarily complicates the problem and ends up making it insoluble. Another approach is possible, according to the following work scheme (Karsz, 2011 and 2017).

Let us consider objectivity and non-neutrality in terms of specific and therefore structurally plural effects, dependent on two regimes that are also specific and structurally different. These are not interchangeable synonyms. Their respective compositions, their objects and their objectives differ completely and totally. Fundamental data of the interpretation that we propose here.

Objectivity belongs to the regime of knowledge, of argumentation. His training mobilizes notions and concepts, theoretical and methodological rigor, logical requirement, empirical demonstration. Its aim brings together reflections, analysis, debates. The error is familiar, at least partial rectification as a necessary and usual mechanism. It aims at knowledge, the peak moment in a process of production of relative and progressive definitions, in the course of which the doubt changes its aspect and content several times, while its function as a stimulating sting persists indefinitely. Objectivity is the possible effect of meanings, insofar as they reason their use of critique, justify the need or, on the contrary, its theoretical and practical inefficiency, the discursive techniques they deploy, their rhetoric and key-terms, and of course his way of countering his adversaries. In short: the objectivity is comparable to the Dutch polders, portions of the mainland reclaimed from the sea that need constant consolidation in order not to disappear.

Neutrality harbors a myriad of components, from subjective beliefs and passions to social commitment, from sublimation to militancy, from union interests to ethical positions, from indifference to accountability in the face of the future of the world. It also includes "class instinct", Lenin's metaphor for the typical and unmistakable repercussions induced by the socio-economic and political position on the attitudes, affections and thoughts of the individuals and groups occupying such a position. For their part, individuals and groups usually experience these repercussions in terms of spontaneous results of their free will, natural and necessary (inexplicable) corollaries of life in society.

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Insofar as each and every one of the aforementioned components privileges certain elements, positions, objectives, and excludes others, insofar as they promote certain positions against others, neutrality always consists, in fact, of a non-neutrality.

Two examples. An act of institutional foundation (National Constitution, regulation of a social service or a social policy guideline) proclaims religious neutrality: it is actually a manifestly non-neutral position regarding the relationship of religions with the state apparatus, its presence in social relations, its non-mandatory nature in the celebration of marriages and births, in obtaining aid. Religious structures tend to be extremely concerned about this non-neutrality that, taking sides against the religious monopoly of civil life, try to contain the non-neutrality of said structures. Another example, ethical positions. Contrary to what spiritualism claims, the strength of these positions comes from their non-neutralities, from the fact that they do not exist in the air but in the heart of history, in the commitments contracted in favor of certain social forces against others.

To reproach a meaning for not being neutral is to reproach it for existing. Its relevance, the reason for its existence, the milestone that a meaning represents in a debate lies precisely in its non-neutrality. Size precision: neutrality and its absence are never at stake. It is always, solely and exclusively, the forms, the contents, the scope, the values actually adopted or rejected, the references that are specifically appreciated or undermined, the positions that are actually promulgated or -on the contrary- discarded. Sense, then, of the negative meaning when it emphasizes the non-neutrality of the positive meaning: whatever the topic addressed, it is indisputable that it enunciates oriented, interested, partisan perspectives. Indubitable assertion. Irremediably erroneous assertion when it supposes that a meaning could or should be neutral, which allows this negative meaning to ignore its own commitments and partialities, its inscription in a historically connoted theoretical and ideological problem, its socially saturated ties with certain points of view, the controversies which he takes part in and is party to. In short, the positive meaning is not neutral only with respect to the non-neutrality of the negative meaning. The meanings do not differ because some would be neutral and others little or nothing, but because their respective non-neutralities are not of the same ilk, because they pursue increasingly singular goals. Without forgetting the fatal habit that stigmatizes practices, discourses and configurations whose non-neutrality ostensibly diverges from those not recognized as such, given their dominant character and their universal appearance.

With greater or less regularity, all the meanings use one of the registers to diminish or to praise the opposite register. Let them be two cases of figure, opposite and complementary. Case 1: the non-neutrality of a meaning automatically diminishes, and even invalidates the cognitive performance of said meaning, the relevance of its

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statements, the rigor and scope of its analyses. The meaning that suffers from such an axiological failure suffers from serious difficulties in thinking correctly. Case 2: on the contrary, thanks to its non-neutrality, a meaning arrives without any major obstacle to objectively reason the criticism and to issue an adequate position on the matter - a position in which each, in its own way, can adopt the three meanings.

However, with non-neutrality, compromises and positions of critical meanings do not at all dispense with examining their eventual objectivity in the most detailed and rigorous way possible. Little or nothing can be said about this objectivity without going into the heart of the analyses, the text and the backroom of the arguments, in the body of epistemological and clinical debates. In other words, tourism allows only visiting but not knowing a country, even less inhabiting it, feeling and accompanying its palpitations.

Determining fact: non-neutrality can represent an obstacle or, on the contrary, an opening, it can hinder little or a lot the production of knowledge or, on the contrary, greatly facilitate it. The current representations are tributaries of a partial and partial vision in this regard. In this perspective, neutrality and non-neutrality represent value judgments, the first eminently correct and the second naturally harmful. These representations are incapable of capturing them as nothing less and nothing more than as existing realities, as configurations of fact, neither good nor bad, susceptible to various declines. When it comes to ideologies, the quintessential prototype of non-neutrality, current representations imagine them as solely anti-scientific devices, prisoners of blind militancies, and not also - more than once, en masse - as anticipations and capital companions of scientific work, as designs of new and welcoming modalities of individual and collective existence. Relegated to the unilateral role of inveterate adversaries, it is practically impossible to perceive that ideologies constitute precious, often essential allies. This difficulty does not reside in the theme of ideology but in its current, ordinary or allegedly scientific approach [2].

Let's keep going. Indispensable objectivity, impossible neutrality: these scores highlight the characteristics of both settings, and consequently what can be required or set aside in their respect. Configurations that, as we see, are considered successively, each one in its own right. But that is not how they appear and function in different meanings. Their crossovers, influences, and overlaps are reciprocal and constant; their facilitating or, on the contrary, hindering roles are exercised without fainting, continuously, mutually. Each prospers or recedes thanks to and against the opposite configuration. Neither is sheltered from the other. They are specific, not waterproof.

[2] Frequenting the writings of Louis Althusser (1970) is precious to rectify these theoretical misunderstandings and their practical, clinical, and political impasses.

We are in the presence of a dosage - a dosage of one and the other - and not of a dilemma. Unlike a simple opposition, if not simplistic, and that in this title presents a reality that is more than improbable, the dosing values the interrelations, interpenetrations and influences of two effectively specific poles despite and thanks to the opposite pole. The dilemma is static, defined once and for all. The dosage is dynamic, changing, evolutionary. Dialectical principle par excellence.

Dosage implies that both configurations operate in positive, negative and realistic meanings, each time with particular content. In this regard, we advocate exercising a kind of indulgent prejudice, according to which the most irritating and dogmatic of meanings means something, presents a thesis to be closely examined; the party will does not completely suffocate the rational project nor does it necessarily inspire an ideological and fair political stance. Slipping between the lines, deciphering what does not appear in the text but what it says, is part of the reading work. Dig up the sayings and interdictions of each configuration, detail the dosage, the combination, the reciprocal fertilization, the intervention of each configuration thanks to the other, despite and against it, its contribution to the reproduction of the meaning considered and the elucidations of the real that it provides. It is about practicing a rigorous deconstruction of the meaning considered, in order to consolidate its weak points or, depending on the case, optimize the exit prospects. This means resorting to one or the other of the three meanings, since no point of view is stated here or beyond confrontations and alliances.

The result of such an undertaking, which in fact cannot be carried out in a single day, is a final radical displacement of the problem from which we started. This seeks absolute certainty, definitely indisputable, the origin of all origin. Its links with religious issues can easily be identified. In turn, abandoning said problematic implies posing the problem on a new basis - it implies modifying the terms of the problem. We have already advanced some elements: what matters first and foremost is the concrete game between effects of objectivity and effects of non-neutrality, their uninterrupted interpenetrations regarding a given theme at a given moment in human history. An essential point: objectivity and non-neutrality exist only within social history. They are evolutionary, obviously debatable and therefore indefinitely improvable, on condition of accumulating sufficient arguments and empirical evidence. Its guarantee lies, not in a celestial afterlife, a disciplinary committee or a principle transfigured into a statue, but in an incessant work of demonstration-rectification and in the advances thus induced.

Of course, we admit that this path does not lead to the absolute origin, to the guarantee of guarantees, for one and only one reason: such an origin is part of a theological fable outside of which it makes no sense. Let's abandon the “absolute / relative” dichotomy in favor of the work of the concept (Hegel, 2017 [1807]) and its endless rectifications.

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How do these observations work for each of the three meanings?

In the negative sense, the argumentation usually concentrates on some phrases and propositions that, reiterated like archetypes, rarely tolerate questions and discussions. The contempt for systematic critique, as well as the conservative defense of the existing, consume a lot of time and energy. This does not prevent it from working. On the contrary, it assures him a comfortable space in the perimeter of hegemonic ideologies, which, like a background fabric, attribute to this meaning a golden obviousness. Reason why any demand for justification becomes a priori suspected of a crime of lese majesty. Dismissed from cultivating conceptual rigor, this meaning runs up against little resistance, not despite the common places that it conveys, but thanks to and based on them.

The realistic meaning presents a similar operation. Although it suffers, like the previous meaning, from conceptual insolvency, the favorable reception it reserves for critique, a certain critique, its claim for a healthy and constructive critique that never precisely defines, gives it an aura of subtlety, insight, and above all a finally elusive presence. Often, the positive meaning fails to grasp this position that is both an accomplice (in appearance) and an adversary (in fact). That is why some of its variants affirm their full and complete neutrality without perceiving the contradiction which they incur, or they approach these issues with strong hesitations, swings and indisputable discomfort.

The same occurs in the case of the positive meaning. To found, to consolidate, to develop that thinking against the current of the dominant certainties of the so called "critical thinking", requires tenacious efforts as well as obstinate resistance against the onslaught determined to contain it, if not to destroy it. Its adherents may be tempted to withdraw into belief and abandon, a little or a lot, the record of deliberation, if not explicitly and deliberately, at least in fact. Its main care is to convince the already convinced. Some use the names of the founding fathers and their once-important contributions as a protective shield or magic potion. A terrible negligence thus appears in the open: the updating of the references and the readjustment of the arguments constitute a pure and simple demand for survival. Not obvious, of course. They suppose fidelity and innovation, iron principles and ductile strategies, tradition and rupture: not one or the other, but both at the same time - under penalty of becoming a museum piece.

The difficulty of confronting the unprecedented forms of anti-critique and assent to the reigning order weakens the positive meaning, especially in the face of its realistic opponent. This thorny situation leads to positions similar to those of the preceding meanings: ritualization of the arguments, sacralization of the precursor teachers and

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parents, ad libitum repetition of the founding gestures, idioms and semantic contractions. Or, an alternative complicit in the heart of the same problem; some believe that denying the referential founders is enough to automatically change their position. They forget that saying otherwise is often the same as saying the same in reverse, usually less well. In all cases, an unequivocal symptom manifests itself: the strong reluctance to learn from one's mistakes and to take advantage of objections that come from outside. The adversaries do not stop denouncing this phantom of "besieged fortress" which in fact functions as the contribution of the positive sense to the sabotage of their own position. A way of remembering that dogmatism, in effect, is not just someone else's scourge.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the positive meaning is undoubtedly the most stressed of the three, the one that needs care, because of the external pressures that it constantly faces and its repeated internal constraints.

This double causality explains that, to continue its task today, to face with any success the challenges of modern times, the so-called “critical thinking” must satisfy certain precautions. The operation already carried out by the negative meaning when he invents his realistic version.

The first of these precautions may seem banal, if not superfluous. Indeed, throughout this article we have emphasized the fact that a thought is not critical because it claims this epithet or because its opponents attribute it to it. The positive or negative, exalting or pejorative appeal of said adjective mobilizes complex and ramified problems, independent of the good or less good will of one or more individuals and groups. A self-proclaimed critical thinking can gradually become "realistic", if not reactionary: not because it is a victim of circumstances, but because circumstances help it develop some of its inner tendencies. Proclaiming over and over your deep critical commitment does not prevent you from lending your assistance to what you hate, it does not prevent you from being a consenting victim.

The second collection is a consequence of the first. Since critical thinking cannot be limited to mere statements, its validity today passes through its performative capacity, its explanatory power, its work on the empirical, if not domestic tests of its assertions, its abandonment of all demonization of efficacy, of the efficiency of the protocols and other formalities that it is important mainly to deconstruct and secondarily to denounce. More than an academic cliché or a teacher's tic, argumentation as rigorous as possible avoids yielding to the realistic meaning the monopoly of creation, of discovery, of the new.

The third collection, **last but not least,** concerns the use of the classics and other founding fathers and, therefore, of the theoretical and ideological references. A radical choice is imposed. Whether it is a proven track record once and for all, because in fact what has been built in the past is of excellent workmanship and has opened up new and promising perspectives, in which case it is intended that its contemporary invocation alone validates the analyses that are practiced and the postures that are adopted. A certain dexterity in the manipulation of important terms corroborates this rest of the warrior. It is enough then to sing a thought that is supposed to be critical today because it was so emphatically yesterday. It is, however, highly improbable that the virtues of the present automatically derive from the merits of the past.

Let us be, and we now approach a position irreducible to the preceding one, the founding fathers and the classical references are effectively inescapable, neither replaceable nor submissive to any fashion. They are also not negotiable according to the convenience of the moment. They are inescapable to the extent that they are repeatedly updated, enduringly contemporary, and lastingly current. The classics are great because they didn't just live yesterday. That is why it is important to remove them from the reverential pantheon in order to insert them into life and its furious contemporary upheavals.

A re-founding is probably in progress. Beyond the great phrases that sound so good and say so little, critical thinking, a device for interrogating evidence that does not resign itself to the world as it is, an indispensable connector for being able to breathe, needs to prove that reasoned critique constitutes an offensive and effective resource, unlike uncritical thinking, lazy thinking that thinks as little as possible and with a maximum of misunderstandings.

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CRITICAL PROPOSALS IN SOCIAL WORK

PROPUESTAS CRÍTICAS EN TRABAJO SOCIAL

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ARTICLE

The impact of philosophical and theoretical/epistemological productions on the constitution of the discipline

El impacto de las producciones filosóficas y teórico/epistemológicas en la constitución de la disciplina

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Abstract

This article aims to work on the relationship between philosophy and epistemology with social work, assuming a genealogical reading of its evolution that will allow us to highlight the points of contact and the divergences. A critical analysis of the current positions on Mary Richmond's productions is presented, reflecting on her influences, her contributions and her positions, asking ourselves what is the connection between these interpretative views and the more positivist / functionalist epistemic positions of the social work, or even those oriented towards Marxism / dialectics, insofar as these two approaches have been, in different periods, hegemonic in the profession / discipline? To elaborate on this discussion, we refer to another disciplinary field: Ferdinand de Saussure's contributions to structural linguistics, alongside psychoanalysis.

Keywords:
epistemology; social work; review; positivism; Marxism; interpretation

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These perspectives allow us to consider language as an ordering principle and to show the emergence and relevance of the interpretive approach. We propose this reading precisely because we consider the difficulty social work has had to be included in this perspective, despite the ingrained technical-instrumental and theoretical-epistemic traditions that advocate or promote the importance of interpretation. The end of the text opens up new questions, rather than formally elaborated answers. The opening and closing point, in a spiral, is reflexivity and criticism.

Resumen

Este artículo tiene como objetivo trabajar la relación de la filosofía y la epistemología con el trabajo social, asumiendo una lectura genealógica de su devenir que nos permitirá poner en evidencia sus puntos de contacto y sus divergencias. Se presenta un análisis crítico de las posiciones más actuales sobre las producciones de Mary Richmond, reflexionando respecto de sus influencias, sus aportes y sus posicionamientos, preguntándonos ¿cuál es la conexión entre estas miradas, interpretativas, y las posiciones epistémicas más positivistas/funcionalistas del trabajo social, o incluso las orientadas hacia el marxismo/dialéctica, en tanto que estos dos enfoques han sido, en períodos diferentes, hegemónicos en la profesión/disciplina? Para elaborar esta discusión, hacemos referencia a otro campo disciplinar: los aportes de Ferdinand de Saussure para la lingüística estructural, y, por otro lado, el psicoanálisis. Estas perspectivas nos permiten considerar al lenguaje como principio ordenador y evidenciar la emergencia y actualidad del enfoque interpretativo. Planteamos esta lectura justamente porque consideramos que al trabajo social le ha costado, y le cuesta, incluirse en esta perspectiva, pese a las arraigadas tradiciones tanto técnico-instrumentales como teórico-epistémicas que abogan o promulgan la importancia de la interpretación. El final del texto abre a nuevas interrogantes, antes que a respuestas formalmente elaboradas. El punto de apertura y cierre, en espiral, es la reflexividad y la crítica.

Palabras clave:
epistemología; trabajo social; crítica; positivismo; marxismo; interpretación

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Introduction

We think of social work as a politically oriented profession, that is, with objectives and mission based on rights, in accompanying the processes of construction and / or defense of citizenship in the broadest sense[2]. This perspective is accompanied by the understanding that politics is the questioning of established institutions in pursuit of the strengthening of new ones through the exercise of individual and collective autonomy.

This line of thought is complemented by the conceptualization that, since 2010, we have through epistemology understood it as a political act of exercise of criticism, understanding the latter - criticism - as the questioning of collectively admitted representations (González-Saibene, 2011). Both conceptions - critical and political - are articulated in the thought of Cornelius Castoriadis via his posthumous book, *Ciudadanos Sin Brújula* (2000), although in his work they do not always appear with the same emphasis or in the same sense.

Along these lines, we also think of the profession / discipline as the result of a permanent movement of socio-historical construction. That is to say, the social produces subjects that carry it and that in turn produce it, in certain moments and situations. "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past" (Marx, 2003, p. 13).

This leads us to identify the epistemic place or approach from which we speak, that is, critical thinking, which is not necessarily or exclusively Marxist / dialectical / Hegelian (which has been deepened by the Frankfurt School and its Critical Theory[3]) but is more specifically nourished by the interpretative approach, in its poststructuralist and hermeneutical aspects.[4] With certain critical thinking there is no 'the' truth. There are no true and unique positions, but hegemonic ones. Therefore, what is developed in this article is part of a series of postulates emerging from productions of more than thirty years of teaching and research in undergraduate and graduate studies in Argentine and foreign universities, added to more than twenty years of practice in the field, which

[2] In Argentina, the Federal Law of Social Work n ° 27072 (2014) understands by social work "the profession based on practice and an academic discipline that promotes change and social development, social cohesion, and strengthening and liberation of people. The principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversity are fundamental to social work". We include all of this when working on the broad concept of citizenship in this text.

[3] Today there is a refreshing call, in the events of Social Sciences in general, towards THE Critical Theories.

[4] Although following J. Derrida (1995) when he pronounces the "Specters of Marx", we will assume that Specters was the first title that Marx thought of for his Manifesto, a term recovered by Derrida in said text to account for a critique of Marx's heritage in contemporary times, sustained criticism from his particular philosophical theory: deconstruction. The "Specters of Marx" is not exactly a book about Marx; it is a reading of Marx in the context of the defeat of those who proclaimed themselves and were accepted as his heirs, along with the geopolitical triumph of his enemy, economic and political liberalism.

gave us the benefit of interacting theory / practice[5] in a constant and productive way.

We also want to establish that we work from ruptures. And this is essential to consider as we dedicate ourselves to the analysis of the fundamentals and developments of the profession. We do so from what is known as French epistemology, understanding from this perspective the contributions of Gastón Bachelard (1979; 1984), a French physicist and philosopher who left us with discontinuous thought. To speak of ruptures is to say that a theoretical perspective or a disciplinary field is broken from an obstacle, and this warrants a constant epistemological vigilance, in order to avoid the deformations that obstacles impose on us or that make them appear as barriers impossible to franchise.

Some necessary conceptualizations

Bachelard (1984) understood the epistemological obstacle as the resistance or inertia of thought to thought. The problem of scientific knowledge must be posed in terms of obstacles. It is possible to know something by going against a previous knowledge. The epistemological rupture occurs at the moment in which a science is constituted by cutting or breaking with its prehistory and with its ideological environment, and in that sense, it is not an instant break or an absolute novelty that makes a clean sweep from that above, but of a complex process in the course of which an unprecedented order of knowledge is constituted. It is a fact simultaneously of partial recovery of the past and of unpublished creation. Every epistemological rupture is, thus, a point or threshold of no-return.

Epistemological vigilance, on the other hand, is the reflective attitude that leads us to apprehend the logic of error in order to build the logic of scientific discovery. Whether as a polemic against error or as an effort to submit the approximate truths of science and its methods, science employs a methodical review. In this way, we can free ourselves from ideologies, beliefs, opinions, and immediate certainties, demanding the establishment of intersubjective control (Bachelard, 1979; 1984).

A first example that Bachelard (1984) describes tells us about a primary obstacle, that of opinion. This process of ideological centring is taken up, exemplifying it, by Sigmund Freud in the reminder of the three narcissistic wounds or affronts of humanity - in his

[5]We use the bar as a tension; just as in dialectics the poles of an equation are distinguished by their contradictory essence, of mutual insight and generation of movement and struggle (the "motor of history").

case, European - (Freud, 1979). [6]

In a movement coinciding with the contributions of Bachelard, but almost three decades later, Thomas Kuhn (2004), an American physicist, historian and philosopher, showed the revolutionary character of the progress of science which he presents as an open scheme. Foresight → normal science (paradigm) → crisis → revolution → new paradigm → new normal science → crisis → revolution → new paradigm → new normal science → new crisis. This discontinuism is the revolutionary character of scientific knowledge: a revolution supposes the abandonment of a scientific structure and its replacement by another, incompatible with the previous one.

In the same text, Kuhn introduces the concept of paradigm, in its broadest sense. We will point it out and accompany it with some other conceptualizations that, we understand, broaden its focus. A paradigm is constituted, says the author, by the general theoretical assumptions, the laws and techniques for its application adopted by the members of a certain scientific community. It is a constellation that globally contains laws, theories, applications and instruments, a model that generates a particular tradition in scientific research with explicit rules for the enigmas of normal science. A mature science is governed by a single paradigm (or disciplinary matrix); there are paradigmatic sciences: the formal and factual natural ones; there are pre-paradigmatic sciences: social (Kuhn, 2004).

For other authors, the concept encompasses elements that go beyond the specific field of scientific research, insofar as they are broad and general conceptions about reality and about man himself, the methods that should be used to approach it, and the legitimate ways of posing these issues. They are sets that contain conscious elements and unconscious aspects that are prior to the development of the effective and particular investigations that are carried out, germinal soil from which theories and research designs grow (Lores Arnaiz, 1986).

[6] Nicolás Copernicus: The Earth is not the center of the Universe. In this first point, Freud talks about how man believed that the Earth, his home, was at the center of the universe, and that the rest of the stars moved around it describing orbits. Nicolás Copernicus, in the 16th century, showed the world how the Earth was not the center of the universe, but, like other planets, revolved around the Sun. In this way, the self-love of the human being met its first affront, the cosmological one.
Charles Darwin: man is one more animal. In the second point, Freud exposes how man, throughout history, has shown himself superior to other animals, believing himself different and interposing a gulf between animals and human beings. Darwin, in the 19th century, showed the world his theory of evolution, making man no more than any other animal. And not only that, but the man we know is not even the pinnacle of evolution. This led to the second affront that damages human narcissism, the biological one.
Sigmund Freud: we do not own ourselves. In the third point, Freud comments how man, despite having been severely wounded twice by Copernicus and Darwin, still considers himself master of himself. Descartes had formulated in the seventeenth century his "cogito, ergo sum", "I think, therefore I am". His own conscience, his internal perception of which he owns, allows him to make decisions that harmonize with his needs, leaving aside any decision that is not in accordance with it. Psychoanalysis once again hurt the human being by showing that a person is not even the owner of his own "house". Freud confronts Descartes by imposing his "where I think, I am not." With which we come to the third affront, the psychological one.

As conceptions of the world, of man and of social structure, they feed both the emergence or adoption of a certain theory, as well as the acceptance or rejection of certain models, techniques and ways of practicing research, since they constitute the legitimation of specific methodologies, by guiding the understanding of problems that require explanation, investigation or intervention. The sciences, therefore, are divided by competing paradigms and the social sciences in particular. There are no true paradigms but hegemonic ones.

Much earlier, Freud (1986) had presented the category of Weltanschauung or worldview, as an intellectual construction that solves in a unitary way all the problems of our existence from a supreme hypothesis. Within it, no question remains open and everything that interests us finds its precise place.

The emergence in 20th century philosophical thought of language, as a constitution not only of subjects but of epistemological conceptions, and its recognition as such, was brought to the fore by the so-called linguistic turn of the mid-20th century. There, the fall of the Enlightenment paradigm, the paradigm of modernity, produced from the breach of its promises is revealed, and the preponderance of the interpretive approach is configured, fundamentally in the academic and intellectual fields.

What is understood by the paradigm crisis of the 20th century? In a synthetic way, it is called the lack of response to the problems of knowledge by the classical approaches, sustained in all-embracing macro-theories (Sartori, 1988). With the "death" of the great stories comes the irruption of postmodernity, a condition defined by Lyotard (1993) as scepticism in the face of metanarratives. From the crisis of the two great stories, the positivist paradigm contains elements of its own assumptions: ahistoricity, desubjectivity; the crisis of the Marxist paradigm is revealed from the positivist reductions of Marxism and the fall of real socialism, among others. [7]

In short, this crisis of the hegemonic paradigms is, finally, the crisis of the Enlightenment, the crisis of rationality, the crisis of modernity and its project of imposing reason as a transcendental norm on society. The promises of modernity - belief in the natural goodness of man, the pursuit of happiness, optimism, secularism, and its fundamental assumption, rationalism - are contested by the increasing deterioration in humanity's quality of life, as well as by huge scientific and technological developments.

[7] Colleague Consuelo Quiroga (1991) published a book, based on two articles published in the magazine Acción Crítica de ALAETS-CELATS, La invasión positivista en el Marxismo, in which she clearly argues this situation.

The answer, in the hands of ascendant postmodernity, is a 'no to the real', in pursuit of a 'yes to discourses on the real'. This gives rise to the emergence of interpretive paradigms: hermeneutics, poststructuralism, constructivism; great thinkers like Barthes, Foucault, Derrida, Kristeva; to the reappearance of a hermeneutic of the subject, to intersubjectivity as a principle and to language as an articulating axis, based on the postulations of Ferdinand de Saussure (1945) and his principle that language is identical to a formal system, that is, a combination of signs, thus inaugurating structural linguistics.

Authors such as Irene Vasilachis de Gialdino (2007) speak of three paradigms: positivist, materialist-historical and interpretive; we prefer to break down the latter into its different versions mentioned, hence the plural indicated.

The final years of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century give prominence to the category of complexity (Morin, 1997) to think about reality, investigate it and intervene in it. However, in these new decades of the century, the manifestation of novel approaches to social work - decoloniality (Mignolo) and postcolonialism (Dussel, Quijano), gender and diversities (Segato), feminism/s (Butler), among many other perspectives - enables the categorical irruption of the colonization of subjectivity: Foucault, Guattari, and lately the Argentine Nora Merlin (2017), opening new perspectives of analysis to reflect on the discipline.[8]

Epistemologizing social work

Modernity promised us improvement of the quality of life through reason and, although the enormous advance of science and technology during the 20th century and the current one cannot be denied, neither can we fail to recognize the enormous wells of inequality that the order is going through. This situation affects social work as a profession and directly intervenes in some of the effects and manifestations of conflicts - class - that are in their genesis and are becoming more complex in today's social world.

Inequality is sustained on the basis of political and economic elements, hence the importance of thinking of social work as a politically oriented profession. We could indicate that the political capacity to question the established institutions is accompanied by the postulates of Vicente Faleiros (1986), when he maintains the need for the articulation of the instituted, in order to modify the institutional discourse.

[8] All the material formulated in the last pages, of notable relevance, would merit an epistemological seminar of at least one semester. The limits of a post of this type prevent a better solution.

Bourdieu (2010) said that the knowledge of domination is a weapon against domination. From a critical perspective, thinking about the foundations and development of social work, that is, doing epistemology, puts us in a position to know our past, analyse our present and, minimally, give an account of our potentialities in the future. In this section we will point out the particularities of different epistemological perspectives and their theoretical bodies, insisting on the actuality of some of them.

What is the connection between interpretive views and the more positivist / functionalist epistemic positions of social work, or even those oriented towards Marxism / dialectics, while these last two approaches have been, in different periods, hegemonic in the profession / discipline? We will review two breaks in the socio-historical, theoretical and epistemological evolution of these traditions.

When talking about breaks in our profession / discipline, one immediately thinks of the reconceptualization movement. However, at the beginning of the 20th century, Mary Richmond consolidated a substantial rupture when, promoting the institutionalization of the profession, she generated a methodically organized space for reflection, aimed at recovering the elements that characterized the way in which social workers - then "visitors" - acted, with the aim of pointing out an established modality of intervention that was systematized in two fundamental works: Social Diagnosis of 1917 (2005) and What is social case work? of 1922 (1982).

At that time, the well-known process of diagnosis and treatment consolidated, in the manner of the hegemonic professions - medicine and psychiatry - a set of guidelines for the "doing" of social work that, recovered from the experience of thousands of social workers and systematically ordered by Richmond, became models of professional thought and practice. More than a hundred years ago, she bequeathed on us how to make a social diagnosis in her famous 1917 book, and it is precisely in this document that we recognize those traits that allowed the supporters of reconceptualisation to sustain (Lima, 1983; Escalada, 1986; among others) the positivist / inductivist / experimental nature of the proposal, which, as a quick and inconclusive point, can be summarized in the weight of the evidence, the processes oriented in particular cases to general laws or, failing that, from hypotheses to particular cases.

In her next book, from 1922, *What is Social Case Work?* Mary Richmond sets out clearly and simply the objectives of this so-called method for the specific treatment process. The text establishes that the objective of this proposal is “to develop the personality of the clients” (1982, p. 67) in order to achieve their adaptation to the social

environment. And despite the attempts of fellow researchers of the pioneers of social work[9], in the sense of endowing the category with a politically reformist content in light of the prevailing pragmatism in the United States at the time, we argue, as Umberto Eco (1990) would say, that there is a text to be considered.

The reading carried out by Bibiana Travi (2007; 2011; 2017) and Viviana Ibáñez (2011; 2012) focuses on Mary Richmond and the influence she received from pragmatism, a classically American movement that considers the useful as the true: pragmatism depends on the facts and of the concrete, it observes the truth as it occurs in particular cases to generalise (James in Braunstein et al, 1986). Some of these thinkers were C. Peirce, W. James, J. Dewey. The incidence, always according to these authors, of the movement called symbolic interactionism, heir to the Chicago School, to which Cooley, Mead and others belonged, is also visualized, cited by Richmond in various parts of their production. We have called this perspective 'the American side', or direct path, that shapes Richmond's thought.

American perspective -direct way

Pragmatism (Abbagnano, 1998) is a doctrine developed by 19th-20th century American philosophers, according to which the truth test of a proposition is its practical utility. The purpose of thought is to guide action, and the effect of an idea is more important than its origin. According to this approach, no object or concept has inherent validity or is important. Its significance is found only in the practical effects resulting from its use or application. The truth of an idea or object, therefore, can be measured by scientific investigation of its usefulness.

John Dewey, a philosopher who helped develop the pragmatic stream, was also a psychologist and educator, and was deeply interested in reforming educational theory and practice. He contrasted his educational principles in laboratory schools with an experimental nature. The educational principles proposed learning through alternative educational activities (art, ethics, democracy) to the established curricular content. He considered that education should not only be a preparation for future life but should provide and have full meaning in its very development and fulfilment. We understand that Mary Richmond's conception of social work, as a type of informal education, comes from this influence. A similar conception of pragmatism is that of Williams

[9] We respect and admire the production of these colleagues in the recovery of life and work of the pioneers, as well as the advances for the incipient profession; research that they have been developing for many years, with important results for the construction of this disciplinary archeology. Our point of view is basically epistemological, in the most absolute sense that we give the term, and promotes the opening of debates that avoid that constant in social work that is to turn all theoretical production into fashion and dogma, depriving it of its reflective possibilities, for hence, criticism.

James, also a psychologist. His fundamental thesis consisted of reducing truth to usefulness and reality to spirit. As is clear from the texts, the truth is something that happens to an idea in the course of its verification.

In relation to symbolic interactionism, we follow Hans Joas (1995) who points out that this concept was coined by Herbert Blumer in 1938, in an article on social psychology in the magazine Hombre y Sociedad, to refer to this line of sociological and psychosociological research. Its main object of study is the interaction processes - social action, characterized by a reciprocal orientation - underlining the symbolic nature of social action.

Symbolic interactionism is the continuation of certain developments in the thought and work of the heterogeneous interdisciplinary group of theorists, social researchers, and social reformers at the University of Chicago, who exerted a determining influence on American sociology between 1890 and 1940, precisely during the period of institutionalization of our discipline. The Chicago School can be described, according to Hans Joas (1995), as the combination between a pragmatic philosophy, the attempt to give a reformist political orientation to the possibilities of democracy in the context of rapid industrialization and urbanization, and the effort to turn sociology into an empirical science.

From our point of view, in the approach of Travi (2007; 2011; 2017) and Ibáñez (2011; 2012) there is an overvaluation of reformism, progressivism and democratism that this position and its authors claim. Therefore, from our approach, we do not assign substantive value to pragmatism, as we consider that it has limitations in its postulations, fundamentally referring to its own conditions of possibility (utility as the only truth; the centrality given to practical action; its absolute empiricism), although we recognize that the possibility of including it in educational processes, as was done by Mary Richmond, has been fruitful to consolidate what Weber at the same time, but in Europe, called The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (2001).

From this relationship we recover what is revealed. That is, elements attributable to a much more comprehensive proposal with respect to its first and undisputed positivist position. This second proposal is related to a more comprehensive approach, heir to the positions of the Sciences of the Spirit that, in their confrontation - and defeat - against the Natural Sciences of the late nineteenth century, were overshadowed and out of the field of prevailing theoretical-academic visualization.

From this analysis of the foundations and developments of the discipline, in this first great rupture, we consider that Mary Richmond recovers the understanding of tradition, insofar as she maintains that, in the treatment process, two types of techniques must be developed: actions and the understandings; both raised directly with the client and indirectly with the environment related or close to it. Where does Mary Richmond - or rather, the thousands of social workers whose work the Richmonian proposal nurtured - extract this double tendency to operate with understandings and actions?

The simple and even obvious first answer, which prevailed for decades in social work, sustained the influence of the aforementioned hegemonic professions, medicine and, in particular, psychiatry. Both were the fundamental development field of social work in its early stages of institutionalization, disciplines from which arose, surely, the famous sequence Diagnosis and Treatment. Another response, very consolidated and more understanding, was to maintain a humanist stance typical of the professional work of social work. It is a response that today, with the advancement and deepening of disciplinary knowledge, is insufficient for thinking about these developments and deepening their foundations, that is, to epistemologise the discipline / profession.

That reference to Weber puts us in another place to think about the influence indirectly operated in the production of Mary Richmond and that we have already exposed in previous paragraphs. That other place can be called the indirect or European way. We cannot help but consider that, with the training that this author demonstrates in her texts, with the mention of theories, methodologies and authors that she displays in her production, it is not impossible that she was aware, if not directly of the authors fundamental, at least of the most important disseminators of the works of Dilthey and Weber. The first in particular, since Dilthey was the one who at the end of the 19th century taught us that understanding was putting oneself in the place of the other, thus establishing understanding as a method of knowledge. With this he proposed a methodological question differentiated from the proposals of the Natural Sciences, which anchored their base, from Comte onwards, in the experimental method, in particular with its inductivist variant, represented at the end of the 19th century by Durkheim and that monument to the inductive method that is The Suicide (1982).[10]

The Sciences of the Spirit, from the hand of Dilthey and Weber, at the end of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th, are concerned with methodologically deepening subjectivities; know, understand what happens to the other. How can this

[10] Let us clarify that, since the 1930s, the validity of the Vienna Circle and the neopositivism derived from it altered the course of Cartesian reflexive philosophy and introduced analytical philosophy, promoting the emergence of the hypothetical deductive method.

trend be explained in the production of Richmond? We are talking about a trend that, as we understand it, did not try to think about research by mixing two irreducible approaches with each other, but rather its objective was to think about the ways of intervening, proposing the inductive / deductive mode as an instance of knowledge, and a treatment model sustained in understanding.

European perspective -indirect way

The so-called Complaint -or War- of Methods, Methodenstreit, which took place in Germany around 1883, marks the climate of the late 19th century, a confrontation during which the Naturwissenschaften or Sciences of Nature, a classical Galilean science, nomothetic[11], referenced in the experimental method and sustained in the principle of explanation -erklären- typical of the mathematical and physical method, confronts the Geisteswissenschaften, Sciences of the Spirit, of history and of man, postulants of a sui generis, ideographic method[12], focused on understanding / interpreting -verstehen- the method of historical science.

The first marks a naturalistic approach, as an effort to reduce becoming to universal laws that subsume the particular in the universal; it abides by the judgments of reality. The second represents a tradition nurtured in the hermeneutics of Schleiermacher of the early nineteenth century - interpretation of the sacred texts then became, with this author, universal hermeneutics. The hermeneutical task is to bring to light the hidden meaning, the sense. It is about transcribing the individual, without dissolving it in some conceptual mediation, and implies a valorization. The historian Johann Gustav Droysen introduced the distinction (von Wright, 1979) between the two categories.

Wilhelm Dilthey was a nineteenth century thinker, philosopher and psychologist, student of the hermeneutics, which fought the dominance exercised in the field of knowledge by objective natural sciences. He intended to establish a subjective current of the Sciences of the Spirit, as a methodologically differentiated discipline from the Sciences of Nature. These subjective human studies (including law, religion, art, and history) had to focus on historical, social and human realities. Dilthey reasoned that all knowledge must be analysed in light of the history; without this perspective knowledge can only be partial.

In his fundamental work, Introduction to spiritual sciences (1986), his concern was to provide the human sciences with a solid scientific base and to develop a method that

[11]Those that have as their object logical laws, that seek to study causal and invariable processes, that try to objectively establish some universal law.

[12]TIts object is the study of changing events; they are studies dedicated to understanding the individual and unique particularities of the objects of study.

would make it possible to achieve objectively valid interpretations, that is, to confer legitimacy as an objective science to the knowledge of the historically conditioned. For this, the method was that of understanding life through itself: self-awareness, understanding of the appearance and genesis of scientific consciousness through an analysis of the essence of self-knowledge, but through the objectifications of life. Hermeneutics implied understanding the other through its manifestations, the reconstruction of that interiority. Basically, the idea of Dilthey was the idea of the social researcher who puts himself in the place that reproduces the place of the investigated subjects.

On the other hand, Max Weber, German philosopher, historian, economist and political scientist, who was considered one of the founders of modern sociology and public administration, made sense of antipositivistic hermeneutics. In methodological terms (1982; 2001), he opposed the use of abstract reasoning, always preferring an empirical and historical investigation. His works began the anti-positivist revolution in the social sciences, which marked the difference between these and the natural sciences due to the social actions of men. The ideal types, their methodological product, are a conceptual instrument used to learn the essential features of certain social phenomena, the content of which depends on the way in which it is positioned, on what vital position, what worldview, what culture, what ideas the subject keeps in front of the phenomenon. In the real world it is difficult to find a pure ideal type, but this is not a problem since the main value of the concept is its heuristic ability, that is, its ability to generate new ideas.

The key to understanding the process of analysis of social reality was the idea that sociology should have an interpretive understanding (verstehen) of the social action, staying within the traditional hermeneutics; understanding social action as all subjectively significant behaviour, that is, having meaning for the subject who performs it. For there to be an action, the subject has to understand and recognize the reason or reasons for his/her behaviour. Without subjectively recognized motive, there is no action. Understanding, then, was for Weber to try to reconstruct the motive or motives that a subject had to act. And thus, the ideal types are methodologically raised.

A digression is necessary here. There is a tendency, omnipresent in social work, to investigate with so-called qualitative methods or designs, their origin being unknown. When doing an in-depth interview, when working with key informants or with life stories, even with focus groups, what is sought is to know in depth those subjectivities put into investigation: how the other thinks, why they manifest or act in such a way. In the intervention, when we do interviews, these are knowledge modalities derived from comprehensive positioning, aimed at delving into the other. This was already raised by Mary Richmond, when indicating the moments oriented to the achievement of a subsequent treatment to a social diagnosis.

Following Federico Schuster (1995), this problem - to understand is to reconstruct in the consciousness of the researcher the consciousness of the other - encounters three important leaps or moments: the first is Dilthey's, the second is Weber's and the third is that of Alfred Schütz, who was the introducer of phenomenological approaches in social sciences.

For Schütz (1974), the subject who lives in the social world is determined by his biography and his immediate experience. The biographical configuration refers to the fact that each individual is situated in a particular way in the world, since all his experience is unique. Their parents, the upbringing and education received, the interests, desires and motives, all are elements that contribute to the formation of unique personalities. Immediate personal experience is related with the perspective from which the subject apprehends reality, and the understanding is made in relation to the position he occupies in the world. The space and the time in which the individual passes determine their experiences.

The configuration of the subject is also related to intersubjectivity, which constitutes a characteristic of the social world. That the subject can perceive reality by putting himself in the place of the other is what allows common sense to recognize others as analogous to the self. It is in intersubjectivity where we can perceive certain phenomena that escape the knowledge of the self, since the subject cannot perceive his immediate experience, but he does perceive those of others, insofar as they are given to him as aspects of the social world. In other words, the subject perceives his actions, because he can perceive the actions and actions of others.

It is possible to understand actions, says Schütz, who from Weberian concepts advances the idea of an observational understanding, which is what we exercise on a daily basis in our relationships with others, objectifying what is observed and giving it an interpretation, but without risking an interpretation of what the actor tries to mean. Motivational understanding implies a knowledge of the actor, his configuration and the meaning that he could give to his action, so that the observation gives rise to an interpretation that attributes motives to the action.

Schütz thinks that any methodology is admissible for this. But to access the perspective of the other, quantitative techniques are not enough and it will be his disciples who will develop qualitative techniques in a very powerful way, as the most appropriate way to effectively reconstruct the perspective of the other. This idea of interpreted reality is an element that comes from the understanding tradition. "Schütz is one of those that contributes the most to clarifying it ..." (Schuster, 1995, p.31).

Returning to Dilthey and Weber, those initial authors of this understanding position - later specified by Alfred Schütz and his disciples -, we cannot help but consider that Mary Richmond had some approaches to this perspective. We have not done enough research, but it is a hypothesis generated from the knowledge of those two authors and the careful and oriented reading of the two founding texts of Mary Richmond.

As we have already mentioned in previous paragraphs, the use of interviews, both as a means of accessing the diagnosis of the situation of the other - the client - (those measures aimed at understanding, recovering sense, to know what is happening to him), and the effect "from mentality to mentality" advocated to modify "personality" by actions and understandings, are clear indications of that epistemic integrality that we attribute to the production of this author… Are these influences of the attention and treatment of psychiatry added to a rational response, in light of the contributions of what we call the European side?

When we intervene in social work, we seek to understand the situation, to know in depth the intersubjectivities put into play by various actors, in order to accompany the processes of access to rights, and therefore, the exercise - and enjoyment - of citizenship. On that side, we hypothesize that we must point out the antecedents of Mary Richmond's proposal, since that is where the most important value of her proposals seems to lie. We maintain that Richmond did not do an investigation in the terms in which we know this process, nor did she pretend to establish any general theory about the social question of the time. Its objective was to systematize an intervention proposal, with marked elements typical of the dominant method at the time: the experimental in its inductivist version. In this way, he recovered a significant number of completed interventions, from which he established two fundamental instances: diagnosis and treatment; a process that, over time and put into practice, represented what we do now: know, plan, execute and evaluate. In other words, and as can be seen from our approach in other publications (González Saibene, 2015), an instance of knowledge in which we borrow the tools of social research (Urrutia, 1983) and an instance of strategic planning, which includes the formulation of objectives, the development of programs and / or projects, and evaluation.

We are here in the presence of what is known as the method (or methodology, although those two concepts are not exactly homologous) of social planning, which is not the exclusive property of social work, but an established modality for field work, administrative and / or institutional, of any social and / or political operator. This statement does not detract from the proposal, it only tries to critically clear the condition of exclusivity or methodological property. A tour of political science or popular education texts will inevitably allow us to find this proposal in any of its forms of

presentation. If we turn to the text by Ezequiel Ander-Egg (1982), he already incorporated these instances as a way of updating the classical sequence inherited from medicine and psychiatry.

Let's go back to Mary Richmond. The author maintains that social diagnosis is a process that is never definitively finished (note the topicality of her thinking, since only a few decades later Popper (1991) is going to establish knowledge as provisionally true), and that, from it, a treatment can be established. But how is a diagnosis made in social work? Basically, from the study of particular cases a general formulation is proposed or, what is more frequent, a hypothesis is worked on to be tested in these particular cases. We are in the strict presence of the inductive method in the first case, and its deductive variant in the second. These are two forms adopted by the experimental method, typical of the natural sciences and of the classical sociology of 20th century positivism.

Mary Richmond and her colleagues, were, like us today, "children of the time", responding to a "climate of the time." The hegemonic line of thought of those times was the one that she bequeathed to us via her texts. Would it have been striking if Mary Richmond raised something of a different order? Yes, and it does. The comprehensive look that she promotes is the element that can be highlighted as remarkable, as she managed with her proposal to evade the most extreme positions, which from the aforementioned "complaint of methods" of the late nineteenth century, tried to sweep away any attempt of maintenance or visibility of a thought that sustains the principles of the sciences of the spirit, psychology, philosophy, history, that is, of understanding as a form of knowledge (and action).

Positivism and the strong exclusion from the scientific world of everything related to the subjective and ideological field - although it establishes a normative character - permeated the space for the production and reproduction of knowledge and its various forms of knowledge in the field of social intervention. As a typical example of this tendency, in psychology, the Dilthean proposals (and even psychoanalysis) were replaced by the formulations of behaviourism of Watson (1913), who, in his firm intention to maintain discipline in the field of academia, established a content and a sustained method in the observation of behaviours. This allowed for quantification. Another reference from the same disciplinary field is that of psychoanalysis, which, in the hands of Sigmund's daughter, Anna Freud, took this theoretical body, according to her biographers, to well-ventilated, well-lit places, removing the unconscious from the centre of the discipline - an obscure and empirically unobservable environment- in order to place the weight of therapeutic possibility on consciousness.

These are two clear examples - with authors also incorporated by Mary Richmond in her classic 1922 text - of how the natural sciences swept away the spiritual sciences. And with great success, although without being able to fulfil the promises of modernity, as they were presented to us. Inequality in all its forms and manifestations, and its consequence, poverty and exclusion, were imposed as a fundamental condition of the capitalist mode of production.

A kind of conclusion ... new questions

Mary Richmond formulates her proposal in Social Diagnosis organizing it in four consecutive moments: 1) interviews with the client, 2) interviews with the family environment, 3) use of other sources 4) weighting of all the data obtained. This last point is what today, in social research, we call data interpretation. It means that the data, as Bourdieu, Chamboredon and Passeron (1975) say, do not speak to us directly, but rather need to be constructed, read, interpreted.

If this is so, why in social work, where Bourdieu is read so much, was there, until very recently, no interest in the interpretive approach? Why couldn't we introduce this last critical approach that also includes Marxism in its various aspects? We are not posing here a question of an ideological political type, but rather we are asking a question in epistemic terms.

Although we cannot fail to highlight the positivist / functionalist / inductivist influence in the classical or traditional contributions of the profession, we also have to identify that the other rupture, that of reconceptualization, much more worked on by the professional / disciplinary collective, is the one that put us in that critical place. A reconceptualizing rupture, this time, conditioned or produced by the Cuban Revolution of 1959 and the less restricted entry of Marxist material, producing there what, according to Mercedes Escalada (1986) was a counter-ideological reaction, since it was an attempt to get out of a particular ideology to enter another equally particular ideology. This by formulating transformation objectives that far exceeded the concrete possibilities of social interventions.

Despite this, it must be recognized that it was this movement that introduced us to what we now understand and assume as social work: the accompaniment of the population in the effective exercise of their rights and citizenship.

But this does not prevent us from rethinking, in epistemological terms, the reconceptualization's proposals for intervention modalities, which could not avoid that inductivist linearity, the empiricist influence, and even the sensualist influence of Hume

and the experimental method. Its motives were different: all theory is ideological was its proposal, and its response was to deny the theory (which came from the northern hemisphere). Mercedes Escalada (1986), Leila Lima and Roberto Rodríguez (1983) in their respective texts and articles provide a full foundation for the above.

The influence of one of Mao's philosophical theses, On Practice (1984) and the scant knowledge, by colleagues of reconceptualization, of Marxist texts in particular and of dialectics in general, along with the terrible translations did the rest. The fall of the democratic regimes in the Southern Cone of Latin America, where the movement was originally manifested, prevented this process from advancing by reversing this strong tendency to replace one ideology with another, improving its theoretical and strategic productions and consolidating a process that, we insist, introduce us more quickly to a social work concerned - and fundamentally occupied - no longer in producing the adaptation of the clients in a stable and harmonious society as proposed by Richmond in 1922, but in the recognition of the social conflict and in the need to accompany the populations in vulnerable situations in the achievement, already mentioned, of their rights, in pursuit of the expansion of citizenship.

Today, we face the apothegm that "all theory is ideological" not with the abandonment of theories, but with the support of a critical and reflective look, an informed and highly educated attitude, and a founded intervention, that is, well argued - as Alberto Parisi insisted on raising, in 1994, in Santiago de Chile. Accompanying the population in the decision-making process regarding their rights and exercising them, in the recognition of their own knowledge and possibilities, is the fundamental act that characterizes us, through the establishment of our theoretical and strategic instruments.

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CRITICAL PROPOSALS IN SOCIAL WORK

PROPUESTAS CRÍTICAS EN TRABAJO SOCIAL

FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS SOCIALES

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ARTICLE

Where is the "social" in social work? An analysis of social workers' use of theory in practice

¿Dónde está lo "social" en trabajo social? Un análisis del uso de la teoría en la intervención de trabajadoras/es sociales

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Abstract

Theory serves as a source of guiding knowledge in informing assessment and interventions in social work practice. Thus, social workers should be cognisant and analytical in applying theory to practice, particularly as their work moves forward the social work aims of social change and social justice under the current social and political climate. This exploratory, qualitative study sought to explore

Keywords: *theory; social change; social justice; anti-oppressive practice; United States*

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the use of theories by social workers in the United States, the underlying purposes of the social workers' choice of theory, and whether the social workers' practice had a focus on social change and social justice. Data from interviews with twenty social workers were analysed using a summative content analysis and revealed social workers to predominately apply theories to practice that have a purpose to problem solve on an individual level. Only one social worker applied theory with a purpose of empowerment and social change, and two social workers applied theory with a purpose of social change. The findings were considered against the global definition of social work, which promotes social change and social justice as key aims of social work. Social work practice in this study is found to reflect individualism, neoliberalism, and capitalism and recommendations are considered to redefine social work practice to be more widely committed to social change and social justice.

Resumen

La teoría sirve como fuente de conocimientos que orienta las intervenciones del trabajo social. Si lo que se busca es aportar a la transformación y a la justicia social en el momento social y político actual, las/os trabajadores sociales deben ser conscientes y analíticos al momento de fundamentar teóricamente sus intervenciones. Este estudio exploratorio y cualitativo buscó examinar la manera en que las teorías son asimiladas por parte de trabajadoras/es sociales en los Estados Unidos, los propósitos que justifican la elección de teorías y la orientación hacia la transformación y la justicia social que tenían sus intervenciones profesionales. Se realizaron veinte entrevistas semi-estructuradas con trabajadoras/es sociales, las que fueron analizadas mediante un análisis de contenido sumativo. Los hallazgos revelan que las/os trabajadores sociales utilizan teorías que tienen el propósito de resolver problemas a nivel individual principalmente. Solo un trabajador social dio cuenta de teorías orientadas al empoderamiento y dos trabajadoras sociales relataron el uso de la teoría con propósitos de transformación social más estructural. Estos resultados sugieren una discordancia respecto de la definición global de trabajo social, que promueve el cambio social y la justicia social como objetivos clave de la profesión y disciplina. Las intervenciones de las/os trabajadoras/es sociales participantes en este estudio reflejan el individualismo que está a la base del capitalismo neoliberal. Finalmente, se discuten algunas consideraciones para una redefinición de la intervención de trabajo social comprometido con el cambio social y la justicia social.

Palabras clave:
teoría; cambio social; justicia social; práctica anti-opresiva; Estados Unidos

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ARTICLE

Introduction

Social work is an academic discipline and a practice profession that incorporates scientific research and theory into the continual development of best practices to enhance the health and wellbeing of individuals, families, groups, communities and society at large. The International Federation of Social Work (IFSW, 2014, np) provides the global definition of social work:

> *Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.*
> *bienestar.*

A central aspect of the definition is the focus on the role of theories in underpinning the work of social workers to achieve the overall aim of addressing life challenges, enhancing wellbeing, and promoting social change and development to achieve social justice. A theory in social work practice can be defined as "a hypothesis, an idea, or prediction about what can or might happen in certain situations given certain circumstances" (Teater, 2020, p. 1), where the theory "attempt[s] to explain the why, when, and how certain behaviours may or may not occur and indicate[s] the main sources of influence to change the targeted behaviour" (Lub, 2019, p. 5).

Theories, along with the use of empirical research findings, serve as the guiding knowledge in informing assessments and the choice of practice interventions in social work practice. Theories used in social work practice have evolved from knowledge developed within social work as well as theories from other human sciences. Thus, theory plays a critical role in social work practice and social workers should be cognisant and analytical in their meticulous application of theory to practice, particularly as their work moves forward the social work aims of social change and social justice. This study sought to explore the use of theories by social workers in New York City, in the United States (US), the underlying purposes of the social workers' choice of theory, and whether the social workers' practice had a focus on social change and social justice. For the purposes of this study, theory is examined specifically within the context of how individual social workers report using theory in practice situations, which involves direct work with individuals, families, groups, communities, and organisations. The use and application of theory within research, education, or policy development were outside of the scope of this study.

Theory in Social Work Practice

Social workers are first exposed to theory as a form of knowledge to be used to assess and intervene in practice situations through their formal social work education and training. Social work students are provided with key theoretical concepts through coursework and are then given the opportunity to practice applying the theories to social work encounters in their field education placements. The application of theory to practice is one aspect of social work that assists in establishing social work as a "legitimate" profession (Lub, 2019) whereas without the systematic application of theory to practice, social workers would "develop an intuitive voluntaristic mode of work, based on common sense" (Montano, 2012, p. 310). Thus, social workers should be able to explicitly identity what they do, why they make specific practice decisions, and what theory(ies) and other knowledge has influenced and helped them make practice decisions (Howe, 2016; Lub, 2019; Teater, 2020). Such judicious practice will strengthen social workers' accountability and effectiveness and ensure practice decisions are purposeful and conscious versus taken for granted and/or hidden from conscious awareness (Cox et al., 2020).

Social workers' choice of theory should be linked to the overall purpose of the work with the client system, thus, the purpose of the practice theory selected should also match the purpose of the work with the client system. Of equal consideration is the extent to which practice theories are informed and shaped by political philosophy, dominant social welfare discourses, and knowledge and understanding of the client world (Cox et al., 2020; Payne, 2014). Cox and colleagues (2020), building on the work of Payne (2014), Mullaly (2007) and McGregor (2019), have identified and defined five purposes of social work theory.

- -Problem solving theories, such as psychodynamic or cognitive and behavioural, have the purpose to address individual deficit and personal responsibility by focusing on immediate personal problems.

- -The focus of the social work interaction is with the individual and his/her/their immediate surroundings (e.g., family; support systems) in order to alleviate personal problems.

- -Problem solving empowerment theories, such as groupwork and macro practices focused on social development, and/or social pedagogy, aims to alleviate personal and group problems through mutual support or understanding through education and identification of shared resources and strengths.

- -Individual empowerment (therapeutic) theories, such as strengths-based and

person-centred, aims to work with individuals to realize strengths and resources in order to promote and facilitate growth and self-fulfilment.

•-Empowerment social change theories, such as advocacy and empowerment, as well as social change theories, such as anti-racism, anti-oppressive, and ecological justice, take a specific social justice lens to the purpose of the work whereby there is an explicit understanding that suffering, oppression, and discrimination arise from the structural order of society, through systemic racism, classism, and oppression, and social institutions and political ideologies perpetuate and support the continual oppression (Mullaly, 2007).

The latter two theory purposes have recently remerged as critical elements of social work in an attempt to "return to a more structural, activist social work view in which the state and its relationship to capitalism is brought back into focus" (Cox et al., 2020, p. 4). The extent to which these aims have infiltrated social workers' practice in the US is unknown and, thus, the focus of this study. Therefore, this study aimed to examine social workers' use of theory in practice in order to: (a) determine the overall purpose of the practice theories used by social workers; (b) detail the ways in which social workers apply the theories to achieve such purposes; and (c) critique the ways in which social workers' use of theory had a focus on social change and social justice.

Current Political and Social Climate: United States Context

In the year 2020, the US was presented with two public health crises: (1) the pandemic of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, which has resulted in nearly 200,000 deaths (Center for Disease Control [CDC], 2020a); and (2) the prevailing and longstanding systemic racism that has persistently led to the murders of Black and Brown individuals, for example, the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. Both crises have stirred social and political unrest, particularly as COVID-19 and systemic racism have resulted in more health disparities and deaths to Black and Brown communities. For example, African American and Black individuals make up 13.4% of the US population, but account for 21% of the COVID-19 deaths (CDC, 2020b). Additionally, research has consistently shown the link between systemic racism and health disparities among Black and Brown communities, such as infant mortality, diabetes, heart disease, and cancer (Bailey et al., 2017; William et al., 2019). The murders of Black individuals during 2020 resurged the Black Lives Matter movement and resulted in nation-wide protests and calls to action. The two public health crises and the blatant disparities to Black and Brown individuals led to organizations, communities, groups, and individuals to stand in solidarity to address the crises through critiques and changes in policies, practices, education, and health and social care support systems. Thus, the current social and political climate calls for social change and social justice.

Geographical Context of this Study

The regulation of social work in the US is multi-faceted. Social work education across the 50 individual states and the District of Columbia (DC) is regulated by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) which sets Educational and Policy Accreditation Standards and regularly evaluates and then accredits social work programs against these standards. The practice of social work, after educational qualification, in the US is regulated by 50 individual states and the District of Columbia (DC) through individual state licensing (registration) boards; in many states, social workers cannot legally practice social work without being licensed (or registered) with the State's regulatory boards. Finally, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is a national organization that provides guidance to the profession of social work, such as the Code of Ethics, and lobbies on behalf of social work to individual state regulatory boards, CSWE, and the federal government. Although NASW has a significant presence, particularly through establishing the Code of Ethics, they do not have regulatory oversight of the education or practice of social workers.

This multi-faceted regulatory structure is further fractioned by each of the 50 state (and DC) licensing boards, CSWE, and NASW having their own definitions of social work (Hill et al., 2017), which ranges from a focus on micro social work (e.g., work with individuals, families, and groups often referred to as "clinical" social work) to macro social work (e.g., work involving leadership, management, community organising, and policy development) (Gitterman, 2014). Therefore, not only is there a lack of a unified definition of social work practice in the US, there is also a lack of one national regulatory body to provide consistent governance of the profession, which is argued to have implications for identification as a social worker, public perceptions of social work, and, thus, solidarity within the profession (Lightfoot et al., 2016; Worsley et al., 2020).

In New York State (NYS), the title of "social worker" is not a protected title but, rather, the titles associated with social work licensure are protected and regulated by the NYS Education Department, Office of the Professions (NYSEDOP). In order to qualify to have one of the protected licensed social work titles in NYS, individuals must have received a Master's degree in social work (e.g., MSW). These titles include a Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) or a Licensed Clinical Social Work (LCSW). Therefore, individuals who do not hold social work degrees and/or individuals who have not been licensed and registered with NYSEDOP can call themselves "social workers" without legal ramifications and without oversight from NYSEDOP, but cannot refer to themselves as a LMSW or LCSW and cannot apply for social work positions that require the licensure. Only individuals who hold either a LMSW or LCSW may use these relevant titles with LCSWs being able to provide clinical social

work, or psychotherapy, whereas LMSWs can only provide clinical social work under supervision. Individuals who obtain a social work undergraduate (Baccalaureate) degree are not eligible for a social work license in NYS. Therefore, they can practice as "social workers," but they are not licensed or regulated, thus, often leading to contentions in the field as to what is a social worker and who has oversight of social workers in NYS, in terms of establishing standards and codes of practice, requirements for continuing professional development, and sanctions for failing to adhere to such guidelines. This study focuses on social workers licenced in NYS who practise social work in New York City (NYC). Focusing specifically on those social workers who are licensed ensured the study was capturing social workers regulated within NYS, and specifically, NYC. As of July 1, 2020 there were 12,202 LMSWs and 10,853 LCSWs registered in NYC (New York State Education Department [NYSED], 2020).

Methods

This exploratory, qualitative study consisted of a series of individual interviews with social workers in NYC to achieve the above stated research aims. Prior to the data collection, ethical approval was obtained by the authors' University Internal Review Board (IRB) with ethical considerations including informing the participants of the purpose of the study, the confidential and voluntary nature of the study, and compensation of a US$25.00 Amazon gift card in exchange for participation in the interview. Participants provided verbal consent prior to the beginning of the interviews. All data were stored on a password-protected computer and on a secure website only accessible by the authors.

Participants were recruited from a larger quantitative study of 105 social workers who completed an online survey of their use of theories and methods in practice. Social workers were invited to participate in the larger quantitative study through a mixture of convenience and snowball sampling. In the Spring of 2020, the link to the online survey, via Survey Monkey, was distributed to known social workers, social worker listed on the NYS Society for Clinical Social Work website, and social workers listed on the websites of numerous social work organisation in NYC. Participants were asked to share the study invitation with other known licensed social workers. At the conclusion of the online, quantitative survey, participants were asked to volunteer to be interviewed to provide further information on their use of theories in practice. A total of 45 participants volunteered to participate. An initial purposive sample of 10 participants were selected based on their primary field of practice, practice function, licensure type, and demographics. Ten additional participants were selected incrementally and interviewed based on identified gaps in the data, and sampling ceased once saturation was reached and no new information was obtained.

The individual interviews took place via telephone or Zoom between July – September,

2020 with the interviews lasting an average of 41 minutes (range: 32 – 65 minutes). Both authors conducted the interviews with the first author conducting 12 interviews and the second author conducting eight interviews. The interviews were audio recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim by a professional transcription company.

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

A semi-structured interview protocol was used to guide the individual interviews. The interview schedule consisted of three main questions: (a) Tell me about a recent case in your practice; (b) Is there any perspective or theory that you feel was guiding you, generally, when you worked with this case?; and (c) What interventions or methods did you implement with this case? Follow-up questions included, What factors influenced your choice in this particular perspective or theory?; How did the client's involvement in working with you influence your perspective or theory?; and What were the barriers and facilitators to using this perspective or theory? Demographic and work characteristic variables were collected on each participant from their responses to the online survey.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data were analysed by both authors using a summative content analysis approach (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) and consisted of the following steps as suggested by Lune and Berg (2017): (a) The data were transcribed verbatim and presented in an online document where the transcribed words were followed along with the audio recording to check for accuracy and to become familiar with the data; (b) The participants' responses to the questions were re-read and excerpts of data were transferred into an excel sheet under the appropriate heading (e.g., overview of case; specific theory identified; example of how applied and used; factors influencing choice in theory; clients' involvement in influencing choice in use of specific theory); (c) The participants' identified theories were listed, collated, and placed under one of the five theory purposes as proposed by Cox et al. (2020); (d) The participants' description of their application of the theory to a practice example were reviewed under each of the five theory purpose categories to explore common themes in the ways in which each purpose is achieved; and (e) The findings are presented by describing the five theory purposes as illustrated by the participants through their identified application of theory to practice. Data extracts are included to provide support for each theory purpose followed by a discussion that examines the extent to which the participants' use of theory challenges or perpetuates social injustice.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness aspects of dependability, credibility, and transferability of the

qualitative data analysis and findings were strengthened by: (a) creating an audit trail of the data analysis and using direct quotes to support the five theory purposes; (b) holding regular peer debriefing between the authors where data were analysed independently and then compared; and (c) providing details of the context in which the practice takes place, and providing details of the geographical context relevant to this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Results

A total of 20 licensed social workers practising in NYC participated in the study. The participants were, on average, nearly 42 years old, and identified as a woman (n = 16; 80%), White (n = 15; 75%), and as straight/heterosexual (n = 15; 75%). Table 1 provides the full details of the demographics of the sample

Table 1: Sample Demographics (N = 20)

Variable (n)	M(SD)	% (f)
Age(19)	41,95 (10,61)	
Gender		
Woman		80,0% (16)
Man		20,0% (4)
Race/Ethnicity		
White/European-American		75,0% (15)
Asian/Pacific Islander		0,05% (1)
Black/African-American/West-Indian		0,05% (1)
Black/African-American/West-Indian + Latinx/Hispanic + White/European-American		0.05% (1)
Indigenous Peoples		0,05% (1)
Latinx/Hispanic		0,05% (1)
Sexuality		
Heterosexual/Straight		75,0% (15)
Bisexual		0,10% (2)
Gay		0,05% (1)
Queer		0,05% (1)
Questioning or unsure		0,05% (1

Source: own elaboration

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Table 2 provides the details of the participants' licensure and work characteristics with an accompanying code for each participant that will be used to identify their direct quotes. It was intentional to separate this table from Table 1 to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. As Table 2 illustrates, the majority of the participants held a LMSW (n = 12; 60%) and had an average of just over 10 years practising social work (SD = 8.20 years). The primary field of practice and practice functions ranged across a variety of settings, with the largest percentage in adult mental health (n = 5; 25%), and in frontline/direct practice (n = 8; 40%).

Table 2: Sample Work Characteristics (N = 20

Code	License Type	Years in Practice	Field of Practice	Practice Function
1	LCSW	20	Medical Social Work	Frontline/Direct Practice
2	LCSW	12	Adult Mental Health	Private Practice
3	LMSW	16	School Social Work	Frontline/Direct Practice
4	LMSW	3	Gerontological Social Work	Case Manager
5	LCSW	9	Youth Justice	Supervisor/Administrator
6	LMSW	6	Children with Disabilities	Frontline/Direct Practice
7	LMSW	3	Adults with Disabilities	Frontline/Direct Practice
8	LCSW	6	Adult Mental Health	Private Practice
9	LCSW-R[a]	28	Adult Mental Health	Private Practice
10	LMSW	8	Advocacy & Com Organize[b]	Trainer/Educator
11	LCSW-R[a]	25	Adult Mental Health	Private Practice
12	LCSW	21	Medical Social Work	Frontline/Direct Practice
13	LMSW	2	Advocacy & Com Organize[b]	Supervisor/Administrator
14	LMSW	2	Children with Disabilities	Advocate
15	LMSW	6	Medical Social Work	Frontline/Direct Practice
16	LMSW	7	Children with Disabilities	Frontline/Direct Practice
17	LMSW	10	Gerontological Social Work	Supervisor/Administrator
18	LCSW	16	Adult Mental Health	Private Practice
19	LMSW	3	Mental Health (all ages)	Frontline/Direct Practice
20	LMSW	2	Homelessness & Sub Abuse[c]	Supervisor/Administrator

[a] aIndividuals granted the "R" are licensed to be financially "reimbursed" (paid) from health insurance companies for services. [b] = Advocacy & Community Organizing; [c] = Homelessness & Substance Abuse.

Source: own elaboration

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Theory Purpose

The participants' identified theories were mapped against Cox et al.'s five theory purposes. Table 3 presents the number of times a specific practice theory was mentioned and indicates which participant made mention of the practice theory. Each of the theory purposes are described in more detail below with supporting quotes from the social workers; identification codes are provided for each quote to refer to the specific work characteristics of the social worker as listed in Table 2.

Table 3: Social Workers' Theory Purpose

Purpose	Practice Theories	N	Participant
Problem Solving	Crisis and Task Centred	2	12; 15
	Cognitive and Behavioural	12	2 - 7; 11; 16 - 20
	Family Systems/Therapy	4	1; 12; 16; 18
	Psychodynamic/Psychoanalysis	3	8; 9; 11
	Systems and Ecological	3	6; 9; 14
Problem Solving Empowerment	Advocacy	1	14
	Groupwork	1	17
	Macro Practice/Social Development/Social Pedagogy (e.g. Assets Based Community Development)	1	10
Individual Empowerment/ (Therapeutic)	Humanist/Existential/Spiritual	1	13
	Strengths-Based/Solution-Focused/Narrative	6	4; 5; 6; 13; 14; 20
Empowerment Social Change Social Change	Advocacy/Empowerment	1	5
	Anti-Oppressive/Discriminatory	1	4
	Anti-Race	1	5
	Constructivist	0	-
	Critical Post Modern	0	-
	Ecological Justice/Eco-SW	0	-
	Feminist	0	-
	First Nations/Decolonize	0	-
	Radical	0	-
Total		37	

Source: Adapted from Payne (2014) and Cox et al., (2020)

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Problem Solving

The majority of the social workers (n = 18) identified practice theories with a purpose of problem solving with 12 of these social workers drawing from cognitive and behavioural theories. In particular, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) was the most commonly mentioned (n = 10) practice method, followed by dialectical behavioural therapy (DBT) (n = 3), and then the following, which were each mentioned by one social worker: acceptance & commitment therapy (ACT); applied behavioural analysis (ABA); trauma affect regulation: guide for education and therapy (TARGET); distress tolerance; harm reduction; and psychoeducation. An example of a social worker utilizing CBT was from a school setting where the social worker was working with a young child struggling with negative self-image. The social worker explains, *"Before class, we would go in a mirror, we would say three things that were positive. […] 'I'm gonna have a good day,' 'I can make good choices,' 'I am smart.' […] Positive self-talk to replace that negative self-talk that was really the underlying thoughts that were then causing them to make poor choices"* (3).

Family systems/therapy was mentioned four times by social workers. The ways in which the social workers used this theory ranged from informing assessments to including family members in the therapeutic work. For one social worker, although he was not providing family therapy, he used his background knowledge from training in family therapy to guide his assessment of families within a medical setting. He explains: *"In trying to find out some family history, you know, just trying to gather some background information and find out where the family is at and assess for any significant needs that they might have"* (1). Another social worker with a private practice relied on aspects of family therapy to enable her to work with a client in crisis, *"We started off with doing couples with her and her husband, and then her mom came in. […] I just really liked the consistency or the continuity of the extended family's involvement and their commitment to support her*" (18).

The use of family systems/therapy seemed to have some overlap with the use of systems theory identified by three social workers where systems theory was used in conducting an assessment of the problem and need. For example, a social worker who works with children with disabilities explains:

> *In meeting with people, I usually initially try to figure out all the moving parts of what may be necessary and what we might need to triage before we even start talking about*

> *education. I think that is something I will do on pretty much every case. Just kind of a general, like how are you, and those issues [housing concerns, benefit concerns, family court concerns] inevitably they come out as we're speaking (6).*

Psychodynamic/Psychoanalysis was mentioned by three social workers who were working in Private Practice (i.e. the social worker is not providing services within a social service organisation, but serve as their own organisation and clients pay a fee for the social worker's service). These social workers specified the theory that underpinned the service they provided, which included: object relations; attachment theory; somatic experiencing; and Accelerated Experiential Dynamic Psychotherapy. One social worker described psychoanalysis as the theory that underpins her choice of interventions, which often include, *"asking a lot of reflective questions. I'm asking him to think about himself... I'm trying to stimulate his curiosity in himself […] anything to stimulate awareness."* (9). Another social worker, who is also in training to become a psychoanalyst described the structure of his sessions with his clients (that he referred to as "patients"):

> *[T]he structure is, he comes in, he lies down on the couch, he starts talking, and 45 minutes after the scheduled start time I say, 'we're gonna stop'. …and in between, he says whatever comes to his mind, and to the extent that I have things that I think might be helpful to say, I say them (8).*

Finally, two social workers mentioned crisis and/or task-centred theories, both of whom worked in a medical setting where the work was described as quick and focused, for example, *"go in, you assess, you evaluate […] we do the social work process within minutes"* (15). The other social worker describes her work with people who are in crisis:

> *[W]e've walked people to the emergency room to evaluate them for suicidality. I mean, f rom one extreme to the other. It could just be calming a situation down, pulling them out of an area, getting them to sit down, to talk things through. Or it could be pretty significant, like, yeah, this guy needs a psych evaluation to determine if he's really suicidal (12).*

Problem Solving Empowerment

Three social workers mentioned practice theories with a purpose of problem solving to empower with each of the following mentioned once: advocacy; groupwork; and community needs assessment. One social worker works with parents of children with special needs to assist in matching the child to the best learning environment, which often requires navigating the bureaucratic educational system and being persistent in demanding needs be met versus ignored. The social worker states this advocacy work involves, *"helping parents connect to outlets where they will be heard. That their voice is not my voice because I think too often advocates themselves are heard. You know, we get paid to do this work*" (14). The social worker later stressed the need to integrate role modelling into this work to ensure that advocacy is something that is learnt and modelled in the future by the parents when the advocate is not around.

Another social worker mentioned the use of groupwork where she supervises a self-help group for family members of someone with Alzheimer's or Dementia, which she stated, *"I think it's helpful to know that the groups are not therapeutic, they're support groups"* (17). This type of focus and environment allows for the group to challenge, learn from, and support one another. The social worker describes that as a support group there is not always a specific focus for the group, but more around what the group presents and needs, *"there's a topic that's discussed, but usually, 'How was your week?' And everyone, kind of, shares what's happening and then themes will come out and then they, kind of, discuss the themes and flesh it out*" (17).

Finally, one social worker is conducting more macro social work by engaging in the community and is primarily responsible for conducting a community needs assessment each year around problem gambling. This assessment involves engaging key informants through one-on-one interviews, focus groups, but also gathering data, such as prevalence statistics and information from the media. The social worker describes:

> *Based on all the data, what we want to look at is what are [the] general risk and protective factors in the community. […] 'Okay, problem gambling aside, here's kind of a review out of the community as a whole.' And then we kind of drill down into problem gambling specific information. What does the community need around problem gambling? And where are the gaps in services or other things in the community? (10)*

Individual Empowerment/(Therapeutic)

Six social workers mentioned practice theories with a purpose of individual empowerment, which consisted of person-centred care (n = 1); strengths-based perspective (n = 6); and solution-focused practice (n = 1). One social worker, who works with adults with disabilities, described the ethos of the organisation as "person-centred," which meant, *"specifically while working with this population, um, the feeling of putting empowerment in the hands of the person receiving the support always tends to work in our favour and just continuing to go by the person-centred approach at all times"* (13). Another social worker working in substance use and homelessness described the importance of the strengths-perspective with this population, and described how he used it with a client: *"I have been focusing a lot with her on strengths perspective and reminding her of her resilience and what she's gone through. Also reminding the direct care staff that I supervise of how resilient she is and what she's accomplished over a relatively short time"* (20).

Empowerment Social Change

One social worker mentioned practice theories with a purpose of empowerment social change. This social worker utilized elements of cognitive and behavioural theories, and strength-based practice alongside advocacy/empowerment and anti-racist practice, thus, targeting individual, family, and larger systems for change. She explains the advocacy/empowerment work with justice-involved youth as follows:

> *[T]he biggest tool that we look at using with youth is self-advocacy. I think that a lot of our youth aren't able to advocate for themselves or their families aren't people that advocate for themselves. So being able to provide not just the information, but ways in which the family can continue to be able to be self-sufficient and can continue to be able to support themselves in terms of finding the knowledge and tools they need is part of what we try to do when the youth are with us" (5).*

Social Change

Two social workers mentioned theories with a purpose of social change, which included anti-oppressive/discriminatory and anti-racism. One social worker who works with an older adult population described an element of her practice as challenging stereotypes of older adults and the often oppressive and discriminatory treatment they may receive because of their age. She described this anti-oppressive/discriminatory practice as follows:

> *[W]e do live in a culture and a society that is ageist. And clients themselves can have these beliefs and also their family members. […O]ftentimes, people will talk to just the f amily members and not the client. And that is absolutely heart-breaking and disrespectful. […] I, as a social worker, am completely passionate and dedicated to changing that belief. When people make a joke like, 'Oh, it's a senior moment,' or anything like that. I am the one to try to be like, 'You know what? You maybe shouldn't say that because this adds to that stereotype about when you're older, you're not useful anymore'" (4).*

Another social worker mentioned "social justice" as a focus of her practice working with justice involved youth and illustrated how the programs implemented had an element of anti-racism in order to acknowledge and foster the culture of the youth. She described:

> *"As an integrated milieu, we do various things to recognize the culture and the background of the youth that we serve. For instance, we do Freedom School in the summer [which] is designed after cultural perspectives from African American culture where learning is more integrative. They do Harambee […] it's a call and response initiative that takes place in the morning to check in as a community and how that looks when we're checking in on each other, how do we support each other? […] And what that would look like for us when we, you leave detention. [H]ow can you carry these principles, beyond these walls?" (5).*

Discussion

The findings from this study demonstrate how the social workers were predominately concerned with individual functioning of their clients and the choice of theory supported a central focus on individual problem solving. When 16 of the social workers spoke of this individual work, they failed to mention how the individual was situated within her/his/their environment or how larger systems and societal structures could be helping or hindering the individual in alleviating the presenting problem. This type of social work appears to support an individualistic view of presenting problems, without a focus on larger social change and social justice. In this sense, the individualistic work aims to help the client problem solve in order to survive and thrive within a potentially broken system versus tackling the system and seeing if that will alleviate the presenting problems; whether solo or in combination with individual work. Future research should explore the extent to which this individualised focus is evident in other Westernized and non-Westernized countries, and describe other non-individualised ways of working.

As evident in the description of the five theory purposes presented by Cox et al. (2020), not all social work theories used in practice settings have an explicit purpose of

achieving social justice. Yet, the global definition of social work and the accompanying core mandates and principles stress the importance of "promoting social change, social development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people" (IFSW, 2014, np). Likewise, social workers are called to "recognize that the interconnected historical, socio-economic, cultural, spatial, political and personal factors serve as opportunities and/or barriers to human wellbeing and development" where "advocating and upholding human rights and social justice is the motivation and justification for social work" (IFSW, 2014, np). Thus, even if social workers within the US and other geographical contexts are utilizing theories that have a purpose of problem solving and/or individual empowerment, there should also be an acknowledgement of considerations of larger systemic factors that are helping or hindering the individual, family, and/or group system when social workers discuss their work with the client system. Despite the direct work being on a micro-level, there should be macro-level discussions that indicate the social worker has considered larger structural issues and potential actions that need to take place to alleviate structural oppression and/or discrimination ultimately influencing the client system on a micro level; thus, promoting social justice. This seems to be lacking in the recounts of social work practice presented in this study and should be explored within other geographical contexts and countries.

Cox and colleagues (2020) acknowledged the changing social and political landscapes that are moving social services to be more reactive than proactive, with a focus on individual responsibility and solutions versus social and collective need and firmly state, "business as usual is not an option" (p. 1). There is a need for social justice orientated social work practice. By predominately focusing on the individual, the social workers often seemed inoculated to seeing the ways in which the larger social context was shaping the client experience. This type of work supports neoliberalism in placing the responsibility for change on the individual versus seeing the role that societal structures play in the health and well-being of citizens or the need for a communal and societal responsibility to individual, community, and social problems. As the US does not have a universal health care system, access to health and social services is often dependent on one's health insurance plan (with "better" plans often correlated with higher income). Thus, there are variations in the type and quality of care one can receive. This type of capitalist system can perpetuate the commodification of particular social work services, such as private practice services where individuals who are able to afford services are able to receive them and shop (or move between) social services. This is in contrast to individuals with limited health insurance plans or who are receiving national healthcare plans, due to low income, who are limited to service providers. The profession of social work both within the US and across other

geographical contexts should fully examine the extent to which the current structure of social services is operating within a neoliberal, capitalist system and the extent to which this system includes and excludes members of society and perpetuates a focus on theories that have a purpose on individual problem solving.

The findings further support a need for a social justice to be more explicitly present within social work education in the US in order to influence the types of theories that underpin social work practice. The current social and political climate in the US calls for social change and social justice with a particular focus on anti-racist practice and anti-racist pedagogy. Social workers are exposed to theory in their social work education where they are presented with textbook knowledge, but then provided opportunities to practice applying theories and knowledge to practice through field education placements. Social work education in the US and across other geographical areas should provide a foundation on theories of social change and social justice, such as anti-racism, constructivism, critical post-modern, and First nations/decolonialist in order to introduce such theories and link the ways in which they explain and understand racism, classism, sexism, ableism, heterosexism, and other "isms" in working to promote human growth and development and an equitable and safe society for all. In the US, the use of Critical Race Theory (CRT) is timely and appropriate under the current social and political climate. CRT originated with a focus on race, yet the theory has expanded to be inclusive of other marginalized identities and stresses the importance of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 2017) in examining power, privilege, discrimination, and oppression (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). CRT argues that racism and other "isms" are difficult to address because they are often not acknowledged within society and societal structures because it is not to the advantage of White elites or White working-class to do so; racism supports their status, power, and privilege, and material and physical gains. CRT places focus on the analysis of legislation and structural policies and practices that create and sustain racism, colonialism, White supremacy, classism, sexism, ableism, heterosexism and any other form of "othering". In order to eradicate racism and other "isms," and promote social justice, change must occur not only through individuals' hearts and minds, but through dismantling and rebuilding the deeply entrenched systemic policies, practices, and legislation that blind individuals in being able to see how discrimination and oppression are the bones that make up the US. Social work education can play a crucial role in shifting the ways in which social workers think systemically and use theory in practice.

Finally, the profession of social work in the US should strengthen the definition and purpose of social work practice to highlight the aspects of social change and social justice as the fundamental aims of social work. The current definition of social work

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practice put forth by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 2020, np) is as follows:

> *Social work practice consists of the professional application of social work values, principles, and techniques to one or more of the following ends: helping people obtain tangible services; counselling and psychotherapy with individuals, families, and groups; helping communities or groups provide or improve social and health services; and participating in legislation processes.*

The purpose lacks a specific focus on social justice or larger systemic structures, practices, policies, and ideologies that can perpetuate and support individual, family, group, and community suffering. Until there is solidarity around the meaning and purpose of social work in the US, the dominant ideologies, infused with individualism, neoliberalism, and capitalism, will continue to directly and indirectly drive social work practice.

Conclusions

The findings of this study should be considered against several limitations. First, the sample of 20 social workers in NYC, selected through purposive sampling, limits the transferability of the findings from this study to all social workers in NYC and beyond. Second, the social workers were selected from a range of fields of practice and practice functions in order to gain a breadth of social work settings; thus, future research may seek to replicate this study by examining in more depth social workers' use and purpose of theory in more concentrated practice areas, for example, those working in community organising and policy development. Despite the limitations, this exploratory study highlighted some key findings that should be further explored in future research to more fully capture social workers' use and purpose of theory in social work practice and point to some recommendations to explore in the current social and political climate.

This study has explored the theories used by social workers in the US, the purposes of the theories selected, and whether the social workers' practice had a focus on social change and social justice. The focus of practice among the social workers was predominately on individual work with only two social workers describing practice to support social change and social justice. The findings of this study leave one to question - Where is the "social" in social work? Given the current social and political climate in the US, it is timely to showcase the ways in which social work in the US is aiming for social change and social justice and to promote ways in which to strengthen

this purpose of practice. Change can begin by the profession of social work establishing a clear definition and purpose of social work that mirrors the definition and purpose provided by IFSW (2014), and social work education can integrate critical macro theories into the curriculum and field education to embed such work into future social work practice. The profession of social work in the US needs to step up and see the deep-seeded ways in which the practice is sustaining social injustices, particularly through individualism, neoliberalism, and capitalism.

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CRITICAL PROPOSALS IN SOCIAL WORK

PROPUESTAS CRÍTICAS EN TRABAJO SOCIAL

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ARTICLE

What do social work journals and research networks tell us? Expressions and conceptions around the construction of disciplinary knowledge

¿Qué nos dicen las revistas y redes de investigación en trabajo social? Expresiones y concepciones en torno a la construcción de conocimiento disciplinar

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Abstract

In this article we address the question of the construction of knowledge in social work by analysing academic journals and research networks as key dimensions in the dissemination of the intellectual production of the discipline. Singularities are identified and conceptual approaches, as well as methodological and ethical standards, are critically problematized. The configuration of the teams, the thematic

Keywords: *knowledge production; research; journals; networks; social work.*

[1] The study was conducted by Gianinna Muñoz-Arce, Gabriela Rubilar-Donoso, Teresa Matus-Sepúlveda and Paula Parada-Ballesteros, members of the Núcleo Estudios Interdisciplinarios en Trabajo Social, NEITS (Interdisciplinary Studies in Social Work Research Cluster). See more at www.neits.cl.
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lines, the geographical location and the political scope of the debates promoted in journals and research networks are examined. It is proposed that the way in which knowledge is produced in social work is "insular" or geopolitically concentrated, with observable asymmetries on a conceptual and methodological basis, diversity in the configuration of teams and with different public impact scopes. It is observed that journals tend to reproduce endogenic logics; while the research networks that work with decentralized or heterarchical logics are oriented to open spaces for relationships and to exert influence in the public debate, as well as to manifest concerns about the training of future researchers from the discipline. These findings make it possible to problematize the logic of the policies to promote research and dissemination of knowledge -public funds, incentives, access policies- and to project the challenges of social work in terms of its positioning and contributions to the debate on this matter.

Resumen

En este artículo abordamos la cuestión de la construcción de conocimiento en trabajo social analizando las revistas académicas y las redes de investigación en tanto dimensiones clave en la diseminación de la producción intelectual de la disciplina. Se identifican singularidades y se problematizan críticamente los enfoques conceptuales, así como los estándares metodológicos y éticos. Se analiza la configuración de los equipos, las líneas temáticas, la locación geográfica y el alcance político de los debates impulsados en las revistas indexadas en los catálogos más exigentes y en las redes de investigación en Europa, Estados Unidos, Brasil y Chile. Se plantea que la forma en que se produce conocimiento en trabajo social es "insular" o geopolíticamente concentrada, con asimetrías observables en términos de fundamentación conceptual y metodológica, diversa en configuración de los equipos y con alcances de incidencia pública también diferenciados. Se observa que las revistas tienden a reproducir lógicas endogenistas; mientras que las redes de investigación que funcionan con lógicas descentradas o heterárquicas están orientadas a abrir espacios de relaciones y a ejercer influencia en el debate público, así como a manifiestas preocupaciones en torno a la formación de futuros investigadoras/es desde la disciplina. Estos hallazgos permiten problematizar las lógicas de las políticas de fomento de la investigación y difusión del conocimiento -fondos públicos, incentivos, políticas de acceso- y proyectar los desafíos de trabajo social en términos de su posicionamiento y contribuciones al debate en esta materia.

Palabras clave: *producción de conocimiento; investigación; revistas; redes; trabajo social.*

Introduction

The production of knowledge in social work has expanded significantly in recent decades, encouraging the increase in academic journals and the development of research networks promoted in this period. Without a doubt, its creation has contributed in an important way to the disciplinary debate and to the consolidation of the knowledge produced by generations of social workers who have opened fields of study, spaces for the dissemination of knowledge and exchange of productions, debates and reflections at

national and international levels (Taylor and Sharland, 2015).

Recognizing this expansion of the disciplinary discussion, the question arises regarding the characteristics and scope that said discussion adopts in the contemporary context, assuming that behind each academic journal or research network that is created there are bets and proposals that are unique. National policies to promote research and circuits of scientific production on a global scale influence and shape the scope, editorial policies, fields of study and work objectives for academic journals and research networks. In this sense, the imprint of cognitive capitalism, globalization and the demands for greater impacts of the knowledge generated (Zuchowski et al. 2019) have marked the social work agenda in recent years.

Within this framework, we have developed a study that analyses the characteristics of i) social work academic journals indexed in the most demanding catalogues and that enjoy greater legitimacy from the point of view of research policies in Chile, and ii) social work research networks developed in Europe, the United States, Brazil and Chile. The purpose of the study has been to explore the singularity of journals and networks and to identify the predominant conceptual approaches, the configuration of the proposals in disciplinary, methodological and geopolitical terms, and their scope in terms of public discussion, in order to, based on the findings, problematize and project the challenges of the disciplinary discussion on the production of knowledge in social work for its one hundred years of existence in Chile and Latin America.

Knowledge production in the age of cognitive capitalism

The impacts of capitalism on the production of knowledge have been widely studied in recent decades (Blondeau et al., 2004; Vercellone, 2013; Ossa, 2016; Murray and Peetz, 2020). The installation of market logic in research and publications - which are translated into indicators of research productivity or incentive bonuses for publication, for example - have made ideas such as "impact" or "innovation" meaningless (Bourdieu, 1998) , promoting individual work to the detriment of collaboration, and reinforcing competition within work teams. It is the era of cognitive capitalism, a new phase of accumulation that implies a new geopolitics where knowledge occupies a central place, highlighting the power flows that circulate in the global world, where “intellectual property, the concentration of knowledge and the forms of social reproduction shape the production of socially useful knowledge”(D'Amico, 2016, p.432). The production of knowledge in the era of cognitive capitalism is marked by an orientation towards the growth and competitiveness of nations, which is based on incentives to increase intellectual capital; that is, knowledge workers, computer services, education and training (Blondeau et al., 2004).enseñanza y formación (Blondeau et al., 2004).

These orientations have directly influenced the policies to promote research in Chile, as well as in the rest of the world. Fardella et al. (2017; 2019) have shown in their studies how the production of knowledge is organized and controlled by management devices that allow for quantifying and monitoring academic work, which accounts for the impacts of the new public management approach in the generation of knowledge. Hence, the policies to promote research are oriented to the incentive of everything that can be "sold" or "transferred" to students, companies and governments. This is true of patents and publication in paid scientific journals, among other forms of commodification of knowledge (Torres, 2014).

In the case of social work, previous research has shown that the insertion of social workers in this new knowledge economy has followed a pattern relatively similar to that of other disciplines of the social sciences (Figueroa et al., 2018; Muñoz and Rubilar, 2020).

Social Work appeared in Chile almost a century ago as a vocation for science. This is evident in historical studies that investigate the first decades of the development of the discipline. Matus, Aylwin and Forttes affirm that social work emerges with a scientific direction, and quoting Elena Hott they point out that “it is interested in perfecting its methods and scientifically investigating its problems” (Hott, 1930, p.350 in Matus et al., 2004 , p. 47). This orientation is also present in the gestation of the discipline in other countries such as the United States and England, articulating the notions of science, knowledge and transformation (Deegan, 1997; Miranda, 2003; Travi, 2011; Álvarez-Uría and Parra, 2014; Reininger, 2018). In this sense, social work has in its origins a global project of social sciences (Morera, 2010) that results in its disciplinary identity, which among other functions must mediate between the production of social knowledge and its applications.

However, the development and dissemination of disciplinary discussion in Chile is less visible when compared to the situation of social work in other countries. There are about a dozen social work journals in the country -only 3 of them indexed in the Erih Plus catalogue- with the Network of Researchers in Social Work created just 5 years ago. Because the Chilean policies to promote research reward publications in journals indexed in the Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus catalogues (with no Chilean social work publication indexed in these catalogues), most of the "competitive" publications appear in these journals (Muñoz, 2018; Muñoz and Rubilar, 2020). Research networks, in return, are committed to expanding links and creating communities of meaning and exchange of knowledge. Journals and networks, somehow, operate as two edges of the production of knowledge in social work in the current context, which, in turn, obey differentiated, even opposing logics of justification. To answer the questions regarding

the type of publication that prevails today in social work -due to its legitimation by the policies to promote research- and the type of research networks that have developed in recent years, the study presented below was conducted.

Methodology

All social work journals indexed in WoS, Scopus, Erih Plus and Scielo in the official databases during the month of July 2020 were analysed. In total, 30 social work journals indexed in WoS were included in this analysis, 18 in Scopus, 15 in Erih Plus and 4 in Scielo (See Table N ° 1). Based on an exhaustive review of their websites, the general definition framework of each journal was analysed, as well as the contents of the latest issue published in each of them. These journals were considered due to their high recognition by the policies to promote research on a national and international scale.

Regarding social work research networks, four initiatives were examined: Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR) from the United States, European Social Work Research Association (ESWRA), Associação Brasileira de Ensino e Pesquisa em Serviço Social (ABEPSS) and the Network of Researchers in Social Work of Chile, studying the statements and materials posted on their websites during the month of August 2020 (See Table N ° 2).

Based on the reviews carried out, thematic analysis matrices were organized to identify the relevant information for each of the seven established dimensions: 1) conceptual approaches, 2) methodological standards, 3) ethical standards, 4) configuration of teams, 5) thematic lines, 6) geographical location and 7) political scope of the debates. The data were discussed in analysis meetings that led to the synthesis that is presented below.

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Table N ° 1: Academic journals of social work analysed

	Journal	Websit
		Web of Science (WoS) *Source: https://mjl.clarivate.com/home*
1	Affilia	https://journals.sagepub.com/home/aff
2	Asian Social Work and Policy Review	https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/17531411
3	Australian Social Work	https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rasw20/current
4	Child and Family Social Work	https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/13652206
5	Child Development	https://srcd.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/14678624
6	Clinical Social Work Journal	https://www.springer.com/journal/10615
7	Health and Social Work	https://academic.oup.com/hsw
8	Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance	https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/wasw21/current
9	International Journal of Social Welfare	https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/14682397
10	International Social Work Journal	https://journals.sagepub.com/home/isw
11	Journal of Gerontological Social Work	https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/wger20/current
12	Journal of The Society for Social Work and Research	https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/toc/jsswr/current
13	Journal of Social Work	https://journals.sagepub.com/home/jsw
14	Journal of Social Work Education	https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/uswe20/current
15	Journal of Social Work Practice	https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/cjsw20/current
16	Qualitative Social Work	https://journals.sagepub.com/home/qswa
17	Research on Social Work Practice	https://journals.sagepub.com/home/rsw
18	Smith College Studies in Social Work	https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/wscs20/current
19	Social Work	https://academic.oup.com/sw
20	Social Work in Health Care	https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/wshc20/current
21	Social Work in Public Health	https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/whsp20/current
22	Social Work Research	https://academic.oup.com/swr
23	The Indian Journal of Social Work	https://www.tiss.edu/view/6/research/the-indian-journal-of-social-work/
24	Journal of Social Policy	https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-social-policy/latest-issue
25	Journal of Social Service Research	https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/wssr20/current
26	Social Policy and Administration	https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/14679515
27	Social Service Review	https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/toc/ssr/current
28	Social Work & Social Sciences Review	https://journals.whitingbirch.net/index.php/SWSSR
29	Journal of Comparative Social Work	https://journals.uis.no/index.php/JCSW
30	The British Journal of Social Work	https://academic.oup.com/bjswhttps://www.tandfonline.com/toc/wswe20/current

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ARTICLE

	Journal	Website
	SCOPUS *Source: https://www.scopus.com/sources*	
1	African Journal of Social Work	https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ajsw
2	Annual of Social Work	https://hrcak.srce.hr/ljetopis
3	Asian Social Work and Policy Review	https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/17531411
4	China Journal of Social Work	https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rcsw20
5	Critical and Radical Social Work	https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/tpp/crsw
6	Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal	https://www.springer.com/journal/10560
7	Journal of Analytic Social Work	https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/wzsw20/current
8	Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Social Work	https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/wecd20/current
9	Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work	https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/webs20/current
10	Journal of Family Social Work	https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/wfsw20/current
11	Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Social Work	https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/wrsp20/current
12	Journal of Social Work in End-Of-Life and Palliative Care	https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/wswe20/current
13	Journal of Social Work Practice in The Addictions	https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/wswp20/current
14	Journal of Teaching in Social Work	https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/wtsw20/current
15	Social Work Education	https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/cswe20/current
16	Social Work in Mental Health	https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/wsmh20/current
17	Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk	https://socialwork.journals.ac.za/pub
18	Social Work with Groups	https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/wswg20/current
	ERIH PLUS *Source: https://dbh.nsd.uib.no/publiseringskanaler/erihplus/*	
1	Alternativas. Cuadernos de trabajo social.	https://alternativasts.ua.es/
2	Anuarul Universitatii "Petre Andrei"din Iasi - Fascicula: Asistenta Sociala, Sociologie, Psihologie	https://lumenpublishing.com/journals/index.php/upa-law
3	Clinical Social Work and Health Intervention	https://clinicalsocialwork.eu/
4	Conciencia Social - Revista Digital de Trabajo Social	https://revistas.unc.edu.ar/index.php/ConCienciaSocial
5	Cuadernos de Trabajo Social (Chile)	https://cuadernots.utem.cl/
6	Cuadernos de Trabajo Social (España)	https://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/CUTS
7	Czech and Slovak Social Work	http://www.socialniprace.cz/eng/index.php
8	Global Social Work: journal of social intervention research	https://revistaseug.ugr.es/index.php/tsg
9	Ehquidad. International Welfare Policies and Social Work Journal	https://revistas.proeditio.com/ehquidad/
10	European Journal of Social Work	https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/cesw20/current
11	Scientific Annuals of Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi. Sociology and Social Work	https://anale.fssp.uaic.ro/index.php/asas
12	Social Work Review	http://www.swreview.ro/index.pl/home_en
13	Social Work & Society	http://ejournals.bib.uni-wuppertal.de/index.php/sws/
14	Trabajo Social Hoy	http://www.trabajosocialhoy.com/
15	Voces desde El Trabajo Social	https://revistavocests.org/index.php/voces
	SCIELO *Fuente: https://scielo.org/en/journals/list-by-subject-area/*	
1	Prospectiva. Revista de Trabajo Social e Intervención Social	https://revistaprospectiva.univalle.edu.co/
2	Servicio Social Y Sociedades	https://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_erial&pid=0101-6628&lng=es&nrm=iso
3	Trabajo Social	https://revistas.unal.edu.co/index.php/tsocial/issue/view/5171
4	Katálysis	https://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_serial&pid=1414-4980&lng=es&nrm=iso

Source: own elaboration.

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Academic Journals in Social Work

When analysing the corpus of social work journals indexed in WoS, Scopus, Erih Plus and Scielo, two trends are observed, which we have coded as type A journals and type B journals.

Type A journals: The journals indexed in WoS and Scopus, for the most part, do not make explicit a specific conceptual approach. They accept articles written from various approaches or that do not directly make explicit a theoretical perspective. However, the requirement in terms of methodological and ethical standards is high, possibly because WoS and Scopus indexing itself demands it as a requirement for all their journals. The majority of articles published in these journals come from authors from the Anglo-American world with postgraduate degrees in social work. The majority of the articles correspond to empirical research reports. The journals in general do not have defined lines of research, although topics related to clinical intervention and intervention with families and analysis of the position of social workers in social intervention processes dominate. From this last line, the studies on burn-out, chronic fatigue and professional stress stand out. There are few articles that report on the structural analysis of social work intervention problems, and most articles work on social issues or phenomena, emphasizing the individuals who suffer the problems, not on the structural mechanisms that produce them.

Type B journals: The journals indexed in Erih Plus and Scielo, for their part, show a diametrically opposite profile in most of the dimensions studied. The journals indexed in Erih Plus are generally Spanish, while, of those indexed in Scielo, two are Brazilian and two are Colombian. In Erih Plus magazines the scope of the publications is more cosmopolitan, although there is a tendency to focus on analysis of the Spanish reality. The same is true of the journals indexed in Scielo, which focus on the discussion of social work in Latin America. The political implications of the analysis of social phenomena are much clearer in this group of journals, especially those indexed in Scielo. Unlike the WoS and Scopus journals that emphasize the study of the figure of the social worker itself, in the Erih Plus journals, and especially Scielo, no such trend is observed. Rather, the emphasis of the published topics is related to violence and the various manifestations of exclusion that become urgent problems to be solved by social work: poverty, racism, feminicides, among many others. The antecedents that allow for evaluating the level of demand of the ethical and methodological standards that the articles must meet to be published are heterogeneous (some journals provide details of this, others do not).

These findings suggest that there are two parallel realities regarding the production of

disciplinary knowledge that is reflected in journals: 'A' journals that publish knowledge that comes from empirical research, with a strong focus on methodology (qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods) and with very high ethical standards; but with an individual-centred reading of social problems, with little conceptual discussion and weak analysis of the political implications of the reported research results, where the social worker occupies a central place as an object of study. And, type 'B' journals, which publish fewer empirical articles focusing especially on articles in essay format, which conceptually and politically discuss the findings or proposals, that focus on urgent problems, leaving the social worker figure out of the focus of interest. All (journals A and B) have a geographic emphasis, that is, the social work produced in each region is self-observed, limiting the cosmopolitan scope of knowledge production and even more so the South-North exchange. Consistent with this finding, Roche and Flynn (2018) point out that the publications in the indexing social work journals most valued by the academic community -such as WoS and Scopus- reproduce a colonial logic of knowledge production that is manifested in the fact that less than 10% of the articles published in these journals have been written by authors from the Global South, and they identify important knowledge gaps in terms of theory and disciplinary research. It is, clearly, another expression of cognitive capitalism with a colonial bias (Lee and Lee, 2013).

Added to this is the problem arising from the type of access these publications have: type A, WoS and most of those indexed in Scopus journals do not have open access, unlike the Erih Plus and Scielo journals which usually do. The payment that must be made to access these publications ranges from USD 40.00 (for 24-hour access to a specific article) to USD 345.00 (for one-month access to a journal issue). This situation, in addition to reproducing the elitist nature of the production of knowledge in social work, reinforces the geopolitical reproduction of valid knowledge -which is constructed by those who can access it and question it from their own codes (Alperín and Fischman, 2015; Tarragó et al., 2018).

This has crucial implications for the disciplinary discussion and for the form of knowledge generation that is legitimized today by the policies to promote research (Sierra and Alberich, 2019): these two parallel worlds - type A and type B journals (without even considering the wide range of journals that have a less relevant indexing or that are not indexed) - obey a logic that reproduces a geopolitics of knowledge (Lander, 1999) and a validation of works that does not propose a conceptual orientation or explicit politics, almost on the verge of a claim of neutrality that gains legitimacy as it justifies its methodological procedures rigorously (Smith, 2006; Lee and Lee, 2013). Certainly, it is necessary to emphasize that there are exceptions to this trend. This is the case with type A journals that not only accept, but also value theoretical discussion and

debate of the political implications of the research results on a scale of questioning the contextual systems, structures and mechanisms that produce oppression. This is also the case with the Affilia Journal, based on feminist perspectives, and the Critical and Radical Social Work Journal, as its name indicates, founded on various aspects of critical and radical thought. There are also journals that value these conceptual and political discussions but do not explicitly intend them, such as the Journal of International Social Work (Durham University) and the British Journal of Social Work (British Association of Social Workers).

The reproduction of this geopolitics of knowledge and apparent neutrality in the argumentation exposed in many of the articles published in type A journals contains a paradox: it is more valuable to publish in type A journals (from the north) to gain research funds in our (southern) countries. We say that it is a paradox because, in addition, these type A journals do not guarantee open access (Serrano and Prats, 2005; Lillis and Curry, 2010), having to allocate public funds (from competitive research, for example) to pay for such access by the public. It should be considered that for an article to have open access, its author may have to pay US $ 3,900, something like three million Chilean pesos. It is problematic that the access that is "sold" by private entities such as the publishing houses that own the most prestigious social work magazines worldwide must be paid with public funds (Taylor & Francis, Routledge, Sage, Wiley-Blackwell, among others). In Europe this issue is being regulated: if the results were produced by research with public funds, the articles should be published in open access journals[2]. The debate in Chile has started in the last decade, but there is still a long way to go in this discussion.

Research networks in social work

When analysing the four research networks - the Society for Social Work and Research of the United States (SSWR), the European Social Work Research Association (ESWRA), the Associação Brasileira de Ensino e Pesquisa em Serviço Social (ABEPSS) and the Network of Researchers at Work Social de Chile- differences were observed in terms of the consolidation of these initiatives. For example, the SSWR and ABEPSS have a validity of more than twenty-five years and for this reason they are consolidated in their respective countries. Their lines of action include undergraduate and graduate training activities and a journal that is edited by the association: Journal of de Society for Social Work and Research (JSSWR) and *Revista Temporalis*, respectively. For their part, ESWRA and the Network of Researchers in Social Work of

[2] For more details on this discussion, see https://www.scienceeurope.org/coalition-s/

Chile are associations created in the last five years, therefore their development and scope has not yet been consolidated.

Table N ° 2: Research networks in social work analysed

	Network	Country/ Region	Website
1	Society for Social Work and Research - SSWR	United States	https://secure.sswr.org/
2	European Social Work Research Association -ESWRA	Europe	https://www.eswra.org/
3	ABEPPS - Brasil Grupos Temáticos de Pesquisa	Brazil	http://www.abepss.org.br/
4	Red de Investigadores en Trabajo Social de Chile	Chile	https://redinvestigaciontrabajosocial.cl/

Source: Own elaboration.

Regarding the seven dimensions of analysis, it is observed that only the SSWR declares a conceptual perspective from which its research and actions as a network are positioned, based on the evidence-based approach. In the other three networks, a position in this sense is not explicit, although it is possible to infer from their lines of research that ABEPSS does so from a critical social work approach. The methodological standards are high and explicit for SSWR and less demanding for the Network of Researchers in Social Work of Chile and the ESWRA, while in ABEPSS there is no definition of this type of standard. The ethical requirements are explicit in the two networks with the longest trajectory in time (SSWR and ABEPSS), while in the most recent networks this aspect is not explicitly addressed.

The structures and modes of operation of the network also differ. In the case of the more consolidated networks, there is a board and explicit rules on their operation, which follows a similar trend to the European network. In these three cases, it is possible to observe an institutionalized governance that also supposes the administration of resources. In this sense, networks with this more formalized structure include some research financing modalities or strategies. Unlike the other associations, the Network of Researchers in Social Work of Chile is rather a disciplinary group of people who develop functions around a common objective, its conformation is more horizontal, and it does not have a recognizable hierarchical structure.

The networks suppose articulation of subjects and interests. In this sense, in SSWR six central thematic axes are identified: Research, training and innovation in social work practices; Intervention programs and public policies and social policies, programs and health systems. In ABEPPS the lines of research declared are: Development, practice and use of social work research, Meta-disciplinary debates and theoretical approaches

in social work, Education and training in social work at the undergraduate and postgraduate level and Critical social work. In ESWRA the lines are: Social policy, State and economic forces, Education in Social Work and Multiprofessional Work. Finally, In the case of the Chilean Network of Researchers, the declared lines are the Meta-disciplinary Debates and theoretical approaches in social work, Education and training in social work at the undergraduate and postgraduate level, and Public policy and social policies. In this sense, the topics of training in social work at the undergraduate and postgraduate level, social policies and social intervention are transversal research axes.

The only network that shows explicit elements of political incidence is ABEPSS at the national and regional level, with scopes and debates that involve social and collective subjects in contexts of inequalities, contemporary transformations and recognition of rights. In the Network of Researchers in Social Work in Chile, an orientation in this sense is inferred but not yet reflected in the actions deployed to date.

Finally, the scope of the associations analysed is different in spatial terms. SSWR is defined nationally in scope for the United States, while ESRWA does the same at the European level. ABEPSS and Red de Investigadores have a definition of national scope, which in the case of the Brazilian network reaches a broad extension of regional centres and networks, while in the Chilean network its scope is much more unique and limited to its members.

From the above, it can be observed that the tendency to form research networks follows different logics that are common not only for the discipline of social work but also for the ways of conceiving the production and reproduction of knowledge from other disciplines. On the one hand, we find those conceptions that understand the generation of knowledge as a task of collective and not solitary construction, of a rather collaborative matrix that conceives knowledge as part of a model of shared production (Latour, 2008 [2007]), where laymen and experts participate. On the other hand, there is a more hierarchical trend, based on one or a few researchers, who find similarities in the networks of intellectuals and with the concepts of consecration and cultural capital worked by Bourdieu (2012 [1984]) and Latour (2008 [2007]. These networks differ from social or collegiate networks, such as those proposed by Sierra (1998), mainly because they are located in academic spaces, while more collaborative networks would operate more frequently in spaces or areas of professional intervention (Chadi, 2000; Mascareño, 2010). In social reproduction logic, the formation of networks will tend to follow a rather hierarchical structure that differentiates between more established investigations than those that are initiated. In this sense, the network tends to reproduce the logics of academic work, memberships and forms of knowledge construction based

on the work of experts, which distances itself from the most shared production models (Callon, 1999).

Notions of networks with recognized experience and competence in a particular domain emerge from this model, as is the case with SSWR and ABEPSS in the generation of disciplinary knowledge, which entails a certain claim of authority that is based on shared beliefs, professional judgments, notions of validity and a certain common political agenda (Haas, 1980; 1990). As points to highlight, it is observed that SSWR focuses particularly on selected themes, currently on youth and health, community and parenting / mentoring. In this way, they refer to particular cases and no political scope is made in this regard beyond the need for policies on some issues. A different direction is assumed by ESWRA, which has focused on the promotion of education in social work, taking education as a tool for social justice; however, the political discussion that goes beyond the profession is limited.

At the Latin American level, ABEPSS makes explicit the relevance of training in social work, placing professional intervention in a national context of commodification that leads to precariousness. It articulates macro elements and micro dimensions with the aim of enhancing knowledge within the profession. The Chilean network of researchers, unlike the previous ones, presents its lines of research, scope and objectives in a more explicit way than the other networks and has the potential to influence matters of public interest whose results or impacts need to be analysed more closely in future studies.

Conclusions

The findings presented here suggest that the way in which social work knowledge is produced and disseminated at national and international levels continues to be attached to the logic of cognitive capitalism, especially with regard to indexed academic journals included in the four catalogues studied. Additionally, it is possible to observe that the way in which knowledge is produced in social work -both with regard to journals and research networks- continues to be "insular", isolated or, in other words, geopolitically concentrated. Asymmetries in terms of conceptual and methodological bases and configuration of the teams were observed, with differentiated scope of public impact. On the one hand, journals tend to reproduce endogenic logics; while the research networks that work with decentralized or heterarchical logics are oriented to open spaces for relationships and to exert influence on the public debate and on the training of future researchers from the discipline. These findings make it possible to problematize the logic of the policies to promote research and dissemination of knowledge -public funds, incentives, access policies- and to project the challenges of social work in terms of its positioning and contributions to the debate on this matter.
The disciplinary challenges with regard to academic journals refer mainly to the

articulation of the conceptual discussion, the political scope, the cosmopolitan -decolonial- understanding of intellectual production, which aspires to publish works under high methodological and ethical standards, and in journals that guarantee open and free access. In this sense, the formation of horizontal research networks, based on the logic of exchange and collaboration, emerge as a counterpoint to the dominant imprint of cognitive capitalism. Certainly, research networks also present critical points: not all the actors that participate in the network have the same weight and influence. This aspect constitutes a key element of analysis, which recognizes from the beginning the existence of imbalances in favour of some researchers, which affect their legitimacy, or the assessment of knowledge based on certain canons, approaches or logics.

This has implications for the disciplinary discussion and the way of conceiving the production of knowledge insofar as it accounts for an imaginary that is understood and constructed in a relational way. This means understanding the production of knowledge in social work as a network of social relations (Bourdieu, 2013 [1989] and 2012 [1984]) where one-person actors, research teams, institutions and resources are interrelated and connected, and from which resistance can be exerted against the logics of cognitive capitalism (Bourdieu, 1998). Approaching the production of knowledge in this way implies recognizing the interactions that take place between generations and within each generation, but also the individualities of each trajectory, the tensions and disputes around authorship and membership, the geopolitical limits from where knowledge has been built and the connections established with other researchers within the discipline and with other related disciplines.

We are sure that the debates around knowledge production in general and in social work in particular, are undergoing changes and transformations. This is how César Hidalgo expresses it in the interview made by Cabezas (2020), recognizing that science is global and that for the same reason "the concept of country does not make much sense." Geopolitically referenced knowledge reproduces endogenic logics and encapsulates and captures researchers in their production and legitimation networks. Identifying its trends, orientations and dynamics allows us to better understand the political and situated nature of knowledge, its possibility of incidence and the resistance that may arise in the face of these dominant logics.

Evidence and recognition of these processes encourages us to approach the centenary of the social work profession in Chile and Latin America with updated challenges, which invite us to resist in the positions of a collaborative work against the principles of cognitive capitalism, building knowledge horizontally and from intergenerational perspectives. We are hopeful about what is to come in these senses.

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CRITICAL PROPOSALS IN SOCIAL WORK

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TRANSLATIONS

Historiography of South African social work: challenging dominant discourses[1]

Historiografías del Trabajo Social Sudafricano: desafiando los discursos dominantes[1]

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Abstract

The task of examining the origins and development of social work is fraught with competing narratives. In South Africa individualist, liberal, colonial, masculine and "white" discourses prevail. The dialectical-historical perspective, rather than chronological "progress", shows how socio-political and economic dynamics are formative of societal conditions and of social work, which in turn has a role in shaping these dynamics. The fiction of purely historical records of progress and freedom of choice is challenged, and hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses uncovered. Social workers are urged to be engaged with the full complexity of events emerging from the class and race-based antagonisms of South African society.

Keywords:
social work, historiography, critique, South Africa

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Introduction

The task of examining the origins and development of social work in South Africa and internationally is fraught with competing histories and narratives, as well as lacunae and discontinuities. Individualist, liberal, colonial, masculine and "white"2 hegemonic discourses generally prevail (Gebhard, 1991; Marks, 1987; Tsotsi, 2000; Worden, 2008). Foregrounding counter-hegemonic discourses and narratives becomes nearly impossible unless a constantly critical and sceptical gaze is adopted.

How events and developments are understood is determined by which version of history is used to interpret them. Generally, historical development is described by means of chronological listings of events, personalities or laws passed. However, these approaches neglect the interconnection of wider forces that shape people's lives, institutions and disciplines (Harman, 2008). Moments in history are better understood when viewed as being related to socio-political, economic contexts and circumstances around peoples' livelihoods and how these are fought out in social conflicts, resulting in changes in wider societal relationships. Such an historical materialist perspective is of particular importance in the historiography of social work, as the very origins of social work are found in the dynamics of the capitalist system and the resultant conditions of poverty and social conflict.

Developments (in social work) are not merely a matter of choices made by its early prota- gonists and a "natural progression" of theories and practices. A dialectical-historical investi- gation counters the fiction of a purely historical record of "progress" and freedom of choice, devoid of contextual interpretation, and allows for probing the impact of these conflicts and forces on the shaping of social work (Hill, 2009). Hill (2009:612) maintains that:

> *"The universal, transhistorical principles of rights and justice that were associated with the individualistic portrait of mankind that capitalism promoted, suggested a degree of freedom that was wholly incommensurate with the structures ultimately imposed upon its 'freely' contracting subjects."*

Such a perspective reveals various formations of social work knowledge development. Gramsci (1935) argued that any system is maintained in two ways. The more obvious is the political realm (the state), which controls through force and laws. This is complemented by subtle but essential system-maintenance performed by the private realm (civil society), which produces consent without the threat of force (Roelofs, 2007:479).

Social work knowledge thus becomes internalised and consented to through hegemonic discourses of state reports, laws, the findings of commissions, and teaching and writing activities. According to Hill (2009:616), Gramsci calls for a "counter-history" to displace "given thought" and release "common understandings" from their privileged positions. A historiography of social work therefore requires 'common understandings' to be challenged and alternative narratives to be foregrounded.

Liberal and Afrikaner nationalist discourse may therefore be challenged and displaced by a counter-history which acknowledges the significant role of capital industrialisation and racist, exploitative relations of production. Ideologies which interpellate social workers through uninterrogated common understandings of histories during the process of education (Althusser, 1971) may be challenged by a historiography which recognises relations of conflict and exploitation and imagined freedoms of choice and progressions (cited by Boswell, Kiser & Baker, 1999:361).

This article attempts to provide a description of socio-political contexts and developments at various stages of South African history which elucidate various conflicts and progressions. These developments and progressions of context determine the nature of social work and are in turn also impacted and influenced by it.

Perspectives, themes and chronology in South African history

Discourses in social work history may be linked to three broader competing discourses in South African historical analysis, namely the broadly Marxist, the liberal and the nationalist. Different conceptions of structural processes shaping South Africa's social development are linked to "varying perceptions of the motivation of actors involved in social change and the way societies operate in general" (Lester, 1996:1).
The Marxist, revisionist and "black" radical revisionist paradigm, largely reflected in the works of H.J. and R.E. Simons, M. Legassik, S. Marks, S. Trapido, S. Johnson, C. Bundy,

P. Bonner, I.B. Tabata, D. Taylor, H. Jaffe, M.W. Tsotsi, was a radical "reinterpretation of South Africa's past" (Visser, 2004:10). Apartheid is described not as the irrational racism of a pre-industrial colonial frontier, but as the direct product of South Africa's unique process of industrialisation. Segregation was developed to nurture early industry such as mining and capitalist agriculture (Worden, 2008:3). Poverty, deprivation and cheap labour were integral to maintaining the industrial system, and segregation and apartheid resulted from the class domination of capitalists rather than only from racial domination. The central issue is the relationship between capitalism as a mode of production and apartheid's racial structures (Lester, 1996).

Liberal historians such as M.W. MacMillan, C.W. De Kiewiet, E. Walker, T.R.H. Davenport (Cell, 1989; Visser, 2004), "part of the wider community of liberal economists, anthropologists, sociologists and political scientists, came into prominence between the two world wars and had intellectual foundations in classical liberalism" (Visser, 2004). They trace the origins of segregation to the Afrikaner, frontier tradition of racism (Cell, 1989). South Africa was viewed as a "dual economy" with two distinct societies – a white urban, capitalist, agrarian system and a rural impoverished and stagnating African sector (Worden, 2008:2). Developments are explained by virulent white Afrikaner racism arising at the frontier of the Cape Colony and later during the Great Trek. Early structural consequences of exploitative relations of production which used both 'race' and class as a convenient stratifying force are downplayed.

The nationalist perspective in, for example, the works of J.A. Wiid, G.D. Scholtz, F.A. van Jaarsveld, H.B. Thom (Visser, 2004) described and viewed South African development in terms of the building of the Afrikaner "herrenvolk" nation state and the unified experience of the Afrikaner "volk" (Worden, 2008:96). Apartheid thus became an important means of constructing political identity, forged out of Afrikaner diversity. Additional perspectives have developed, including a more "nuanced version" incorporating oral history, the importance of gender and more postmodern historiographical trends (Worden, 2008:3). A post-colonial understanding also highlights the dynamics of colonialism and imperialism (Lester, 1996:13). White supremacy and power structures of the white/black master-servant relationships are described by Tsotsi (2000) as being the necessary result of imperialist exploitation, colonial conquest, white domination and capitalist exploitation.

The development of social work therefore covariates with socio-political events. Various South African socio-political phases may be described (Bundy, 1992; Lester, 1996; Worden, 2008); the following are used in this historiography: pre-colonial era and colonial conquest; industrialisation and mining revolution of 1870s-1920s; 1920s until 1948; the apartheid era; 1985-1994 as era of violent repression, resistance and change; and the post-apartheid era.

Historical eras and historiography of social work

Era precolonial y conquista colonial

1400s	Navigators representing the Portuguese royal house and mercantile interests, establish a monopoly of the Cape sea route to India
1500/1600s	Southward Nguni migration and European settlement

1658	First slaves brought to the Cape
1686	Legislation prohibiting marriage of "full colour" freed slaves and Europeans
1790s	Wars of colonial conquest on Eastern frontier
1795	Formation of London Missionary Society
1799	Rebellion by Khoi and San servants lasting four years
1806	British colonial control
1820	European settlement schemes
1820s	Mfecane and expansion of Zulu kingdom
1834	Slave emancipation
1830s	Emergence of capitalised farming gentry
1856	Xhosa cattle slaughtering

Describing colonialism for what it was is important in accounts of social and political processes. Poverty and inequality existed in the pre-colonial era, but their effects were muted by mechanisms of kinship, reciprocity and institutionalised forms of welfare (Bundy, 1992). Earlier African societies were both ante-capitalist and anti-capitalist (Césaire, 1955). The colonial conquest is described by Césaire:

> *"It is not evangelization, nor a philanthropic enterprise, nor a desire to push back the frontiers of ignorance, disease and tyranny, nor a project undertaken for the greater glory of God, nor an attempt to extend the rule of law. To admit once and for all, without flinching at the consequences, that the decisive actors here are the adventurer and the pirate, the wholesale grocer and the ship owner, the gold digger and the merchant, appetite and force, and behind them, the baleful projected shadow of a form of civilization which, at a certain point in its history, finds itself obliged, for internal reasons, to extend to a world scale the competition of its antagonistic economies." (Césaire, 1955:33)*

Colonial conquest by the mercantile Dutch East India Company and the British resulted in "racism, slavery, attempted genocide, expropriation of land of indigenous people and exploitation of their labour as forced labour. Here lie the roots of national oppression" (Legassik, 2008:441). Massive structural inequalities were introduced in the form of slavery and "reduction of the Khoikhoi to landless labourers" (Bundy, 1992:27). The "wars of conquest" of the late 1700s (frontier wars, annexations and alienation of Xhosa land) brought further inequality, transferring property ownership and creating new relations of production (Bundy, 1992:28).

Colonisation enabled European construction of an inferior African "other", objectivised for cheap labour. The psychology of inferiorisation is described by Fanon (1963) as dehumanising and a "colonisation of the mind" enabling the later powerful forces of industrialised capitalism. Racism may therefore be contested as a primary motive in the early colony, as it is both colonial racism and capitalist accumulation formed the basis for the later structuring of society.

Colonial racism is the story of how Europeans defeated, robbed and ruled "blacks" for the enrichment of "whites" (Tsotsi, 2000:6). Massive inequality was structured along racial lines, with the entrenchment of racist policies from as early as 1686, when Europeans were prohibited from marrying freed slaves of "full colour" (Tsotsi, 2000:25). Slavery was a basis for accumulation and "helped to ingrain racially coded relations of coercion and subordination in colonial culture" (Bundy, 1992:27).

Liberal, philanthropic organisations such as the London Missionary Society (sent missionaries to South Africa in 1799) centred on converting the "heathen" to Christianity and spreading "civilisation". However, beyond Christian liberal discourse and missionary zeal was a capitalist and imperialist motive. William Wilberforce, leader of the London Missionary Society, for example Tomkins (2007) and Majeke (1953), wrote that Christianity teaches the poor to be diligent, humble, patient and obedient, and to accept their lowly position in life, making inequalities between themselves and the rich appear to be less galling (Majeke, 1953). A central tenet of missionary ideology was the expansion of industrial capitalism and empire. Dr John Philip, the representative of the London Missionary Society in South Africa, states:

> *"While our missionaries are everywhere scattering the seeds of civilisation … they are extending the British empire … Wherever the missionary places his standard among a savage tribe, their prejudices against the colonial government give way, their dependence upon the colony is increased by the creation of artificial wants … Industry, trade and agriculture spring up … and every genuine convert becomes the friend and ally of the colonial government." (Philip, 1821, cited by Bundy, 1979:39)*

Social work and the era of colonial conquest

The history of South African social work is interwoven with the history of colonisation and imperialism. Colonialism disrupted and denigrated traditional forms of social relations, and the social work practice which grew from this context was characterised by paternalism and welfare policies that favoured whites as the welfare elite (Patel, 2005).

Liberal and Afrikaner nationalist agendas characterised descriptions of social work development. Even a seminal social work text such as that of McKendrick (1990) described early colonial relations using a liberal hegemonic discourse of the benevolent European who found it "desirable to have a fresh source of supplies" at mid-voyage. McKendrick (1991:6) maintains that initial contacts between "whites" and Khoi were friendly, but that "stock thefts committed by the Khoi led to a war followed by an attempt by the whites to define a boundary to the land which they occupied". No analysis is given of the reduction of the Khoisan to a servile labouring class under the control of colonists (Lester, 1996). Explaining war as resulting from "stock thefts" (McKendrick, 1991) obfuscates the loss of traditional grazing land and independent means of subsistence in the Cape Peninsula. After conquest, the Khoi were incorporated into the colonial agricultural economy. These material relations formed the basis for later "systems of segregation and apartheid" (Lester, 1996:25).

As in Europe, early philanthropic social work arose from class-based structures of society. In South Africa welfare was focused on ("white") orphans and juveniles, with an orphanage established by the Dutch Reformed Church in 1814. In Britain, for example, Mary Carpenter established a "working and visiting society" in 1825, and a reformatory in 1852, typical of philanthropic liberalism. Her essay of 1851 was entitled "Reformatory Schools for the Children of the Perishing and Dangerous Classes and for Juvenile Offenders" (Smith, 2002). The Poor Laws of 1834 stigmatised the poor and social work was dominated by the ideology of individualism, which found the explanation for poverty in the character of the individual client rather than in social or economic structures (Ferguson, 2008; Lavalette & Ferguson, 2007).

In the colonies the philanthropic movement overlapped with liberal-utilitarian projects around reform and incarceration of "deviants" in colonial prisons, lunatic asylums and hospitals (Sen, 2005). These were seen as "enclaves of disciplinary power". Scholarship generally emphasised the "utility of deviance in the extension of the state into the uncolonised spaces of native society" (Sen, 2005:8).

In India, as in South Africa, social work activities focused on juvenile reform and colonial capitalism. Satadru Sen (2005) describes the gathering of career jailers, bureaucrats, native authority figures, women social workers, capitalists and religious colonisers around the project of juvenile reform. These were part of a group of "formidable social workers and colonial child-savers" such as Florence Nightingale, Mary Carpenter, Emily Hobhouse (known as a founding social worker for work in concentration camps during the South African war), Elizabeth Fry and Jane Addams (although respected for her more radical approach in the settlement movement (Reisch & Andrews, 2002). They were "women driven by middle-class anxieties about urbanity

and colonialism … armed with great religious and cultural confidence, and an expansive notion of 'women's work' and a willingness to take on entrenched bastions of male authority in assorted bureaucracies" (Sen, 2005:18). They are also described as being "reactionary in their attitude to the poor, the foreign, the heathen and the non-white" (Sen, 2005:19). Such were the hegemonic discourses of the origins of social work in the colonies.

Industrialisation and mining revolution 1870-1920

1867	Discovery of diamonds in South Africa
1877	First American Charity Organisation Society
1884/85	Berlin conference to formalise "scramble for Africa"
1894	South African Glen Gray Act
1898	New York School of Philanthropy established as first school for social workers
1899	Outbreak of South African War (until 1902)
1900	Emily Hobhouse, British social worker, forms Relief Fund for ("white") South African women and children
1902	Charlotte Maxeke, first South African social worker
1908	First Child Welfare Society in South Africa (Cape Town)
1910	Establishment of Union of South Africa, with the interests of mining capital paramount (Jan Smuts, minister of mining)
1912	Founding of African National Congress
1913	South African Natives Land Act
1914	First World War
1918	Status Quo Act fixing job colour bar in favour of "white" miners

Rapid transformation of the South African economy as a result of diamond and gold mining intensified social inequalities through the demand for labour (Bundy, 1979:28). Structuring of society was greatly affected by the economic interests and imperatives of mining capital after the 1870s (Legassik, 2008; Lester, 1996). Legassik (2008:441) maintains that "the real impact of capitalism came only with the discovery of gold and diamonds" as mines used pre-existing structures of segregation to obtain cheap labour. Segregation thus served the interests of capitalism rather than merely being an ideology of Afrikaner nationalism – mining capitalisation exacerbated early racial domination and stratifications (Legassik, 2008).

The Native Affairs Commission of 1905 with its territorial and political segregation between "black" and "white" laid the basis for future racialised policies. The gold

mines further established patterns of hierarchy and inequality in labour, with deep divisions along race and skill lines, reserving certain tasks for "white", better-paid miners (1911 Mine Works Act) (Bundy, 1979).

The reserves in the rural areas reproduced cheap labour, which led to the underdevelopment of these reserves. An example of such coercion of rural migration to supply labour needs was the Glen Gray Act 25 of 1894 (Thompson & Nicholls, 1993:58) on land tenure and labour extraction. It eliminated communal tenure of land and provided for the allocation of no more than one single plot to "black" heads of households. This aimed to force Africans off the land and make them wage workers (Ncapayi, 2005:24).

Extra methods to create a labouring class for the mines included "the legislative power of the state and the creation of monopolistic recruiting organisations" (Webster, 1978, cited by Thompson & Nicholls, 1993:59). Legislation included the Squatters Law (1895); the Pass Law (1896) and the Land Act (1913), which reserved less than 10% of the land for Africans (Patel, 2005:67). It is argued that the primary goals of the later Union Government of 1910 was industrialising the country and turning it into a capitalist state (SA History Online, 2013).

Increased levels of poverty among "white" Afrikaners, cattle losses during the 1890s rinderpest epidemic and destruction of Boer farms during the South African War made a "mass phenomenon of Afrikaner proletarianisation" (Bundy, 1979:30). This drove thousands of "poor white" Afrikaners from the rural areas to cities. State welfare and social work services were later directed mainly to this group. "White" migration and the threat it posed to "black" workers then led to various forms of "black" worker resistance and militancy between 1915 and 1917 (Worden, 2008).

Both Afrikaner nationalist and liberal writers used discourses of racial pluralism, assuming race groups to be real categories and discrete entities, while generally neglecting economic interests. Generally, the spread of capitalist social relations was obscured by attention to racial categories, pluralism and liberalism (Lipton, 2007:9).

Early development of social work prior to 1920

Liberal analysis and the structuring of Afrikaner nationalist state policies produced discourses of "protectionist" segregation (Worden, 2008). These ideologies and hegemonic racist discourses, together with international liberal and philanthropic influences, produced an indefensible form of social work.

The formal international history of social work used similar narratives, describing it as

arising from philanthropic, religious and gender struggles in response to poverty, from an individualist and moralistic perspective. In the late 1860s British social work tended to mirror the concerns, fears and prejudices of the Victorian middle and upper classes regarding the "problem of the poor", seen as threatening the social fabric of British cities (Ferguson & Woodward, 2009). The middle class of the mid-nineteenth century had "tolerated the poor living in overcrowded squalor and dying of disease and hunger", but later fears around the spread of diseases to the rich led to interventions from which groups of capitalists set out to profit, employing new groups of workers to supply them (Harman, 2008:380).

Explanations for poverty were sought in the character of the individual, rather than in social and economic structures. The "friendly visiting" of the Charity Organisation Societies (COS), founded in 1869 by Octavia Hill, for example, focused on assessing "deserving" recipients. The "poor need to be coerced into behaving morally" (Ferguson, 2008:40). "When an applicant is truly starving he may be given a piece of bread if he eats it in the presence of the giver" (Lewis, 1995, cited by Ferguson, 2008:90). Dominant discourses claimed that misguided interference in market forces would undermine family responsibility and that charity had a negative impact, as it would "undermine character" and be wasted on the "undeserving poor". These arguments were based on Social Darwinism and eugenics, maintaining that some people were beyond help as a result of weak genetic inheritance (Ferguson & Woodward, 2009:18). As will emerge later, eugenics and its racist discourse would form the basis for development of social work in South Africa during the 1920s and 1930s.

The poverty of "black" and "white" groups were dealt with in markedly different ways in South Africa in the early 1900s (McKendrick, 1990:10). "White" poverty was the primary focus of the state and "poor whites" were viewed as degenerate. Concerns around the health and wellbeing of communities developed around the "sanitation syndrome" and concerns that "black" inhabitants spread infection led to removals and racial segregation (Worden, 2008:47).

There are various narratives of South African social work of the early1900s. One is about Emily Hobhouse, a British welfare campaigner, in the Boer concentration camps of the South African War between 1899 and 1900. She is commonly credited for being the first social worker in South Africa, opposed to the Boer War and denouncing the activities of the British government. In 1900, she formed the Relief Fund for ("white") South African Women and Children (Spartacus Educational, 2010). Similarly, the formation of the Afrikaansche Vrouwe Vereeniging (AVV) (Afrikaans Women's Association) in 1904, which later became the Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue

Vereeniging (ACVV), is described in formal discourses as being the first welfare organisation in South Africa arising from racialised "white" philanthropism with a commitment to build "Taal en Volk" (Language and the People) (Du Toit, 2003:27). According to Vincent (1999), this arose from the "volksmoeder" (mother of the nation) discourse on the gendered role of Afrikaner women in "white" Afrikaner Nationalism, which fused racialised Christian charity with an Afrikaner nationalist mission (Du Toit, 2003).

However, other discourses remained hidden, emerging only when archival sources are explored. These include the work of Charlotte Maxeke (1874-1839), a campaigner for women's and workers' rights, as a "native welfare officer" in juvenile welfare at the Johannesburg Magistrate's Courts. Berger (2001:554) refers to A.B. Xuma's pamphlet on her life: Charlotte Manye (Mrs. Maxeke) or What an Educated African Girl Can Do.

The pamphlet includes a brief foreword by W.E.B. Du Bois, Maxeke's teacher and friend at Wilberforce University.

Although social work activities remained in the religious, philanthropic, "welfare" realm of social control, rehabilitation and work with the indigent, a more radical social work developed in the resistance movements and political organisations. There was no formal social work training and most "social workers" practised as such on the basis of their leadership skills, social commitment, liberal ideals and educational advantage.
It was, however, the liberal and philanthropic form of social work, geared to the maintenance of the status quo, which first became formalised, especially as the state gained control of such activities and training institutions, dictating and structuring the form and content of the unfolding profession.

1920s until 1948

1920	"Black" mineworkers' strike and co-option of radicalised skilled workers
1922	Trade union militancy and general strike of "white" workers (Rand Revolt)
1924	Pact government of General Hertzog
1924	First social work diploma course, University of Cape Town
1929	Formation of South African Institute of Race Relations
1930	Formation of Race Welfare Society
1930-38	Great Depression
1932	Report of Carnegie Commission of Inquiry into the poor "white" problem

1932	Stellenbosch University offers first degree course in social work
1933	Verwoerd becomes Chair of the Department of Sociology and Social Work at the University of Stellenbosch
1934	South African Party (Smuts) and National Party (Hertzog) form "fusion"government
1937	Establishment of Department of Welfare
1939	Beginning of WWII
1943	Founding of the Non-European Unity Movement
1944	Post-war Planning of social welfare

It is particularly in this era that formal social work emerges from the socio-political context, while it also has an impact on the socio-political context. These processes and developments will be described concurrently as they overlap.

During the early 1920s "white" workers fought, with increased militancy, to maintain their positions by opposing the appointment of cheap "black" migrant workers, which led to the Rand Revolt in 1922 (Worden, 2008). This led to a drive towards racial segregation and after the Pact government of General Hertzog came to power in 1924, attention was turned to the problem of "white" indigence (McKendrick, 1990:10).
The focus of welfarist groups from the 1920s was with sex and social hygiene, relating to eugenics and Social Darwinism (Glaser, 2005). Mass female urbanisation had implications for urban planning, public health, social services and juvenile delinquency, and welfare organisations worked on perceived "problems of uncontrolled sexuality" (Glaser, 2005:302) such as population growth; premarital sex and pregnancy (damaging the stability of the urban family); venereal disease; "cross-racial" sex which challenged racial boundaries; and young aggressive male sexuality, which posed a potential security threat to women (Glaser, 2005).

The Race Welfare Society (1930), led by H.B. Fantham (Dean of Science of the University of the Witwatersrand from 1923 to 1926), used theories of eugenics to limit the fertility of "poor whites", cultivate a healthy and productive "white" population and avoid "white race degeneration" (Legassik, 1976). The formation of the South African Institute of Race Relations in 1929 was another example of the liberal effort supporting the state's segregationist policy. By the 1930s the state was increasingly concerned about urban, unemployed African women.

Leading South African liberals such as Alfred Hoernlé (Professor and presenter of the Phelps-Stokes lectures of 1939) and Winifred Hoernlé (Anthropology lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand and "experienced in welfare services for blacks")

(Dubow, 1995) became involved in the Race Welfare Society in 1935 after it changed its focus to all race groups. This was in reaction to rapid growth in the urban African population, the visible problem of "black" poverty and the need to limit African population growth (Dubow, 1995:178). It later became the National Council for Maternal and Family Welfare (Glaser, 2005:317).

After the Race Welfare Society had expanded services to include "African" people, it became attractive for liberals to join, to "help Africans", while still adhering to government's segregationist policies (Dubow, 2000). Another example was the Joint Committee for Non-European work, formed under the Johannesburg Child Welfare Society (JCWS). Wilfred Hoernlé became president of the JCWS in 1951.

Welfare activity also focused on work with young people, such as the establishment of racist, segregated youth movements – Boy Scouts and Girl Guides for "Europeans", wayfarers and pathfinders for "non-European children". Hoernlé also appears in the report of the Post-War Planning conference at the University of the Witwatersrand (1944:125) as a chairperson of a discussion session on "social research in the planning of social welfare work".

The liberal support for segregationist and anti-socialist policies is apparent in Hoernlé's writing (1939, cited by Legassick, 1979:231):

> *"The great task of South African development was to guide the gradual transformation of the mass of natives into the class of wage-earning labourers … wisely on such lines that the creation of a corrupt, discontented, and dangerous industrial proletariat is avoided."*

And so, social work, within the framework of state policy and legislation, comfortably embraced liberal "status quo maintenance" activities. McKendrick (1990:12) uses a liberal perspective in ascribing this to "the long-ingrained racial attitudes of white persons, reflected in discriminatory state-sponsored social welfare and social assistance programmes". Lowe (1988:24) also sees apartheid as having developed from Afrikaner nationalism, which arose as "a reaction initially to British imperialism, and later to internal racial/ethnic forces" as well as from religion, specifically Calvinism.

The 1932 Report of the Carnegie Commission of Inquiry played a role in solidifying "white" Afrikaner political and economic dominance. It was foundational in terms of policy, ideology and the discipline of social work and its institutions. Such foundations are described as:

> *"prime constructors of hegemony, by promoting consent and discouraging dissent against capitalist democracy ... Their influence is exerted in many ways, among them: creating ideology and the common wisdom … and supporting those institutions by which policies are initiated and implemented." (Roelofs, 2007:480)*

The "Poor White Study" of the Commission was widely recognised as an important factor leading to the rise of the National Party, with its 1948 general election slogan, "The white man must remain master" (Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2004). Following its recommendations, the Department of Social Welfare was established in 1937, signalling a conscious state decision to become more involved in (white) welfare programmes (McKendrick, 1990:12).

Earlier, in 1926, the Pact government and its Economic and Wages Commission had put forward an important ideological perspective, using a structural approach and acknowledging circumstances rather than personal culpability in poverty. However, the Carnegie Report was a "backlash" against this project of welfare state building, emphasising psychological traits and "retarded adjustment" (Seekings, 2008:520). This shift is of relevance to the formalisation and professionalisation of social work in South Africa with its remedial and pathologising discourse. "The poor needed to be rehabilitated through developing new personal and psychological qualities" (Seekings, 2008:521).

Non-profit organisations and churches, mainly funded by the state, were important in building institutional and infrastructural capacity in schools. The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) and the ACVV (Afrikaans Christian Women's Association) built and managed many industrial and agricultural schools (Fourie, 2007:1288). It provided programmes for young women from rural areas, such as poor relief, hostels for work-seekers and services for unmarried mothers.

The complicity and collaboration by social work with racist segregationist and "protectionist" policies linked well with liberal ideologies of the time. For example, the Race Relations Report (1936) on the 1936 social work conference in Johannesburg, attended by social workers of all races, but predominantly "European", described the "remarkable extent" to which non-Europeans had benefited from the development of social welfare activities. Legassick (1976:235) quotes from the 1936 report of the Native Affairs Commission:

> *"There can be a Bantu nation in South Africa, every member of which can be proud to be a South African … The ideal is to recreate a Bantu world which shall be enlightened by our religion and ethics, and instructed by our economic experience …*

> *a world in which the interests of each in its own sphere shall be paramount, without detriment to the other. All our legislation aims at doing this."*

In spite of claims that the paramount interests would be "without detriment to the other", liberalism acted ideologically and institutionally to reproduce differentiated structures of South African racialised capitalism (Legassick, 1979).

Formalisation of social work education 1920 – 1948

South African social work education dates back to the 1920s, but the Carnegie Report led to its formalisation (Seekings, 2008). The first university training was offered at the University of Cape Town in 1924. Founding figures of social work education were Professor Bateson of the University of Cape Town (representing liberalism) and Professor Verwoerd of the University of Stellenbosch (representing Afrikaner nationalism). Other training institutions followed, such as the institutions of the Dutch Reformed Church, the Minnie Hofmeyr College for "coloured" women and the Huguenot College for "white" women (previously Friedenheim College) in 1931, the Transvaal University College in 1929 (the University of Pretoria), the University of the Witwatersrand in 1937, Jan Hofmeyr College for "black" social workers in 1941, DeColigny Training Institution (Dutch Reformed Church Seminary in Transkei), and the Strydom College Training School (Ntusi, 1997; Van der Merwe, 2011).

The curriculum content was based on British and American models, with a clinical approach inhering in the philosophy of personal responsibility (Kotze, 1998). The basis for training was the welfare system of the day, with therapeutic and restorative approaches (Lombard, 1998:17) with a strong focus on the hegemonic discourse of the Carnegie Report. Social work education had to adhere to policies such as separate higher education institutions and services according to racial categorisation (Social Welfare Post-War Planning Conference Proceedings, 1944).

> *"Early moves were largely stimulated by a genuine desire to train 'black' social workers to work with the problems experienced by 'black' people" (McKendrick, 1990:182). Such statements may be interpreted as (liberal) Gramscian "common understandings" which have a privileged location in the uninspected realm of the consciousness (Hill, 2009).*

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A prominent institution at the time was the Jan Hofmeyr School of Social Work in Johannesburg, opened in 1941 by Rev. Ray Phillips and supported by, among others, Job Richard Rathebe (trained as a social worker in the USA and member of the South African Institute of Race Relations) and A.B. Xuma (President of the ANC in 1940) (Jan Hofmeyr School of Social Work pamphlet, 1940). Some well-known graduates from the college included Ellen Kuzwayo, Joshua Nkomo, Winnie Mandela and Gibson Kente. Funders included the Union government, Transvaal Chamber of Mines, the Phelps Stokes Fund and the Carnegie Corporation (Phillips' News, 1943), all institutions with clear liberal ideological positions. In a newspaper article about the School, the evidence of hegemonic liberal discourse and the misrecognition of relations of conflict and exploitation are evident:

> *The need for such a school has long been felt. The impact of Western civilisation upon us has uprooted us from the anchor of the ancient life of our race, and thus has created social problems that can only be dealt with by trained men and women … It is becoming clearer and clearer to many Europeans that the welfare of their race in this country is bound up with that of the African race. They realise that as corn and tare [an undesirable weed] cannot grow side by side without the one overwhelming the other, so civilisation and barbarism cannot be allowed to grow side by side. (Bantu World, 1940)*

In spite of such racist and imperialist discourse, the Hofmeyr College later seemed to pose a threat to state ideologies. It was taken over in 1950 by the state and later closed down due to the undesirability of admission of "alien" black students from outside South Africa and claims by government officials that the educational level was unnecessarily high (Lowe, 1988:27). It had produced important leaders in the welfare and political field.

Apartheid era from 1948

1950	Population Registration Act; Immorality Act; Group Areas Act; Suppression of Communism Act
1952	Launch of defiance campaign
1955	Congress of the People in Kliptown and adoption of the Freedom Charter
1956	Mass demonstrations of women against Pass Laws
1956-1961	Rivonia treason trial
1959	Formation of Pan Africanist Congress (PAC)
1959	Extension of University Education Act

1960	Sharpeville shootings and banning of ANC, SACP and PAC
1969	Formation of South African Students Organisation led by Steve Biko
1976	Student protests in Soweto
1977	Murder of Steve Biko and banning of Black Consciousness organisations
1983	Formation of United Democratic Front

Further development of Afrikaner nationalism and Afrikaner ethnic identity transcended economic concerns and was not only connected to the material realm of capitalism – it was "firmly planted in a worldview determined by ethnicity" (Lester, 1996:98). Apartheid objectives preserved Afrikaner identity, protected white supremacy and economic privilege, prevented African urbanisation and social advancement and elevated the Afrikaner community (Lester, 1996).

The Bantu Authorities' Act of 1951 undermined local chiefs by making them responsible for tax collection and agricultural "betterment schemes" (Worden, 2008). Rural and urban protests such as defiance and pass laws campaigns failed to adequately challenge the state and the ANC was "uneasy in its proletarian alliance" (Worden, 2008:113). The Non-European Unity Movement advocated for boycotts and non-collaboration, focusing on working-class interests and refusing to recognise race as a valid category of political organisation (Worden, 2008:115). The Freedom Charter of 1955 and the subsequent charterist ideology united various groupings, including the Communist Party, which had accepted the principle that a national-democratic stage of revolution had to precede socialist transformation (Hudson, 1988, cited by Worden, 2008; Legassik, 2007).

Apartheid's "second phase" of separate development enforced segregation and "influx control" and superseded the earlier economic motives of segregationist policies (Worden, 2008:121). The Extension of University Education Act of 1959 impacted on social work training institutions, creating separate-race educational institutions and restricting admission of "other-than-white" students to "non-racial" universities such as in Cape Town, Natal and the Witwatersrand. "Black" university colleges became independent Universities in 1969 (McKendrick, 1991:185).

Concern mounted in the 1950s about the visible "white" working-class youth gang subculture in welfare circles. White delinquency was blamed on inadequate parenting, particularly among working and single mothers, and the response to this was the development of youth movements and programmes on health, marriage and family life (Glaser, 2005:323). At the same time youth gangs developed in the "African"

townships, "asserting a particularly aggressive form of masculinity" (Glaser, 2005:323). By 1964 birth control among Africans was high on the state agenda, with a cabinet memorandum stating that it was in the long-term interest of the state to reduce the size of "non-white families".

The emergence of Black Consciousness among university students and led by Steve Biko was a powerful new strategy to act as the Hegelian anti-thesis to the thesis of white racism (Biko, 1978). This movement was also committed to social development among rural black communities. The emergence of movements such as the Black Peoples Convention in 1972 united various groupings of the black consciousness movement, posing a threat to the state.

The absence of an appropriate social work response to these circumstances demonstrates the nature of social work as an instrument of the state. It was only on the marginal fringe of "alternative welfare structures and social movements" that a social work of resistance was practised.

Gradually, after 1948, various welfare alliances splintered and by 1960 "welfare became synonymous with 'white' welfare under Nationalist rule. As 'white' families stabilised and poverty declined, government welfare services could cope with the small numbers who fell through the cracks" (Glaser, 2005:327). The provision of welfare services among African people was greatly neglected and apartheid social welfare was tied to the political and economic objectives of the time, focusing on social control and adaptation to an unjust social system (McKendrick, 1990; Patel, 2005).

In the narrative of "white" social welfare and social work, 1978 saw the promulgation of three simultaneously enacted regulatory and controlling laws (Patel, 2005:73). These were the National Welfare Act 100/1978, the Social and Associated Workers Act 110/1978 and the Fundraising Act 107/1978 (Greater Johannesburg Welfare, Social Service and Development Forum, 1999). Social workers rendered services only to their "own group" and salaries were differentiated. Conflicts of class and exploitation received little attention, subsumed by the liberal narrative which interpreted those conflicts as deriving from race and Afrikaner nationalism.

However, community work, especially in the alternative social development and political movements, did have a radical and transformative character in challenging apartheid social welfare (Patel, 2005:79). For example, a two-day strike, one of the first social work protest actions, occurred in Cape Town in 1980. An important role player in resistance against apartheid was the South African Black Social Workers Association (SABSWA). For example, in 1977 the Black People's Convention (BPC) convened a consultative meeting with various organisations at Hammanskraal to develop strategies

to frustrate the pending "independence" of Bophuthatswana from the Republic of South Africa. Present were SABSWA (Mpotseng, 1978), among others. Another example of social work activity in resistance to the apartheid regime during the early 1980s was found in the activities of BABS (Build a Better Society), working in the Cape Flats and beyond, to conscientise and mobilise people around basic human rights and community development. These and many other alternative and progressive practices contributed to the evolution of a just social welfare system after 1994, although formal discourses around such activities are minimal.

Transition 1983-1994

1985	Declaration of state of emergency and violent repression by the apartheid state
1986	Repeal of Pass Laws
1987	"Washington consensus" as the start of the neoliberal era of global capitalism
1988	FW De Klerk replaces PW Botha, who resigned as president of South Africa
1988	Extensive banning of anti-apartheid organisations
1989	Launch of the mass democratic movement civil disobedience ("defiance") campaign and resistance
1989	Women's protest march in Cape Town
1990	Unbanning of ANC, PAC and Communist Party
1993	Negotiations and Interim Constitution
1993	Transitional Executive Council signs IMF loan agreement with a commitment by the ANC to the freedom of the market rather than regulatory interventions
1994	Democratically elected Government of National Unity

During the 1980s global neoliberalism, ideological shifts in policies of the North and the economic crises of the South undermined many social policies in both rich and poor countries, including South Africa. "Social policy was given a residual role of coping with the consequences of socially blind macroeconomics" (Lund, 2006: vii). The South African government, like other conservative governments such as those of Thatcher and Reagan, embarked on a process of change in the welfare system based on the logic of the market (Sewpaul & Holscher, 2004). This "New Right" cleverly diluted the more radical tradition (Ledwith, 2001; Mishra, 1999; Sewpaul & Holscher, 2004). According to Patel (2005:77), critical observers believed that political change was inevitable and that privatisation (of welfare) would prevent a post-apartheid government from adopting radical redistributive policies. Transitional state structures had committed to

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neoliberalism, agreeing to "manage the economy responsibly" in order to obtain a loan of US$850 million from the International Monetary Fund in 1993 (Sewpaul & Holscher, 2004:70).

In the mid-1980s there had also been a revolutionary upsurge of mass worker organisation and resistance to the repressive apartheid regime. There were numerous general strikes, boycotts, marches and other protest actions. According to Legassik (2007), by the early 1990s 4 million workers were participating in political strikes. With such mass resistance, the "negotiated settlement" (ensuring the upholding of liberal capitalism) was entered into between the ANC and the government. Top businessmen were instrumental in moving forward the negotiation process to avoid the impending revolution (Legassik, 2007). Social democracy is said to have been based on "statist economic models … as a way of breaking the power of white-owned corporations", creating opportunities for the "black" elite to enter business (Mbeki, 2009). It is argued that for the ANC the "political/ideological project of nation building became paramount and supplanted … the socio-economic features of the crisis" (Marais, 1996, cited by Legassik, 2007:433).

In this context, social work generally remained true to those who held "hegemonic discursive power in society, namely a "new right", neoliberal and managerialist South African social welfare system operating on discourses of modernity" (Sewpaul & Holscher, 2004:94).

In the late 1980s some sections of the welfare sector organised themselves to resist racist and unjust policies (National Welfare Forum, 2013), as "progressive social workers of various persuasions" questioned their own roles in human service delivery (Ntebe, 1994:41). Important initiatives included the Free the Children Campaign, the National Children's Rights Committee and the Detainees Parents Support Committee (SA History Online, 2013). The political resistance movements such as the "black" student movements and women's movements provided an important platform for social work participation and mobilisation. Legendary social workers such as Helen Kuzwayo and Winnie Mandela were actively involved in these organisations (Norward, 2007). Similarly, conferences demonstrating such shifts included: University of the Western Cape "Social Welfare at the Watershed", 1987; University of the Witwatersrand "Towards a Democratic Welfare System – Options and Strategies", 1989; Maputo "Health and Welfare in Transition", 1990; and the University of the Western Cape "People's Health and Social Services", 1991, along with numerous other seminars, workshops, discussions, protest pickets. Progressive social workers were thus in search of a unitary, non-racist, democratic welfare system, best enacted through a radical social work approach (Ntebe, 1994:43).

Current era since 1994

1996	Adoption of the South African Constitution
1996	GEAR economic policy adopted
1999	Thabo Mbeki elected as second president of SA
2002	Government HIV/AIDS anti-retroviral rollout plan announced
2005	Rise of formalised resistance through social movements such as Abahlali Basemjondolo (shack dwellers movement)
2008	Global economic crisis and rise in anti-capitalist and anti-war movements
2011	Mass revolutionary upsurges such as the "Arab Spring"
2011/2012	SAP statistics describe approximately 11000 protest/mass action events
2012	Marikana massacre

The 1994 elections were characterised by hope for social justice. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission attempted to bring about healing after centuries of oppression and injustice and the South African Constitution, adopted in 1996, is considered to be one of the most progressive in the world, ensuring protection of human rights for all.

However, in 1996 the South African government adopted the neoliberal Growth, Employment and Redistribution programme (GEAR) in keeping with pressures from global economic institutions. The global shift to neoliberalism was a commitment to rampant capitalism and the logic of the market as the solution to the world's problems, dictating an unfettered free market, fiscal discipline and privatisation (Noyoo, 2003:37). This was a shift from the Redistribution and Development Programme (RDP) designed to meet basic human needs and redistribution (Adato, Carter & May, 2006). Only a few protective aspects of social policy were retained and the emphasis was placed on "the deserving poor", mitigating the worst effects of structural adjustments (Lund, 2008).

The changes were mostly political and socio-economic. Transformation is said to have failed due to the choices made by government which "strengthened the minerals-energy complex (MEC), introduced financialisation and allowed capital flight, hastened deindustrialisation and amplified poverty, unemployment and inequality" (Bond, 2012).

The levels of poverty and social injustices among "black" communities led to mobilisation of social movements such as Abahlali Basemjondolo (shack dwellers

movement), the Landless Peoples Movement, the Anti-eviction Campaign and the Anti-privatisation Forum (Ballard, Habib & Valodia, 2006). Outrage at conditions of suffering and injustice challenged structural conditions of unequal power relations and class conflict and social mobilisation seems to have become "a conventional vehicle for the attainment of democratic rights for ever increasing numbers of citizens" (Tapscott, 2010:275) in the transition from race-based to class-based apartheid.

A recent critically significant moment in South African history was the Marikana massacre of 16 August 2012, when 34 striking miners were killed by the South African police in what seemed to have been a deliberate ambush of the striking workers. While South Africa is said to be the wealthiest country in the world in terms of its mineral resources (Amandla, 2012), the paradox of high levels of exploitation and social injustice associated with mineworkers and the majority of South Africans is clear. Analysing the massacre, Kassrils (2012:7) states: "much lies behind the catastrophe: chiefly the exploitative mine owners and the horrendous conditions under which our country allows mineworkers to toil and their communities to fester".

Understanding neoliberalism in the political economy of South Africa is critical for the analysis of current realities. Formulations of the current ANC government are "a narrow liberal understanding of freedom and representative democracy, a conception of social capital emptied of an understanding of power relations, a state that hovers above class contradictions to regulate class conflict and a productivist conception of economic change; more growth and industrial jobs" (Satgar, 2012:5).
ductivista del cambio económico" (Satgar, 2012, p.5).

Social work after 1994

Social work evolved after 1994 within this neoliberal context. By 2001 approximately 27 laws administered by the Department of Social Development were amended or repealed, and new laws adopted by the legislature (Patel, 2005). The White Paper for Social Welfare (Department of Welfare, 1997) outlined broad policy guidelines with principles such as democracy, equity, ubuntu, non-discrimination, human rights, people-centredness, human capital, sustainability and partnership. Social workers were thus required to depart radically from the forms of intervention and service provision of the apartheid era.

However, a social work "business" discourse emerged, as the culture of neoliberalism has "colonized the public sector as business thinking and practices crossed the public-private sector divide and were transplanted into activities such as social work" (Harris, 2002:5). Social work was expected to function, as far as possible, as if it were a

commercial profit-making business. This mirrored an international trend. For example, in Britain a similar crisis in the early 2000s led to the drafting of the Social Work Manifesto, a statement of social workers' commitment to social justice, renewed radical efforts towards creating an equal society and resistance against neoliberal, managerialist discourses (Ferguson, 2008).

In South Africa developmental discourse gained dominance, often presented from a neoliberal perspective of entrepreneurship and free market participation. Social development's social justice aims include promoting social and economic development, facilitating participation of the socially excluded; improving the quality of life of people; building human capabilities; promoting social integration; and promoting human rights (Midgley, 2001; Patel, 2005; Patel & Midgley, 2004, cited by Patel, Hochfeld, Graham & Selipsky, 2008). In itself, social development pursues important social justice ideals; however, when transposed onto a neoliberal capitalist agenda, it becomes co-opted for the maintenance of the corporatist and capitalist system.

Community and social development, as espoused in the White Paper for Social Welfare (Department of Welfare, 1997), became the urgent project of social work education. For example, at the conference on the transformation of social work education in 1998, Lombard (1998:18) made a plea for a paradigm shift beyond the casework-community work dichotomy towards social development. This shift focused on empowerment; non- remedial intervention; participation and networks; and concern with economic development (Gray & Simpson, 1998), although neoliberal capitalist discourses remained dominant.

To some degree social work has acknowledged the destructive and oppressive nature of its past and the imperative for a critical perspective. For example, the social work Standards Generating Body (SGB) of the early 2000s identified, among others, the following learning outcome for social work training (13 of 27):

> *Identify, select and implement various techniques, methods and means of raising awareness, developing critical consciousness about the structural forces of oppression, exclusion and disempowerment, and use such awareness to engage people as change agents.*

Conclusiones

The historiography of social work and the interconnection of events and wider forces in history that shape people's lives, institutions and even disciplines (Harman, 2008) are more fully understood from a historical-materialist perspective. The origins of social

work in South Africa are found within the forces of racist capitalism, social conflict and unequal power relations – shaped by the hegemonic ideologies of the various eras during the 20th century and even earlier colonial and imperialist origins. Through hegemonic discourses, social work generally supported the maintenance of the racist status quo and the capitalist mode of production, with individualist and liberal ideologies of freedom of choice and personal responsibility.

Social work, on the other hand, has also played a challenging role in forming and shaping society through resistance and struggles against oppressive dynamics. These radical responses offer counter-narratives and challenge the hegemonic discourses of South African social work. They provide hope and inspiration for a social work which strives for social justice and a better society.

The dialectical-historical perspective rather than a purely historical or chronological record of "progress" allows for socio-political dynamics to be understood as formative of societal conditions as well as of social work. If societal conditions as well as social work are formed by socio-political dynamics, activists for social change such as social workers, community members, workers and new social movements are in turn able to intervene in a meaningful way in these socio-political dynamics. Such is the urgent imperative for social work: to respond to its call to be a social justice profession and resist status quo maintenance and oppressive hegemonic discourse. Consistent critical consciousness, examination of and contribution to new discourse and action are essential.

Such critical consciousness will allow social work never to be disengaged from moments like the Marikana massacre and other forms of oppression and brutalisation (Smith & Alexander, 2013). It demands that social work engage with the full complexity of events emerging from the class- and race-based antagonisms of South African society. Understanding and engaging with current crises and conflicts as heralding a transformational and revolutionary moment in history allows for social work to respond by playing a role in this history as well as being shaped by it.

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REVIEW

The Routledge Handbook of Critical Social Work,

Stephen A. Webb (Ed.), Londres y New York, Routledge, 2019, 609 pp, ISBN: 978138578432. CLP$ 44.0000 / US$ 53,00

Taly Reininger[1]

Edited by Stephen A. Webb, professor of Social Work at Glasgow Caledonian University, this handbook provides an overview of Critical social work in primarily Anglo speaking countries. Comprised of 48 chapters written by social work academics from the UK, Australia, United States, New Zealand, Canada and a few other European countries, the handbook is divided into six sections. The first section, titled "Historical, social and political influences" seeks to provide the conceptual foundation of Critical social work, providing historical and contextual insight into the differences between Critical social work and what the handbook defines as "mainstream social work perspectives". The second section of the handbook is entitled, "Mapping the theoretical and conceptual terrain" and presents readers with an introduction to a wide range of theoretical perspectives that inform Critical social work including chapters on Critical Theory (Frankfurt school), Constructivism, Anarchism, Feminism, Biopolitics, amongst others. The third section, "Methods of engagement and modes of analysis" seeks to cover Critical social work methods including chapters on critical race theory and social work, postcolonial feminist social work, narrative analysis and social work, amongst others. A fourth section, "Critical contexts for practice and policy" focuses on Critical social work in particular contexts and populations followed by a fifth section, "Professional education and socialization" dedicated to discussing the challenges secondary education faces due to neoliberalism and presenting innovative approaches to incorporating Critical Social work into social work curriculums. Lastly, the final section, "Future challenges, directions and transformations" completes the handbook with chapters dedicated to exploring new directions for the profession and discipline in the 21st century.

The handbook begins with a brief foreword by Jan Fook, social work academic who has published various texts on critical social work throughout her career. The foreword is written from a personal perspective, detailing her ties to critical social work and its development since she was a student during the 1970s in Australia. Surprisingly she states that critical social work, "…might have been said to have been initiated in

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Australia" (p. xxv), a statement I am sure many are willing to counter, including authors from this very handbook as well as many from outside the Anglo-Saxon academic circle (see for example the Latin American reconceptualization movement of the 1960s). Nevertheless, Fook's foreword provides an interesting review of the birth of critical and radical social work in the UK as well as Australia discussing the author's own hesitations with the perspective during her formative years. Fook details how in her work she was able to combine critical, postmodern, and post structural theories in order to address what she felt were shortcomings of the 1970s critical social work. She thus defines critical social work in the 21st century as theoretically, methodologically and contextually pluralistic, identifying this heterogeneity as potentially divisive. It is for this reason she praises the publication of the Handbook as key to providing a space for featuring the diversity of Critical social work thinking under one unified volume, specifically considering the challenges Critical social work faces in today's uncertain times.

Jan Fook's forward to the Handbook is followed by Stephan Webb's introduction, a chapter fittingly titled, "Critical social work and the politics of transformation". While Webb's introduction provides an overview of the book and its parts, it also provides a much needed redefinition of the meaning of Critical social work. Here Webb juxtaposes what he defines as mainstream social work and Critical social work, defining the latter as a political project, one that seeks social justice, emancipation and the end of oppression versus the former as a depoliticized practice focused on the failings of individuals and communities. Webb's redefinition threads even finer by identifying the differences of what he defines as critical social work (with a small c) and Critical social work (with a capital C). According to the author, the dissimilarities lie in that critical social work (with a small c) is broader in definition and encompasses a "…much more generic approach that attenuates the necessary attributes and characteristics for effective interventions." (p.xxxiii). The focus of critical social work (small c) is thus on developing best practices and calls for social workers to be reflective and critical in their practice with a focus on individual and community level interventions, leading to what Webb argues is an obscuration of larger more structural analysis of reality and transformation. Critical social work (capital C) on the other hand, is narrower in scope and is characterized by the identification of structural oppressions and inequalities and seeks widespread structural transformations rather than micro level change. Within this line of argument, Webb defines Critical social work as a political endeavor that need to take a stand against neoliberal capitalism and the wide-spread and profound damages it has caused on a global scale. He incites social work and social workers to resist, to organize, and to recognize, "…just how multinational corporations and local state bureaucrats are terrified of social protests and radical mobilization." (p. xii). For Webb

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this fear is of tactical importance for social work in order to become a force of refusal, of opposition, of insurrection and of "…fraternal solidarity." (p.xiii). He calls upon social workers to become militant political agents who confront and fight against "…the repressive violence of the State and apparatus of capitalist greed and wealth accumulation." (p.xiii). It is precisely this political position and the critique of structural oppressive forces that unite the chapters that make up this hefty volume.

While all the chapters of the volume present very interesting and thought-provoking perspectives, on a personal level I particularly enjoyed and thus recommend Paul Michael Garrett's chapter, "Welfare words, neoliberalism and critical social work"; Stephen A. Webb's chapter, "Resistance, biopolitics and radical passivity"; Natalia Farmer's chapter, "Controversy analysis: Contributions to the radical agenda." and; Lucas D. Introna's chapter, "Performativity and sociomaterial becoming: What technologies do.". Nevertheless, before ending this book review I would like to take a moment to delve into more depth into a chapter I consider of particular significance to the handbook, specifically due to the lack of chapters and authors from the global south. This chapter is the Handbooks last, fittingly titled, "Imperialism, colonialism and a Marxist epistemology of 'critical peace'" written by Vasilios Ioakimidis and Nicos Trimikliniotis. This chapter is an excellent note on which to end the Handbook due to its call for, "a radical shake-up" (p. 560) of social work's imperialist knowledge base.

In this last chapter, Ioakimidis and Trimikliniotis argue that while colonial and postcolonial theories have been key to challenging "traditional" social work knowledge, the postmodern or poststructuralist origins of these theories places a limit on the manner in which social work is conceptualized, specifically by obviating the broader socio-economic structural links of social work as an imperialist project contained within modern capitalism. Taking the readers on a historical journey, the authors reveal how social work in certain times and places has played a key role in suppressing and controlling certain "dangerous" populations in order for oppressive regimes to thrive. The authors give examples of the origins of social work in Cyprus in which the profession was imported from the UK by the colonial authorities in order to undermine anti-colonial movements, working towards identifying and containing "anti-social" opposing forces during the 1940s, a strategy also utilized in India and the West Indies. The authors argue that these imperialistic strategies have continued throughout the 20th and 21st century under the guise of humanitarian aid, calling out the, "lucrative 'peace industry' which often employs social workers and NGOs" (p. 565) that aided in the transition to neoliberal regimes in war torn and poor ravaged countries. In their chapter the authors provide a true global perspective on social work and it's at times horrific history, a perspective key to recognizing the challenges Global Critical social work faces in today's complex times. Their proposal for a Marxist epistemology of critical

peace is, "…a profoundly deeper and broader concept which demands a break-up with imperialist and neocolonial practices and meaningfully addresses the questions of inequality and poverty." (p.570) calling upon social work to take up this endeavor on local and global levels.

To conclude, there is no doubt that this handbook is an extremely valuable contribution to the literature on Critical social work, providing readers with a vast array of perspectives, discussions, and innovative methods. This handbook is a very important reference not only for students and social work academics but also for frontline professionals who seek to widen and update their social work knowledge base. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that the handbook's scope is limited in scale and would benefit greatly by the incorporation of authors and perspectives outside of anglo-saxon and European countries. There is a great depth of knowledge and wisdom on Critical social work from the global South that is absent from this volume thus contributing to the imperialist tendencies of social work discussed in Ioakimidis and Trimikliniotis's last chapter. Hopefully this absence will be taken into consideration in the publication of the Handbook's second edition or perhaps better yet, in the publication of a second volume of the Handbook that provides a much needed platform from which to include Critical social work perspectives and discussions from other latitudes that have been obviated for far too long.

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REVIEW

Las caras del trabajo social en el mundo. Per(e)sistencias bajo el capitalismo tardío,

Paula Vidal Molina (Coord.), Santiago de Chile, RIL Editores, 2017, pp. 376. ISBN/ISSN: 978-956-01-0413-7. CLP$ 21.000 / USD$ 26,00

Fiorella Cademartori[1]

The book reviewed below is a daring compilation of articles from ten countries on four continents. A journey through histories, trajectories, realities, geographies and processes of a diversity rarely seen in this type of compilation from our profession. The adjectival of diversity not only belongs to the authors and their positions, but to the expression of the "concrete" that they describe, interpret, explain and propose to challenge.

The daring, and therefore the first, virtue of the material is to present to the readers an internationalist view of the discipline / profession. Between pp. 16 to 22, the compiler (also the author) provides a brief reference to the central arguments and the interest placed by each essayist; which is why repeating the task would result in a duplicate contribution. However, highlighting the validity of some questions, the power of reflection and the vitality of open dialogues, shows the meaning of these words.
As the title states, this book gives an account of the persistence of the general law of capitalist accumulation while still showing the engine of contradiction, resistance. We are invited to view the experiences and proposals of resistance to the forms of exploitation, oppression and colonization throughout the world, not only from the exercise of Social Work, but as a society as a whole.

Diving into the premises of the discussions invites an exercise in thinking in "plural" (not to be confused with eclecticism). Readers will require sharpness in the task of elucidating the debates that the essays presuppose (not because they are veiled, but because the bibliography alone refers to very divergent theoretical currents, thought and traditions). As capitalism is international in its content but national in its form, it shows that problems inherent and common to the logic of capital have varying levels of intensity, scope and drama in the countries / regions, which ultimately questions dissimilar efforts and challenges at each juncture.

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In the first section entitled "Social Work: context, notions and theories" (pp. 25 to 158) we find the development of categories typical of the foundations of the profession: equality (radical), criticism, human rights and systemic crises of the capital. Intellectual efforts that, far from being pigeonholed into theoretical-conceptual debates, need to be (re) appropriate and translated in the light of the daily presence that they have in our work processes (regardless of the field in which we are employed).

The second section entitled “Social Work in today's world” (pp. 161 to 374), with even more references to particular experiences in each country, also places the foundations of our profession at the center: research as a constitutive aspect; changes in training courses and political projects to which they pay; disputes over accessibility to rights and existing public services; the critique of social protection systems based on merit and the primacy of commercial logic; the labor field and the tense autonomy of educational processes in the face of state mandates; and, the recovery of the category of peace to give way to substantial practices that attack the future of globalization.

Certainly, the analyzes carried out by the referents of the countries represented (Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Costa Rica, Canada, China, Botswana, England, Italy and Germany) should not be taken as hegemonic readings or views within those countries or even region but, undoubtedly, as a contribution from a line of thought, sector and / or grouping; since it is pertinent to emphasize that the profession and the professionals of Social Work, far from being fixed in watertight and monolithic places, move under disputes of ethical - political (and theoretical) projects in conflict.

In conclusion, I would like to underline that the twelve chapters become valid inputs both for academic training spaces and for workplaces. To reflect, position and act in the face of an increasingly precarious and unequal reality for the enormous group of the working class, is a constant, continuous and persistent task. As the Peruvian Marxist JC Mariátegui said in the mythical Amauta Magazine “The isolated cry is not worth, no matter how long its echo may be; constant, continuous, persistent preaching is worth it. The perfect, absolute, abstract idea, indifferent to the facts, to the changing and mobile reality is not valid; the germinal idea, concrete, dialectical, operative, rich in power and capable of movement is valid". Social Work has won battles regarding its role and contributions to the production of knowledge in the social sciences. We celebrate and invite the reading of this type of publication to continue the fight.

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INTERVIEW

Interview with Dimitra-Dora Teloni, Greek social worker, academic and activist

"Struggling for social justice is not something that you achieve in one day. You have to be there and be patient, take care of yourself and take care of your comrades, and be together and act collectively".

In this issue we have discussed the meaning of critical social work from diverse perspectives. In our section of interviews, we are glad to present a conversation with Dimitra-Dora Teloni[1] . She is an Assistant Professor in the Social Work Department at the University of West Attica, Athens, Greece. She is a social worker and activist and participates in the solidarity movement during the financial crisis as well as in the antiracist movement in Greece. She has been a member of the Social Work Action Network in the United Kingdom since 2004 and is a founder member of the Greek Social Work Action Network.

Gianinna: Dear Dora, thank you very much for giving this interview to our Journal Critical Proposals in Social Work. I am glad to have this conversation with you today because the aim of our journal is to promote debates on critical social work from a cosmopolitan perspective, including diverse approaches and experiences on what it means to build critical approaches in our profession and discipline nowadays. In Chile and in Latin America in general, we don't know much about Greek social work though, I think, we have many things in common (for example, the experience of dictatorship and its impacts on social work). One of the main problems is that in our countries few people speak and read English, so we have a language barrier that contributes to an "isolated" development of social work debates, and also inhibits the contributions that Latin American social workers can make in other latitudes and vice versa. That's the idea of our journal, and that is why we created a bilingual journal, with the purpose of translating – in the broad sense of the idea of translation – and connecting debates from critical perspectives around the world

Dimitra-Dora: It is an honour for me, thank you very much for considering me. This is very interesting, to be honest, I think in Greece we don't know about Chile, but I have also the feeling that we have many things in common. However, I suspect that you are

[1] Online interview conducted on October 9, 2020.

more progressive than official social work in Greece. I heard that in your university you do marvellous work. I think we have a lot to teach each other, to exchange.

Gianinna: Thank you very much Dora. We would like to know more about you, about your trajectory as a social worker, your experiences and views about social work in these critical times and the possibility of resistance to neoliberalism today.

The first question is about you, your trajectory and career as a social worker.

Dimitra-Dora: As you know, most young people take exams, usually in the universities in Greece, when they are eighteen years old. I didn't follow this trajectory. I took these exams when I was twenty-eight years old. I studied social work about thirty. After that, I was working with drug addiction, young people and their families, and I was also working in communities for the prevention of addictions. After that I decided to study social work. I studied four years in a public university in Patras; in the town where I was born. I studied until I was thirty-two years old. Then I worked with women with breast cancer. But this was not enough, and I wanted to study more so I went abroad to the University of Liverpool where I did my Masters. My Masters Degree was in Research Methodology (Social Policy and Sociology). And then I wanted to do a PhD, but I didn't have much money, so I had to come back to Greece to work and pay the fees for the PhD. I finished my PhD and continued to work with people with cancer. And then I started to teach from 2006 until today in the Social Work Department in Patras, and then in the Social Work Department at the University of West Attica in Athens. I have taught for the last fourteen years, but also during all these years I was very involved in politics, in unions and in social movements in Greece. That's my story more or less.

Gianinna: How was the experience of studying your PhD in England?

Dimitra-Dora: Actually, I did my research in Greece. It was about frontline social workers in municipalities and public social services, covering issues of poverty, social services and social work. My supervisor was Chris Jones, he is very famous in radical social work. And also, at the University of Liverpool I met Michael Lavalette, you know Michael. I was also there in 2004, when the Social Work Action Network - SWAN had its first conference. It was a unique experience to be there and to be part of this. And I also met Ian Ferguson who you know and studied at the same University as Vasilios Ioakimidis.

The University of Liverpool was an opportunity for me to know more about radical and critical social work, particularly about radical social work, because in Greece we had

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never been taught about radical perspectives before. I started to be closer to those approaches.

Gianinna: When I studied my PhD -I also studied it in England, but between 2010 and 2014- I did my thesis underpinned by critical and radical social work as well, so Michael Lavalette, Ian Ferguson and Vasilios were part of my list of references. And I remember, at that time I found a paper about austerity, dismantling of welfare in Greece and how social workers resisted the call from the government, which was very important for my research. The paper was written by you and colleagues and was an inspirational paper because you analysed the way in which social workers, as a collective body, had contested the government policies by doing acts of civil disobedience.

Dimitra-Dora: At that time there were many austerity policies in Greece that left people in extreme poverty, because the financial crisis was the opportunity to promote neoliberal policies and cuts in public welfare, in public health and social services. They tried to promote privatisation in all the sectors. From 2011 until 2015 there were great social movements. There was the Solidarity Movement, which was very important because what they did...we did...because many of the members of the movement were social workers. And what was the interesting thing in the Solidarity Movement? As many people didn't have access to the public health system, we, from the Solidarity Movement, created a grassroots health sector. We created what we called medical centres. We organised across Greece and provided primary health care for free. This was because the right-wing government at that time decided that people in order to have primary health care, had to pay. And people during that period, because there was a lot of poverty, didn't have money to pay for health, and didn't have money to buy their medicines. So, what the Solidarity Movement did was to create these medical centres in which doctors, nurses and social workers, and other people participated. All this was made without any funding at all. No funding from the government and we weren't an NGO. We were a grassroots welfare initiative and had about 85 medical centres across the country. We created these centres and provided primary health care, but the Solidarity Movement did not do only that. At the same time, we struggled and demanded public health care. In 2015 the newly elected government of Syriza decided to provide free primary health care. This political shift was not only due to the fact that it is a left party but also due to the struggles and pressure by the solidarity movement and medical centres. This is an example of victory.

Gianinna: Yes, that is a great example of how social movements can position the demands of the people and defend their rights. The risk of course was to transform the movement into a new NGO…that is the risk if solidarity movements meet the people's

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needs, the State withdraw…that is a great conquest that you could exert pressure to the point that the new elected government decided to provide free health care…

Dimitra-Dora: Yes, we were aware of this, and you know, the people who were participating, we also participated in other organisations and unions, so we knew how the system works and we didn't want to replace the state, and we didn't want to be an NGO. We were there because there was a crisis situation and people were starving, without access to health care. But at the same time, we were aware that the only solution was to have a public health system. And we wanted a strong public health system. Many of the members of the medical centres were also doctors, nurses and social workers who also worked in public hospitals. Half of the day they were in the hospitals. And after that, they were at the medical centres to provide healthcare for free. And they were also the connections, the links, between the movement and the public health system.

I think there are two points from which we can take lessons for social work. First, is that this was a grassroots initiative. It was not from above, it was from below. And in these centres participated also people from the community. They could be there, say for a while, discuss with other people, discuss with the social worker but not in a formal way. And also, as a second point: In a study that we held in 2015 we found that social workers who participated in these grassroots health initiatives, they gradually changed the way that they worked in the official services. For example, in contradiction with official social and health services the access in medical clinics was free for everyone: refugees, migrants, Greeks, Roma with no justificatory document. So, while official social work was bureaucratic, with gatekeepers and controllers, in the work with the grassroots initiatives social workers shifted their role to a more emancipatory one. And this was a big difference with official social work but at the same time also one of the strengths of the coalition of social work with the movements.

Another finding of this research was the fact that social workers adopted in official social services alternative ways of working with people, exactly those that they used with other health professionals in medical clinics. They also started to think about other ways in which social work can be closer to the people, more creative in their daily practice, and not so bureaucratic and oppressive as before.

What we saw in this case but also in the case of social work activity within the antiracist movement was that this connection between social work and the movement had many privileges. Social work has the knowledge on how to approach people in the community and how to support and respect people, and we do that very well. For example, when I participated in the medical centre as a social worker, when I was there with doctors and nurses, I could teach them how to treat people, making them understand that people have suffered abuse, or had other social problems so they have to be treated with care,

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etcetera. In some way, I taught them how to respect people. And they also taught me different ways to work together and work more politically. I think the connection of social work and the movement and the grassroots initiatives is very important because we have many things to exchange.

This is just an example of the Solidarity Movement, because we had many other solidarity initiatives. For example, we had public meals, because people were starving during the years of austerity, they didn't have food, so we were in the squares and cooked all together in order to provide meals. There are many examples. There were about 300 welfare initiatives across Greece with no funding by the state or sponsors; the majority of them were created by the people for the people: for example, structures that provided lessons for children for free, food for people for free, medical care for free, social work for free.

At the same time, we had a very strong anti-racist movement in Greece, from the 1990s, but during that period in 2015 we had also a refugee crisis. We had a double crisis: a financial crisis and a refugee crisis. The anti-racist movement was very supporting and expressed solidarity for one million refugees that were in Greece in 2015.

Gianinna: That's something that I also want to ask you, about the anti-racist movement. I know that a few days ago something very important happened. The court had the decision against the fascist organisation Golden Dawn. I know that you and colleagues from Greece have participated in many demonstrations on this matter.

Dimitra-Dora: I am very happy, I participated in that huge demonstration on Monday with SWAN- Greece. It was a unique experience. So many people, there were more than 20,000 people there, with masks and all the safety measures. It was an historical moment not only for Greece but for Europe and for anti-fascist and anti-racist movements across the world. The Court decided that Golden Dawn is a criminal organisation. In 2013 Golden Dawn was a party that was elected in the parliament, so it was legal. Now it is illegal, and it is destroyed.

This has been a long way. We must be aware of that. Struggling for social justice is not something that you achieve in one day, in one month, in one year. You have to do that for years, and you have to be there and be patient and take care of yourself, take care of your comrades, take care of your colleagues, and be together and act collectively, because it takes a long time to achieve.

And why am I saying that? I am saying that because this case was in the Court for the last five and a half years. After the murder of Pavlos Fyssas, a Greek anti-fascist singer, a young man, who was murdered by Golden Dawn, his mother and anti-fascist and anti-racist movements accused Golden Dawn of this. And for the last five and a half

years they were trying to have this decision from the Court. But anti-fascist and anti-racist movements have struggled with Golden Dawn for the last twenty years. Fascism is not new here.

You see, it took many years. And many people, even the right-wing government says OK, we are anti-fascist, we fight against fascism, but these were lies. The system wants to have fascism and fascist organisations as Golden Dawn because they use them, as they are very useful to reinforce capitalism. To put it differently, fascism is an integral part of capitalism.

This is why we are very happy, because the decision of the Court arrived after many years of struggles, after many deaths, especially of immigrants. Because nobody speaks about the deaths of immigrants and refugees by the fascist. And this is very sad.

Gianinna: The cost in terms of human lives has been very high. There is a happy ending, but the process was heart-breaking. In Chile we also had our struggles and many people lost their lives because of police repression against the movements pushing for a change to the political Constitution created during the dictatorship of Pinochet in the 1980s.

What you have shared about social workers participating in the Solidarity Movement and anti-racist movements is very important for thinking about critical and radical social work nowadays; it talks about activism as a part of social work. During recent decades, at least in my experience as a student many years ago, social work and activism were dissociated. Activism was understood in some circles as a kind of action without foundations, as something that had nothing to do with professional social work or academic social work. You have shown in your experience that activism is strongly based on critical and radical social work theory, and when you talked about the research you conducted with social workers participating in the solidarity movement we can also learn that practice and research feed each other and that social work can be committed with an activism and knowledge basis.

Dimitra-Dora: I lived the same for years. I am now permanent staff at the university only in the last three years. All the previous years I wasn't permanent staff. Every six months I had to prepare new applications, new lectures, and I wasn't sure if I would have the job. Of course, I had all the qualifications. But I was also from the left and a member of the union. And it wasn't a good thing. I remember when I first started to teach in 2006 and brought these ideas of radical social work -for the first time, because before that, we didn't have that approach- it was amazing. I saw something in the eyes of my students and also of my colleagues…they told me "what are you talking about? What are these things you say to the students about refugees, about LGTBQ, about

social movements? This is not social work". Also, my students were shocked. I still remember their expressions at the beginning.

I also have to tell you that it was not easy at all. It may now sound very nice, because at undergraduate level we teach radical and critical social work for the first time in Greece. This has also been another long struggle for years. I knew it was going to be hard, that was also why I was a member of the union. I faced many problems in my job, some people frighten me "don't do that, because you are not going to have a job next year". It was not straightforward that one day, suddenly, radical and critical approaches started to be taught in Greek social work.

We needed to bring these ideas slowly, we needed to do research about this, publications and conferences. For many years I was only invited to conferences abroad and not in Greece. For many years I couldn't publish a paper in a Greek journal. Actually, one of my articles was rejected because it was underpinned by radical social work. It is a bit funny, but I am trying to tell you how the situation was. But gradually things changed not only in teaching but also in theory and in the street. We created the Social Work Action Network in Greece which promoted radical and critical social work. Our activity was on many levels such as participating in campaigns, announcements in our blog but also our activity included community action from a radical perspective. Therefore, we acted for three years in one of the poorest communities in Patras (one of the biggest cities in Greece) and struggled with the inhabitants for their social rights such as housing, community and childcare and many more. To put it differently we attempted to bring radical community development and community action in day-to-day practice. Given the rise of racism and the hostile policies against refugees in Greece and Europe, we also acted in coalition with the antiracist movement. Consequently, radical social work was more and more popular in Greece given that we acted on two levels. As academics but also as activists. Now in the University I teach radical and critical social work but also another module which is called "Human rights social work and the movements". In this module users and representatives of the social movements participate and this not only fulfils the global standards of social work education but at the same time we achieve bringing together social work students, users and activists. So, I try to think and do things out of the box. I think this is very important for radical social work in general. We need to be creative and think out of the box.

And well, we also have humour and sarcasm to survive in capitalism. I don't know how you can translate this (laughs).

Gianinna: It is a type of resistance, being sarcastic and using humour as a way of challenging and contesting dominant discourses.

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Dimitra-Dora: Yes, absolutely. Well, things have gradually changed but still there are a lot of things to do.

Gianinna: To conclude, and considering we are in a critical time —the pandemic, shock doctrine, the dismantling of welfare, and in Latin America particularly, the regression of social protection systems, and so on— and also that we face, as social workers, a process of deprofessionalisation, what would be your message for social workers around the world? What is your view about these critical moments we are living in as citizens and as social workers?

Dimitra-Dora: It is a very complex period because we feel very isolated because of COVID-19 and at the same time we have to face a lot of difficulties in our families, in our jobs and maybe in our health, and this is also used by capitalism to attack the rights of the people. I think the first thing is our analysis about what is happening outside and not being isolated. I mean there are many ways to not be isolated. I survived through the financial crises and desperation generated by financial crisis, because of the collective action and because of solidarity. Because I knew that if I lost my job, there were people that would help me. I knew that if I was threatened in my job there was the union that would help me. I knew that I had comrades and colleagues to share ideas and act together. My message is not being isolated. Not being competitive. Not being individualistic in our jobs and try to find things to do with others. Take care of our comrades and think and act together, through campaigns. I think it is very important to find collective spaces to share ideas and act together. We cannot resist alone. Of course, it is important to have an individual resistance. But we need each other, and we need to find ways. I think, in SWAN- International, you know, we tried, and we succeeded in finding ways in these difficult times not only to share but also to provide to other people and, by this, to have this connection for social change.

Gianinna: Individual resistance is important of course because we need to cope as we can with barriers every day, but it is not enough. Individual resistance is overwhelming at the end. We need a network to work together, in collective ways of resistance. But it is difficult not being competitive and individualistic in our jobs; individual competition is always on the table because policy guidelines are promoting those values. The challenges are related to how we put in practice counterhegemonic values in human relations on a daily basis.

Dimitra-Dora: I totally agree. I always ask… Am I alienated? Please, tell me, because I think about work all the time. Alienation is also on the table for all of us. It is not something that happens to other people if we are Marxist and so on. It is here day by day. And I think that the best mirror for us is not only to be honest with ourselves but to

be honest with other people about us. I hope people around me can say 'yes, you are alienated, come back'. Yes, capitalism and values of competition and individualism, is not only for the others, it is also about us.

Gianinna: Yes, that's an idea that I like because it is not binary. It is not like 'on the one side you have those neoliberal people and on the other side you have us, those who resist neoliberalism", because we are also part and crossed by neoliberal rationality. We also reproduce. If we don't understand this, we finish believing that social workers can be superheroes. And I think we are far from that.

Thank you very much Dora for sharing your views with us.

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Find out more about Dimitra-Dora's work:

- Documentary film "Greece 2012: Social work in austerity" https://vimeo.com/39398286
- Teloni, D. D., Dedotsi, S. and Telonis, A. (2020). Refugee 'crisis' and social services in Greece: social workers' profile and working conditions. *European Journal of Social Work 23* (6), pp 1005-1018. DOI: 10.1080/13691457.2020.1772729
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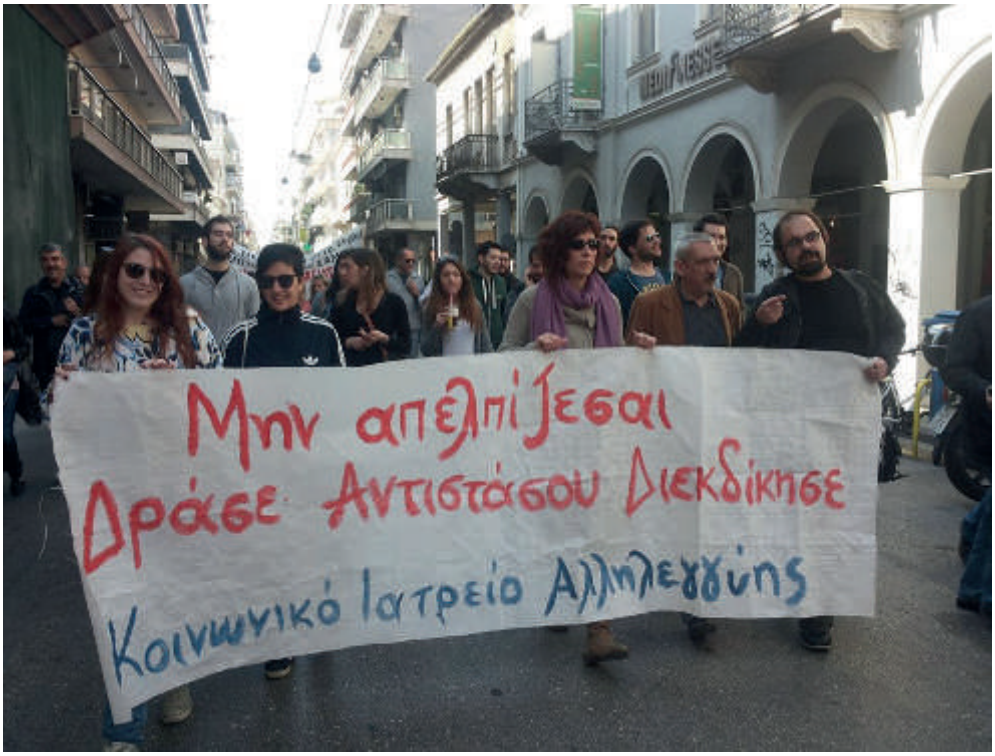

The members of the Medical Clinic in Patras and Greek SWAN. We participate in the strike and demonstrate demanding free access to the primary health care system in 2014 during the period of austerity. Translation of the banner: "Do not despair: Resist – Act – Demand/ Medical Clinic Patras".